

## Table of Contents

- [After 15 years of hardship in China, Chen Min fled to Spain](#)
- [Forced to flee China due to religious persecution: the case of Li Jie](#)
- [Gong Dazhi: Fled religious persecution in China, now waiting for refugee status in Spain since 2017](#)
- [From China to Spain to flee discriminatory arrests and torture](#)

---

## Religious Freedom Awards 2020 recognizes three Spanish Professors

***"Mejora Foundation awards three prestigious teachers in the 7th Edition of the Religious Freedom Awards"***



The European Times (26.11.2020) - <https://bit.ly/3q65laj> - The **Church of Scientology Foundation for the Improvement of Life, Culture and Society**, in consultative status with the United Nations since 2019, presented the **Religious Freedom Awards**, in the form of a Tizona sword, to **Prof. Dr. Alejandro Torres, Prof. Dr. Rafael Valencia and Prof. Dr. Catalina Pons-Estel**, in an online ceremony attended by **Prof. Dr. Mercedes Murillo, Director of Religious Freedom of the Spain's Ministry of Presidency (Prime Minister's Office)**.

MEJORA DE LA VIDA, LA CULTURA Y LA SOCIEDAD

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AWARDS 2020

PREMIOS DE LIBERTAD RELIGIOSA

21 NOV 2020 - 18:30 EN DIRECTO

Dr. Alejandro Torres Sutiérrez  
Religious Freedom Awards 2020

Dra. Catalina Pons-Estel Tugores  
Religious Freedom Awards 2020

Dr. Rafael Valencia Candalija  
Religious Freedom Awards 2020

FUNDACIÓN PARA LA MEJORA DE LA VIDA, LA CULTURA Y LA SOCIEDAD

LA FUNDACIÓN PARA LA MEJORA DE LA VIDA, LA CULTURA Y LA SOCIEDAD, ES UNA ENTIDAD INSCRITA CON EL Nº 1780 EN EL REGISTRO DE FUNDACION, Y CUENTA CON EL RECONOCIMIENTO DE ONG CON ESTATUS CONSULTIVO ESPECIAL ANTE EL CONSEJO ECONOMICO Y SOCIAL DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS DESDE 2019

(c) Copyright 2020. Todos los derechos reservados.

The ceremony, inaugurated by **Ivan Arjona**, President of the European Office of the Church of Scientology for Public Affairs and Human Rights, and **Isabel Ayuso**, Secretary General of the **Mejora Foundation**, began with the viewing of two videos regarding the right to freedom of thought, religion and conscience (one of them based on the works of **L. Ron Hubbard's** book "The Way to Happiness"), as well as a music video by international artists such as **Chick Corea** with a message of "**Spread a Smile and not something else**", very suitable for the times of health crisis that are being experienced worldwide.

Following this, **Mercedes Murillo, Director of Religious Liberty for the Ministry of the Presidency**, addressed the award winners and attendees at this online ceremony, saying, "**Once again this year the Church of Scientology Foundation is presenting its Religious Freedom Awards, a pioneering initiative, and so it is also appropriate for another year to recognize and appreciate this opportunity to bring together people concerned about this right around the world**"

**Murillo** continued by saying "**we are meeting this afternoon to present some well-deserved awards to three recognized specialists in this field whom I would like to congratulate**" words after which the master of ceremonies went on to present the winners, who personally thanked the Fundación Mejora, of the Church of Scientology, for the award received and for the initiative that seeks to encourage people to promote and defend freedom of conscience.

Isabel Ayuso, Secretary General of Foundation, in her presentation said of these awardees that "**they are the heroes of our times**"... "**they have changed the battleground for the classroom, the swords for the quill... on a real battle for freedom**".

