TORTURED to DEATH

The persecution of The Church of Almighty God in China

Human Rights Without Frontiers & Bitter Winter
Tortured to Death

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The Church of Almighty God in China

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2018
This report is dedicated to the many people who have died while in custody or as a result of their treatment while in custody in China, including:

Xie Yongjiang
Zhan Hongmei
Gao Cuiqin
Li Suansuan
Zhang Zhaoqi
Jiang Guizhi
Ye Aizhong
Zhang Hongtao
Zhang Ruixia
Zhang Laigu
Ma Suoping
Wang Fengtian
Nan Xiangming
Wu Xia
Deng Xiufen
Shen Xiurong
Wei Xiuyun
Xu Xinyao
Zhang Mengling
Liu Limei

May we find a way to hold those responsible for these deaths accountable.
Introduction

Across the country of China, human rights abuses run rampant. The latest news is quite staggering.

At the end of June 2018, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) secretly planned to carry out a nationwide crackdown on The Church of Almighty God underground communities. The code name was “Operation Thunder” and the purpose was to try to deal a death blow to them.

According to sources inside the CCP, the arrests were to be regarded as strictly confidential and the list of targets was not revealed in advance to the police officers in order to avoid the operation to be leaked. Only 10 minutes ahead the action on 26 June 2018, the CCP authorities released the list of members of The Church of Almighty God to be arrested. All police officers to be involved in the operation received an emergency notification issued through WeChat. They were called to work immediately to conduct arrests day and night.

As of 4 July, according to rough statistics in Liaoning Province alone, more than 500 CAG members were arrested; including nearly 300 members from the cities of Dalian and Panjin, 47 from Dandong, 39 from Chaoyang, 36 from Benxi, 23 from Jinhzhou, 19 from Shenyang, 14 from Fuxin, 9 from Fushun, 8 from Huludao, 5 from Yingkou, 2 from Tieling, and 1 from Anshan. The numbers are increasing every day.

This report, “Tortured to Death”, tells the stories of The Church of Almighty God members who have died at the hands of the Chinese authorities mainly in the last ten years. Each person’s story has been researched and corroborated through affidavits, photos, and legal documents.

Human Rights in China

The People’s Republic of China is a one-party state, ruled by a single authority, the all-pervasive Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

China has ratified the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and holds various provisions in national laws to protect individuals from various types of torture. However, China has yet to meet the international standards.

The United States Department of State’s 2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices raised many issues relating to torture in China. The report logged the following wide-spread concerns across China:

- Individuals being detained by authorities and being held at undisclosed locations or disappearances;
- Individuals being beaten, subjected to electric shock, forced to sit on stools for hours, being hung by their wrists, being raped, sleep-deprived, force-fed, and other forms of physical and psychological abuse;
- Harsh and degrading conditions in penal institutions;
• Arbitrary arrests and detention;
• The denial of a fair public trial;
• And violations in freedom of privacy.  

The report is careful to note that, “Although ordinary prisoners were abused, prison authorities reportedly singled out political and religious dissidents for particularly harsh treatment.”  

There is no freedom of religion or belief in China. Officially, the Communist Party in China is atheist. While some religious groups have been granted some level of tolerance from the government, most do not.

This anti-religious freedom stance paired with an abysmal human rights record leaves many in China in grave danger. The most recent victims of this have been the members of The Church of Almighty God.

**The Church of Almighty God**

As Holly Folk of Western Washington University explains in *Protestant Continuities in The Church of Almighty God*, The Church of Almighty God is a peaceful, non-threatening religious group. Folk describes that The Church of Almighty God believes that Jesus Christ has returned to the world as Almighty God in the shape of a Chinese woman currently living in the U.S., and regards Almighty God’s messages as an authoritative Christian scripture. As she explains, The Church of Almighty God beliefs strongly resonate with the doctrines of Protestantism. Differences do exist however, for example, The Church of Almighty God believes that both Jesus and the living person it worships as Almighty God originate from the Spirit of God, are one and the same God, and it recognizes the importance of both The Bible as well as a book entitled ‘The Word Appears in the Flesh,’ which includes most of the utterances of Almighty God. However, “understanding continuities with teachings of traditional Christianity supports the conclusion that CAG is indeed ‘Christian.’”

Important for the purpose of this report, is to highlight that religious scholars around the world have examined this religious group and its teachings and have concluded that they are peaceful and non-threatening. For more information about The Church of Almighty God’s theology, see the report by Holly Folk.

**Persecution in China**

As previously mentioned, China has restricted freedom of religion or belief for many religious groups, including The Church of Almighty God.

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2 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
Chinese authorities identify, target, imprison, torture and sometimes kill members of religious groups that the government has labeled as xie jiao (which is popularly translated as “evil cult”, but more accurately ascribed as meaning “heterodox”). Groups which do not align themselves with the Chinese Communist Party are usually subject to this label.

To be labeled as xie jiao is lethal, as it means any individual associated with the group is subject to severe state coercion and persecution.

The Church of Almighty God were labeled xie jiao in 1995\(^5\) and has more recently faced increasing oppression. In 2017, the government re-opened its Anti-xie jiao website, setting off a new wave of persecution against the ‘dangerous’ group.

Human Rights Without Frontiers has detailed the cases of over 750 members of The Church of Almighty God currently in prison in China for their beliefs.

The Church of Almighty God members are constantly at risk of being arrested, detained, and tortured. This report highlights the severity of the situation in China.

This report tells the accounts of twenty-one innocent people who, because of their faith, were arrested, imprisoned, physically and mentally tortured, and killed.

Xie Yongjiang

After being tortured to death for his religious beliefs – police claim Xie Yongjiang committed suicide

On 29 April 1997, Xie Yongjiang learned that his church friend had been arrested for preaching. Nervous that the belongings of the Church stored at his friend’s home would be confiscated by the police, Xie, his son-in-law, Mr. Gao, and Mr. Gao’s father, rushed to their friend’s home. The three men worked until 2:00 a.m., moving Church’s belongings to a safe place.

The three men rode their bicycles home in the early morning hours of 30 April; but as they neared the town of Wugou, they were stopped by local police officers. Xie Yongjiang, who had been arrested previously for preaching his faith, was recognized by the officers.

As a consequence, the three men were arrested on the suspicion of unlawful preaching and taken to the Wugou Town Police Station.

At the police station, the three men were separated, searched, and interrogated.

Two male officers beat Mr. Gao with a belt and kicked him, threatening death if Mr. Gao did not falsely admit guilt of the preaching charges. The police officers whipped Mr. Gao with a belt, until it finally broke. The following day, the police officers switched their torture weapon to a metal rod.

The following day, Mr. Gao and his father were taken to the Public Security Bureau for further questioning and paper work formalities. It was then that Mr. Gao’s father hinted to his son that something terrible had happened to Xie.

That evening, on their ride back to the police station, Mr. Gao asked their escort about Xie. The driver threatened to kill him if he inquired about Xie again. Mr. Gao and his father were sent to the Suixi County Detention Center where they were held for 15 days.

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On 1 May, a friend went looking for Xie at the Wugou Town Police Station. Miraculously, he was able to confirm that Xie was locked in a dark room with one small opening. Through this opening, Xie told his friend that he was not in good physical condition – the police had been ruthlessly torturing him.

Hearing of this news, Xie’s wife immediately went to the police station to bring her husband a blanket. Upon arrival, she saw her husband in the station courtyard washing a police car. The
officers however, refused her the ability to speak with Xie. She watched as he walked with a severe limp around the car – this is the last time that she would see her husband.

Xie’s wife visited him again the next day to bring him food. When she arrived, the police informed her that he had been transferred to Suixi County.

On the afternoon of 2 May, Xie’s family was notified that he had committed suicide in the police station. The police informed them that his body had already been sent to the crematorium. His family begged to see his body – a request which the authorities denied.

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Xie’s family continuously sought for a way to see their loved one’s body. Finally, on 10 May, after establishing a number of connections, they were able to see his body as it lay in the Suixi County Baishan Crematorium.

