

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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## **CHINA: Seoul Sungrak Church, a large Baptist Church banned as a “cult”**

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*China's desire to please Korean anti-cultists, with whom it regularly cooperates, may have been a factor in the decision.*

*by Chen Wangli*

Bitter Winter (19.01.2023) – <https://bit.ly/3XsSe3e> – “Xie jiao.” This is the verdict for the Berea Church, the Chinese branch of the Seoul Sungrak Church. Bitter Winter reported in 2018 that a secret United Front working group was organizing a crackdown on this church, and again in 2019 that Sungrak had become a main target in a campaign against Christian groups active in China and headquartered in South Korea.

“Xie jiao,” as readers of Bitter Winter know, is an old Chinese label used since the Middle Ages to ban as “heterodox teachings” movements regarded as hostile to the governments. The word is translated in English-language official Chinese documents as “cults.”

The most current list of movements banned as xie jiao does not include the Seoul Sungrak Church or its affiliates. However, the government-controlled Three-Self Church has written this month to its affiliate churches that the Berea/Sungrak Church should be considered as a xie jiao, as it has been banned in the provinces of Heilongjiang, where Berea has its Chinese headquarters, Liaoning, Fujian, Shandong, and Zhejiang. Indeed, it is a common way to become a xie jiao for all practical and legal purposes to be listed as such at the provincial rather than the national level.

Bitter Winter has learned that pastors and believers have been interrogated in Liaoning and Heilongjiang, and some have been detained. “We do not criticize the government and we mind our own business, a lay church leader from Harbin, Heilongjiang, told Bitter Winter. We were never harassed until the Three-Self Church and the China Anti-Xie-Jiao Association started cooperating on a regular basis with movements fighting ‘heresies’ in Korea.” “The latter, according to the believer, do not like us because we are one of the fastest-growing church in South Korea and their churches lose members who come to us. China should have nothing to do with these disputes,

but it wants to please the Korean heresy hunters because they help them fighting Falun Gong and The Church of Almighty God.”

The Sungrak Seoul Church was founded by Pastor Kim Ki Dong in 1969. Although he had been educated as a Presbyterian, and his style of worship was Pentecostal, he decided to affiliate himself with the Korean Baptist Convention. Pastor Kim’s church grew so fast that it was listed among the fastest growing churches in the world, and one of the largest Baptist congregations internationally (today, it has some 170,000 members).

Because of this growth, it was accused of “sheep-stealing” by the powerful Korean Presbyterian churches, which persuaded the Korean Baptist Convention to expel Sungrak in 1987, citing an inappropriate emphasis on Pentecostal rather than Baptist practices and on demonology and exorcism. However, at that stage Sungrak was large enough to create its own rival Baptist Convention and keep the contacts with American and other Baptist bodies.

“There are other fine theological points where we disagree with Presbyterians and with some other Baptists, the Harbin leader told us. However, they know these are not the real reasons they attack us. They do not like us because we grew too fast. They have persuaded the Chinese to call us a xie jiao for the same reason.”

*Photo: Seoul Sungrak Church, Seoul, South Korea. From Facebook.*

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