The first winner of the celebration was **Prof. Dr. Alejandro Torres Gutiérrez**, Full Professor of Law at the **Public University of Navarra** with an incredible production of publications and professor in the field of religious freedom. His publications are focused on the study of the financing and tax system of religious denominations, models of Church-State relations in Spain, Austria, Portugal and France, the status of minorities and multiculturalism in the United States, Canada and Austria. In his acceptance speech he left, among other messages, messages such as "**the study of freedom of conscience is still relevant because we should not have fewer rights as a result of being less**"... "**in a society like ours in which there is still much violence for religious reasons I understand that the study of tolerance is important**"... "**the protection of diversity is key in a state like ours in which all possible interpretations of the universe have a place as long as they respect the ethical minimum of which we all participate in a democratic society**".

After which, Arjona gave the following Tizona to **Prof. Dr. Rafael Valencia Candalija**, currently Professor of Ecclesiastical Law at the **University of Seville** and that in addition to having opened religious diversity in Spain in a practical way to thousands of law students, will soon be publishing a book on Religious Freedom in Football, a pioneering prism in the field. Prof. Valencia said at the ceremony that "**there is no prize today for an professor of religious freedom law giving a greater hope and joy as a recognition for protecting religious freedom**" ... "**we must continue to fight, therefore we must continue to work in defense of religious freedom ... for those situations that violate this great right that occupies us and above all, we must continue to seek and continue to establish proposals for a better protection of the good, that is our work, and that should be our mission**".

And in this 2020, 40th Anniversary of the Law of Religious Freedom, could not miss an award for Prof. Dr. Catalina Pons-Estel Tugores, from the University of the Balearic Islands, who in addition to teaching this subject since 1997, this year has completed a series of lectures reviewing and commenting on the current Spanish law with the vision of both minor and major religious entities, as well as professionals in the field both scholars and government officials, which she has brought to the general public in addition to classrooms. In her acceptance speech, **Prof. Pons-Estel** explained that **“religious freedom is a very current subject, a subject that is very much alive and close to all citizens” ... “although we have all taken for granted the importance of the fundamental right of religious freedom, in these times in which everything seems to be in crisis, it never hurts to remember the importance of these rights that have cost us so much to achieve and guarantee”**.

The ceremony was recorded online and can be accessed on the Foundation’s social networks and [HERE](#).

The event also had space for a statement by the **Director of Religious Freedom of the Ministry of the Presidency**, to remind citizens about the current health situation: *“I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the responsibility that all religious entities have had in this situation to limit their various forms of worship and replace them with other ways of providing spiritual care to their faithful ... Therefore, I appreciate this task that they have been developing and that has not only maintained the possibility of meeting those who share their beliefs, but also in a difficult situation I know that all have maintained their solidarity activities towards the most vulnerable”*.

---

## **After 15 years of hardship in China, Chen Min fled to Spain**

HRWF (14.07.2020) - Chen Min<sup>1</sup> escaped several arrest attempts by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) but was detained twice. The CCP’s repression tore her family apart: her husband divorced her on good terms and, for the sake of their children, she had ‘to disappear’. In 2015 she fled to Spain. However, due to her arrests in China she cannot return to obtain the necessary documentation for her immigration application. She was left no choice but to file for asylum, and her case is still pending.

Chen Min is from China’s Henan Province. She joined The Church of Almighty God (CAG)<sup>2</sup> in 1998. She shared her experience of persecution in China with *Human Rights Without Frontiers* during an interview.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a pseudonym. The real name of this asylum-seeker is known to HRWF.

<sup>2</sup> The CAG is a new religious movement that has only gained visibility outside of China due to thousands of its members fleeing and applying for refugee status in Europe and North America. It has been defamed by Chinese propaganda and, as a fast-growing movement, it is perceived as a competitor by Protestant Churches inside and outside of China, which present its theology as heresy.

The CAG releases periodic statistics on its website (<https://www.holyspiritspeaks.org>). According to this source, between 2011 and 2013 more than 300,000 members were arrested. These figures are not inconceivable if one factors in the frequent references to ‘successful’ campaigns against the CAG in Chinese anti-*xie-jiao* propaganda and other official sources. The Church also reports that many of its members were tortured, and that some have died while in custody under suspicious circumstances.

According to official Chinese sources, the number of CAG members had reached approximately four million members by 2014. However, this figure is disputed by scholars who argue that it is inflated.

