Chairman, XUAR People's Government
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Copy to:
Ambassador Yesui Zhang
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
3505 International Place NW
Washington, DC 20008

Date: _____

Dear Chairman:

The Uighur poet and story writer **Nurmemet Yasin** is serving a 10-year prison sentence for writing an allegorical short story. The story, "Wild Pigeon" (*Yawa Kepter*), is a first-person narrative of a young pigeon, the son of a pigeon king, who is trapped and commits suicide in captivity, killing himself rather than sacrifice his freedom. On the basis of this story, Nurmemet Yasin was charged with "inciting splittism" in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). He is a prisoner of conscience.

The Maralbeshi County People's Court sentenced Nurmemet Yasin following a closed trial in February 2005. The Kashgar Intermediate People's Court upheld the sentence on appeal in March 2005. It is unclear whether he had legal representation at the trial. Members of his family have been allowed to visit him only once. Believed to be in poor health, he is not due to be released until November 2014.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture Manfred Nowak met with Nurmemet Yasin in prison in November 2005. Nurmemet Yasin told him that, during interrogation in November 2004, the police had threatened and beaten him. In prison, he also had been beaten by fellow inmates because he did not speak Mandarin Chinese. Manfred Nowak, in his report following his visit to China, concluded that "since [Nurmemet Yasin] has been convicted of a political crime, possibly on the basis of information extracted by torture, the Special Rapporteur appeals to the Government that he be released."

We call for the immediate and unconditional release of Nurmemet Yasin and for a full and impartial investigation into allegations that he has been tortured. Those persons determined to be responsible must be brought to justice. We urge adoption of policies that ensure freedom of expression for all and respect the right of ethnic minorities to ensure, preserve, and reproduce their distinctive culture and traditions.

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