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CHINA: Religious persecutions and issues. Bimonthly news digest

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General

19.12.2022 – Technological authoritarianism: USCIRF examines Chines religious freedom

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) conducted a virtual hearing regarding China's violations of religious freedom. Commissioners invited Bob Fu, Founder and President of ChinaAid, to speak about the exiled Mayflower Church and how Chinese authorities extend their technological authoritarianism.

Other guests and panelists included other experts like Yaqiu Wang, Senior China Researcher for Human Rights Watch; Buhchung K. Tsering, Interim President of International Campaign for Tibet; Louisa Greve, Director of Global Advocacy for Uyghur Human Rights Project; and Zack Smith, Legal Fellow from the Heritage Foundation. USCIRF provided the following summary regarding the virtual hearing:

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Buddhists

30.12.2022 – Tibetan writer held by China for 'discussing' Dalai Lama

A prominent Tibetan writer who disappeared last year in Chinese custody was arrested for taking part in politically sensitive discussions about Tibet's exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, Radio Free Asia has learned.

Rongwo Gangkar, author of such popular works as *The Knot* and *An Interview With Gendun Choephel*, a collaboration with other writers, was taken into custody in western China's Qinghai province more than a year ago, a source living in the region said.

"He was arrested by the Chinese government for initiating a discussion about the Dalai Lama at a gathering," RFA's source said, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

“He was talking about how his Holiness’s birthday and other important events related to the Dalai Lama should be celebrated.”

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Uyghurs

26.12.2022 – Chinese attack a “Lonely Uyghur” demonstration in Amsterdam, police investigates

On December 18, I spoke with the Dutch police on the phone about an incident that happened last month. The police officers said they are on the case and will call me for an interview soon.

What happened, exactly? My protests finally attracted the attention of the Chinese, and a reaction followed.

On November 24, 44 Uyghurs died due to a fire breakout in Urumqi, East Turkistan (Ch. Xinjiang), while China was in a harsh Zero-COVID mode. China had imposed a strict lockdown in the region and residents had been prevented from getting out of their houses for over a hundred days.

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Protestants

27.12.2022 – Pastor Hao Zhiwei: 8-year prison sentence confirmed on appeal

This month, the appeal against the decision sentencing **Pastor**

Hao Zhiwei to eight years in jail for “fraud” was dismissed. The first-degree decision, rendered by the Echeng District Court of the prefecture-level city of Ezhou, Hubei Province, on February 11, 2022, was one of the first based on the legal theory that, if a religious community is not part of one of the five authorized religions, it is a “false” religious organization and those who receive donations on its behalf commit the crime of fraud.

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23.12.2022 – Golden Lampstand Church: 16 months without trial

On December 23, Gold Lampstand Church disclosed that 12 Christians of the church, including **Pastor Wang Xiaoguang and Minister Yang Rongli**, were arrested on suspicion of “fraud” over 16 months ago without trial.

On August 7, 2021, public security arrested 12 Christians of Gold Lampstand Church in Linfen city and gave them 15-day detentions. 15 days later, police continued to criminally detain them on suspicion of “fraud” because of the tithe and offerings the church received. The case was transferred to the court in March 2022. Nine months passed, and the trial is not scheduled.

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23.12.2022 – Mother of four released from prison

Wang Liqin, the wife of renowned Chinese poet **Wang Zang**, returned home 10 days ago after serving her sentence. She seems to be in good health.

Chengdu lawyer Lu Siwei lost his lawyer’s license during his time as Wang Zang’s defense lawyer. Lawyer Lu, who is familiar

with the family's situation, confirmed the news that Wang Liqin returned home after serving her sentence. Lu Siwei expressed: "Wang Liqin returned home. We just had a phone call. She is in good condition. Because she doesn't have a cellphone, it's inconvenient to contact her. I'll let everyone know when she has one."

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21.12.2022 – Trial of Zhao Weikai ends without public verdict

On December 15, Shanxi Province Lvliang Municipal Intermediate People's Court held the trial of **Zhao Weikai**, a coworker of Zion Reformed. He stood accused of "illegally possessing terrorism and extremism items." The presiding judge interrupted Zhao's testimony on the pretext that it was "not related" to the evidence in the case. Li Xin, Zhao Weikai's wife, disclosed that seven strangers attended the trial and her husband looked well.

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16.12.2022 – Chinese Christians compelled to honor deceased CCP leader Jiang Zemin

Jiang Zemin, who was the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from 1989 to 2002, and the President of the People's Republic of China from 1993 to 2003, died on November 30, 2022.

He was greatly honored by Xi Jinping and the CCP, which is of course not surprising. More surprising is that the government-controlled Three-Self Church, the only legal Protestant body in the country, called all Christians to remember and commemorate him. On December 6, national leaders of the Three-Self Church gathered in Shanghai to watch together the

Memorial Conference for Jiang Zemin. Instructions to do the same were sent to all churches nationwide.

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16.12.2022 – Fleeing persecution in China: Christian Congregation takes refuge in Thailand, hopes for asylum in the US

Three years ago, 62 members of the China's Shenzhen Reformed Holy Church, also known as the Mayflower Church, fled to South Korea to escape persecution from the Communist government. They requested political asylum in South Korea, but were denied.

The church is now in Thailand, where members hope to gain refugee status, and eventually resettle in the United States. Until then, they face many challenges, including possible arrest by Thailand immigration police and being sent back to China.

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Falun Gong

25.12.2022 – Police Officer held in brainwashing center and forced to retire due to his faith in Falun Gong

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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23.12.2022 – Heilongjiang Woman convicted for helping a blind person read Falun Gong books

A Jiamusi City, Heilongjiang Province resident was sentenced to ten months in late November 2022 for helping a local blind resident read the teachings of Falun Gong.

Ms. Qin, 59, used to suffer from severe heart conditions before taking up Falun Gong. Thanks to the practice, she didn't only regain her health but also became a more considerate person. She often volunteered to clean the hallway in her apartment building and never sought anything in return.

After the communist regime ordered the persecution in 1999, she was repeatedly arrested. While she was in custody, the police slapped her in the face, handcuffed her and forced her to sit in a metal chair for long hours.

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18.12.2022 – Woman invited to appear on Talk Show to expose possible forced organ harvesting from her father in China

“When I saw my father's body, I could not believe it was real – he was emaciated and covered with bruises. One large area of skin was missing from his face and he had many injuries,” recalled 37-year-old New York resident Ms. Han Yu about her father on the Rick Jensen talk show on December 13.

Ms. Han's father, Mr. Han Junqing, was a Falun Gong practitioner in Doudian Town of Fangshan District, Beijing. He

was arrested in February 2004 for upholding his faith and died three months later, on May 4. The police cremated his body against his family's will.

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