



## One Year of Silence: No News Since Forced Deportation of 40 Uyghur Men from Thailand to China

February 27 marks one year since the Government of Thailand forcibly deported forty Uyghur men to the People's Republic of China, despite clear warnings that they would face arbitrary detention, torture, and enforced disappearance. One year later, none of the men have been heard from. Neither the Chinese nor Thai authorities have shown proof that these 40 men are alive, safe and well. Their whereabouts remain unknown.

These forty men, held in Thai detention for over a decade, were part of a larger group of Uyghur women, men and children detained in Thailand in March 2014. In July 2015, Thailand released 173 women and children to Türkiye and within weeks deported at least 109 people to China of whom nothing has been heard since. These men had endured over 10 years in harsh conditions in Thai detention where five of the group had died. They repeatedly publicly called to the international community to be resettled as they feared forced return, detention and mistreatment in China. In a [published letter](#) on 11 January 2025, a little more than a month

before they were deported, they pleaded; *“we could be imprisoned, and we might even lose our lives. We urgently appeal to all international organisations and countries concerned with human rights to intervene immediately to save us from this tragic fate before it is too late.”*

Family members of the deported men waiting for news share that words feel empty. They can only repeat to the world: *“Where are our sons, our fathers, brothers and cousins? We want to hear their voices.”*

To date, both China and Thailand have failed to provide credible assurances, access, or verification regarding the men’s treatment. No UN-facilitated access or independent monitoring of the men has taken place. Enforced disappearance has become a de facto outcome.

Since the men’s disappearance, two visits to Xinjiang by Thai government officials in February and May last year, revealed little more about the fate of the men returned. The visits were promoted in Chinese and Thai media, but provided no actual evidence about the returnees’ well-being. Only six of the forty men appeared in photos or video footage. The other thirty-four other men disappeared since their deportation one year ago.

On 26 May 2025, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and six other UN experts, issued an [urgent appeal](#) to China and Thailand requesting information on the group of forty Uyghurs forcibly returned. China’s [response](#) is concerning for family members waiting for news. China replied that the men returned will receive a legal education and asserts that *“the repatriated persons have made it clear that they do not wish to be disturbed by the outside world again”*.

Thailand’s actions represented a clear breach of the principle of non-refoulement, a cornerstone of international refugee protection. While there is an [announcement](#) of a visa restriction policy to address the forced return of Uyghurs from the US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, apply to certain Thai officials responsible for, or complicit in, the forced return of Uyghurs, accountability has not extended far enough to secure transparency, access, or answers about the fate of the men who were returned.

This case also has implications far beyond the forty men themselves. It has sent a dangerous signal to governments across Southeast Asia and beyond that deportations to China can be carried out with limited consequences once initial attention subsides. That signal fuels transnational repression and undermines the international system designed to protect those fleeing persecution.

Five Uyghur men amongst those first detained in 2014, remain in detention in Thailand serving prison sentences for an escape attempt. They face real risk of deportation and disappearance once their prison sentences are served later this year. These men, two of whom were children when first detained, deserve a future in safety and protection. We call upon the Thai government not to deport them to China but allow them to seek resettlement elsewhere.

On this somber anniversary, we, the undersigned organisations, call for renewed and sustained international action. We ask for strategic, coordinated diplomatic pressure, robust UN engagement, and clear demands for proof of life and independent verification of the men’s status. We call upon the governments of China and Thailand to reveal where all forty men are

now. We ask the Chinese authorities to allow independent monitoring visits to these men and enable them to contact their families outside China. Accountability must extend not only to those who carried out the deportation, but to the international failures that allowed these men to disappear from view.

Until their fate is known, and these men are allowed to communicate freely with family abroad, this case remains unresolved. The international community must not allow enforced disappearance to be normalized through inaction.

**For more information please contact:**

Julie Millsap, Government Relations Director. Wild Pigeon Collective,  
[info@wildpigeoncollective.org](mailto:info@wildpigeoncollective.org)

Puttanee Kangkun, Director. Fortify Rights, [puttanee.kangkun@fortifyrights.org](mailto:puttanee.kangkun@fortifyrights.org)