

YOUNG RESPONDERS

UYGHUR SONGWRITER SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS FOR HIS RAP LYRICS AND BOOKS IN HIS POSSESSION

Yashar, also known as Yaxia'er Xiaohelaiti (亚夏尔·肖合拉提), is a 27-year-old Uyghur songwriter serving a three-year prison sentence for creating music and possessing books in Uyghur, his native language. In June 2024, the Chinese government decided that his music and his books were dangerous. Yashar is still detained, which is unfair because he has the right to share his culture and read books as well as the right to freedom of expression.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Send a copy of your letter to:

c/o Ambassador Xie Fang
Embassy of the People's
Republic of China in the
United States 3505
International Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Secretary Ma:

I am writing to you because I am very worried about Yashar (Yaxia'er Xiaohelaiti), a Uyghur songwriter and musician. On June 20, 2024, a court decided that Yashar was in trouble because of the lyrics in his songs and the books that he bought that are written in his **Uyghur** language.

This is unfair because Yashar is being punished for exercising his right to explore his culture and freely express himself through his music. I am also worried that Yashar is not getting the medicine that he needs for his **bronchitis**.

I urge you to:

- Release Yaxia'er Xiaohelaiti, also known as Yashar.
- Make sure Yashar receives medicine and does not experience bad treatment from authorities.
- Make sure Uyghur artists can express themselves freely without the fear of getting in trouble with the government.

Yours sincerely,

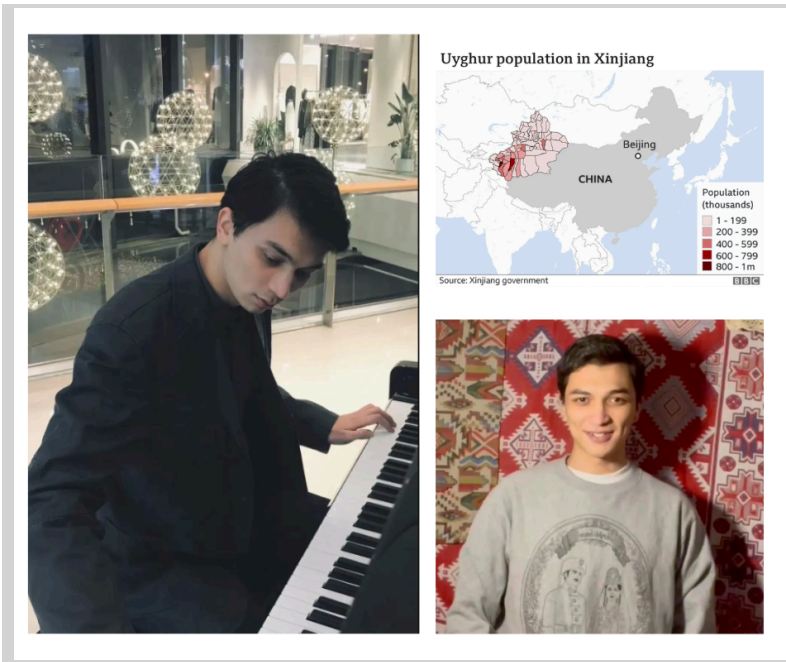


Photo Left: Yashar (Yaxia'er Xiaohelaiti).

Photo Top Right: Map of China highlighting the Uyghur region.

Photo Bottom Right: Yashar (Yaxia'er Xiaohelaiti).

Learn More About the Uyghurs

There are approximately 12 million Uyghurs who live in Xinjiang, China, also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). They speak their own language and mostly practice **Islam**. Xinjiang is **autonomous**, meaning it can govern itself. However, there are many restrictions placed onto this region by the People's Republic of China.

Xinjiang produces about one-fifth of the world's cotton. There are serious concerns that cotton production is supported by forced labor. It is estimated that half a million Uyghurs and other **ethnic minorities** have been forced to pick cotton in Xinjiang during their time in re-education camps. Since 2017, the government of China has sent mass numbers of Uyghurs to these **internment camps** or prisons. In these camps, people were forced to follow very strict rules and could not make their own decisions when it came to everyday tasks like eating, sleeping, and going to the bathroom. **Detainees** were not given a lot of time to spend outside or in fresh air and the camps did not have enough food, clean water, or medical care.

During the day, detainees had to participate in long classes that taught them Mandarin, one of the official languages in China, because they were not allowed to speak their own language freely. If a detainee was caught using their native language, they were physically punished very harshly. Detainees were also forced to watch videos that spoke badly about Islam but praised China and the Chinese government.

Learning Activities

- [Vocabulary Chart](#)
- [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Worksheet](#)
- [Tips for Letter Writing](#)
- [The Music in Me](#)