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FROM : UAA

FAX NO. : 202 333 2663

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The Honorable Colin Powell
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

December 8, 2003

Dear Honorable Secretary Powell:

We write respectfully to seek your assistance to consider granting political asylum for the Uyghur detainees at Guantanamo, who have been declared not a threat to United States interests.

We are deeply disturbed by the recent media reports that the United States is considering a Chinese request to return Uyghur detainees to China. Members of the Uyghur American Association together with many human rights activists around the world are concerned that the detainees will be persecuted if they are returned to China.

Chinese government may promise to United States government that those detainees will get fair trial if they are returned to China. However, for the people who understand China's government and legal system, "a fair trial" for the opponents of the Communist party is a farce. It is well known fact that there is no independent judiciary in China and that government wields enormous power over the Courts. The Chinese Communist government has consistently shown utter disrespect for the rule of law by denying its citizen's constitutional rights. Even though the Chinese constitution grants its citizens' the rights of free speech and demonstration, the government has in the past, regularly arrested, jailed and even slaughtered (as in the case of 1989 Tiananmen Massacre) its critics. Such was the fate of those peaceful and patriotic Chinese dissidents. It is not difficult to imagine what the "fair trial" would mean for those Uyghurs who were detained in Afghanistan and already branded by Chinese government as terrorists and separatists.

Moreover, there is no way for the United States and international organizations to guarantee the fairness of the trial and the treatment that the detainees will receive once they are returned to China. Experience tells us that any appeals and suggestions made by international organization and United States on their behalf will fall upon the deaf ears of Chinese officials. Rebiya Kadeer, the prominent businesswomen and philanthropist, was arrested and sentenced for eight years in prison in 1999. United States Congress passed resolutions calling on the release of Rebiya Kadeer. However she is still languishing in Chinese prison. Just a month ago, Ghulam Nabi Wazir, who was recognized as a refugee

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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by UNHCR, was forcibly returned to China by Nepalese government and sentenced to death. Despite appeals by the UNHCR and Amnesty International against the verdict, the death sentence was carried out swiftly. China also executed Uyghur political activists returned by both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999. Such was the fate of Uyghurs who have been returned to China by other countries with Beijing's assurance that they would be humanly treated. The fate of Uyghur detainees in Guantanamo will not be any different if the United States returns them to China under these Chinese assurances.

Returning the Uyghur detainees in Guantanamo Bay to China is against the United States interests. Uyghurs are probably some of the most pro-American Muslims in the world at a time when there are strong anti-American sentiment among Muslims in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Oppressed by foreign rulers for more than two centuries, Uyghurs see the United States of America as a beacon of hope. American government's continued criticism of China's human rights record and American assistance to liberation movements of many nations around the world, such as the liberation of Europe from Nazi Germany, assistance to Afghan resistance to Soviet invasion and military interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo, have fostered such sentiment among Uyghurs. Uyghurs believe United States is a friend of oppressed people and will assist in Uyghurs' quest for its right to self-determination.

Such pro-Americanism among Uyghurs is very disturbing for the communist rulers in Beijing, who totally disapprove America's dominant position in the Asia Pacific region and American military presence in Central Asia. They believe such pro-Americanism among Uyghurs will not only hurt the chances of survival of the Chinese communist rule in East Turkistan (also known as Xinjiang), but also negatively affect China's power of competition with the United States in Central Asia and Caspian Region. Therefore, they see destroying such pro-Americanism among Uyghurs is essential to China's quest for strong influence in the oil-rich Caspian region. Therefore, the best way for China to destroy the Uyghur people's faith in the United States is to convince them that the United States is the best friend of the authoritarian Chinese government, which regularly persecutes the Uyghur population. The United States' return of Uyghur detainees in Guantanamo will serve exactly this very purpose. China will use the Uyghur detainees as propaganda tools to incite anti-American feelings among the Uyghurs. The Chinese government will undoubtedly use them to legitimize its crackdown on the Uyghur population. It will help destroy the faith the Uyghur people have in American values and principles, such as democracy and individual freedom. This is exactly the outcome that American government is trying to avoid around the world.

The United States government's decision on the fate of those detainees has great significance upon the conflict resolution in that part of the world. Today, United States is the only remaining super power in the world. It is the only power on the earth that can influence, to a certain degree, the behavior of the Communist China. Transferring those detainees into Chinese custody would be perceived by China as the United States' endorsement of its heavy-handed tactics in dealing with the discontent in East Turkistan. It would encourage the Chinese government to rule out any possibility of entering constructive dialogue with the Uyghurs, who are opposing the brutal and repressive

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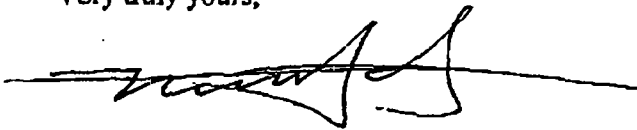
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Chinese rule in East Turkistan. This would exacerbate the human tragedy in that region. On the contrary, different decision on the issue would produce totally different outcome. In the last decade of the 20th century, by leading military intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, America and its western allies sent a strong message to the world that human rights violations can not be tolerated by the civilized world. Today, by refusing to hand over Uyghur detainees to Chinese government, United States can send powerful message to the dictators in Beijing that legitimate issues of minorities should only be tackled through dialogue and concessions. This, in turn, encourages Chinese government to explore democratic ways to deal with the discontent.

We therefore urge:

1. That United States government resolutely reject the Chinese government's request to return Uyghur detainees to China.
2. That United States government consider granting political asylum to those Uyghurs in the United States.

Very truly yours,



Nury A. Turkel
General Secretary

cc: Ambassador Clark T. Randt
Assistant Secretary, Lorne Craner

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