Xie’s son recounts that his father’s body was covered in bruises, welts, and dried blood. His face and body were covered with lacerations. It was clear to him that his father had died after incredible suffering.

The family concluded that Xie did not die from suicide and they sought justice. Xie’s family set out to sue the Wugou Town Police Station.

Local authorities warned the family to settle the matter privately, but they refused. Once the news of Xie’s torture and death spread around the community, there was local uproar. As a result, the Suixi County Procuratorate approved the arrest of police officer Wang Min.

However, nearing the end of the court case, Wang Min retracted his testimony, stating that he was simply covering for the police station and was not really the one responsible for Xie’s torture and death. Wang Min was then released on bail pending trial.

The case was brought to a civil mediation case in the Suixi People’s Court. In the Conciliation Agreement, it was stated that during the interrogation Wang Min had hit Xie with a belt four times and had kicked him twice; after that, Xie hung himself. The court ruled that Wang Min owed the family 41,000 RMB in compensation.

The family was not appeased as they did not seek money, but justice for Xie. They affirm to this day that Xie did not commit suicide.
Xie Yongjiang

Photos of Xie Yongjiang taken during his family’s viewing at the Crematorium.
Zhan Hongmei

On 29 October, 2003, Zhan Hongmei was arrested by authorities for allegedly proselytizing, no one saw Zhan alive again.

Born in 1970, in the Dongmiao East Village of Pingdu City, Zhan Hongmei was a well-liked young woman, known for always being reasonable and respectful.

On the Wednesday morning of 29 October 2003, Zhan Hongmei traveled to the Jiulikuang Village of Jiudian, to reportedly “share the gospel”. One home that she visited reported her to the police. Shortly after, four security officers arrived to apprehend her.

As Zhan Hongmei attempted to escape, the four officers resorted to violence – pushing her to the ground, kicking her and punching her.

The chief officer present, Jiang Xiangang, confiscated the literature she had been carrying and physically dragged her to the Jiulikuang Village Community. Here, a second round of beatings would begin.

Three hours later, at 11:00 a.m., the four officers made an official report to the police. Soon after, officers from the Jiudian Town police detained Zhan Hongmei and escorted her to the station. At the police station, the local police chief Li Linzhi, police officer Yang Zhilei, and their colleague Zheng Shantang, beat Zhan again – it is reported that they used iron plates.

Later that day, officers would arrive to Zhan’s house, collecting a bible and ransacking the entire place.

The next day, when Zhan’s mother and mother-in-law heard what had happened, they rushed to the police station. The police only allowed Zhan’s mother-in-law to meet Zhan. She reported that when she saw Zhan she was handcuffed and shackled, was restrained on a tiger bench with chains, her hands and feet were swollen, her face was severely bruised, and her pants were soaked with urine.

Zhan’s mother-in-law begged the police to release her, but to no avail.

* * *

On 31 October, Zhan’s family was informed that she had been beaten to death by the police.
Police initially reported that she had died from a heart attack, but later reported that she had committed suicide by taking poison.

Zhan’s family demanded an autopsy. The Pingdu People’s Hospital reported that Zhang’s body had extensive bruising, and that blood had welled up under the skin in many places; no part of the body was left unscathed. The ruled cause of death was a rib puncturing her lung, resulting in hemorrhaging and eventually terminal heart failure.
Zhan Hongmei

Photos of Zhan Hongmei’s body taken by her family.
Gao Cuiqin

While at home making breakfast, police officers stormed into her home. Twenty-four hours later, she was pronounced dead.

In the early morning of 15 July, 2014, Ms. Gao Cuiqin was at home making breakfast when six plain-clothed police officers barged into her home. Without providing any documentation, the police, led by Gong Yuebing, the deputy captain of the Shandong Huantai County Public Security Bureau, took Gao to the Huantai County Police Station. Her family members watched in horror—helpless against the six police officers.

The very next day, Gao was beaten to death by the police.

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Emergency responders at the Huantai County Shengjie Hospital disclosed that around 11 a.m. on 17 July, they received a call from the police requesting an ambulance for a medical emergency. When the doctors arrived, they discovered that the patient had been deceased for some time. The doctors did not take the body to the hospital. The police then called the Shandong Qilu Hospital—this time the emergency responders took the body to the hospital.

On the afternoon of 17 July, Gao Cuiqin’s husband, Mr. Liu, received a call from the Director of Huantai County Police Station. The director informed him that his wife was in the hospital.

An hour later, Gao’s family was at the hospital. However, no record of Gao’s hospitalization was registered with hospital personnel. Her family was unable to find her.

That evening, Mr. Liu went to ask the police. They brought him to the hospital, where he was able to see his wife. She had breathing tubes in her nose and a flat line on the ECG monitor. It was clear that she was not alive. A doctor was pretending to issue an external pacemaker. According to Liu, he overheard a doctor mention that his wife was already dead by the time she arrived to the hospital. Mr. Liu then took photos of her body.

A hospital staff member later disclosed that she had indeed been deceased when she arrived to the hospital and that her body displayed clear signs of torture.
A prisoner who had been held in a cell close to Gao Cuiqin’s interrogation room reported hearing screaming followed by an abrupt silence around 5 a.m. on 16 July. Another prisoner reported hearing an officer on the phone telling someone that an officer had hit her with an electric baton.

On 18 July, as Gao’s family met at the funeral home to prepare her body for burial, they noticed scars and bruising on her body. Her head was pointed to one side and apparently could not be straightened. An expert concluded that Gao’s injuries were consistent with being tied to a chair and beaten with a high-voltage electric baton.

* * *

Gao’s husband sought justice for the officers who beat his wife to death. He met with the Mayor to share the story of his wife. After, three employees from the public security bureau and from the Discipline Inspection Committee met with Liu and demanded that they settle the matter privately.

Gao’s family demanded to see video recordings of her interrogation, but their request was denied.

The two police officers thought to be responsible for her death disappeared from the locale.

The police claimed that Gao had a pre-existing heart condition and that she died from cardiac arrest. Her family says that Gao had no such medical issue.

The police pressured Gao’s family to not bring the case to court. After the police threatened the family’s careers and their children, they felt they had no option but to agree to settle it privately.
On the afternoon of 21 December, 2012, He Chengrong was on her way to church when she was arrested. After taking her cash and religious literature that she was carrying, they escorted her to the National Security Brigade of the Aksu Public Security Bureau. It was reported that He Chengrong, as a local leader of her Church, had been traced and monitored on her cell phone prior to her arrest.

Immediately following her arrest, He’s husband attempted to bribe police officers, offering over 30,000 RMB. In return, the police officers agreed to release He in a few days.

A few weeks later, He’s family was informed of her death.

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An inmate in a cell nearby He’s reported hearing her being beaten, moaning in agony, and a police officer exclaiming that “She won’t pull through! She’s dying!”

While in prison, He Chengrong had a roommate. The roommate tells a gruesome account of her interrogations. Members of the National Security Brigade fiercely beat and kicked He in order to obtain information about her Church. They forcibly fed her extremely spicy chili oil and shackled her so that she could not use the toilet.

The police officers had male prisoners get involved in the torture. They fed her extremely hot food and forced a feeding tube down her esophagus.

After such grotesque torture, unsurprisingly, by 8 p.m. on 7 January, He Chengrong was unconscious on the brink of death. The officers only brought her to the hospital the following morning.

On 9 January 2013, three policemen arrived to the door of He’s family to inform them that she had died at the hospital after suffering a myocardial infarction the evening before.
The next day the family gathered to view her remains. They reported that her body and head were covered in bruises. Her back was covered in scratches and her legs were swollen to twice their normal size.

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While the family prepared for He’s funeral, police officers and a forensic scientist arrived to the funeral home. The scientist had been sent by the police on orders to dissect He’s abdomen and to remove her brain, heart, lungs, stomach, liver, and intestines in order to “examine the cause of death”.

Zhao Youpeng, vice-director of the Aksu Public Security Bureau along with the secretary, the vice-director of the Nancheng Police Station, and the vice-director of the National Security Brigade were all present at the funeral home.

