There is a growing awareness among German politicians and media that not only the Tibetans, but Uyghurs too are suffering from massive human rights violations. In October 2007, only two weeks after the meeting between the Dalai Lama and Chancellor Ms. Merkel, we arranged in cooperation with Uyghur World Congress meetings with the most prominent human rights experts in the German government and Federal Parliament. The Human Rights Committee of the Parliament even organized a special session to give President Rebiya Kadeer the floor to present an overview on the current human rights situation in Eastern Turkestan. All the meetings were encouraging.

The latest brutal repression in Tibet and East Turkestan has made the headlines in all German media. The awareness of Chinese disastrous human rights record has been dramatically growing in recent time. That’s certainly a positive and encouraging perspective.

On the other hand we should bear in mind that the Tibetans made the experience that public support had no direct effect on the bilateral relationship between Western governments and China. We had to be realistic: There is still no support for the independence of Tibet despite numerous public declarations of Western politicians on human rights violations in Tibet. No country might imagine to abandon the One-China-Principle. For East Turkestan the situation is even more complicated due to China’s interest in resources in East Turkestan. The fact that East Turkestan became China’s most important producer of oil and gas in 2007 has been widely noticed. Everybody is aware that China will take his hold on this resource-rich region.

We had to keep in mind that 10 millions Uyghurs are facing 1.2 billions Chinese. Regarding this imbalance the Uyghurs will never have the means to effectively impose an independence of East Turkestan against the will of China. The prospect of a massive breakdown of China seems to be not very realistic. An armed struggle of Uyghurs would perhaps make some headlines but would have disastrous consequences for the people of East Turkestan because it would be used by China as a pretext to strengthen the repression and it would severely hurt all your contacts with European politicians. Because you might be assured that no Western politician today can afford to support armed resistance in China. Such a decision would have extremely negative consequences for your political standing in the Western world. It would close all doors of western governments which reluctantly are starting to open now.

Since 40 years Society for Threatened Peoples has been lobbying for the right to self-determination of nationalities all over the world. There are many different ways to exercise this right. It must not necessarily be exercised by the call for national sovereignty and an independent nation. Recent examples of difficult new creations of states (Eritrea, East Timor, Kosova) have shown that building a new independent country is highly sensitive and complicated. And it might not always lead to more political independence that was a frustrating experience made in Kazakhstan and several other former Soviet republics.

From that experience we are calling on many nationalities, not to focus too much on the sovereignty issue but on human rights and other forms to implement the right to self-determination. Regarding the Uyghurs we would like to encourage you to address the human rights situation. Especially in the next months before the Olympic Games in Beijing such an approach would facilitate many contacts to politicians and open doors to search for a solution for the Guantanamo Uyghurs and the imprisoned sons of Rebiya Kadeer.