

*The following are excerpts of Ilham Tohti's statement after he received a life sentence for allegedly "separatist" crimes:*

My outcries are for our people and, even more, for the future of China.

Before entering prison, I kept worrying I wouldn't be able to deal with the harshness inside. I worried I would betray my conscience, career, friends and family. I made it!

The upcoming life in prison is not something I've experienced, but it will nonetheless become our life and my experience. I don't know how long my life can go on. I have courage; I will not be as fragile as that. If you hear news that I mutilated or killed myself, you can be certain it is made-up.

After seeing the judgment against me, contrary to what people may think, I now think I have a more important duty to bear.

Even though I have departed, I still live in anticipation of the sun and the future. I am convinced that China will become better, and that the constitutional rights of the Uighur people will, one day, be honored.

Peace is a heavenly gift to the Uighur and Han people. Only peace and good will can create a common interest.

I wear my shackles twenty-four hours a day, and was only allowed physical exercise for three hours out of eight months. My cellmates are eight sentenced Han prisoners. These are fairly harsh conditions. However, I count myself fortunate when I look at what has happened to my students and other Uighurs accused of separatist crimes. I had my own Han lawyer whom I appointed to defend me, and my family was allowed to attend my trial. I was able to say what I wanted to say. I hope that, through my case, rule of law in Xinjiang can improve, even if it is only a baby step.

After yesterday's sentencing, I slept better than I ever did in the eight months (of my detention). I never realized I had this in me. The only thing is don't tell my old mother what happened. Tell my family to tell her that it's only a five-year sentence. Last night, in the cell next door, Parhat (student of Tohti's) slammed himself against the door and cried out loud. I heard the sound of shackles, nonstop, as they were taken to interrogations. Maybe my students have been sentenced too.

(To his wife): My love, for the sake of our children, please be strong and don't cry! In a future not too far away, we will be in each other's arms once more. Take care of yourself! Love, Ilham.

(Source: [http://wqw2010.blogspot.com/2014/09/blog-post\\_124.html](http://wqw2010.blogspot.com/2014/09/blog-post_124.html) )

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