

Independence for Uighurs or death

Written by Shohret Hoshur
Thursday, 19 August 2021 03:15

In the article “Calls for Independence May Not Help the Uyghur Cause” published in Foreign Policy on July 2, Yehan, writing under a pseudonym, argued that calls for independence might not help the Uighur cause.

As a senior journalist and person who belongs to the affected community, I argue that not calling for independence from China means accepting genocide.

Uighurs and Han have no common ground for living together. When they are forced to do so, as we are witnessing today, one side kills the other.

Independence is needed because Uighurs are not reaching for freedom or development, but for survival.

Let us put aside the history of East Turkistan, including the question of who is the true owner and who the invader, and the vast cultural differences between Han and Uighur communities, as well as the psychological uniqueness of the two groups. Just look at accounts of events and clashes in the region in past decades.

China has since 1950 launched more than 100 campaigns against Uighur separatists, with names such as “Land Reform Movement,” “Anti-Rightist Campaign,” “Cultural Revolution” or “Strike Hard Campaign Against Violent Terrorism.”

A 2017 white paper said: “Since 2014, Xinjiang has destroyed 1,588 violent and terrorist gangs, arrested 12,995 terrorists and punished 30,645 people for 4,858 illegal religious activities.”

The Global Terrorism Database recorded more than 270 terror acts in China from 1989 to 2019, mostly in Uighur areas.

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Another white paper said: “Incomplete statistics show that, from 1990 to the end of 2016, separatist, terrorist and extremist forces launched thousands of terrorist attacks in Xinjiang.”

Uighur activists say that some of the incidents were about fighting for freedom, while others were about self defense.

However, most of China’s state terrorism is aimed at innocent Uighurs. This is especially true of the ongoing campaign, which began in 2017 and is aimed at “eliminating religious extremists.”

In Xinjiang’s 380 concentration camps, more than 3 million Uighurs are mentally and physically tortured.

Whatever you call things — whether terror or liberation, concentration camp or vocational training center — the irrefutable reality is that there is unalterable hatred and an untreatable wound between the Uighurs of East Turkistan and the Han of China.

This was also revealed in one of China’s own documents.

In the 2017 white paper, Qiu Yuanyuan (邱元元), a researcher at the party school of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, described the situation: “In 2014, 2015 and 2016, our strike-hard campaigns in Xinjiang were very broad and rigorous. It was impossible for their relatives not to be heartbroken and angry with us; therefore, to maintain stability, we established the comprehensive training camps, even though they had committed no actual crimes.”

The document proved that campaigns launched before the camps were established caused a loss of mutual trust between Han and Uighur communities.

If there was unresolved hatred before 2017, imagine how it is today, after millions of families have been separated forcibly, millions of children have been orphaned and innumerable people

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have died in the camps.

After so much tragedy, so much pain, so much killing, so much jailing, how can a country be united?

Some people believe that calling for independence might push the Chinese public to side with the Chinese government against the Uighurs.

However, Chinese already march in lockstep with their government.

Why do the Chinese neighbors of Uighurs held in camps not ask: "Where are these people? Where did they go?"

Why do CCP cadres not ask: "What kind of kinship is this? Why do we sleep in Uighurs' houses?"

When millions of orphans are squatting in classrooms, why do their teachers not protest and speak out, saying that it is torture, not education?

How can a Chinese judge who ordered a 15-year sentence for praying still sleep comfortably?

It is either naive or hypocritical to think that the Uighur genocide is being executed by the CCP alone. Separating it from the strong support of the public is a deceit of oneself and others.

There were British supporters of India's struggle for independence; blacks in the US were not separated from whites after the civil rights movement; and Russian human rights advocates supported Chechen separatists.

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Yet, in the nearly 100-year East Turkestan independence struggle, Chinese have almost never been at the front lines with Uighurs.

Meanwhile in the free world, more than 30 Chinese organizations in the Netherlands have written a protest letter to the Dutch government over its condemnation of the Uighur genocide, and Canadian Senator Yuen Pau Woo (袁晓亮) voiced opposition against a Canadian Senate motion calling the situation in Xinjiang “genocide,” leading to a majority of senators declining it.

Yuen exonerated the CCP with the theory of output and input legitimacy, saying that China’s actions are acceptable due to its praiseworthy economic success.

Meanwhile, Yehan’s key argument is that the “CCP is exploiting the dominance of the independence movement in the narrative. The Chinese public has been trained for decades to treat ‘separatists,’ whether in Xinjiang or Taiwan, effectively as traitors, and to see the integrity of the country’s modern borders as key to national identity.”

Should the Chinese be educated? China’s living standard is above the global average, and many Chinese have been educated in the US or Europe, and yet, there has been little desire among them to democratically elect a government.

Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) abolished his term limit, and there was no opposition.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo (刘晓波), who gave up his life in a free world for China’s democratization, died in prison, and there was no protest.

When COVID-19 started spreading in Wuhan, Beijing tried to hide it. Many Chinese have died, yet the public has not held the government accountable.

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Instead, Beijing punished eight doctors who publicly warned about the virus, and this has not even sparked debate.

Chinese, who are not eager for freedom for themselves, do not wish freedom for others.

Under Beijing's rule, no matter whether democratic or autocratic, there is only one path for the Uighurs, and that path is death.

Despite countless disadvantages of Uighur independence, there are some advantages.

Uighurs are not alone on the battlefield of genocide. What China is doing is against the will of God. Being an Uighur is not a choice; genocide is against the basic rule of humanity.

Eventually, the world will realize that it needs to stop China from killing others. God and humanity are with the Uighurs.

Even under the most conservative marriage law, couples are allowed to divorce if there is a loss of trust, and they are ordered to immediately separate if there is evidence that one of them is doing harm to the other.

For the Uighurs, the issue at hand is not whether to separate from China, but when and how to do it. The difficulty of the problem should not cause Uighurs to cover it up or escape from it.

Not calling for independence might destroy the Uighur cause and help China eliminate Uighurs from the face of the Earth.

Shohret Hoshur is a Uighur-American journalist.

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