### ***Detained for 18 days and extorted 6,000 USD***

“On 20 December 2001, when my two children and I were having lunch, out of the blue, the National Security Brigade (NSB) chief and three other officers broke into my house. They stormed through every room and turned the house upside down in their search. They found a Bible and a notebook on spiritual devotions and then took me to a Public Security Office.

The NSB chief commanded me to sit on a tiger bench and cuffed my hands into two iron hoops. They tried to extract information about Church leaders and assets from me. An officer used an electric baton to shock me. On seeing the baton sparking and hearing the awful cracking sound, I prayed to God, asking Him to keep my heart. When the officer was about to shock me, they received a phone call warning them to hurry. They were informed that my family had used their connections to get help. The NSB decided to send me to the detention house, so they could instead extort money from us.

I was detained in a small, dark, and smelly room, that was less than 15m<sup>2</sup> (about 160 ft<sup>2</sup>) in size. It was already crowded with 27 other inmates. One of them was also a CAG member. She had been stripped naked several times, and then kept in the freezing cold outside. During my own detention I was interrogated six times. 18 days later, the CCP police extorted more than 40,000 RMB (about 6,000 USD) from my family before releasing me on bail, pending trial.”

### ***Divorced due to the “guilt by association” policy***

“In China, family members of religious people are seen to be affiliated, and, thus, will also be targeted by the CCP. Their rights to schooling, jobs, and travel can all be restricted, and they are often no longer promoted at work. On 25 April 2017, my husband asked me, ‘Is it possible for you to stop believing in God? If so, then we can work together for a better life. If not, I am afraid I will have to file for divorce. My work is going to promote a group of people soon, and I do not want to be associated with your faith and lose an opportunity like this again.’ The idea that my husband was left with no choice but to propose a divorce, broke my heart. I understood his difficulties but could not give up my faith. Sadly, we had to agree to get an official divorce.”

### ***A narrow escape***

“In June 2009, someone reported that I had been sharing the gospel. The police came to my store to arrest me. They lied to the store clerk, claiming that they wanted to talk to me about a purchase plan of several hundreds of towels. When I entered the supermarket using the backdoor, I could see four men standing at the store counter. I recognized one of them as an officer who had arrested me the first time. I realized the danger I was in of further torture and detention and so I fled. After this narrow escape I dared not to return home. Instead I moved from place to place, staying with relatives, or living in rental apartments.

Eight months later, after seeing that I was living in hiding and unable to live a normal life or manage my business, my ex-husband used his connections and bribed the police 3,6000 RMB (about 5,000 USD) to settle my case.”

---

They believe this over-estimation is used by the CCP as justification for the urgent need to persecute the CAG.

### ***Detained 28 days and extorted 23,000 USD***

“On the morning of 6 May 2011, when three sisters and I were in a worship meeting, six police officers barged in unexpectedly. Without showing any credentials, they began to search the premise. After a policewoman found my ID card in my bag, she shouted excitedly, ‘We have been to your home several times and we can finally arrest you today.’ They confiscated all our religious books and compact discs, handcuffed the four of us, and took us to a Police Station.

There, the police threatened me about my two children’s prospects in attempts to get information regarding church leaders and assets. They told me that if I were sentenced, my children’s futures would be ruined. They would be disqualified from taking college entrance exams. Since I still refused to say anything they sent me to a detention center where I was interrogated nine times. After twenty-eight days of detention, I was released. It was two days before the college entrance examination day for my children.

I found out that to enable my children to take part in the college entrance exams, release me and have my previous arrest records deleted, my family had paid off the police with 158,000 RMB (about 23,000 USD). My ex-husband told me that he had had no other choice but to write in their School Admission Papers that ‘their mother had died’ in order to prevent any future issues for our children. As heartbreaking as it was to lose my children, there was little I could do but agree.”

### ***Forced to live abroad***

“In December 2012, the CCP arrested CAG Christians nationwide. Over a dozen members were arrested from my local congregation. One day, my ex-husband explained to me that he believed there was nothing wrong with me believing in God, but that it was wrong to believe in God while living in China. He suggested that I move to a country in the West where people are able to enjoy religious freedom.