The police did not allow her family to see her remains again.

He Chengrong’s family sought justice, but were faced with intimidation. The Aksu police force were sent to force her family to sign a certificate of death which ruled the cause of death to be a pulmonary infarction – not a myocardial infarction like they originally claimed. The family was faced with heavily armed police officers and threats of imprisonment upon refusal to sign.

On 5 February 2013, the Aksu police had He Chengrong’s remains cremated, without the approval of her family.
He Chengrong
Photos of He Chengrong’s body, taken by her family.
On 20 July 2013, Li Suansuan of Turpan City was arrested. On 26 July, the police informed her family that she had died of a sudden heart attack. Li Suansuan had no history of heart problems.

Li’s family fought to see her remains. They were only granted permission a few weeks later. Strangely, they found her body covered with mud and she was wearing a hat. She had deep gashes across her forehead and her body was covered with bruises. One long cut had been made extending from her neck to the stomach. A police officer later informed the family that her body had been dissected – her brain, heart, liver, and lungs had been removed.

Li’s family set out to seek justice. The family hired two lawyers. After reviewing the case the lawyer concluded that Li’s death was a direct result of her treatment while in custody of the local police. The lawyer, however, stated that the police had already warned those involved in the justice system, so cases such as this will not be won, even with litigation – that it may even be impossible to get a court hearing.

Li’s husband continued on regardless. He prepared to go to court and approached another lawyer. However, he did not do so unwatched. The police had been monitoring him and when they discovered his intentions to bring the case to court, they threatened him and ensured him that he would never win a lawsuit.

After this, Li’s husband was under surveillance by the police. His phone was tapped and he was forbidden from traveling.

Li Suansuan never received justice.
Zhang Zhaoqi was fifty years old when he was arrested after attending a church gathering on 8 September 2005. Within approximately twenty-four hours, Zhang was pronounced dead.

Zhang was gathering at the home of a friend in the Li Village Group of Shangyi Village when a village leader, militia commander, police chief, and two plain-clothed police officers burst into the house.

Without identifying themselves or showing any warrants, they searched the house, confiscating hymn books, compact discs and a VCD player. The police then turned to Zhang and conducted a physical search, interrogated him, and forced him to provide his personal identification information. Zhang did not respond to their request. The police then handcuffed him and escorted him to the Jiaokou Town Police Station.

That evening, he was transferred to the Qinyuan County Detention Center where he was interrogated by Chief Shi Jianye of the county’s Public Security Bureau’s Political Security Section. Zhang continued to refuse to answer their questions. The police then called for the director of the Qinyuan County Detention Center, Hao Mingzhu, to participate in the interrogation. Hao Mingzhu had brought a wooden stick.

He beat Zhang with the wooden stick for one hour. Within a matter of hours, Zhang died in the Qinyuan County Detention Center.

* * *

One day later, representatives arrived to the detention center from the Changzhi City Procuratorate of Shanxi Province. They deemed that Zhang’s death was caused by torture. Subsequently, Hao Mingzhu was jailed in the Qin County Detention Center. However, soon after, the director of the Qinyuan County Public Security Bureau publicly exonerated Hao Mingzhu saying that Zhang had only died because there was no one present to discourage Hao Mingzhu from torturing him.

It was not until three days after his death that the family was invited to identify his body through a series of photographs provided by the police. The police did not mention the cause of death or
the whereabouts of Zhang’s body. As compensation, the police paid the family a burial fee of 19,000 RMB. The police then cremated the body without the family’s permission.

The family attempted to write letters to provincial security departments, party committees, and judicial representatives, but received no responses.

Hao Mingzhu was briefly incarcerated before being reassigned and then transferred to a post in the National Security Brigade.
Jiang Guizhi

Interrogated, tortured, and raped by authorities in a ‘secret’ hotel room

Jiang Guizhi, a local church leader, was arrested on 4 January 2013 while preparing for a church meeting.

On the evening of 4 January, Jiang Guizhi and Zhang Li were in an apartment in Xinmi City that had been rented for a church meeting. A little after 7 p.m. eight police officers headed by the captain of the Xinmi City National Security Brigade, Yu Hongchao, entered the apartment. The officers did not present any form of identification or warrant before apprehending Jiang and Zhang.

The police ransacked the apartment, cutting open the sofa with a knife and turning furniture upside-down. They confiscated any book that referenced God, 10,000 RMB in cash, computers, mobile phones, clothing items and household goods, including food and cooking utensils.

The two women were then taken to the Xinmi City Public Security Bureau.

On 6 January, the captain of the National Security Brigade of Xinmi City’s Public Security Bureau, Yu Hongchao, and officers Shen Ke, Wang Lei, and Bai Shuangfeng, escorted Jiang and Zhang to the Xiyuan Hotel in Xinmi City for interrogation. This was the last time the two women would see one another.

*       *       *

Jiang Guizhi is now known to have died. No one knows exactly what happened to her.

Other members of her Church were arrested and interrogated by Yu Hongchao and the other officers at the Xiyuan Hotel at the same time. According to them, Jiang was deprived of sleep, beaten, stripped, and humiliated. Officers did not allow her access to the toilet and made her lick her own urine off the floor. Another inmate reported that she was sexually abused and raped with a wooden baton. She was beaten with a belt and was tied in excruciating positions and was hung upside-down while being beaten.

On 25 January 2013, Jiang Guizhi was transferred to the Zhengzhou City No. 2 Detention Center. While there, her cell mates reported that she was unable to properly speak, get out of bed alone, or manage simple activities like getting dressed. Jiang had told some of them that she had been
interrogated, tortured and raped by authorities in a secret hotel room. Jiang’s physical condition worsened and her cellmates feared her death. The prison authorities brought Jiang to a hospital.

Eighteen days after arriving to the prison, she was pronounced dead.

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Police information states that Jiang died in the early morning of 12 February 2013. Her family had received no information about her status of whereabouts between her arrest and 13 February 2013 when she was pronounced dead. The police told her family that she had died of a heart attack.

When Jiang’s family arrived to the morgue of the Fourth Affiliated Hospital of Zhengzhou University, the doctor told them that when she first arrived to the hospital she had been foaming at the mouth, was disoriented and had lost control of her bowel and bladder movements.

On the death certificate they saw question marks written next to recorded symptoms of high blood pressure, heart disease, and cerebral infarction. The cause of death was noted as multiple organ failure. Seeing that the death certificate did not match the police’s reported cause of death, the family concluded that the police were covering up the truth.

Jiang’s family searched for evidence, asking the police for records of her interrogation. The police refused the request, but allowed them to watch the surveillance videos from her life in the Zhengzhou City No. 2 Detention Center. After seeing the horrible state she had been in, the family asked why she was not taken to the hospital sooner – the police did not answer.

Her family then asked for the charges that she was arrested on and the verdict of her case. The Xinmi City Public Security Bureau representative responsible for her case, Bai Shuangfeng, only replied that she was arrested for her belief in Almighty God and for being a leader of the Church.

The authorities put pressure on the family to cease their search for evidence and to keep the case quiet. They threatened the family to such an extent that they had no option but to end their pursuit.

On 5 March 2013, Jiang Guizhi’s body was cremated at the Zhengzhou City Crematorium.

On 9 March, her ashes were brought back to her hometown and buried in a tomb.
Ye Aizhong

‘As he passed the door of the room where Ye was being held, he saw his friend sitting motionless in the electric chair…’

Ye Aizhong is described as a warmhearted man who loved helping others. He was known for often helping people buy and exchange MP5 players for listening to hymns and sermons. This activity, brought Ye to the attention of the authorities.

On the morning of 26 March 2012, Ye and his friend, Feng, went to the Shuyang County “Computer City” store to help repair MP5 players. The two men were arrested outside the store by two plain-clothed police officers from the Nanguan Police Station in Shuyang County. Without displaying any identification, the policemen forced Ye and Feng into a black car, blindfolded them, and took them to the Shuyang County Detention Center.

