

## **Rebiya Kadeer to Speak at MIT**

An exiled Uyghur woman to discuss repression of a Muslim people in western China

May 15th, 2007  
7:30pm - 9:00pm  
MIT, room 66-110

Rebiya Kadeer, human rights activist and former business woman, rose from poverty to poster-child for the Chinese government's policies towards the PRC's ethnic minorities. Kadeer served as a delegate to the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, as well as delegate to the United Nation's Fourth World conference on Women in 1995. However, Kadeer quickly fell from the favor of the PRC government after she began to demand change in China's culturally repressive policies against the Muslim Uyghur people in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (also called East Turkestan by many Uyghurs).

In 1997, Kadeer was stripped of her membership in both the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and forbidden to travel abroad. She was arrested in 1999 while on her way to meet with a U.S. Congressional delegation that was visiting East Turkestan to investigate the human rights situation there. She was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment in March 2000, following a secret trial. Forced to spend two years in solitary confinement, she witnessed brutal torture and abuse carried out on her fellow prisoners.

In 2005, Kadeer was finally released, ostensibly in response to pressure from the US government and grassroots advocacy groups such as Amnesty International and Human Right Watch. She currently resides in Washington, D.C., where she serves as the president of the Uyghur American Association and the Uyghur World Congress. She advocates the right of the Uyghur people to use peaceful, democratic means to determine their own political future and secure their right to practice Islam free from government surveillance and manipulation.

Although government repression of basic rights is a problem spanning all of China, the Uyghurs are victim to policies that specifically target their Muslim identity. Chinese leaders have failed to discriminate legitimate threats to state security and peaceful religious practice. Today, nearly all religious practice or congregation not approved by the government is classified as one of "three evils:" separatism, extremism, or terrorism. Current repressive policies include required "reeducation" sessions for Uyghur Imams, barring minors from "participating in religious activities," and unrelenting punishment for deviation from the state-approved version of Islam.

Kadeer will share her own experience witnessing first-hand the Uyghur condition, as well as offer her analysis of the current situation in Xinjiang/East Turkestan. Her one hour talk will be followed by a moderated question and answer session. The event is cosponsored by the MIT Program for Human Rights and Justice, Amnesty International, and the MIT Muslims' Student Association.

Please send any questions or requests for further information to [uyghur@mit.edu](mailto:uyghur@mit.edu).