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CHINA | Judicial Review Called for in Uyghur Case

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is calling for a judicial review in the case of Uyghur Christian Alimujiang Yimit, who is currently serving a 15-year prison sentence for “illegally providing state secrets to foreign nationals.”

Alimujiang Yimit (also written Alimjan Yimit or Alimujiang Yimiti) is a Uyghur Christian from Xinjiang in Northwest China. In 2009, he was convicted of “illegally providing state secrets to foreign nationals” and is currently serving a 15-year prison sentence. Yimit denied these charges. Those familiar with the case believe his detention is connected with a set of earlier charges put forward by the Kashgar Municipal Bureau for Ethnic and Religious Affairs in Xinjiang, relating to his “illegal” religious activities as the leader of an unregistered church.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has rendered the opinion that Yimit has been arbitrarily detained.

A Chinese author close to Yimit’s family claims his case could be reopened in connection with China’s nationwide anti-corruption campaign which has resulted in the ousting of officials who handled Yimit’s case. CSW has not been able to verify this report.

Religion is a sensitive issue in Xinjiang. In 2015 and 2016, CSW continued to receive reports of restrictions on religious activities and expression in the region, including bans on civil servants and students fasting during Ramadan, restrictions on dress and appearance with religious connections, such as head coverings for women and long beards for men, and convictions for religious meetings outside designated venues. In August 2016, Radio Free Asia also reported that authorities were asking school pupils in Xinjiang about their families’ religious practices and telling them not to engage in religious activities.

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “CSW has campaigned on Alimujiang Yimit’s case for several years and continues to be concerned about his conviction and detention, which the

UN has declared to be arbitrary. We believe the charges against him are groundless and that he is being penalized for his peaceful religious activities as an unregistered church leader. We urge the authorities to re-assess his case thoroughly, impartially and without delay, with a view to securing his unconditional release. We further call on the government to ensure that any persons found responsible for Yimit's wrongful imprisonment and/or ill-treatment in detention are held accountable and to ensure that Yimit's current conditions in detention comply with international standards.”