The authorities interrogated Ye and Feng, asking them for information about their church. The police denied Ye and Feng any food or drinks for over forty-eight hours.

On 27 March, around 10 p.m., Ye and Feng were taken to the second floor of the Shuyang County Public Security Bureau’s Crime Squad officer, where they were separately interrogated.

Feng recalls that three pairs of police officers took turns interrogating him. The policemen repeatedly hit him with electric batons, leading to Feng falling unconscious. Barely able to move or think falling in and out of consciousness, the officers had Feng sit on the floor with his legs straight out. They placed a baton across his legs and stomped on it for thirty minutes. Feng’s legs were bleeding. The officers then hit Feng’s head with the electric batons until he fully passed out. When he came to, they would hit him with the electric baton every time he closed his eyes. This carried on until 4 a.m.

Ye was being held in an adjoining room. While Feng was being tortured, he noticed authorities carrying an electric chair into the other room. Feng could hear cries of agony for a total hour.

On the evening of 28 March, Feng was chained to a chair. He could hear Ye being interrogated and tortured in the other room.
At daybreak on 29 March, the police took Feng outside. As he passed the door of the room where Ye was being held, he saw his friend sitting motionless in the electric chair, his head hanging down. Feng called out to his friend, but Ye gave no response.

Feng was taken to the Shuyang County Detention Center and was detained for fifteen days on the charge of “suspicion of using superstition to undermine the law”.

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On 30 March, officers informed Ye’s family that he had died on 29 March. The officers told his family that he fell ill and died after being given a blood test. The family demanded a diagnosis from the hospital, but the police did not reply. Ye’s family felt that the police were lying. Ye had never suffered from any health problems – how could he have suddenly died?

The police officers threatened the family, forcing them to sign a disclaimer regarding Ye’s death.

On 5 April, the family was allowed to see Ye’s remains. His body was covered in bruises and welts. That day his remains were cremated and his ashes were brought back by his family and buried in his family’s cemetery.
Ye Aizhong

A photo of Ye Aizhong’s body, taken by a family member.
Zhang Hongtao

Arrested at 9:00 a.m., reported dead by 4:00 p.m.

On 6 December 2012, Zhang Hongtao met with several other members of her church to “preach the gospel” in Xiaochuan Town. Around 9 a.m., while they were having a conversation with the owner of a food stall, a nearby plain-clothed policeman overheard their discussion. One hour later, Zhang Hongtao was arrested and escorted to the police station in Xiaochuan Town.

Around 2 p.m. that day, a police officer called a contact listed in Zhang Hongtao’s phone. He informed the person who answered (a fellow church member) that Zhang had been admitted to the Cheng County Hospital. Two hours later, they called again saying that Zhang had died.

*       *       *

On 7 December the police located and informed Zhang’s husband, Dong, that she had been arrested for preaching and had died from a sudden cerebral hemorrhage. Dong went to the Cheng County Public Security Bureau and saw his wife laying on the ground, naked, in a small house. Without the consent of her family, her skull had been opened for an autopsy. There was a large bump on her head and her face, neck, shoulders, back, and legs were covered with bruises. Dong asked the police officers what had happened and they responded that an autopsy had been conducted to ascertain the cause of death.

Dong was skeptical of the police’s story. The following day he gathered family and friends to visit the leaders of the local Public Security Bureau, the Politics and Law Committee, and the Petition Office to resolve the matter. Every department they visited told them that their leaders were on a business trip.

Zhang’s family returned to the Cheng County Public Security Bureau demanding the truth. They replied that Zhang Hongtao was taken in for questioning for preaching. She had refused to answer their questions and after, they said, she died of natural causes – a cerebral hemorrhage. They stated that the Public Security Bureau takes no responsibility for her death.

Zhang’s family continued their search for the truth. They went to the Cheng County government compound asking for an explanation. In response, they were threatened with arrest.

Later, the government set a secretary and lawyer to her family’s home to settle the matter. Finally, a compensation of 100,000 RMB was given to the family. The family was never able to see or obtain Zhang’s body.
Zhang Ruixia

*Family members were asked to identify the body - it was so mangled, a DNA test was necessary to confirm her identity*

On the evening of 25 June, 2014, Zhang Ruixia met with friends in an apartment in Linzhou, Henan Province. One hour after arriving, police officers forced their way into the home.

Led by Ma Zhihong, captain of the National Security Brigade of Linzhou Public Security Bureau in Anyang, a dozen policemen rummaged through the house without showing any identification or warrant. They arrested Zhang Ruixia and her friend, Xiaoying (alias), and escorted them to the Criminal Investigation Brigade of Linzhou Public Security Bureau.

The police had been tracking Zhang Ruixia from Xinxiang to Linzhou.

One hour later, other church members, Xiaoqing (alias) and Xiaohong (alias) were also arrested by the police.

According to Xiaoqing, around 11 p.m. she was taken to the Criminal Investigation Brigade of Linzhou Public Security Bureau for interrogation. When she went to the toilet, she saw Zhang Ruixia, Xiaoying, and Xiaohong had all been detained in three separate rooms. Ruixia had been handcuffed to a bench and her head was down. There were four or five plain-clothed policemen standing in the room. Xiaoqing could hear the police officers shouting at Zhang. When back in her interrogation room, she could hear Zhang let out a cry in agony followed by silence. Xiaoqing heard a police officer make a remark about Zhang being tough even when being beaten.

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Approximately twenty days after Zhang’s arrest four policemen ransacked her house. Zhang’s house however was locked, and neighbours refused to help the policemen get inside. Instead, they headed to Zhang’s mother-in-law’s house. They rummaged through her house but did not find anything of interest to them.

Zhang’s family had been contacting local village leaders to find out more information about Zhang’s whereabouts, but did not receive any responses.
At the end of January 2015 Xiaoqing was released. She informed Zhang’s family that Zhang had been killed almost six months ago.

The Chinese Criminal Procedure Law states that a family of a detainee must be notified of the detention of the detainee within 24 hours. However, the authorities did not tell her family that she had been arrested – or that she had died.

Six of Zhang’s family members went to meet Ma Zhihong. They requested to see Zhang’s body. Eventually, Ma Zhihong authorized one family member to see it.

Zhang’s younger brother saw a skinny, desiccated body – it looked like a child’s body. It had no flesh and was hardly recognizable. The jawbone and teeth indicated that it resembled Zhang. The body had bruises, and her abdomen was misshapen, there was a long scar that had been sewn up across it. Her family suspected that her organs had been removed. A DNA test revealed that it was indeed Zhang.

Zhang’s family was not allowed to see her body again. They questioned the police about her death and why they were never notified of her arrest or death. Ma Zhihong told the family that she had been sick and was sent to the hospital the day after she was arrested.

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In March 2015, over twenty people gathered at the Linzhou Public Security Bureau holding banners and wreaths, demanding justice for Zhang. The policemen punched and kicked two of them, threatening them with arrest.

Zhang’s family wanted to take her remains home, but their requests were denied. Eventually, Zhang’s remains were cremated in Linzhou City.
Zhang Laigu was spreading the gospel in a community in Fengcheng Town on 12 December 2012 when plain-clothed police officers from the Fengcheng Town Police Station arrested her. Later that evening she was transferred to the Shanghai Minhang District Detention Centre.

Another prisoner in the detention center recalls that Zhang was referred to as “Anonymous” because she had refused to tell the police officers who she was. She was verbally abused by the guards and was bullied and physically abused by other prisoners. In the winter, she was not allowed to drink warm water like the others were.

One day, over the loudspeaker, authorities called, “Anonymous prisoner no. 36, come out!” Zhang Laigu followed orders – this was the last time Zhang was seen.

* * *

Police informed Zhang’s family that she had committed suicide by hanging herself in the toilet. Prisoners at the detention center reported that this was impossible, as there was nowhere to hang oneself in the toilet – it was physically impossible.

