

50 Killed in China Terror Blasts

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Forty attackers, six civilians and four police died in the blasts that occurred last Sunday in a shop, a street market and two police stations in the Luntai district in northwestern Xinjiang.

But Chinese news media initially reported only two deaths and did not provide the updated figure until Thursday, as has happened on several previous occasions.

Police in Xinjiang, the homeland of China's Uighur minority, described the incident as an organized terrorist attack.

Two "rioters" were arrested by the police, and 54 civilians, including 32 Uighurs, were injured in the multiple attacks.

Police said that a man named Mamat Tursun, who was fatally shot by officers on Sunday, "urged others to join his terrorist group while working on construction projects."

Ethnic violence has been on the increase in Xinjiang, where a majority of inhabitants are of Turkic origin and at least nominally Muslim, since a series of violent clashes in 2009 left hundreds dead.

Uighurs accuse the Chinese government of repression and discrimination, while Beijing says some Uighurs have ties to terrorist organizations that are seeking independence for Xinjiang.

Amid the escalating tensions, Uighur intellectual Ilham Tohti, known as the "moderate voice" of

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his community in China, was sentenced to life in prison on Tuesday on charges of separatism.

The European Union and several Western countries joined human rights organizations in criticizing the sentence and in urging Beijing to release Tohti immediately.
