

The Uyghur Community in Syria - Report of a visit in February 2025

Inner Asia Colloquium



Presenter

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15:00 CET

04 April 2025

<https://bit.ly/4iqy7NI>

Meeting ID: 395 721 704 476

Password ID: x6p2rG9f

In 2012 shortly after the Syrian Revolution had broken out and was quickly developing into a decade-long civil war, six Uyghurs arrived in northern Syria, close to Idlib. They were received well and soon more followed. Within short time they set up a military training base for fighters of the Turkistan Islamic Party which had previously had their centre and training facilities in Afghanistan. Constantly moving from place to place to flee the war, the Uyghurs entered into local alliances with revolutionary Syrian forces to defend the area against both Bashar Al'Assad's government forces and against ISIS gathering foothold in the northeast. As their ranks filled up with both fighters and civilians and as the Syrian revolutionary forces were successful in freeing first the north and later all of Syria, the chance of building a small but free Uyghur society with its own schools, courts, economy, police and defence became a realistic goal. In February 2025, when visiting the community, now a part of the New Syria, they were running more than 20 schools with a pure Uyghur language curriculum, producing soy sauce and vinegar, growing wheat and olives.