Zhang’s family was outraged. A large group of them gathered at the detention center and demanded to see her body. The police granted them access, but as soon as they started to photograph her body, the police began to argue and threaten them. The police forcefully held all the family members in the building. They cross-examined each of the family members about their relationship with Zhang. No one was allowed to leave until they had all been questioned.

On 12 January 2013, the body of Zhang Laigu was cremated. The Shanghai Municipal Public Security Bureau provided 700,000 RMB in compensation to the family.

The Shanghai Municipal Public Security Bureau and the Public Security Bureau of Nanling County sent four police cars and eight officers to Zhang’s parents’ home. The police officers threatened them and threatened to outlaw all religious assemblies in their village.
Ma Suoping

The death of a leader of The Church of Almighty God

Ma Suoping was a leader of The Church of Almighty God in mainland China. On the afternoon of 17 July, 2009, more than twenty plain-clothes armed police officers with police dogs burst into the home of Mr. Liu in Tangshan City. Ma Suoping was one of the five church members arrested that day.

It appeared that the police officers had been looking for Ma Suoping. The police officers forced the five people to crouch down in the living room. They wrapped their eyes and faces with clothes and brought in police dogs to search the apartment. In the end, they confiscated 120,000 RMB, two cases of books, four laptops, five cell phones, two bags of clothing, and a few boxes of health products. After their raid, the police put the five people in separate cars and took them to a military sub-district facility in Tangshan City to interrogate them.

According to a neighbor, the police had dispatched forty to fifty police cars and hundreds of police officers and SWAT police outside the house.

Anonymous sources from inside the police bureau disclosed that the police designated Ma Suoping as a “national leader” of the church. Since July 2008 she had been on the Public Security Network wanted list. The police had made many prior attempts to capture her, but all had failed. The “success” of their raid in Tangshan was attributed to phone tapping and the assistance of the National Ministry of Public Security.

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17 July 2009 was the last time anyone saw or heard from Ma Suoping. No one was informed of her whereabouts.

Two of the other church members captured that day reported stories of police torture and attempted forced confessions. Family and friends of Ma feared the worst.

On 24 July, their fears were realized when police notified family members that Ma Suoping had died. The police informed them that her body was in the morgue of Yellow River Central Hospital in Zhengzhou City. When her husband and a village leader went to visit the morgue, they saw that her body was covered in bruises and scars.
The police reports state that Ma Suoping was arrested alone on 21 July and was transferred to Zhengzhou on 22 July. They claimed Ma Suoping died of a sudden heart attack that evening, and that the scars and bruises appeared on her body after she died. Ma’s husband and family refused this explanation and requested that her body be returned to them. In response they were threatened and intimidated.

On 26 July, Ma’s husband and daughter were able to bring Ma Suoping’s ashes back to Shanxi to be buried on 29 July.
On the evening of 16 January 2009, several police officers from the Zuoshan Police Station in Xiashan District, Shandong Province, entered Wang Fengtian’s home. Without identifying themselves or an arrest warrant, they searched her home. Even though they did not find anything of interest to them, they forcibly escorted her to the Zuoshan Police Station.

Less than an hour later, three members of Wang’s church were arrested and locked in a cell with her. At the station, officers interrogated Wang about her church. They deprived her of food and drink for twenty-four hours. One of her cellmates said they could hear her screaming in another room.

At 2 a.m. the four cellmates were put in a metal cage. Later that day, they were transferred to the Weifang City Detention Center.

One of the cellmates recalls that while in the detention center, Wang had repeatedly asked for bail pending trial, but police refused. Wang was taken for questioning four separate times while in the detention center and was forced to bear heavy ankle shackles and handcuffs which were all connected to one another. After each questioning session, the police would reduce the number of chain links between the handcuffs and ankle shackles, eventually making it so Wang could not stand straight.

As one month went by, the police were unable to collect any evidence and were readying to release the four prisoners. They were brought into a room to sign a statement of acquittal, but as soon as they did, officers rushed towards them, handcuffed them and placed black hoods over their heads. Even the guards in the detention center were confused about why this was happening.

The police took the prisoners to a secret location – it was later learned to be the Shuiyuntian Hotel in Jingzhi Town. Hai’ou (alias), one of the four prisoners, heard the police yelling and Wang Fengtian crying in the next room. She could hear the police officers discussing the torture of Wang.

Two weeks later, Wang Fengtian died.

The police first tried to conceal her death and made several visits to her family members to question them about their beliefs – never mentioning that Wang had died. The police sent Wang’s corpse to the hospital for cosmetic reconstruction. A nurse, who had come from the same village as Wang,
had taken part in the procedure and recognized Wang. The police immediately separated the nurse, denying her ability to work on the body.

Later, when Wang’s younger sister went to identify the body, she noticed that Wang was covered in bruises. It was clear that she had suffered severe torture. The local police threatened her family to keep quiet.
Nan Xiangming

Arrested and denied medical treatment

Nan Xiangming and his wife were known as honest people who were always willing to help others. The two assisted in creating audio CDs of hymns and sermons. In their home, Nan and his wife created a basement to store church books, CDs, and the materials to burn new CDs.

On 24 July 2014, three members of their church came to help organize and remodel the basement. The authorities somehow discovered this and the five were arrested. Nan Xiangming was sentenced to three years imprisonment for his belief in Almighty God.

Nan Xiangming, who suffered from diabetes, did not fare well in prison, as he was not given enough food and was forced to participate in intensive labour. Nan requested to receive treatment, but the police refused. In February 2016, Nan died in prison at 74 years of age.

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Around 1 p.m. on 24 July 2014, Nan’s wife, Wang, was making lunch while Nan and three church friends sat in the living room. Suddenly, five police officers from Junma Township Police Station forced their way into the home. Without showing any documents, they began to search the home and confiscate items. They ultimately seized 118 books, 2 CD-writers, 86 CDs, 2,795 blank CDs, 53 stamps, 4 MP4 players, 2 DVD players, 1 newly purchased tricycle, 1 used electric tricycle, one motorbike, one cell phone, and 500 RMB in cash.

The police then arrested all five present and took them to the Junma Township Police Station in Liquan County.

Around 8 p.m. that evening, Yang Chao, the Director of Junma Township Police Station in Liquan County, along with other officers, interrogated the group. The police questioned Nan about his faith, the items in his home, and the leaders of the church. Nan refused to answer their questions. The police deprived Nan of food. Suffering from diabetes, Nan became weak throughout the night.

Around 8 a.m. the next morning, the five people were transferred to Liquan County Public Security Bureau. Nan Xiangming was then held in the Liquan County Detention Center.

On 2 August, Nan and the others were publically paraded through the village where Nan Xiangming was living. The five were in prison uniforms, handcuffed, and shackled.
On 14 May 2015, Nan Xiangming was sentenced to three years imprisonment by the People’s Court of Liquan County, Shaanxi Province on the charge of “sabotaging the enforcement of laws by utilizing an evil religious organization”.

On 13 July, Nan was transferred to the Weinan Prison in Shaanxi Province to carry out his three year sentence.

On 16 July, prison authorities called Nan’s daughter asking her to buy and bring medicine for Nan’s diabetes. Up until this point, authorities had denied Nan’s family to visit him. They were allowed to send him one monthly remittance, but no other items were allowed to be sent to him.

On 1 February 2016, Weinan Prison called Nan’s daughter again, and asked her to send 20,000 RMB.

The following day, Nan’s daughter went to the prison. There, she learned that Nan was in critical condition and had been sent to a prison hospital, Xin’an Central Hospital in Xi’an, Shaanxi Province.

In the hospital, Nan quietly disclosed to his daughter that he was not being fed sufficiently in prison, which led to the worsening of his diabetes. A medical examination revealed that his blood sugar level had reached critical levels (14-15mmol/L, where usually, his blood sugar was recorded as 3-5mmol/L).

Nan had lost the ability to eat. He regurgitated any food he tried to eat. Nan’s daughter repeatedly requested authorities to transfer her father to another, better-equipped hospital. All requests for parole for medical reasons were denied. One authority replied to her request stating that treatment out of custody for diabetes will only be given in the case of blindness or foot rot.

