

# CHINA: Special Weekly FORB Newsletter (28.06-06.07.2020)

**04.07.20 – Must raise national flag and sing anthem to reopen church**

Some state-run churches were allowed to reopen in China after a 5-month lockdown. But only after proving their loyalty to the Communist Party.

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**03.07.20 – Numerous mosques ‘sinicized’ amid the pandemic**

Threatening and intimidating Muslims, the CCP implemented forced rectifications of mosques in Hui-populated areas in Henan, Hebei, and Ningxia.

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**02.07.20 – Hundreds of policemen sent to demolish Buddhist temples**

The Chinese government continues stepping up efforts to suppress religions by demolishing places of worship.

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**01.07.20 – Religious venues ordered to subscribe to CCP’s periodicals**

The government wants to ensure that all people of faith in China accept its ideological leadership. Those who disobey are punished.

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**01.07.20 – Two State-run protestant churches demolished in**

## Henan

As other venues started reopening after the coronavirus lockdown, places of worship remained closed in China. Some never opened—they were destroyed instead.

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### **01.07.20 – Protestants, catholics stifled to curb ‘foreign infiltration’**

Amid escalating tensions with Western democracies, China’s regime incites nationalist sentiment among residents, cracks down on religions as “foreign agents.”

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### **30.06.20 – Three-Self church venues demolished or repurposed**

Officials suppressed state-approved Protestant venues in Jiangxi Province using a variety of pretexts—for being “dilapidated” or “too eye-catching.”

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### **30.06.20 – 100+ Church of Almighty God members arrested**

Most of the detained have been monitored for days, and some elderly people were tortured to make them disclose information about fellow believers.

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### **29.06.20 – Uyghurs subject to mass sterilization: A new CCP crime against humanity**

A new study by Adrian Zenz proves that Muslim women in Xinjiang are massively subjected to forced abortion, sterilized, and fitted with IUDs.

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## **29.06.20 – Makers of religious statues suppressed**

The Chinese government is expanding the scope of crackdowns on religions by stifling businesses that produce religious items.

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## **29.06.20 – Poverty alleviation–Yet another tool to control Xinjiang**

In the name of fighting poverty, the CCP moves impoverished households from across China to Xinjiang, while sends Uyghurs to other provinces for forced labor

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## **28.06.20 – Islamic Symbols Removed from 300+ Hui-Run Businesses in Yunnan**

Star-and-crescent and other symbols, also writings in Arabic, are purged from shops and restaurants, as the CCP enforces its plan to “sinicize” China’s Muslims.

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# **Fled China to escape the CCP’s persecution, now seeking asylum in Europe**

*– HRWF calls upon the relevant Spanish authorities to grant asylum to Wang Dongdong and other members of The Church of Almighty God whose case is similar.*

HRWF (30.06.2020) – Wang Dongdong is from Jiaozuo City in Henan Province, China. In 2001, his family all joined The Church of Almighty God and so he has been a member since childhood. He once had a happy family, but it was torn apart by the CCP's arrests and persecution. In May 2015, he managed to escape China and reach Spain to seek asylum.

The following is Wang Dongdong's personal experiences under the CCP's persecution that he shared with *Human Rights Without Frontiers* (HRWF).

### ***Arrested at the age of 12, forced to drop out of school***

“One day during the spring of 2002, someone reported that my parents were preaching the gospel to the police. About eight police officers arrested my father and three other church members on charges of ‘illegal preaching’ and took away all of their faith-related books. My father was released one day later. After that, the police would regularly come and raid our home, intimidating and threatening us by saying that they were going to take my father away to be re-educated through labour. In order to avoid another arrest, my father had to run away from home and go into hiding.

The harassment by the police and the CCP's persecution had a long-lasting impact on my mental and emotional wellbeing. Even today, I am overwhelmingly fearful when I see police on the streets in Spain, and I panic. My entire body shakes uncontrollably.

In 2003, when I was 12 years old, I was arrested while preaching on the streets. The police informed my school and my teachers began discriminating against me. For example, I was disqualified from exams. Later, I had to drop out of school because of this.”

