

CHINA: Church in Henan demolished before it could be used

In September, Lushan county authorities dispatched over 50 police officers to tear down the church that cost nearly one million RMB to build.

By Jiang Tao

Bitter Winter (15.11.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2KjrI7B> – On the morning of September 8, Zhao Guangming (pseudonym), preacher at a newly built church in Pingdingshan city in the central province of Henan, found himself in a problematic situation as police officers charged into the premises.

Their contingent included over 50 police officers, two excavators, two ambulances, and over a dozen other vehicles. They were there to demolish the church on the local government's order, as the church was an "illegal construction."

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Mr. Zhao reasoned with the officials but to no avail. Instead, when he tried to record the demolition, his cellphone was snatched and its contents deleted. He was accused of obstructing law enforcement and the officials ordered for him

to be arrested. At this, his wife, Zhang Guizhi (pseudonym), stepped forward to prevent the arrest but she was violently pushed aside.

The couple stood outside the church as the authorities carried out the demolition. At one point, Ms. Zhang tried to enter through the gaps in the church's gate. But then, she was not only stopped but also beaten up viciously. It was only when Mr. Zhao pleaded with village cadres to intervene did the police officers end assaulting his wife.

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Ms. Zhang had to be taken to the hospital. The onlookers saw all this and felt indignant but couldn't say anything out of fear.

As per reports, believers had pooled in nearly one million RMB or over 140,000 USD of their money to build the church. During the construction, they had even deposited the 14,000 RMB (about 2,000 USD) permit fee as well as 4,000 RMB (nearly 600 USD) to relevant government departments, but their permit had still not been approved.

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