



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on November 10, 2009

## China Executes Nine for Riot-related Crimes

Communist China has executed nine men for crimes committed during violent, ethnically motivated riots that took place in China's Xinjiang region in July. Eight of the men were from the Muslim Uighur minority, and the other was reported to be from the Han majority, although the official China News Service did not specify this.

The men had been convicted of murder and other crimes committed as part of the ethnic rioting. They are the first to receive the death sentence in relation to the riots.

Violence erupted on July 5 after Chinese police dispersed a demonstration by Uighur students in Urumqi, the regional capital. The students were urging the authorities to investigate a fight at a factory in the city of Shaoguan during which Han workers killed two Uighurs. After police broke up the protest, the crowd of Uighurs began roaming the streets of Urumqi and attacking Hans, vandalizing their vehicles, and burning their shops.

Two days later, Hans charged into Uighur neighborhoods and exacted their revenge in even more bloody violence. Officially, 197 people died during both of the riots, while 1,721 were injured. Most were reported to be Hans, though some Uighurs disputed the statistics as underreporting their casualties.

The China News Service reported that 20 more people were indicted on November 9 on charges of murder and other crimes. Only two of the prisoners appeared to be Han since 18 of them had names common to Uighurs.

Dilxat Raxit, a Uighur activist located outside of China, condemned the executions as politically motivated and meant to appease the Hans in Urumqi, thousands of whom had marched through the city's streets in September to demand that the Uighurs responsible for the first riot be brought to trial. Raxit also serves as spokesman for the World Uyghur Congress based in Germany.

"We don't think they got a fair trial, and we believe this was a political verdict," Raxit said. "The United States and the European Union did not put any pressure on China or seek to intervene and for that we are extremely disappointed."

Raxit also claimed that the men condemned to die had been denied any last visits with family members, something that would be a violation of standard practice. No confirmation of this could be found from official sources.





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Steve Tsang of Oxford University, an expert on China, stated that the Chinese government's secrecy about the trials of the accused did not exactly inspire confidence in the verdict reached. While Tsang acknowledged that criminals must be punished for their deeds, there is also a need for openness so that Uighurs and Hans might reconcile and build trust.

Regrettably, the Communist Chinese government seems little concerned about fostering ethnic harmony. Tsang noted, "They will achieve their goal of short-term stability, but they're not solving the basic problems and they're not going to be able to put the issues behind them."

*Photo: AP Images*



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