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Second UA: 154/15 Index: ASA 39/9126/2025 Thailand of March 13, 2025

## **THAILAND FIVE UYGHURS STILL FACE FORCED RETURN**

On February 27, 2025, Thai authorities forcibly returned 40 Uyghur refugees to China. Now, five more Uyghur refugees remain at risk of being sent back, where they could face serious human rights violations. The five men fled to Thailand in 2014 to escape persecution in China. Like many other Uyghurs, they sought safety and protection in another country. However, instead of receiving refuge, they now face the threat of forced return. The Thai government has a duty to respect international law and protect refugees from being sent back to danger.

### **Write to the Prime Minister of Thailand urging him to:**

- Ensure the five Uyghur men have access to a full, effective and fair procedure to assess their asylum claims; to adequate and appropriate medical care and lawyer of their choice; and commit to not forcibly returning them to China or to a third country from where they could be returned to China;
- Investigate the refoulement of 40 Uyghur men forcibly returned to China and ensure those found responsible are held to account in fair trials;
- End arbitrary detention of refugees and migrants and amend legislation and regulations in line with international standards accordingly.

### **Write to:**

Government House  
1 Phitsanalok road  
Bangkok  
Thailand  
Fax: (+66) 2618 2358 Email: [prforeign@prd.go.th](mailto:prforeign@prd.go.th)

### **And copy:**

His Excellency Kallayana Vipattipumiprates  
Ambassador  
The Royal Thai Embassy  
180 Island Park Drive  
Ottawa, ON K1Y 0A2  
Tel: (613) 722-4444, 729-5235/739-3506/863-3506(24H) Fax: (613) 722-6624  
Email: [contact@thaiembassy.ca](mailto:contact@thaiembassy.ca)

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

In March 2014, five Uyghur men, including two 16-year-olds, fled persecution in China's Xinjiang region and traveled to Thailand. They were among more than 300 Uyghur refugees—men, women, children, and elderly people—detained by Thai authorities in mid-March during raids on suspected human

smuggling camps. Officials placed them in immigration detention under Thailand's Immigration Act, which allows indefinite detention for people without legal status.

In June 2015, Thai authorities allowed 172 women and children from the group to travel to Turkey. The following month, in violation of international law, officials forcibly returned 109 Uyghurs to China. Armed Chinese security personnel loaded them onto a chartered flight on July 9, 2015. Amnesty International condemned the deportations as "a despicable act, and illegal under international law."

The five men remained in detention for years without charge or trial. Thailand's Immigration Act does not set a maximum detention period, and they had no legal way to challenge their imprisonment. The conditions were harsh, with overcrowding, damp cells, and poor access to healthcare. Amnesty has confirmed that five Uyghurs, including a newborn baby and a three-year-old child, died while in custody.

In 2020, the five men escaped from Mukdahan Immigration Office in northeastern Thailand, citing inhumane conditions as their reason. Authorities later recaptured them and sentenced them to prison until 2029 for escaping. Following Thailand's deportation of 40 Uyghurs in late February 2025, concerns have grown that officials may grant the men an early pardon—only to send them back to China.

Before their imprisonment, Thai officials denied the men access to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and pressured them to sign documents agreeing to deportation. UN experts, governments, and human rights groups urged Thailand to uphold its obligations and stop deporting Uyghurs to China, where they face serious harm.

Despite these warnings, on February 27, 2025, Thai authorities transported 40 Uyghur men from the Suan Phlu Immigration Detention Centre to Don Mueang Airport. They were reportedly placed on a direct flight to Urumqi, China.

New regulations in Thailand, in effect since September 22, 2023, created a National Screening Mechanism (NSM) to assess asylum claims. However, these rules exclude migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam and allow authorities to deny protection on vague "national security" grounds. These loopholes put Uyghurs, Rohingya, and North Korean asylum seekers at greater risk of deportation.

Amnesty International has documented widespread human rights violations against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim groups in China's Xinjiang region. Over a million people have been arbitrarily detained in internment camps, where they face torture, forced labor, and severe restrictions on their religious and cultural rights. Amnesty has concluded that China's actions amount to crimes against humanity, including persecution, imprisonment, and torture of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Muslim minorities.

***Please take action as soon as possible until September 13, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***