In June 2015, I received an EU Tourist Visa and came to Spain. I then bought a house, but to finalize my immigration I needed to go back to China to obtain a Certificate of Deposit. Just when I was about to leave, I received news that the CCP was going to re-arrest all CAG members with prior arrests, and then re-sentence them. I have never returned to China since learning that, and so I was unable to apply for my Permanent Residence Permit. I had no choice but apply for Asylum. I now have an Interim Residence Permit and am awaiting a decision on my case.”

---

## **Forced to flee China due to religious persecution: the case of Li Jie**

HRWF (14.07.2020) – Li Jie<sup>3</sup> was transporting religious books in 2006 when he was stopped by armed police, arrested and tortured. Fortunately, he managed to escape. He then lived on the run to avoid another arrest until 2016 when he fled China and sought asylum in a democratic country.

---

<sup>3</sup> This is a pseudonym. The real name of this asylum-seeker is known to HRWF.

Li Jie, who is from Shandong Province in eastern China and joined The Church of Almighty God (CAG)<sup>4</sup> in 1999, shared his experiences of religious persecution in China with *Human Rights Without Frontiers* during an interview.

### **Stopped by armed police**

"On 7 August 2006, we loaded a truck with 20 boxes of books of Almighty God's words<sup>5</sup> in Shandong Province's Rizhao City, which were scheduled to be transported to a congregation in another province. When we reached a toll station in Pizhou City, Jiangsu Province, five or six armed police officers stopped us. They forced the driver to open the container door to search the contents. As soon as they saw that the title of the books in the crates was *The Word Appears in the Flesh*, they phoned their superior to report it. They then took us and the truck to the police station."

### **Eight officers tortured him**

"At the Police Station, officers searched me and confiscated my money (700 RMB or 100 USD in cash), as well as my notebook which contained handwritten phone numbers. They destroyed my trousers in the process. The officers fiercely interrogated me about where I came from, where we had printed the books, and demanded to know where they were destined to go. Seeing that I would not say anything, the chief of the Police Station pointed at my head and angrily said, 'Do not think that the Government is a loving entity. You, believers in Almighty God, deserve harsh punishment.' Their interrogation lasted four hours, but it yielded no results. Consequently, they called the local Public Security Bureau to take over my case.

At around 9:00pm a man in his fifties came in. Under his command, eight officers took turns torturing me in an attempt to force me to speak. They first demanded that I stand in a half squat. As it was August, and scorching hot in Jiangsu, I sweated profusely, wetting the ground under my feet. After about half an hour, I was so exhausted that I collapsed onto the floor, unable to stand up.

They then instructed me to sit on the floor with my two legs stretched out straight and a straight back. If I moved, they kicked and beat me as punishment. Since I had still refused to talk, they took a stainless-steel instrument with an iron head and a spring. They violently beat my toes and ankles, causing a tremendous pain. Even to this day, the skin around my ankles is dark and numb.

Next, they sprayed a liquid with a very strong odor into my eyes, causing immense pain and for me to tear heavily. It felt like my eyes were burning. Later, with a fully

---

<sup>4</sup> The CAG is a new religious movement that has only gained visibility outside of China due to thousands of its members fleeing and applying for refugee status in Europe and North America. It has been defamed by Chinese propaganda and, as a fast-growing movement, it is perceived as a competitor by Protestant Churches inside and outside of China, which present its theology as heresy.

The CAG releases periodic statistics on its website.<sup>4</sup> According to this source, between 2011 and 2013 more than 300,000 members were arrested. These figures are not inconceivable if one factors in the frequent references to 'successful' campaigns against the CAG in Chinese anti-*xie-jiao* propaganda and other official sources. The Church also reports that many of its members were tortured, and that some have died while in custody under suspicious circumstances.

According to official Chinese sources, the number of CAG members had reached approximately four million members by 2014. However, this figure is disputed by scholars who argue that it is inflated. They believe this over-estimation is used by the CCP as justification for the urgent need to persecute the CAG.