***Mother died due to being in hiding and unable to see a doctor***

“In November 2011, the CCP carried out a massive repression campaign in Henan Province. They frantically arrested and persecuted Christians everywhere: 29 leaders of our Church as well as many members were arrested in our area. My parents had to leave the region to escape capture.

Afterwards, the police learned that my parents were custodians of church funds. They went to our home and turned it upside-down during their search for them. My home was a total mess after that, as if it had been cleaned out by looters. Fortunately, my parents had transferred the church’s money when they had fled home. The police didn’t find the funds, so they arrested my older brother and waited at our home until the evening, hoping to capture all four members of my family.

In order to avoid being caught by the CCP, my parents hid in a cave for a long time. Due to the lack of clothing and food, they suffered from extreme cold and hunger. They lived in fear the entire time. My mother soon fell ill. My parents didn’t dare go to the hospital because they were afraid of exposing their whereabouts after showing their ID cards. Unable to receive treatment, my mother passed away.

When I heard about my mother's death, I was absolutely devastated and am heartbroken to this day. I wish I could have seen her one last time before she died but that was made impossible. It was the CCP's persecution that separated us and broke my family.

Unexpectedly, I met my father one day. When I saw him, I was shocked. He had become so thin, aged and haggard. Almost all of his hair had turned white. His eyes were swollen, and he looked defeated. I held my father tightly in my arms and we cried. The passing of my mother is an anguish that will never end for us."

### ***Arrested again in 2013***

"In 2012, I faced great difficulties in my attempts to reach Sichuan Province to spread the gospel. On the morning of 29 March 2013, I was meeting two church members at the Guangyuan City Wetland Park when, within five minutes, we were surrounded by twenty to thirty heavily armed special force officers, all of them pointing their guns at us. An older member tried to run, but several police rushed up to her and violently kicked her onto the ground. They forced us in police cars and drove us to the police station.

The police took away my two cell phones, my watch, and RMB 1,500 (approximately 212 USD) in cash. After they had searched me, they yelled at me and violently kicked me onto the floor. They kept kicking if I made even the slightest movement. Later, they took me to the interrogation room and cuffed me to

a tiger stool, without allowing me to relieve myself, and while denying me any food or water.

That evening, the Cangxi County National Security Brigade Police escorted me to the Cangxi County Detention Center.”

### ***Torture and forced labour***

“On the morning of 30 March 2013, the police cuffed me to an iron chair and interrogated me with the aim of extorting information about myself and the church. When I told them nothing, they threw burning cigarette butts on my face. For more than half a month, I was threatened and interrogated every day. They showed me many photos of church members and pressed me to identify them. They told me details about phone conversations I had with other church members. It was then that I realised that they had already been tracking us for at least half a year using video cameras, wiretapping our phones, and recording our conversations.

While I was incarcerated at the detention center, I was forced to make tin foil for up to ten hours every day. This tin is poisonous, and if you continually breathe it in, you will eventually get cancer. After working for a long period of time, every inmate there developed numerous red blotches on their skin which were insufferably itchy, and our mouths were also festering.

One time, a flu was spreading amongst the inmates, but the guards refused to give us medicine and forced us to continue

working. According to one inmate, the work of just our cell alone would net them over one million yuan in one year. We ate moldy rice and rotten vegetables boiled in water, without any salt or oil. We never had enough to eat. Apart from that, two video cameras were installed in every cell to monitor us 24 hours a day.

I was detained under these horrendous and dangerous conditions for three months and eleven days.”

### ***Fleeing China and arriving in Spain***

“On 28 May 2014, the CCP accused members of our Church of a horrifying homicide at a McDonald’s in Zhaoyuan, Shandong. This tragic incident was used by the CCP to justify a large-scale mobilisation of armed police and military troops to arrest leaders and members of our Church. Fellow followers of the Church of Almighty God were captured one by one and so I had to relocate many times. In 2017, Dr Massimo Introvigne investigated this criminal case and uncovered the CCP’s deliberate deception in an article published in [The Journal of Cesnur](#).

