

Progress and spending report for shahit.biz

Time period: April 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023 (3 months)

I. Donations and spending breakdown

Donations received: 21337.13 USD

Total spent: 16450.30 USD

Breakdown

- Curator: 3920 USD

- Victim importing: 3600 USD

- Translation: 666.31 USD

- Research: 6321 USD

- Fees: 1942.99 USD

(international transfer commissions, 544.00;

site domain/server, 263.70;

Google One online storage, 6.33;

regular site backups and cybersecurity services, 110.70;

internet data plans, 135.73;

Skype subscription for calls to China, 5.86;

SMS generator for Chinese accounts, 30;

technology repair/replacement, 6.40;

work space rent, 815.67;

purchase of relevant software/apps, 24.60)

II. Staff and project size

Curator (general management, research, and quality control): 1 full-time

Importers (adding/processing victim information into database): 2 part-time

Translators (translation of primary evidence and site interface): 3 part-time, 1 volunteer

Site programming and development: 1 volunteer

Research (victims and accountable parties): 3 part-time, 1 volunteer

Two of the part-time staff are themselves victims of the mass incarceration campaign, with the part-time work making it possible for them to cover their costs of living.

III. Progress over the past three months

Victim documentation (core)

- 4572 new victims documented (261 high-quality, 4250 medium-quality, 61 low-quality). 1239 of them have also been independently corroborated.

- Family links established for over 2000 families from Konasheher County

(<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1674747289926254593>).

Primary-evidence translation and organization >> <https://shahit.biz/eng/#evidence>

- Addition of a new “interrogation scripts” section (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1664324018172997632>), with two translations included for victims Adil Tursun (<https://shahit.biz/interview.php?no=1>) and Mehem Yasin (<https://shahit.biz/interview.php?no=2>). These translations have demonstrated, via verbatim similarity, that there is a very high likelihood of the interrogation “records” being prepared in advance and only given to the detainee to sign (to then be used as formal evidence in the coming “trial”).
- Translation of a police report that details the crackdown on Urumqi’s Miraj Restaurant (<https://shahit.biz/reportcont.php?repno=3>) and the close surveillance that the relatives of one of the staff there were subjected to.
- Translation of the court decision for Wang Deqiang (<https://shahit.biz/verview.php?no=50>), a Han migrant who lived and worked in Hotan’s Bingtuan area. Because of his petitioning activities, he was detained multiple times, had his movements restricted, spent time in camp, and was ultimately sentenced to 2 years.
- Translation and addition of around 120 police notes from the Urumqi police records (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1653469880107282434>), bringing the current total to 464.
- Translation of a letter by lawyer and professor Wu Danhong, addressed to the Xinjiang High People’s Court (<https://shahit.biz/appview.php?no=5>) and providing some new details regarding Halmurat Ghopur’s detention.
- Addition of over 400 new cases to the “charges vs. actions” dictionary (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1663182900274298881>), which lists what prisoners who were charged with a specific formal crime actually did.
- Translation of a “take all who need taking” screening form for Sarsenbek Akbar (<https://shahit.biz/notview.php?no=35>), the first form of this type that we’ve seen/translated.
- Translation of the arrest notice for Peyzulla Utuq (<https://shahit.biz/notview.php?no=36>), who was allegedly shot dead following a manhunt in late March 2018.
- Translation of the detention notice for Huang Yunmin (<https://shahit.biz/notview.php?no=34>), a Han judge from Tumshuq who was sentenced to 10 years.

Facility documentation >> <https://shahit.biz/eng/#facilities>

- A general comprehensive mapping of 196 pre-trial detention centers in Xinjiang (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1661007366056460290>), with the coordinates available now and a more thorough write-up to follow.
- Recently constructed Onsu Prison discovered (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1649390883283034115>), though not formally documented yet, as we don’t know of any victims held there.
- 2 new facilities documented: the Tumshuq City Pre-Trial Detention Center (<https://shahit.biz/eng/#facilities126>), the former Fourteenth Division Pre-Trial Detention Center (<https://shahit.biz/eng/#facilities127>).

Accountability >> <https://shahit.biz/eng/#account>

- Around 5500 new individuals added to the accountability database: approximately 3700 court staff (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1645777251827601410>), 1000 procuratorate staff (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1673752272160055297>), and the majority of the rest being village/neighborhood-level Party secretaries and other officials.

Notable cases and/or significant finds

- Documentation of the execution of 6 prisoners who were taken as part of a violent incident in Konasheher County on December 15, 2013 (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1673604639701487616>). They were executed while serving their sentences in March 2017, over 3 years after the initial detention.
- Documentation of the case of Mehmet Memet'imin (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1655975057452302339>), who was arrested while at school for using a VPN. Radio Free Asia followed up with an investigation (<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/student-sentenced-06082023154805.html>), learning that he was ultimately sentenced to 13 years.
- A step-by-step summary of Abduweli Abdurahman's case (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1664288068948619264>), where Abduweli was feared to have been taken by authorities in Hong Kong only to suddenly reappear later in South Korea following an Amnesty International action for him. It is still not clear what exactly happened.
- Over 100 examples of recent name changes for children in Konasheher County (<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1667816645375688704>), showing a clear trend of changing away from more religious names, some of which were forbidden/punished in the region, starting in as early as 2017.

