

CHINA: Henan, Kaifeng Jews persecuted along with other religions

The Jewish community is not recognized among the official religions and its activities are considered "illegal". The persecution increases after the launch of the new regulations on religious activities. The Jewish community of Kaifeng dates to the 10th century and is made up of about 1000 members. The project to rebuild the synagogue has been blocked by the government

AsiaNews (16.02.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2BHQ1cn> – Kaifeng: The small Jewish community of Kaifeng (Henan) is suffering persecution along with all other religions in China.

In an article published yesterday in the "Jerusalem Post", Lela Gilbert, a member of the Hudson Institute and author of several books on persecution, writes: "The harsh treatment of China's miniscule Jewish population is emblematic of the Godless CCP's massive suppression of religious faith. And the Kaifeng Jews' vulnerability is both ominous and all-too-familiar to millions of Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims and Chinese Christians".

The Jewish community of Kaifeng has less than 1000 members, but it is subjected to heavy controls, police raids, obstacles of various kinds, especially after the February 2018 launch of new regulations on religious activities.

“During a raid – says Gilbert – government agents reportedly tore loose a metal Star of David from the entryway and tossed it on the floor. They ripped Hebrew scriptural quotations off the walls. They filled up a well that had served as a mikveh (ritual bath) with dirt and stones. And all foreign plans to build up and support the Jews of Kaifeng were summarily canceled.

The problem is that the Chinese government recognizes only five religious communities: Taoists, Buddhists, Muslims, Protestant Christians and Catholics. The other religions – including the Jewish one – are considered illegal and suffer a fate similar to that of the underground communities. In Henan, many Catholic and Protestant churches have been forced to close and prohibit entry for young people under 18.

The Jewish community of Kaifeng has a history dating back to the 10th century, when Jews from Persia arrived in China. The first synagogue in Kaifeng was built in 1163. After several events over the centuries, in recent years the community has succeeded in establishing relations with Jewish world and has created a small center of Jewish culture. Some benefactors are ready to support the reconstruction of the synagogue. But, since February, this project has been blocked.

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