<sup>5</sup> In the CAG theology, the Almighty God is their (female) spiritual leader, the reincarnation of Jesus-Christ.

charged electric baton stick, an officer shocked my shoulders and knees. The torture I endured from these nine officers caused tremendous agony.”

### ***A narrow escape***

“The next morning, two officers took me into a separate room. They twisted my arms behind my back, tied my thumbs together with a thin cotton string, and told me to squat between two sofas near the wall. I knew that I would soon face more severe torture, and so I kept praying silently to be able to escape.

Out of the corner of my eye I observed how the door of the room was opened and closed. At the same time, I tried to pry my thumbs loose. To my surprise and joy that seemed to work. One of the two officers on guard then left the room, leaving only a young officer to keep an eye on me. This officer kept dozing off while sitting on the bed in the room. I was hoping to escape while he was napping.

However, just when I thought it might be possible, he seemed to notice something was wrong and moved a chair so as to sit directly in front of me, with his feet on one of the sofas to prevent me from leaving. I felt my heart in my throat because soon it would be lunch time and I would lose this window of opportunity to escape. Luckily, it wasn't long before he began to snore. That is when I built up the courage to creep over him and, as quietly as I could, leave the room. To my horror, the door slammed shut behind me. After I realized the young officer was still sleeping, I breathed a huge sigh of relief. There was no one in the corridor and so I was able to walk out of the police station without being stopped. This is how I escaped the CCP and return home safely.

About two months later, fellow members of the CAG informed me that the CCP was asking about my whereabouts, and that I had to go into hiding as soon as possible. It left me with no choice, I had to leave my home and start to live as a fugitive.”

### ***Forced to flee China***

“After eight years of living in hiding, in 2014, the CCP falsely attributed the so called ‘May 28 Shandong Zhaoyuan Murder Case’<sup>6</sup> to the CAG. The CCP mobilized the armed police, as well as the army, and conducted the ‘One Hundred Day Battle’ nationwide to repress and arrest CAG members. I learned from my family that people were asking about my whereabouts. My village’s Party Secretary had already reported me to the municipal township authorities. Later, I received word that many CAG members in my village had been arrested. I did not dare return home again.

It took another two years of living on the run before I managed to get a Passport and flee to Spain in August 2016, seeking asylum. In late September, my case was heard by the refugee board. Now, in 2020, I am still awaiting a decision from the Government.”

---

<sup>6</sup> In 2014, the CCP falsely accused members of the CAG of being responsible for a homicide that occurred at a McDonald’s in Zhaoyuan, Shandong Province. The CCP used all of the media outlets under its control to attack, defame, and slander the CAG. In 2017, Dr Massimo Introvigne investigated this criminal case and uncovered the CCP’s deliberate deception in an article published in [The Journal of Cesnur](#).

# **Gong Dazhi: Fled religious persecution in China, now waiting for refugee status in Spain since 2017**

## ***The case of Gong Dazhi, a member of the Church of Almighty God***

### ***Human Rights Without Frontiers calls upon the Spanish authorities to grant refugee status immediately to believers of all faiths that are persecuted in China***

HRWF (28.05.2020) – After thirteen years of harrowing persecution in China due to being a member of The Church of Almighty God, Gong Dazhi, 41, shared his story with HRWF. He was detained and subjected to horrific torture until 2017 when he fled to Spain and applied for asylum. To this day, he is waiting to hear whether he will be recognised as a political refugee or not.

### ***Arrested and tortured in 2003***

“On 15 March 2003, I was arrested in Jilin Province because of my faith in The Church of Almighty God and my evangelism activities. While detained, I was tortured and then sentenced to one year of so-called ‘re-education’ through labour.

On the day of my arrest, I was reported to the police by passers-by for preaching the gospel with an elderly sister. The police confiscated our books and took us to the Jingyue Town Police Station in Erdao District, Changchun City, Jilin Province. That was where my first experience of torture occurred.