On 7 February around 9 p.m., Nan’s family received a call from the prison. Nan Xiangming had died.

It was later revealed that Nan died after a lame rescue attempt. His blood sugar had been so high that he developed coronary heart disease. Nan’s family demanded justice. The Weinan Prison responded by paying the 8,000 RMB cremation fee.
When her daughter arrived to the station, Wu Xia communicated her burial wishes

In mid-August 2009, two friends and members of The Church of Almighty God were followed by authorities, arrested and brought to the Xiguan Police Station in Shuyang County, Suqian City. In connection to these arrests, the authorities discovered that one local woman, Wu Xia, was an active member of The Church of Almighty God.

Around 3 p.m. on 23 August, police from the Economic and Technological Development Zone Branch of the Suqian Public Security Bureau barged into Wu Xia’s home in the Sucheng District of Suqian City. Wu Xia was home alone. The police arrested her.

A few days later, the police requested Wu’s daughter and son-in-law to go to the Liyuan Police Station to urge Wu to provide information about other church members. The police were particularly interested in two church members that she had hosted, and they allegedly were asking about content on their computers.

When her children arrived, Wu Xia removed her jewelry and gave them to her daughter. She then communicated her wishes for her burial. She told them that the authorities had deprived her of sleep in order to force her to share information about other church members. She told them to not try to persuade her to talk because she would rather die than betray God. Her family understood that she was resolute and that the authorities would not release her.

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On 31 August, the police notified Wu’s family that she had been sent to the Suqian City People’s Hospital for an emergency treatment – her life was at risk. The family rushed to the hospital, but when they arrived they were denied access to Wu Xia by staff and authorities. After midnight, a doctor informed her family that they had failed to save her – Wu Xia had died.

The police then approached the family and warned them that if they told anyone that Wu Xia had been tortured to death, the government would come for their entire family. Scared, Wu Xia’s family did not complain or respond.

Later that evening, Wu’s body was taken to the morgue. The police called Wu’s close relatives to view the body before it would be prepared for cremation.
Her nephew, a law student, objected to the cremation and went to the Liyuan Police Station, the District Public Security Sub-Bureau, the Suqian Public Security Bureau, and the Provincial Department of Public Security to argue the case. All authorities replied in the same way – that Wu had died due to her illness and that the police were not responsible for her death. The authorities ensured her family that they would never find justice.

Determined, her nephew continued to escalate the case and said that if he could not win a lawsuit in China, he would take it overseas.

Out of fear of causing a stir, the police agreed to pay 300,000 RMB of restitution to Wu Xia’s family.
Deng Xiufen

Sent to a re-education through labour camp, all members of The Church of Almighty God were to wear a yellow card around their neck

On 26 September 2002, Shen Qiang, the Director of the Ouhai District Public Security Sub-bureau of Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province, and several other police authorities arrived at Deng Xiufen’s home. They arrested Deng after allegedly having received confidential reports confirming her belief in The Church of Almighty God and her possession of spiritual books. She was accused of “participating in an evil religious organisation” and “disturbing social order”. Without trial, the police sentenced her to re-education through labour for one year.

According to a cellmate of Deng’s, she was sent to the Moganshan Labour Re-education Camp in Zhejiang Province to serve her sentence. There, she was assigned to the seamstress group of the First Squadron, in the Second Brigade. In the re-education through labour camp, members of The Church of Almighty God were forced to wear a yellow card around their neck that stated “Special Disciplinary Control”. Such identification led to abuse, discrimination, and harsh treatment by the prison guards.

Deng’s cellmate recalls that they woke up every morning at 5:30 a.m. and were fed a small piece of bread and a bowl of poorly-cooked porridge. The prisoners were to work more than ten hours per-day without proper nutrition. With intensive labour, excessive physical exertion, and starvation, the prisoners were constantly in a state of debilitation and dizziness.

Those wearing a yellow card, had to work overtime. Deng Xiufen worked an additional two hours per day, her typical work day lasting a total of 14 hours. On most days, she did not arrive to the cafeteria in time for meals. Sometimes she was given cold leftover food, other days she was not given anything.

In addition to the 14 hours of forced labour, Deng was involuntarily sent to “forced conversion” programmes. If she did not meet satisfactory levels in her learning performance, she was punished.

Guards allowed Deng Xiufen and others bearing a yellow card to spend only 10 RMB per month, which was not enough for daily necessities, let alone extra food.

In such conditions, Deng Xiufen suffered immensely.
One night in early May 2003, Deng Xiufen returned to her dormitory after working overtime. She felt dizzy, nauseous, and uncomfortable. Deng Xiufen was squatting, gasping for air, her face red and her neck bulging. Her cellmate rushed to help her sit down on a chair. Deng was so weak, she was unable to speak. Her cellmate urgently called others to help carry Deng to the duty office to ask for medical care. The two exit doors leading to the office had been locked – the prisoners could not ask for help.

They sat Deng on a chair. Her body was profusely sweating and her hands were cold to the touch. Her cellmate was anxiously waiting for a guard to open the door.

Deng’s head suddenly fell hard to the right and her hands hung down, covered in sweat. When the guards eventually arrived, a prison doctor was casually called and leisurely arrived to the camp after 11 p.m. that night – three hours after the original call for help. Guards ordered prisoners to carry Deng Xiufen to the infirmary.

Some staff members quietly told prisoners that Deng was suffering from severe prostration. Deng would not survive – she had not been treated quickly enough.

An inmate later disclosed that she had witnessed the whole event from within the infirmary. When Deng arrived, there was no doctor in the room. The guards left Deng lying in the bed, motionless. Thirty minutes later, Li Ming, the secretary of the Second Brigade, arrived with the doctor. By that time, thirty-five year old Deng Xiufen had passed away.

Deng’s death certificate states the cause of death as myocardial infarction. It states that there was a timely rescue and a failed resuscitation attempt.

After Deng’s death, her cellmate, who also bore the yellow sign around her neck, was strictly monitored and disciplined. She was not allowed to speak about Deng’s death.
Shen Xiurong

Four hours after her arrest, Shen Xiurong mysteriously died after falling from a building

Around 11:30 a.m. on 6 March 2008, a chauffeur of the State Security Brigade of Pingyuan Public Security Bureau of Dezhou City drove a black car with two plain-clothed officers to the house of Shen Xiurong. In the car with the policemen was Yan, a 60-year-old male and member of The Church of Almighty God who had been arrested in the town of Qiancao in Pingyuan County.

Without providing identification or any documents, the two officers forced their way into Shen’s home and arrested her. They proceeded to ransack the house. They ultimately confiscated Shen’s CD player along with a CD that was inside the player. Shen was taken to the State Security Brigade of the Public Security Bureau of Pingyuan County.

When Shen and Yan arrived at the Pingyuan Public Security Bureau around 12:30 p.m., the police had Shen carry the confiscated CD player into the building. As she walked, she removed the CD from the player and snapped it into pieces. The police officers furiously yelled at her. Shen and Yan were then separated and interrogated.

Around 3 p.m. as Yan recalls, he heard a police officer stating that they must detain Shen.

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Shen’s husband arrived to their home around 12 p.m. Around 4 p.m., he received a call from his uncle, who worked at the Pingyuan County Court: Shen had fallen from the Public Security Bureau building and died. Her body was being held inside a freezer at the crematorium.

Shen had fallen headfirst from the third-story toilet window. Police from the Bureau claimed that she had committed suicide. Shen’s husband was not convinced and accused the police of killing Shen.

A forensic scientist ruled that suicide by falling from the third-story was not likely the cause of death.
On 10 March, Shen’s body was cremated and was buried five days later. Afterwards, the Pingyuan Public Security Bureau paid Shen’s family 220,000 RMB to keep the matter private and warned them to not pursue the matter further.
Wei Xiuyun

After six months in a coma due to torture, Wei Xiuyun died — then fifty police officers were sent to surround the hospital.

