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# **CHINA: Religious persecution and issues – Bimonthly digest September 01-15**

## **Religious persecution and issues – Bimonthly digest September 01-15**

### **General**

**11.09.2023 – With a little help from my friends: Russian anti-cultist supports China atrocities**

Bitter Winter – “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds

of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible.” As an Orthodox priest, Russian anti-cultist Alexander Novopashin, part of the European anti-cult federation FECRIS until March 2023, should be familiar with these words of the fifth chapter of Apostle Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians.

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### **31.08.2023 – China issues new requirements for religious groups**

voanews – New measures handed down by the Chinese Communist Party that it says will strengthen the regulation and management of religious venues appear to be further restrictions on religious freedom and go into effect Friday.

The Administrative Measures for Religious Activity Venues requires religious venues to “support the leadership of the CCP, support the socialist system, and thoroughly implement Xi Jinping’s new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

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## **Buddhists**

### **31.08.2023 – Buddhists a majority in China as Christianity’s growth struggles**

Religiousunplugged.com – The growth of Christianity in China has stagnated over the past decade, while one-third of the country’s adult population identifies as Buddhist, according

to a new report.

A Pew Research Center report issued Wednesday found that only 10% of Chinese adults identified with any religious group – but the number rose significantly when survey questions focused on spirituality, customs and superstitions.

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### **The Church of Almighty God**

**07.09.2023 – Post-COVID purge: Over 2,100 Church of Almighty God Members arrested in two provinces**

Bitter Winter – In Anhui and Jiangsu, as soon as COVID quarantines ceased, the banned church's devotees started being persecuted again. Two died. After the COVID pandemic quarantine was fully lifted, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched a nationwide purge against The Church of Almighty God (CAG). According to incomplete figures collected by the CAG and shared with a "Bitter Winter" reporter, from January to July 2023, at least 2,100 church members were arrested in Jiangsu and Anhui provinces alone, and two of them were persecuted to the point of death.

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### **Catholics**

**13.09.2023 – Bishop convicted for not joining Chinese catholic patriotic association**

ChinaAid – Catholic Bishop Yang Xiaoming from the Wenzhou Diocese in Zhejiang, China, was convicted of "fraud" because he refused to join the official Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. It is uncommon for Catholic clergy to be punished

under the charge of “impersonating religious personnel.”

Sources in China told AsiaNews, Fr. Yang Xiaoming (baptismal name Joseph), was brought to court, convicted, and subjected to administrative penalties because of his refusal to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

This is a matter of conscience. The acts of the government constitute the coercion of citizens’ faith, infringing on human rights.

According to AsiaNews, Fr. Joseph Yang Xiaoming was born on November 22, 1989, in Longwan District, Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province. On December 18, 2020, Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin ordained him as a priest. Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin, who is recognized by the Vatican, was arrested multiple times and subjected to surveillance because of his refusal to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

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## **02.09.2023 – Taiwan hopes Pope’s China engagement helps ‘worsening’ religious freedom**

Reuters – Taiwan supports the Vatican’s efforts at engagement with China and hopes it improves that country’s “worsening” religious freedom and human rights, the island’s foreign ministry said after Pope Francis messaged Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The Vatican is one of only 13 countries to maintain formal diplomatic ties with Chinese-claimed Taiwan, and Taipei has watched nervously as Francis seeks to improve ties with Beijing.

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## **01.09.2023 – China bars Chinese bishops from traveling to see pope in Mongolia**

Religionnews – Chinese authorities have prohibited Catholic bishops in China from traveling to Mongolia to meet with Pope Francis during his papal visit to the tiny Catholic community in this country on China's northern border.

The decision by the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party, first reported by America, the Jesuit magazine, is the latest sign of tension in the already strained relations between China and the Holy See.

Flying to Mongolia Thursday (Aug. 31) for his four-day visit, Francis issued a telegram while in Chinese airspace to the country's president, Xi Jinping: "Assuring you of my prayers for the wellbeing of the nation, I invoke upon all of you the divine blessings of unity and peace," the pope wrote.

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## **Falun Gong**

### **12.09.2023 – 87-year-old woman sentenced a third time for her faith, ordered to re-serve the last 3 years of her second prison term**

Minghui – Ms. **Liao An'an**, 87, in Baiyin City, Gansu Province was sentenced to three years and nine months on September 5, 2023 for her faith in Falun Gong.