The policemen put hoods over our heads, handcuffed us and took us to a secret interrogation room. They put me on a tiger bench, twisted and lifted my arms behind my back, and then placed my arms on the iron rail at the top of the tiger bench. They handcuffed my wrists in that position and tied a white nylon rope to the chain between the handcuffs. They also tied my feet to the tiger bench with another rope.

A young officer slapped me hard in the face. A middle-aged policeman yanked the nylon rope connected to my handcuffs while simultaneously stomping on the rope attached to my feet. The handcuffs pulled on my wrists so tightly that it felt like the metal was cutting through my bones.

The officers attempted to force me to identify and denounce my fellow brothers and sisters in the church. When I refused, they placed two thick white plastic bags over my head and tightened them around my neck. One officer repeatedly punched my chest while another treaded hard on the rope connected to the handcuffs at the same time.

I was being suffocated while experiencing excruciating pain. I struggled and, in the process, managed to free my feet from the rope. I twisted my feet around the chair legs, trying to tear the plastic bags with my teeth so that I could breathe. Despite my best attempts, I failed to create a hole and subsequently passed out.

The police revived me by pouring cold water on me. When I came to, gasping for breath, they interrogated me about the church. Again, I refused to tell them anything, and so they put the plastic bags back over my head and trod harder on the rope tied to my handcuffs. I fainted again from a lack of oxygen. They repeatedly tortured me in this way until they were exhausted.”

### ***Tortured and sentenced***

"The next evening, the police took me to Daguang Detention Center of Changchun Municipal Public Security Bureau. After seven days of detention and torture I was charged with 'disturbing the social order' and sentenced to one year of so-called 're-education' through labour. I was sent to the Chaoyanggou Labour Camp in Changchun City to serve my sentence."

### ***Tortured again and subjected to inhumane labour***

"At the camp, the guards often instigated other prisoners into torturing me. I was forced to carry out intense physical labour every day that year without pay. I was woken up at 5 am every day and had to work until midnight. If I couldn't finish the compulsory tasks within the stipulated time, I would be subjected to severe beatings.

Additionally, the prison guards and inmate boss often forced me to handwash clothes and sheets for them, even when the temperature of the winter in Jilin Province was colder than minus 20 degrees Celsius. The water was icy and it took two or three hours to do the washing, which created great pain in the joints of my fingers.

If I stood in the wrong line at the cafeteria, the inmate boss would punish me by forcing me to bend down until my head touched the iron pipe at the corner and lift my hands as high as I could from my back. I would have to stay in this position for a prolonged period of time. They would also hit my mouth hard with a 30 cm long bamboo plate. I lived in constant fear.

After my release in 2004, I had to go into hiding, moving from place to place, because the police were searching for me."

### ***Forced to flee China***

After living in hiding and nonstop fear for 13 years, Gong Dazhi fled China "to freely practice my faith", as he said to HRWF. He arrived in Spain in February 2017. He now has an interim residence permit and is waiting for a final decision on his asylum application. He says: "I'm often afraid that I may be sent back to China where I have suffered so much persecution by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government. I do not want to experience that ever again."

### ***HRWF Comment***

Since Xi Jinping came into power in 2012, the Chinese Government has dramatically escalated the persecution of Christians and other religions.

HRWF's Database of Prisoners in China is regularly updated. At the time of writing, it has documented over 4,000 cases where members of The Church of Almighty God are imprisoned. This figure is estimated to be only the tip of the iceberg.

See HRWF's Prisoners' Database here: <https://hrwf.eu/hrwf-prisoners-database-china/>.

---

## **From China to Spain to flee discriminatory arrests and torture**

***The case of Zhang Wenbo, a member of the Church of Almighty God***

***Human Rights Without Frontiers calls upon the Spanish authorities to grant refugee status to believers of all faiths that are persecuted in China.***

HRWF (27.05.2020) - In December 2019, **Zhang Wenbo**, 50, landed in Spain after escaping the "Chinese Communist paradise" where he had spent nearly his entire life. He hopes to start a new life in this safe haven, where he is free to practice his religion without fear. About 600 asylum seekers from China who fled harsh religious persecution are still waiting for Madrid to recognise them as refugees. Spain has not threatened to deport any of them, but it has not granted them political asylum either.