In 2015, as there was a high risk of being re-arrested, I somehow managed to obtain a passport. After many challenges, I finally escaped China and have now reached Europe where I am applying for asylum.”

***HRWF calls upon the relevant Spanish authorities to grant asylum to Wang Dongdong and other members of The Church of***

*Almighty God whose case is similar.*

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# **From China to Italy after being on the run for three years**

*– HRWF calls upon the relevant Italian authorities to grant asylum to members of The Church of Almighty God who have fled China because of the persecution.*

HRWF (30.06.2020) – After being persecuted and living in hiding for three years in China, Cheng Lu, a pseudonym used to protect her family who still live in China (\*), arrived in Italy and asked for the protection of the Italian government.

Cheng Lu is from Henan Province, China, and used to work as a designer at a shoe company. In 2012, she was arrested by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) because of her membership in The Church of Almighty God. Consequently, she lost her well-paid job.

In 2013, she narrowly escaped from the CCP's mass arrest campaign targeting believers of all faiths. After that, she lived on the run. In 2015, she escaped China and sought asylum in a democratic country overseas.

She shared her experiences of persecution in China during an interview with *Human Rights Without Frontiers* (HRWF).

### ***Arrest in 2012***

“It was 12 December 2012. Two church sisters and I were sharing the gospel with other people when four police officers caught us. They put us in a police car without showing any official identification. One of them shouted at me: ‘You break the law by believing in God in China. Instead, you should believe in the Communist Party. If all people become followers of God, then who will follow the Party?’

At the police station, the officers ordered us to take out all of our religious materials and personal belongings and to put them on our legs. They photographed us and then separated us for interrogation. An officer questioned me about how I got the religious material. As the three of us refused to say anything, they locked us in a very small room and deprived us of food and water.

That night, my then company manager bailed me out. When I left, an officer warned me that if I was found to be continuing to believe in God and spreading the gospel, I would be sentenced to between eight and ten years in prison. My manager became afraid for his business and gave me an impossible choice: to leave The Church of Almighty God and continue working there or to leave. I chose to quit my job.

Since I now had this arrest on my record, I was unable to find a job or rent an apartment, and I was afraid to show my ID card to others. I had no other choice than to flee to another city and live in hiding.”

### ***A narrow escape in 2013***

“In late June 2013, the CCP launched a mass arrest campaign in Zhejiang Province, which led to the arrests of over 100 members of our church, including leaders and general members. Among them was Sister Liu, who managed the church in the town I lived in. She had been secretly tracked by the police for six months. Since I had frequent contact with her, I was in grave danger. I decided to escape immediately to another province. Later I learned that five leaders and church staff were arrested there after I left.

Sometime in August 2014, the CCP ordered the police to re-arrest believers of The Church of Almighty God who had arrest records and to re-sentence them. The CCP police conducted a blanket search for church members by going from door to door under the guise of a census or checking either the water or electricity.

To escape another CCP arrest, I moved from place to place and had to constantly hide. Wherever I was, I dared not go out and only spoke in whispers, living in stifling fear every day. Once, when residential committee staff visited our place for a check, I had to hide in a small cupboard, curling myself into a ball in total darkness. I could only see a gleam of light from the crack in the cupboard door, and in that moment, I

felt miserable. It occurred to me that believers in God had nowhere to live in China where they would be free from persecution. This realisation led to a great deal of pain. I longed for freedom.

In the 14 months I spent in hiding, I did not dare to call my parents because I knew their phone was under surveillance.”

### ***Forced to flee China***

“In 2014, the CCP falsely accused members of our Church of a homicide at a McDonald’s in Zhaoyuan, Shandong. The CCP used all of the media outlets under its control to attack, defame, and slander our Church. In 2017, Dr Massimo Introvigne investigated the criminal case and uncovered the CCP’s deliberate deception in an article published in [The Journal of Cesnur](#).