Known media and academic mentions

- Media mentions:

The China Project (<https://thechinaproject.com/2023/06/22/elderly-uyghurs-die-alone-in-jail-detained-on-trumped-up-charges/>, <https://chinamediaproject.org/2023/05/19/confessions-of-a-han-chinese-woman/>),

Foreign Policy (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/04/07/china-human-rights-united-states-groupthink/>),

Radio Free Asia (<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/two-detained-06302023144854.html>, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/student-sentenced-06082023154805.html>),

Radio Canada (<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1991155/pekin-chine-onu-diplomatie-influence>)

- Academic mentions/citations:

A. Zenz, "Innovating Penal Labor: Reeducation, Forced Labor, and Coercive Social Integration in the

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region”

(https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4468500),

A. Rippa, "Infrastructure Development in Xinjiang"

(<https://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-729>),

R. Steenberg and T. Seher, “Personalized Propaganda: The Politics and Economy of Young,

Pro-Government Minority Vloggers From the XUAR” (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Martin-Lavicka/publication/371782565_Voiced_and_Voiceless_in_Asia/links/649489adb9ed6874a5cf7080/Voiced-and-Voiceless-in-Asia.pdf#page=179)

G. Salimjan, “Ecotourism as Racial Capitalism” (https://brill.com/view/journals/inas/25/1/article-p91_8.xml)

Other initiatives/work

- 9 postcards sent to prisoners by a volunteer that have also been added to their entries

(<https://twitter.com/shahitbiz/status/1654503638784438272>).

IV. Future plans

One of the main goals for this past quarter was to import a large prisoners list of around 18000 people from 2015 (<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1nn-i6pWiBZvryNw2dn1SuSkaDTcB3eun/edit?usp=sharing&oid=109776214625080468628&rtpof=true&sd=true>). However, after we organized all of the government/police files we had (about 50000 in total now) and ran an algorithm to determine their priorities – based on things like numbers of individuals, mentions of detention, and amounts of sensitive ID numbers – this file ended up being deprioritized slightly, in favor of the Konasheher County file that took us the majority of the quarter (https://shahit.biz/supp/redacteddocs/fxyrelatives_redacted.xlsx). That yielded around 5000 new victims and important supplementary things like family links, and has now been finished. As a result, we are hoping to get to the big prisoners list this quarter, although there’s still a few big files in line before it. In short, the documentation of new victims will continue full speed, as always. Expect the addition of 1000s of new victims, and maybe even 10000s if things go smoothly.

Another thing that took a lot of time was the research and documentation of the approximately 200 pre-trial detention centers in Xinjiang, old and new. The fundamental work here is done, and we are now working on a report/write-up that does a general review of the pre-trial detention center as a facility type, and then provides the proof/evidence allowing to fix the locations and identities of the 200. That should be finished in this coming quarter, hopefully within the next month. (As part of this small project, we are also translating a pre-trial detention center construction standards manual.)

Accountability work should also advance very quickly, with at least 3000 officials from the township/municipality level being added. These have all been researched and identified already, so we just need to format their data and import them.

We didn't really get to adding any new platform features this past quarter, and consequently are shifting them as goals to this upcoming one, with higher priority. At least some of these should get done this time around:

- (a) a "mission map" of places/people in Xinjiang to visit for anyone who has the opportunity to go there in person,
- (b) a revamped statistics interface,
- (c) a Kazakh-language version of the site,
- (d) a customized machine-learning based Google translator to facilitate translation of Xinjiang-related texts and documents, which would call on our existing in-house dictionaries and translations (if funds permit, as training such a translator can cost up to 300USD),
- (e) a new section dedicated to authenticating government documents (harder, may not be realized so soon) and summarizing the leaked/hacked documents available so far (easier, should be doable soon).

The Boston Uyghur Association has also sent hundreds of postcards to various prisoners in Xinjiang, and we have photos of these. So, we're hoping to add them to the individual victim entries soon as well.

V. Ways to donate

We are still actively encouraging people to set up small monthly donations via our Donorbox: <https://donorbox.org/xinjiang-victims-database-work>. This is preferred as it helps us stabilize our funding and have a better idea of what is possible in the future. At the moment, over 40% of our monthly costs are covered by a total of 60+ monthly donors, and we hope that additional donors could join to help us cover the remaining 60%.

For those who would like to make a one-time gift only, we still recommend using our GoFundMe fundraiser: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/xinjiang-victims-database-work>. The fees here are slightly lower than with Donorbox, and so there's not much reason to choose the latter if you're only going to donate once. It also has a nice teamwork feel, as you can add your donation to the 2000+ that came before it.