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CHINA: Religious persecution and issues – Bimonthly digest March 01-15

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Uyghurs

15.03.2023 – Uyghur Christian released after 15-year sentence

ChinaAid confirmed that Uyghur Christian **Alimujiang Yimiti** was released from prison after his 15-year sentence. While other details are unconfirmed, the Uyghur house church pastor is home with his family.

Alimujiang Yimiti, also known as Alim, converted from Islam to Christianity in 1995 and served as a house church pastor to Uyghurs in Kashgar, Xinjiang. His work in Xinjiang painted a target on his back, as the Chinese government began to scrutinize Uyghurs in the area. In 2007, authorities initially accused Alim of using his business to “infiltrate” Christian ideology into Kashgar.

Alim was criminally detained on Jan. 12, 2008, for “inciting separatism” and “unlawfully providing state secrets to overseas organizations” due to a conversation he had with an American colleague, possibly about his interaction with authorities in 2007.

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Buddhists

15.03.2023 – The “Buddhist and Taoist clergy database,” another CCP imposture

With great fanfare, the China Buddhist Association and China Taoist Association have launched in Beijing’s Guangji Temple, at the end of last month, the Buddhist and Taoist Clerical Personnel Information Query System.

Those attending the press conference saw the slogan, “Fake monks and priests now have nowhere to hide!” displayed prominently. The speakers insisted that both Chinese and tourists have been defrauded by fake monks and Taoist priests asking for alms. Indeed, that these incidents have occurred is

not false, although tourists in popular temples have been more easily fooled than Chinese believers. Also, temples where tourists are taken are managed by the China Buddhist Association and the China Taoist Association, which are supposed to keep their own houses in order.

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Protestants

08.03.2023 – Another difficult Sunday for Chengdu's Early Rain Church

Bitter Winter has reported how the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, theoretically liquidated in 2018 before his pastor Wang Yi was sentenced to nine years in jail in 2019, continues to gather "illegally" by changing locations every Sunday, in a cat and mouse game with the police.

The game continued on May 5, according to a report shared by the house church members with Bitter Winter and other human rights media. Some twelve church members were blocked at home since Friday; one sister had the tires of her car punctured; another had to deal with the fact that water and electricity supplies to her home had been cut off, a frequent harassment strategy against church members. Four believers were taken to the police station on Sunday.

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06.03.2023 – 'Smart religion' app: christians must submit online form to attend church.

Christians in Henan province, China, must complete an online form and receive approval to attend church services. Officials refer to applications for church gatherings as a form of

governance for “Smart Religion,” but no legal basis has been provided for such a measure.

Henan has one of the largest Christian populations in China. According to the “Smart Religion” requirements formulated by Henan’s provincial religious department, if religious believers want to participate in religious activities, they must make online reservations before they can attend services in churches, mosques, or Buddhist temples.

Local believers must register and make an appointment through an application called “Smart Religion,” developed by the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Henan Province.

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03.03.2023 – Early Rain Church: Family blocked at home and forbidden to attend “illegal” Sunday service

Readers of Bitter Winter and friends of religious liberty are familiar with the saga of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, whose **Pastor Wang Yi** (not a relative of the chief of Chinese Foreign Affairs with the same name) was sentenced to nine years in jail in 2019.

Officially, Early Rain has been shut down in 2018 but unofficially members have continued to play a cat and mouse game with the authorities and meet for Sunday services outdoor or in private homes.

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03.03.2023 – Exiled church supported by Texas churches

More than 60 members of the exiled Mayflower Church received

tremendous support from churches in Texas. The members of the Christian house church from Shenzhen have been adopted by the East Texas churches, but 10 more families still need resettlement sponsors.

Deana Brown, founder and CEO of Freedom Seekers International (FSI), partnered with Bob Fu and ChinaAid to resettle these Christians who fear repatriation back to China.

The “Mayflower Church” was established in 2012 as Shenzhen Holy Reformed. Due to Pastor Pan Yongguang’s ordination in the United States, police interrogated him about his connection to overseas groups.

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Falun Gong

14.03.2023 – Former chef survives ten years of torture in Liaoning Prison

After enduring ten years of torture in Shenyang City First Prison in Liaoning Province for practicing Falun Dafa, Mr. Guo Yanda, in his 60s, said that it was a miracle that he walked out of the prison alive.

Mr. Guo, a former chef in Yingkou City, Liaoning Province, was arrested at home by officers from Dongqiao Police Station on April 18, 2012. His computer and car were confiscated.

Mr. Guo appeared in Zhanqian District Court on February 1, 2013. His lawyer entered a not-guilty plea for him, yet the judge still sentenced him to ten years. He appealed with the Yingkou City Intermediate Court, which ruled to uphold his original verdict.

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10.03.2023 – Falun Gong’s report on persecution in 2022: 172 killed, 633 sentenced

Just as The Church of Almighty God does, Falun Gong also publishes an annual report on the persecution it is subject to in China. The 2023 report, covering the year 2022, has now been released.

It claims that 172 Falun Gong practitioners died in 2022 as a result of the persecution, bringing the total to 4,984 (or more, as the Falun Gong organization abroad believes the data it collects from China are incomplete) since the crackdown started in 1999.

Those who died in 2022 include “one 88-year-old woman in Heilongjiang [who] died hours after she was arrested. A 70-year-old man died the day after his arrest. Two practitioners, including an 83-year-old man and a 64-year-old woman, died shortly after being given toxic drugs while in custody...

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08.03.2023 – Chongqing man dies in custody, four months after being arrested for practicing Falun Gong

A 74-year-old man died four months after he was arrested for his faith in Falun Gong, a spiritual discipline that has been persecuted by the Chinese communist regime since 1999.

Mr. Lai Yuanchang, of Chongqing, was reported in 2020 for distributing informational materials about Falun Gong. Although he escaped from being arrested, he was forced to live away from home to hide from the police. Unable to find Mr. Lai, the police frequently harassed his daughter.

On September 7, 2022, one month before the Chinese Communist

Party's 20th Congress, a group of officers from the Degan Town Police Station descended at the home of Mr. Lai's daughter. They smashed the door, broke in, and arrested Mr. Lai.

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06.03.2023 – Beaten and deceived by the police, Jilin Woman faces trial for her faith in Falun Gong

A Jilin City, Jilin Province resident was beaten and interrogated after being arrested for her faith in Falun Gong. The police also deceived her into going to the Procuratorate to sign her case documents. She is now facing trial after the prosecutor indicted her and moved her case to the court.

Ms. Wang Chunling, 45, was arrested on January 3, 2022, after being reported for distributing informational materials about Falun Gong. When she refused to get into the police car, an officer kicked her and forced her into the vehicle.

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