This is not the first time that Ms. Liao An'an has been targeted for her faith. She was sentenced to five years following her arrest on August 18, 2008 and given another five years following her arrest on September 19, 2014. Due to health reasons, she was allowed to serve the last three years of her second prison term outside of prison.

The Baiyin District Court, however, added the three years from Ms. Liao's second prison term to her latest one, ordering her to serve a total of six years and nine months. She filed an appeal against the wrongful conviction.

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### **10.09.2023 – Two Jilin residents sentenced to prison for practicing Falun Gong**

Minghui – **Ms. Pan Hongming** and **Mr. Yue Chunguang**, both of Tonghua City, Jilin Province, were secretly sentenced to prison between June and July 2023 for practicing Falun Gong.

The sentencing stemmed from a study session hosted by Mr. Yue at his home on August 11, 2022. That night he and Ms. Pan, Ms. He Qihong, and Xu (gender and first name unknown) were reading Falun Gong books together, when a woman knocked on the door, claiming to be Mr. Yue's upstairs neighbor. She said that he was making too much noise and demanded to be allowed inside to see what was going on. Mr. Yue refused to let her in. The woman then claimed that she was from the residential committee and told him to open the door. When Mr. Yue again would not let her in, she finally said that she was a police officer and threatened him.

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### **05.09.2023 – Shoulder disabled by torture in Labor Camp, former engineer Mr. Huang Zhufeng sentenced again for practicing Falun Gong**

Minghui – **Mr. Huang Zhufeng**, a Maoming City, Guangdong Province resident was sentenced to two years and ten months, and fined 10,000 yuan, on August 16, 2023 for practicing Falun Gong, a spiritual discipline that has been persecuted by the

Chinese communist regime since 1999.

Prior to Mr. Huang Zhufeng's latest sentencing, the 53-year-old former award-winning electronic automation engineer served two labor camp terms, including a one-year term given in February 2000 and another two-year term given on September 4, 2001. While he was held in the Sanshui Forced Labor Camp, a guard ordered two prisoners to pull his arms apart as hard as they could on January 2, 2003. Both of his shoulders were dislocated and his arms were disabled. He was unable to continue working in his profession after being released and had to do odd jobs to make a living.

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## **Muslims**

**07.09.2023 – Betrayal of China's Muslims undermines the organization of Islamic cooperation's credibility**

The Diplomat – Once again, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has shown its unconditional support to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), despite the CCP's massive persecution of Muslim people in Xinjiang – chiefly Uyghurs but also other Turkic minorities.

On August 17, China's Vice Foreign Minister Deng Li met with an OIC delegation, saying the organization "symbolizes the unity and independence of Islamic countries and functions as the bridge for China to develop its relations with Islamic countries." In turn, the OIC delegation praised China as "a great country that has scored remarkable achievements in its economic and social development" and noted the expectation that the OIC would "further expand its cooperation with China."

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## Protestants

### **14.09.2023 – Heavily persecuted Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church officially banned**

ChinaAid – The Chinese government continues to ban Chinese house churches under the pretext of banning illegal social organizations. The Panyu Civil Affairs Bureau of Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province in southern China banned Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church on August 24th.

This house church was not registered with the Chinese government. The notice from the Civil Affairs Bureau determined that Guangzhou Biblical Reformed operated as “an illegal social organization.”

The announcement states: “Upon investigation, ‘Guangzhou Biblical Reformed Church’ is without registration, and has carried out unauthorized activities in the name of a social organization[... the church] falls under the category of an illegal social organization. After looking into it, it has now been decided to ban it.”

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### **08.09.2023 – Three-Self bureaucrats enforce new rules on religion in Anhui, Shaanxi, and Guangxi**

Bitter Winter – The attempt to strictly and immediately enforce throughout China the new “Administrative Measures for Religious Activity Venues,” which came into force on September 1, continues.

From August 15 to 23, Pastor Gao Feng, chair of the Board of Supervisors of the National Two Christian Associations, i.e., the Three-Self Church and China Christian Council (which



supervises education and organization of Three-Self-affiliated Protestant churches), led a team to inspect Christian communities in Anhui, Shaanxi, and Guangxi.

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