

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

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CHINA: 18 Jehovah's Witnesses sentenced to years in jail in Xinjiang

– The 18 Jehovah's Witnesses arrested in Xinjiang have now been sentenced to long jail terms. Lawyers complain of the inhumane conditions of their detention.

– HRWF: This is the first time that Jehovah's Witnesses have been sentenced to prison terms in China

– by Chang Xin

– Bitter Winter (17.08.2020) – <https://bit.ly/317k5eJ> – *Bitter Winter* has learned that, on June 13, the People’s Court of Korla city in Xinjiang, has sentenced 18 Jehovah’s Witnesses to imprisonment, ranging from two years and six months to six years and six months, on the charge of “organizing and using a *xie jiao* organization to undermine law enforcement.” As *Bitter Winter* previously reported, this was the first time that Article 300 of the Chinese Criminal Code was applied for a crackdown against the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Their religion is not part of the official list of the *xie jiao* (“heterodox teachings,” or movements banned in China), yet law provisions against the *xie jiao* are now applied against them.

According to the verdict, three of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Liu Weiguo, Lin Zaiwu, and Li Yifang, were sentenced to six years and six months and fined 30,000 RMB (about \$ 4,200). Another three, Lin Hao, Jiang Xijun, and Wang Xiaoqing were sentenced to six years and fined 30,000 RMB (about \$ 4,200). Ten, whose names are Gao Qiaolian, Yu Bingru, Zhang Min, Jiang Jinling, Chen Meiling, Wei Pengfei, Huang Lili, Ma Xiaojun, Yang Hua, and Xu Yanli, were sentenced to three years and fined 15,000 RMB (about \$ 2,100). The remaining two were sentenced to two years and six months, and two years and eight months respectively, and each fined 15,000 RMB (about \$ 2,100).

18 Jehovah’s Witnesses were arrested by the Xinjiang police for evangelism in 2018 one after another, and held in the Korla Detention House in Xinjiang. As *Bitter Winter* and *China Aid* reported last year, on April 15, 2019, the People’s Procuratorate of Korla city indicted the 18 Jehovah’s Witnesses members “on the suspicion of organizing and using a *xie jiao* organization to undermine law enforcement.”

According to a report by the Weiquanwang (the Rights Protection Network Information Center, which operates a blog that posts information on human rights abuses in China), on February 14, during detention, most of the 18 members were subjected to physical punishment and mistreatment, such as “conjoined handcuffs” and “hug handcuffs” (where the handcuffs are linked to the shackles with a short chain, attached with a 5-kg block). According to the blog, as a result of the unbearable conditions, Jiang Xijun knocked his head against a wall trying to kill himself, but failed.

Several defense lawyers wrote a joint letter to the People’s Procuratorate of Korla city, complaining that “conjoined handcuffs” and “hug handcuffs” “were kept locked for 24 hours a day, including the time for going to toilet, eating, washing and brushing. Those who are handcuffed can only walk with their waists bent, and sometimes they have to crawl on all fours like a dog (as remarked by Xu Yanli).”

The defense lawyers stated in the letter of complaint that, “The detention house has no right to force detainees to sing any kind of songs,” yet that is what happened. The teachings of the Jehovah’s Witnesses mandate political neutrality, so their members do not join political parties or sing national anthems. It is also said in the lawyers’ letter of complaint that, “Singing red songs has nothing to do with the love for the country. So far, there is not an authoritative definition of the ‘love for the country,’” and “those who sing red song do not necessarily love the country, while those who do not sing do not necessarily lack the love for the country.”

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Notice: Undefined index: **et_footer_layout** in **/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1268**

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