

## ILHAM TOHTI

### China

Officially an atheist state, Christians face increasing persecution in China. The Chinese Communist Party views churches that claim Christ is King as suspicious and monitor them closely, even making it illegal for children under 18 to attend church. Indeed, it is difficult for Christians to share their faith publicly or freely attend worship services as church raids increase and closures occur without warning. Protestant house churches are particularly vulnerable as digital surveillance grows there. Even Christian chat groups are routinely shut down. But across China, it is not just Christians who are vulnerable to persecution. Chinese authorities use extreme and repressive measures in order to eradicate certain ethnoreligious identities, notably Tibetan Buddhists and Uyghur Muslims. These distinct faiths, with their heritage and cultures, have led to strict censorship campaigns by the government, threats, arbitrary imprisonment, and even being sent to “reeducation centers.” In fact, Uyghurs in China are the most heavily jailed people group in the world according to recent statistics despite making up only one percent of the total population of China.

Ilham Tohti is one example. A scholar and Uyghur Muslim, Ilham is currently imprisoned for his ethnoreligious identity, sentenced to life in prison. In the years leading up to his arrest, he had worked to foster understanding between Uyghur and Han people (China’s majority ethnic group). However, since 2017, Ilham has been detained incommunicado.

Ilham is the father of Jewher Tohti, a human rights activist based in the U.S. and one of the Global Gathering’s featured panelists on Friday Oct. 25th, which is also Ilham’s birthday. Jewher has fought for her father’s freedom over the last decade (even meeting with President Trump in 2019) and dedicates her work today to continuing her father’s legacy of bridging the gap between the Uyghur people and the Han Chinese.

Pray with us for Ilham, and his family, today.



**Ethnoreligious identity:** Uyghur Muslim

**Sentence:** Life imprisonment - already has served 10 years.

**Motive for arrest:** “Seperatism”, i.e., advocating for the rights of Uyghurs and his research on Uyghur-Han relations.

Read more about China’s overt religious persecution [here](#).

Read and share our CAAP Prayer Guide on China [here](#).

See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s Victims List [here](#) and pray with us for all who suffer for their beliefs.