On 17 November 2014, Wei Xiuyun and her daughter-in-law were doing chores at home when two policemen from the Feidong County Public Security Bureau and Wei Bangfa, the Party Secretary of Longxi Village, Dianbu Town of Feidong County, forced their way into the house. Without producing any credentials or warrants, they arrested Wei Xiuyun.

Soon after, Liu Chao, the deputy secretary of the Feidong County Politics and Law Committee, and more than a dozen policemen arrived at Wei’s house.

Later that day when Wei’s husband arrived home after picking up their grandson from school, they were also arrested.

The police ransacked the house for two hours, seizing a copy machine, two boxes of paper, ink, four Mp5 players, two opera players for the senior, and six TF cards.

The police then escorted Wei, her husband, daughter-in-law, and grandson to the Feidong County Public Security Bureau.

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On the evening of 17 November, Wei and her husband were escorted to the Feidong County Hostel where they were separated and interrogated. At 6 p.m. the following evening, Wei was transferred to the Hefei Second Detention Center.

Three hours after being transferred, Wei’s son received a call from the Hefei City Second Detention Center stating that his mother was ill and had been sent to the Anhui Provincial Hospital for treatment.

Around 10 p.m., Wei’s son arrived to the hospital. Wei was in a coma. Her face was pale and puffy and her clothes were covered in vomit. The doctor informed her son that her coma was caused by a brainstem hemorrhage.
Wei was in a deep comatose vegetative state with signs of edema on her face and hands. Her life was dependent on a ventilator and a nasogastric tube which administered nutrients.

Two months later, when Wei’s daughter was combing her mother’s hair, she noticed a three-centimeter long scar above her right ear. Wei’s daughter asked the doctor if the scar was a result of torture. The doctor replied that the scar was from sleeping.

Wei Xiuyun remained in a coma for six months. Wei died in the hospital on 18 May 2015. The medical report issued by the hospital stated that her cause of death was visceral failure due to brainstem bleeding.

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On 19 May 2015, Wei’s family was preparing to send her body to the hospital morgue. Suddenly, Gao Yuanzhi, the director of the Hefei City Detention Center ruled that the family could not claim her body for she had died from unnatural causes. Five or six plain-clothed officers immediately arrived and attempted to take Wei’s body. Extremely upset, Wei’s daughter exclaimed that she would fight anyone who tried to take her mother away and that the authorities would not let her live in peace or die in peace. The police officers let Wei’s relatives send the remains to the hospital morgue.

As Wei’s family walked from the morgue to the hospital hall, they received a call from Tang, the political officer of Hefei City Detention Center. He informed the family that Wei’s body had been taken by officers from the Feidong County Public Security Bureau and sent to the Feidong County Funeral Home.

Wei’s husband saw fifty to sixty armed policemen around the entrance of the hospital – they had come prepared.

The authorities did not allow family members to review Wei’s remains at the funeral home.

On 10 December 2015, Huang Taohe, the Deputy Commander of the Feidong County Public Security Bureau’s National Security Brigade, together with Wei Bangfa met with Wei’s family to sign an agreement to cremate Wei’s body.

Wei’s family recalls that the agreement stated that Wei was arrested for her belief in The Church of Almighty God and had become ill during her incarceration. It added that she died in spite of an emergency treatment. The Feidong County Bureau compensated Wei’s family with 150,000 RMB, provided that no future appeal is allowed. Upon agreement, the body was returned to Wei’s family for cremation.
Xu Xinyao

Dead after prison guards requested prisoners to beat cellmate

On the afternoon of 10 December 2012, Xu Xinyao and two others were “preaching the gospel” to villagers of Yuanlei Village in Weinan City. Suddenly, five policemen from the Fengcun Police Station rushed to the scene, forcibly arresting and escorting them to the town police station.

The three members of The Church of Almighty God were handcuffed and interrogated while being slapped and kicked by police officers.

Around 7 p.m. that night, Xu and the two others were transferred to the State Security Brigade of the Dali County Public Security Bureau.

According to one of the two arrested alongside Xu, she could hear Xu being beaten during his interrogation. Around 11 p.m., the police detained the three in the Dali County Detention Center on the charge of “believing in a cult”. They were held in administrative detention for 15 days.

During this time, Xu refused to disclose his real name and address. This resulted in an extension of his detention until 22 January 2013.

On the morning of 7 January 2013 in No. 16 men’s cell, Xu Xinyao spewed foam and died.

According to a cellmate, prison guards had requested that prisoners beat Xu. Whenever Xu sang a religious song, cellmates would frantically beat him. On the morning of 7 January, Xu collapsed after being beaten by a gang of prisoners.

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In order to prevent news about the death from leaking out, the former cellmates of Xu were moved. Prisoners reported that guards move prisoners when they fear questioning of inmates by the Prosecutor’s Office. On 10 January, 2013, the detention center released The Church of Almighty God members who had, similar to Xu, had their sentences extended.

According to Xu’s family members, they received a call from an inmate, urging them to have Xu released on bail – he was being deprived of food, water, and was being beaten every day. Prior to this call, his family was not aware that Xu had been arrested and detained.

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His family urgently raised funds for his bail. However, before they had the chance to visit him, they received a call from the Dali County Public Security Bureau informing them to pick up Xu. The family rushed to the detention center where they were met by the director. He informed the family that Xu had suddenly passed out that morning and died after a failed rescue attempt – they could find his body in the Dali County Hospital morgue.

When Xu’s family arrived at the Hospital, two people from the City Procuratorate and 8 or 9 policemen from the detention center were waiting for them. The police only allowed two family members to enter the morgue and view the body. Xu’s brothers-in-law entered to view his remains. His body was clothed, but they could see that his face was severely bruised and contorted by pain. Both of his ears had ulcerations and his right ear looked green. They could make out a large bruise on his chest. They were certain that he had been beaten to death. They were not allowed to take photos of Xu’s body.

On 8 January, a group of thirty people gathered at the Dali County Detention Center to demand that Xu’s two children be permitted to view his body. The Detention Center rejected their request.

On 9 January, the police negotiated with Xu’s family. The officers claimed that the detention center was not responsible for anything, and said that they would pay the family 330,000 RMB if they agreed to sign an agreement acknowledging that Xu had died of illness and stopped their attempts to claim the body. The family had no option but to sign the agreement.

On 10 January 2013, Xu’s remains were cremated against the family’s wishes.
Zhang Mengling

Zhang was left cuffed and shackled on a chair for over two weeks

In August 2012, Zhang Mengling went to “preach the gospel” in Sichuan Province. Eight months later, on 2 April 2013, Zhang was at the home of his church friend, Wang Zhongzhi (alias), when nine policemen burst into the house. They arrested Zhang and conducted a search, confiscating books, evangelical materials, two SD cards, and mobile phones amongst other things. The police brought the two men to the Huaying City Public Security Bureau.

At the Huaying City Public Security Bureau, Zhang was ordered to sit on an iron chair with his hands and feet placed in iron rings attached to the arms and legs of the chair. Policemen Hu Yong and Deng Jie interrogated Zhang unsuccessfully.

The following day, Hu Yong and Deng Jie escorted Zhang to a “forced conversion” center in Wusheng County, Sichuan Province.

While there, Hu Yong and Deng Jie slapped Zhang across the face, punched him violently, and cuffed his hands asymmetrically behind his back. They continued to interrogate him, asking him questions about who he had preached to back in August 2012. Zhang refused to answer.

Hu Yong and Deng Jie placed Zhang in a chair; his feet were restrained in shackles and hands tightly cuffed behind the back of the chair. The handcuffs and shackles were so tight that his fingers and feet swelled immensely.

Zhang was left cuffed on the chair for over two weeks. The police officers deprived him of sleep. They threatened to torture him further if he did not answer their questions.

On 10 May, Hu Yong and Deng Jie transferred Zhang to the Huaying City Detention Center, where he was detained in cell number 21.