Afterwards, the CCP mobilised armed police and military forces to carry out a nationwide ‘Hundred Day Battle’ with the sole purpose of arresting members and leaders of our Church. Throughout the campaign, almost 1,900 members of The Church of Almighty God were arrested and at least six of them were tortured to death. From time to time I heard news about the arrests of members and leaders that I knew or had worked with. My situation became even more dangerous and I ran out of places to hide.

In 2015, I managed to get a passport and escape China to seek asylum in a democratic country. I have filed my application

for asylum in Italy and I am waiting for a decision that will change my whole life. During my hearing in March 2018, I talked about how I joined The Church of Almighty God, my participation in the church activities, and my persecution by the CCP. The Church of Almighty God overseas confirmed my membership after rigorous review and issued a certificate.

However, in July 2018, Italy's Ministry of the Interior rejected my asylum claim. They didn't recognise my affiliation to The Church of Almighty God and my persecution in China because I managed to obtain a valid passport. This demonstrates ignorance of the loopholes within the Chinese system and the widespread corruption that allowed me to purchase this passport. I have appealed this decision."

*HRWF calls upon the relevant Italian authorities to grant asylum to members of The Church of Almighty God who have fled China because of the persecution.*

(\*) The real name of this asylum-seeker is known to HRWF.

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**Gong Dazhi: Fled religious persecution in China, now waiting for refugee status in**

# Spain

*– The case of Gong Dazhi, a member of the Church of Almighty God*

*– Human Rights Without Frontiers calls upon the Spanish authorities to grant refugee status immediately to believers of all faiths that are persecuted in China*

– HRWF (28.05.2020) – After thirteen years of harrowing persecution in China due to being a member of The Church of Almighty God, **Gong Dazhi**, 41, shared his story with HRWF. He was detained and subjected to horrific torture. In April 2019, he arrived in Spain and applied for asylum. To this day, he is waiting to hear whether he will be recognised as a political refugee or not.

## *Arrested and tortured in 2003*

“On 15 March 2003, I was arrested in Jilin Province because of my faith in The Church of Almighty God and my evangelism activities. While detained, I was tortured and then sentenced to one year of so-called ‘re-education’ through labour.

On the day of my arrest, I was reported to the police by passers-by for preaching the gospel with an elderly sister.

The police confiscated our books and took us to the Jingyue Town Police Station in Erdao District, Changchun City, Jilin Province. It is in the Changchun Municipal Public Security Bureau that my first experience of torture occurred.

The policemen put hoods over our heads, handcuffed us and took us to a secret interrogation room. They put me on a tiger bench, twisted and lifted my arms behind my back, and then placed my arms on the iron rail at the top of the tiger bench. They handcuffed my wrists in that position and tied a white nylon rope to the chain between the handcuffs. They also tied my feet to the tiger bench with another rope.

A young officer slapped me hard in the face. A middle-aged policeman yanked the nylon rope connected to my handcuffs while simultaneously stomping on the rope attached. The handcuffs pulled on my wrists so tightly that it felt like the metal was cutting through my bones.

The officers attempted to force me to identify and denounce my fellow brothers and sisters in the church. When I refused, they placed two thick white plastic bags over my head and tightened them around my neck. One officer repeatedly punched my chest while another treaded hard on the rope connected to the handcuffs at the same time.

I was being suffocated while experiencing excruciating pain. I struggled and, in the process, managed to free my feet from the rope. I twisted my feet around the chair legs, trying to tear the plastic bags with my teeth so that I could breathe. Despite my best attempts, I failed to create a hole and

subsequently passed out.

The police revived me by pouring cold water on me. When I came to, gasping for breath, they interrogated me about the church. Again, I refused to tell them anything, and so they put the plastic bags back over my head and trod harder on the rope tied to my handcuffs. I fainted again from a lack of oxygen. They repeatedly tortured me in this way until they were exhausted.”

### ***Tortured and sentenced***

“The next evening, the police took me to Daguang Detention Center of Changchun Municipal Public Security Bureau. After seven days of detention and torture I was charged with ‘disturbing the social order’ and sentenced to one year of so-called ‘re-education’ through labour. I was sent to the Chaoyanggou Labour Camp in Changchun City to serve my sentence.”