Zhang Wenbo was born in a Christian family in Henan province, one of the cradles of Chinese civilization. As an adult he converted to The Church of Almighty God, and he has now been a member of it for 22 years. He was arrested twice by the Chinese police in 2003 and 2012 due to his missionary activities inside the country. Both times, he was subjected to inhumane torture and nearly killed.

He shared his experience of religious persecution in China with *Human Rights Without Frontiers* (HRWF):

***Arrested and tortured in 2003***

"I was arrested for the first time because of my faith in 2003. Over a dozen police officers surrounded the place where four of us were worshipping. We were apprehended and tortured to reveal the names of our church leaders. I was forced into painful positions for prolonged periods of time, such as half squatting. Additionally, they shone a 1000-watt spotlight into my eyes which caused severe pain in my head, but they would beat me if I closed my eyes.

After this incident, the police visited my furniture shop frequently. They would ask me whether I continued believing in God. Sometimes they would take me to the police station and try to force me to revoke my faith. To evade potential arrest and further persecution from the Communist Party of China (CCP), I had no choice but to go into hiding."

***Arrested again and tortured in 2012***

"On 17 December 2012, the director of Tongren City Public Security Bureau and over a dozen officers discovered our hiding place. They confiscated more than 10 cellphones, 6,000 RMB (about 850 USD) in cash and a deposit book. They then took me to the Bijiang District Police Station of Tongren City, where they interrogated me about our church leaders. As I refused to cooperate, they slapped me in the face, punched me and kicked me. I was assaulted to the point that I felt dizzy and pain all over.

Over the course of 16 days, I was subjected to torture as the officers tried to force me to talk. I was taken to the basement of the police station for the so-called 'swing treatment'. While handcuffed, I was hung on a door frame so that my feet were no longer touching the ground. They tied my feet to a rope and then, for an hour and a half, they swung my legs back and forth. This caused excruciating pain in my wrists and blackened my hands.

Since I still refused to betray our church leaders, they then laid me on the ground and hit my back, waist and shoulders with a 70 cm long steel tube, fracturing my ribs. I was then forced to kneel, and this steel tube was rolled over my calves. This was so painful that I thought it was crushing my knees and ankles.

Then, one of my handcuffed wrists was hung high above my head on the wall, so that only one of my feet could touch the ground, whilst the other hand was tied around my back. This meant I was hanging from one arm and barely standing on one leg, and so I could neither stand or squat down.

On 3 January 2013, I was transferred to Bijiang District Detention Center in Tongren City. I was detained there for an additional 13 days.

During my detention, I was fed minimally. Other inmates often abused me and beat me up due to instigation from the guards. Also, at one point, the authorities forced me into a wooden chair and stabbed my genitals with a long iron awl.

On 26 January 2013, my family and friends from the church used their connections to obtain my release on bail. My freedom was bought with 16,000 RMB (about 2,290 USD), although the standard fee was registered as only 3,000 RMB (about 430 USD).

To this day I have not recovered from this torture. It traumatized me and created long-term physical damage to the extent that now I am unable to do any physical labor."

***Under constant threat of a new arrest: no choice but to flee***

"After my release in 2013, I was under strict surveillance by the police. I had to report to them every month and they threatened and interrogated me on a regular basis.

Between 2013 and 2018, I was always on the run, moving from place to place and living in constant fear and pain. While preaching in Sanmenxia City of Henan Province in 2013, I was reported to the police and narrowly escaped arrest. In 2016, I was questioned by the police in Yiyang City. Ultimately, I realized that I had no alternative but to leave China if I wanted to live according to my faith.

In December 2019, I managed, with great difficulty, to obtain a passport and flee to Spain. I submitted my asylum application and received an interim residence permit. In February 2020, my case was heard by the refugee board. Now I'm awaiting the decision from the Spanish government."

*HRWF Comment: During his interview with HRWF, he disclosed many more details about additional sexual torture that he was subjected to.*