On 14 June, Zhang was formally arrested and transferred to cell number 15. In prison, he was forced to mop the floors and clean the toilets every day. For breakfast he was given a watery rice soup. For lunch and dinner he was given a small scoop of steamed rice with one spoonful of leafy vegetables. Hungry, Zhang was often dizzy. Some days, he could not get out of bed. Cellmates had to carry him to the toilet.
One night, while cleaning, Zhang passed out. He was unconscious for over four hours before coming to.

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On 9 September, Zhang’s case was heard in the Huaying City Court. During the trial, Zhang refused to admit that his religious beliefs were illegal. No sentence was announced.

On 18 November, 2013, Zhang was taken outside of the Huaying City Detention Center. A policeman read out-loud to Zhang: “Pursuant to Article 300 of the Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, Zhang Mengling is sentenced to three years in prison on the charge of ‘sabotaging the implementation of the laws by utilizing an evil religious organisation.’”

One month later, Zhang was sent to the Jiazhou Prison’s Fifth Prison Unit in Leshan City, Sichuan Province for imprisonment and labour reform. Zhang not only had to endure intensive labour, but also suffered severe verbal abuse from prison guards. On one occasion, he collapsed after a rapid increase in blood pressure. He was sent to the hospital where he remained unconscious for twenty-four hours. When he regained consciousness, he was taken back to work by prison guards.

When Zhang’s wife heard of his condition, she attempted to send him medication. The authorities however, did not allow medicine from outside in the prison. A total of 15,000 RMB was sent over three years. In that time, his family visited him twice. He had lost weight and had rapidly aged.

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On 9 May 2016, Zhang was released upon completing his sentence. His wife, son, and village party secretary picked him up from prison. On the way home, his blood pressure was extremely high – he could not walk. He was dizzy and vomited three times. Once home he took medication, but his blood pressure would not respond.

On 22 September, Zhang suffered a cerebral vascular rupture due to high blood pressure. He was rushed to the First People’s Hospital of Shangqiu City, but they were unsuccessful in saving him. Zhang Mengling died on 5 October 2016.
Liu Limei

After torture and years of surveillance and stalking, Liu Limei took her own life

On the evening of 17 July, 2009 Liu Limei and her husband were on their way home when they were surrounded by more than a dozen police officers. Led by Qiao Riwen, the Head of the National Security Brigade of Shuozhou City Public Security Bureau, and Mr. Xie, the division chief, the officers rushed towards Liu and grabbed her arms, one officer held her tightly by the neck and forced her into a car. The police then escorted her to an underground room in the Shuozhou City Public Security Bureau.

Mr. Xie showed a search warrant to Liu’s husband before ransacking the house with the other officers. They confiscated 2 laptops, a DVD player, 2 computer cases, 2 MP3 players, more than ten spiritual books, and over sixty spiritual CDs. According to a colleague of the police, they had monitored Liu’s phone and learned that she had hosted senior leaders of The Church of Almighty God.

While in detention, Liu Limei was interrogated by Qiao Riwen and two police officers named Gao Rihua and Zhang Lingjuan. For two days and three nights, the police deprived Liu of sleep and forced her to remain in a half-squatting position for extended periods of time. Liu collapsed to the ground several times. She had preexisting medical ailments including an irregular pulse, gastritis, and lumbar disc protrusion.

The officers verbally insulted Liu and made threats regarding her children’s future and elderly parents. They interrogated her for nine days straight. Liu never surrendered to their questions.

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On 26 July, Liu Limei was released on bail at the request of her family. Her case was transferred to the Xinkai Branch of the Shuozhou Public Security Bureau, which extorted 50,000 RMB from Liu’s family.

Although released on bail, Liu was not allowed to leave the city and was forced to regularly report to the authorities, to write ideological reports, and to always be on call.

Her family’s phones were tapped and she remained under surveillance by the authorities. There were often cars parked near her house, or people waiting outside her house or office, they would follow her whenever she left her house.
Over the following months, the director of the Xinkai Branch, Wang Junwu, and Liu Runfang, a police officer, would regularly arrive at her workplace to interrogate her. Liu’s superiors at work often reprimanded her and colleagues ridiculed her. She was eventually forced to resign.

Ten months later, the police installed a surveillance camera on the wall of Liu’s neighbour’s house to monitor Liu around the clock. Over the following years, officers often burst into her house and interrogated her. Liu’s family lived under terror.

The tension and fear lead to Liu becoming depressed. She suffered from severe insomnia and was no longer cheerful and extraverted herself. She had become reticent and reserved. Coupled with the physical torture she had suffered, Liu’s mental and physical health deteriorated.

In June 2014, authorities executed mass arrests of The Church of Almighty God members. After hearing this, Liu Limei left her house and went into hiding. She hid in a small house of less than 60 square meters in Shanyin County, Shuozhou City.

When Gao Rihua learned that she had left home, she interrogated her husband but he denied knowing of her whereabouts.

In the small house, Liu Limei suffered extreme mental pressure. She was fearful and restless. She did not dare leave the house during the day or turn on the lights at night. She did not cook out of fear that she would be discovered and reported. Her husband did not visit her out of fear of being followed. Occasionally at night he would meet Liu to give her daily necessities.

Liu Limei became extremely thin and emotionally unstable as she waited, fearfully alone in the small house.

On 16 November 2014, Liu Limei committed suicide by jumping into a river in Lüliang City, Shanxi Province.
It is no secret that freedom of religion or belief is not respected or tolerated in China, and it is no secret that torture is rampant throughout the country. The international community needs to work on solutions for these problems – to hold accountable the people who play a role in torture.

From the accounts that have been collected, we can identify that the following individuals played a part in the suffering and death of Church of Almighty God members in China:

Jiang Xiangang
Li Linzhi, Jiudian Town police
Yang Zhilei, Jiudian Town police
Zheng Shantang, Jiudian Town police
Gong Yuebing, Shandong Huantai County Public Security Bureau
Zhao Youpeng, Aksu Public Security Bureau
Shi Jianye, Political Security Section of the Qinyuan Public Security Bureau
Hao Mingzhu, former Qinyuan County Detention Center, National Security Brigade
Yu Hongchao, Xinmi City Public Security Bureau’s National Security Brigade
Shen Ke, Xinmi City Public Security Bureau
Wang Lei, Xinmi City Public Security Bureau
Bai Shuangfeng, Xinmi City Public Security Bureau
Ma Zhihong, National Security Brigade of Linzhou Public Security Bureau in Anyang
Yang Chao, Junma Township Police, Liquan County
Shen Qiang, Ouhai District Public Security Sub-bureau, Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province
Wei Bangfa, Party Secretary, Longxi Village, Dianbu Town, Feidong County
Liu Chao, Feidong County Politics and Law Committee
Gao Yuanzhi, Hefei City Detention Center
Huang Taohe, Feidong County Public Security Bureau’s National Security Brigade
Hu Yong, Huaying City Public Security Bureau
Deng Jie, Huaying City Public Security Bureau
Qiao Riwen, Shuozhou City Public Security Bureau’s National Security Brigade
Mr. Xie, Shuozhou City Public Security Bureau’s National Security Brigade
Gao Rihua, Shuozhou City Public Security Bureau
Zhang Lingjuan, Shuozhou City Public Security Bureau
Wang Junwu, Shuozhou City Public Security Bureau, Xinkai Branch
Liu Runfang, Shuozhou City Public Security Bureau, Xinkai Branch

Discussing human rights in China is not an easy task. Although torture is wide-spread and systematic, one must not turn a blind eye and deem it ‘impossible’ to ameliorate the situation. Identifying individuals involved in torture in China provides multiple opportunities for policy makers and human rights activists.
To demand that China investigate these individuals and their colleagues, and show proof of such investigations, could serve as an initial step to decreasing the rate of torture in China, particularly for members of The Church of Almighty God and those alike.

To publicly condemn or place sanctions on these individuals is another method that policy makers can use to gain justice for those killed while in the custody of Chinese authorities.

In conclusion, The Church of Almighty God members in China have faced unsurmountable forms of torture. Holding one another accountable for violations of international laws is an important feature of the international political system, and for guaranteeing human rights. As global politics and figures change, so too must the channels for accountability.