### ***Tortured again and subjected to inhumane labour***

“At the camp, the guards often instigated other prisoners into torturing me. I was forced to carry out intense physical labour every day that year without pay. I was woken up at 5 am every day and had to work until midnight. If I couldn’t finish the compulsory tasks within the stipulated time, I would be subjected to severe beatings.

Additionally, the prison guards and inmate boss often forced me to handwash clothes and sheets for them, even when the temperature of the winter in Jilin Province was colder than minus 20 degrees Celsius. The water was icy and it took two or three hours to do the washing, which created great pain in the joints of my fingers.

If I stood in the wrong line at the cafeteria, the inmate boss would punish me by forcing me to bend down until my head touched the iron pipe at the corner and lift my hands as high as I could from my back. I would have to stay in this position for a prolonged period of time. They would also hit my mouth hard with a 30 cm long bamboo plate. I lived in constant fear.

After my release in 2004, I had to go into hiding, moving from place to place, because the police were searching for me.”

### ***Forced to flee China***

After living in hiding and nonstop fear for many years, Gong Dazhi fled China “to freely practice my faith”, as he said to HRWF. He arrived in Spain in April 2019. He now has an interim residence permit and is waiting for a final decision on his asylum application. He says: “I’m often afraid that I may be sent back to China where I have suffered so much persecution by the Chinese Community Party (CCP) government. I do not want to experience that ever again.”

### ***HRWF Comment***

Since Xi Jinping came into power in 2012, the Chinese Government has dramatically escalated the persecution of Christians and other religions.

HRWF's Database of Prisoners in China is regularly updated. At the time of writing, it has documented over 4,000 cases where members of The Church of Almighty God are imprisoned. This figure is estimated to be only the tip of the iceberg.

See HRWF's Prisoners' Database here: <https://hrwf.eu/hrwf-prisoners-database-china/>

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## **From China to Spain to flee discriminatory arrests and torture**

*– The case of Zhang Wenbo, a member of the Church of Almighty God*

*– Human Rights Without Frontiers calls upon the Spanish authorities to grant refugee status to believers of all faiths that are persecuted in China.*

– HRWF (27.05.2020) – In December 2019, **Zhang Wenbo**, 50, landed in Spain after escaping the “Chinese Communist paradise” where he had spent nearly his entire life. He hopes to start a new life in this safe haven, where he is free to practice his religion without fear. About 600 asylum seekers from China who fled harsh religious persecution are still waiting for Madrid to recognise them as refugees. Spain has not threatened to deport any of them, but it has not granted them political asylum either.

Zhang Wenbo was born in a Christian family in Henan province, one of the cradles of Chinese civilization. As an adult he converted to The Church of Almighty God, and he has now been a member of it for 22 years. He was arrested twice by the Chinese police in 2003 and 2012 due to his missionary activities inside the country. Both times, he was subjected to inhumane torture and nearly killed.

He shared his experience of religious persecution in China with *Human Rights Without Frontiers* (HRWF):

### ***Arrested and tortured in 2003***

“I was arrested for the first time because of my faith in 2003. Over a dozen police officers surrounded the place where four of us were worshipping. We were apprehended and tortured to reveal the names of our church leaders. I was forced into painful positions for prolonged periods of time, such as half squatting. Additionally, they shone a 1000-watt spotlight into my eyes which caused severe pain in my head, but they would beat me if I closed my eyes.

After this incident, the police visited my furniture shop frequently. They would ask me whether I continued believing in God. Sometimes they would take me to the police station and try to force me to revoke my faith. To evade potential arrest and further persecution from the Communist Party of China (CCP), I had no choice but to go into hiding.”

### ***Arrested again and tortured in 2012***

“On 17 December 2012, the director of Tongren City Public Security Bureau and over a dozen officers discovered our hiding place. They confiscated more than 10 cellphones, 6,000 RMB (about 850 USD) in cash and a deposit book. They then took me to the Bijiang District Police Station of Tongren City, where they interrogated me about our church leaders. As I refused to cooperate, they slapped me in the face, punched me and kicked me. I was assaulted to the point that I felt dizzy and pain all over.

