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CHINA: Religious persecution and issues, bimonthly digest Jan 01-15

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General

06.01.2023 – Prison art from China's Ming Dynasty reflects a restriction of religious freedom

Ying Zhang, associate professor of history at Ohio State

University, is exploring the connections among prison, art and religious freedom in a unique and meaningful way.

Zhang's Nov. 1 lecture at The American Academy in Berlin accompanies her book "Confucians and Confinement: Imprisoned Officials in Ming China (1368-1644)." It's the first book-length study of prison culture in premodern China, and it offers new insight on how religion adapts, how art helps express spirituality and the effects of imprisonment on the modern idea of religious freedom.

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03.01.2023 – USCIRF charges China's authorized religious bodies as communist party accomplices

According to sociologist Fenggang Yang's famous distinction, China's religion is organized according to three "markets." The "red market" includes the five authorized religions: five government-controlled bodies that constitute the only legal religious organizations in China. They are the Three-Self Church for Protestants, the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association for Catholics, the China Daoist Association for Daoists, the China Islamic Association for Muslims, and the China Buddhist Association for Buddhists.

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Buddhists

05.01.2023 – China will interfere with Dalai Lama succession: Tibet's President-in-exile

China is expected to interfere in the succession of the Dalai Lama, and anticipating that eventuality, the Tibetan government-in-exile has worked out a plan for a democratic

transition of the leadership role by the spiritual .

In an interview to PTI, President of the Tibetan government-in-exile Penpa Tsering pointed out that a replay of the 1995 appointment of a rival Panchen Lama by the Communist government of China while a boy chosen by the Dalai Lama as the incarnate of the Lama was whisked away from the public eye, can be expected.

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Catholics

06.01.2023 – Benedict XVI's "Non-negotiable principles" for a dialogue with China

When the Holy See and China were getting ready to sign the Vatican-China deal of 2018, later renewed twice in 2020 and 2022, Cardinal Joseph Zen, bishop emeritus of Hong Kong, published on his blog a very harsh attack against Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin. He accused him of manipulating Benedict XVI's "Letter to the Bishops, priests, consecrated men and women, and lay faithful of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China" of May 27, 2007, and even falsifying its text.

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Protestants

14.01.2023 – Armed Police demolish Nangang church overnight

On the evening of January 11, the Ruian County government of Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province forcibly demolished the Nangang Church, located in Nangang Village, Feiyun Street, to build commercial buildings. The church covered an area of 888

acres. A church worth tens of millions of RMB was ordered to be demolished at night without an agreed compensation plan.

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11.01.2023 – Qingcaodi Church: Wives raise concerns for imprisoned husbands

Cui Yanqin and Yang Yufeng, the wives of elders **Wu Jiannan** and **Hao Ming** respectively, posted on social media concerning their husbands. Wu Jiannan and Hao Ming served as elders of Qingcaodi Church in Deyang.

In her open letter, Cui Yanqin explained that she is a stay home mom taking care of two kids. Around 2017, Cui Yanqin joined Wu Jiannan to move hundreds of miles from Anhui province to Deyang city. Before, she was a teacher in the countryside. Even though Deyang was a small city, they liked it and found the locals to be kind. Cui Yanqin wrote that she and Wu cooperated with all kinds of projects in the neighborhood, which can be verified by the Hualian Neighborhood.

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09.01.2023 – Detained leaders of Church of Abundance accused of “Violating National Security”

The spouses’ appeal of January 3.

Yet another appeal has been circulated on January 3, 2023, by the spouses of the detained leaders of the Church of Abundance (Fengsheng) of Xi’an city, Shaanxi province.

The wives of Pastor **Lian Changnian** and **Brother Lian Xuliang**, and the husband of **Sister Fu Juan** report that their spouses

are still detained in government-designated residences and are now accused of “endangering national security” in addition to “religious fraud”.

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06.01.2023 – Christian persecution highlighted in open letter to Chinese mayor

Tan Xiuhong, a Christian attorney, wrote an open letter to Li Yunfeng, the mayor of Linfen City, Shanxi province. Tan addressed the massive arrests of Christians in Linfen over the past couple of years and called on local authorities to stop Christian persecution.

On December 31, 2022, Tan Xiuhong wrote to Mayor Li, admitting Li must experience a lot of difficulties and hard times while governing Linfen, a city of four million, during COVID. However, before the new year, Tan candidly expressed “Authorities of Linfen City should stop persecuting Christian churches and immediately release detained Christians.” The culture-rich city became notorious in China for its massive arrests of Christians. She gave examples of incidents related to Christianity that happened in Linfen in the past two years:

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03.01.2023 – ‘There is no deceit’: Mother of Li Jie defends son amidst fraud charges.

Police arrested Preacher **Li Jie** of Linfen Covenant House Church on suspicion of “fraud.” Li Jie’s 65-year-old mother Zhang Ruxin posted on the Chinese social media app Weibo airing grievances for her son and calling for international media attention.

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02.01.2023 – Chen Ziliang passes in detention center.

Chen Ziliang, a member of the China Democracy Party's Zhejiang Preparatory Committee, passed away on December 24, 2022, while in custody at the Jinyun County Detention Center in Lishui, Zhejiang province.

THE NOTICE FROM POLICE

The Jinyun County Public Security Bureau informed the family that "on the morning of December 24, Chen Ziliang was found to be in critical condition at the detention center. The detention center sent Chen Ziliang to The First People's Hospital of Jinyun County. In the afternoon of the same day, Chen Ziliang passed away after the failure to rescue."

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Falun Gong

14.01.2023 – Shandong woman secretly sentenced for her faith, elderly parents deprived of care.

A police officer was held in a brainwashing center for three months. After he was released, he was forced to retire early and placed under strict surveillance, all because of his faith in Falun Gong.

Mr. Yan Ji, an Anlu City, Hubei Province, resident in his 50s, was arrested at work on May 24, 2022. Agents from the 610 Office and Domestic Security Office first said that they needed to talk to him. But before he could respond, they pushed him outside and into the police car.

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08.01.2023 – Reported in 2022: 633 Falun Gong practitioners sentenced for their faith

A total of 633 cases of Falun Gong practitioners being sentenced for their faith were recorded in 2022. The newly confirmed cases included 21 (4%) that took place between 2013 and 2020, 166 (26%) cases in 2021 and 446 (70%) cases in 2022.

Due to strict information censorship in China, such cases can't always be reported in a timely manner, nor is all the information readily available.

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07.01.2023 – Former College professor given third prison sentence for talking to people about her faith

Since 2008, a former college professor has been sentenced three times for her faith in Falun Gong, with each arrest taking place only a few months after she finished the previous prison term.

Ms. **Wang Jiafang**, a 58-year-old Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province resident, was most recently arrested on September 10, 2021 while talking to people about Falun Gong outside of a mall. She was held at the Baiyun District Detention Center and had her arrest approved by the Baiyun District Procuratorate on September 25.

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