







GHULJA MASSACRE

26 years ago, on February 5, 1997, Uyghur demonstrators in Ghulja took part in a non-violent protest calling for an end to religious repression and ethnic discrimination in the city. After violently suppressing the demonstration. Chinese authorities arbitrarily detained large numbers of Uyghurs. Human rights organizations documented a pattern of torture in detention and unfair trials of detained Uvahurs. For their alleged role in the events, several Uyghur participants were executed.

PREMISES

Before 1997. Ghulia city was known as the birthplace of Uvghur modern education and a center for inspiration, freedom and hope. As time went on, society began to fall apart for several reasons: more and more young people were being left jobless, and issues with drug and alcohol abuse were becoming a major concern as they slowly dismantled families and the community. As no help was forthcoming from the government, a group of young people organized the **Meshrep***. Through this form of community building and the creation of a social support network, many youths were able to give up drinking, drug abuse and other civil crimes.

Many alcohol and tobacco shops went out of business, and young people started to do sports or other activities to stay healthy. These changes seemed to make the authorities nervous rather than happy. The authorities had done nothing to combat the social problems Uyghurs had been facing, so the youth had taken it upon themselves to do so.

Meshrep is a traditional Uyghur male gathering that typically consists of social, religious, and cultural activities such as music, dance, the recitation of poetry, the teaching of basic principles of our religion, or simple conversation, as well as organized sports.

AFTERMATH

Rather than supporting this initiative, they arrested the organizers. On February 5, 1997, the youths took to the streets to demand their release and the rights and freedoms that Uyghurs were constitutionally entitled to. The peaceful protest turned into a so-called "riot" according to state media; the Chinese military opened fire on the unarmed protesters on the street. It was a massacre.

Each of Meshrep organizers has either been tortured and killed, or is still serving their sentence in

25 years after the Ghulia massacre, there has been no accountability for the atrocities committed that day or the months after. In fact, China continues to hunt down every Uyghur who had a connection to that movement and is punishing them by sending to concentration camps as well as millions of others detained in concentration camps since 2016

These and countless other unreported instances oppression serve as testimony to the fact that China is systematically trying to erode Uyghur ethnicity: mentally, spiritually, culturally, and physically.







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