Over the course of 16 days, I was subjected to torture as the officers tried to force me to talk. I was taken to the basement of the police station for the so-called ‘swing treatment’. While handcuffed, I was hung on a door frame so that my feet were no longer touching the ground. They tied my feet to a rope and then, for an hour and a half, they swung my legs back and forth. This caused excruciating pain in my wrists and blackened my hands.

Since I still refused to betray our church leaders, they then laid me on the ground and hit my back, waist and shoulders

with a 70 cm long steel tube, fracturing my ribs. I was then forced to kneel, and this steel tube was rolled over my calves. This was so painful that I thought it was crushing my knees and ankles.

Then, one of my handcuffed wrists was hung high above my head on the wall, so that only one of my feet could touch the ground, whilst the other hand was tied around my back. This meant I was hanging from one arm and barely standing on one leg, and so I could neither stand or squat down.

On 3 January 2013, I was transferred to Bijiang District Detention Center in Tongren City. I was detained there for an additional 23 days.

During my detention, I was fed minimally. Other inmates often abused me and beat me up due to instigation from the guards. Also, at one point, the authorities forced me into a wooden chair and stabbed my genitals with a long iron awl.

On 26 January 2013, my family and friends from the church used their connections to obtain my release on bail. My freedom was bought with 16,000 RMB (about 2,290 USD), although the standard fee was registered as only 3,000 RMB (about 430 USD).

To this day I have not recovered from this torture. It traumatized me and created long-term physical damage to the extent that now I am unable to do any physical labor.”

## ***Under constant threat of a new arrest: no choice but to flee***

“After my release in 2013, I was under strict surveillance by the police. I had to report to them every month and they threatened and interrogated me on a regular basis.

Between 2013 and 2018, I was always on the run, moving from place to place and living in constant fear and pain. While preaching in Sanmenxia City of Henan Province in 2013, I was reported to the police and narrowly escaped arrest. In 2016, I was questioned by the police in Yiyang City. Ultimately, I realized that I had no alternative but to leave China if I wanted to live according to my faith.

In December 2019, I managed, with great difficulty, to obtain a passport and flee to Spain. I submitted my asylum application and received an interim residence permit. In February 2020, my case was heard by the refugee board. Now I’m awaiting the decision from the Spanish government.”

*HRWF Comment: During his interview with HRWF, he disclosed many more details about additional sexual torture that he was subjected to.*

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**CHINA: Xi Jinping to**

# teachers: Nourish the faith in the Chinese Communist Party

– In his “important speech”, the president asked educators to instill patriotism in young people and reject “misconceptions and ideologies”. Since 2012, a struggle against the spread of “Western values” and the ban on religious education for young people is underway in schools and universities.

AsiaNews (21.03.2019) – “Nourishing” faith in the Chinese Communist Party and rejecting “misconceptions and ideologies”: this is the program that Chinese president Xi Jinping proposed to a group of teachers gathered yesterday in the capital for a seminar on “ideological theory” and politics “.

According to Xinhua, Xi gave an “important speech”. In it, the party leader, who is also general secretary and head of the military commission, said that starting with toddlers China must “nurture generation after generation [of young people] who support Chinese Communist Party rule and China’s socialist system”.

“Most importantly,” he added “we must emphasise [taking the correct stance] on politics such that people who have faith [in the party] can preach what they believe in.”

He also asked all educators to instill patriotism in young people and reject “misconceptions and ideologies”.

Since Xi took power in 2012, the Party has launched [a battle against the spread of “Western values”](#) in schools and universities, banning books that promote “Western ideas” such

as democracy and the rule of law.

At the same time, those who spread “religious” ideas among students are prosecuted. In the name of “patriotism” students are required to reject religions, especially those that come “from the West”, that is Christianity, making students swear to fight them.

The new regulations on religious activities prohibit young people under 18 from going to church or receiving a religious education.