

*Via email to english@mail.gov.cn*

President Xi Jinping  
The State Council General Office  
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People's Republic of China

October 31, 2018

**RE: Release Renowned Uyghur Scholar Rahile Dawut**

Your Excellency:

I write to express grave concern regarding Professor Rahile Dawut, a world-renowned scholar of Uyghur studies, who disappeared in China in December 2017 and is believed to be detained.

According to Scholars at Risk (SAR), Professor Dawut is a scholar of Uyghur studies at Xinjiang University in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region who has received awards and grants from China's Ministry of Culture, and is the founder of a folklore institute. I understand from SAR that, in December 2017, Professor Dawut reportedly told a relative of her plans to travel from Urumqi to Beijing. Since that time, however, her family and friends have lost contact with her. Professor Dawut's family and friends announced her disappearance in August 2018.

Chinese authorities have not publicly disclosed Professor Dawut's whereabouts or details of her well-being, access to legal counsel, or any charges against her. Professor Dawut's family, along with human rights groups, suspects that she is among a growing number of Uyghurs who have been reportedly taken into custody by authorities and are being held at so-called "re-education camps," in prisons, or at other detention facilities. Reports suggest that detainees are subjected to physical and psychological torture in re-education camps.

I welcome any additional information that may clarify my understanding of these events. Absent this, the facts appear to indicate that Professor Dawut has been detained in connection with her peaceful exercise of the right to academic freedom -- conduct that is expressly protected under international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which China is a signatory. The nature of her disappearance and detention, lack of information about her whereabouts, and reports of torture in re-education camps raise grave concerns about whether Professor Dawut has been afforded due process, and about her treatment and well-being. Professor Dawut's case, moreover, gives rise to serious concern about the ability of intellectuals in China generally to conduct scholarship safely and freely.

I therefore respectfully urge you to secure Professor Dawut's immediate and unconditional release and, pending this, to publicly disclose the circumstances of Professor Dawut's detention, ensure her access to family and legal counsel, and ensure and that her case is addressed in a manner consistent with internationally recognized standards of due process, fair trial, and detention, in

accordance with China's obligations under international law.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

CC:

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