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China weakens itself by suppressing civil society and silencing independent voices

Unconstrained by civil society and democratic institutions, Xi Jinping has set China on a dangerous course.

A commentary by Aaron Rhodes and Cheryl Yu

[RFA](#) (09.03.2023) - Chinese leaders aspire to global economic, political, and even spiritual leadership. But unless the Chinese Communist Party relaxes its suffocating restrictions on civil society, Chinese citizens won't be able to fulfill their creative and human potential. Without independent assessments of the utility and moral integrity of its policies, no government can understand its errors and make changes, and keep its own power in check.

Free access to information strengthens society, but in 2017, Chinese leader Xi Jinping [explained](#) that "the [CCP] manages the media by putting all media at all levels under the leadership of the party."

Censorship disadvantages the Chinese people in comparison to their counterparts in democratic societies. They are deprived of full access to scientific facts, historical and social scientific research, and the humanistic contributions and political debates that broaden our thinking and allow informed reflection on the challenges and possibilities of life in society. Instead, most of the Chinese people have access only to what the state allows. All public information and opinion are shaped in ways that putatively ensure the stability of the regime, not reflecting the objective reality of events.

Xi, now safely ensconced in a third term as top leader of the Communist Party, is using this year's session of China's rubber-stamp parliament, the National People's Congress, to push [structural changes](#) that would tighten party control over security, intelligence, scientific and technological institutions, as well as over financial institutions--consolidating more political power in his hands. This will also choke the flow of information.

In free societies, schools and universities have been incubators for new ideas and techniques, and for the development of individual character. But in China, education and research at all levels has been co-opted to control the people's knowledge and understanding through propaganda, according to official directives on "[adhering to political standards](#)" and "[strengthening and improving ideological and political work](#)" at the primary, secondary, and university levels.

Xi's support for "[think tanks with Chinese characteristics](#)" serves as an evidence for the suppression of independent research and thought. According to an Opinion [published](#) in 2015, the basic principle is to "adhere to the Party's leadership." In August 2019, an independent think tank promoting economic liberalism and constitutional democracy was [shut down](#) because it was deemed "unregistered and unauthorized."

Clearly, the CCP-ruled government is afraid of independent research and thought it cannot control. Since its release in November last year, [ChatGPT](#), an artificial intelligence application, has amassed over 100 million users, and aroused a flurry of activity as engineers race to incorporate AI into their products. In China, Baidu is trying to keep pace with its Ernie Bot. But restrictions imposed by censorship and surveillance put it at a severe disadvantage. China's industrial sector and overall economy is the loser.

What is even worse is how the Chinese state imposes itself on the moral and spiritual life of the people. Despite being peaceful and non-political, religious movements not under state control are ruthlessly persecuted; in 2022, for example, more than 10,000 members of the Church of Almighty God were arrested, with over 3,000 tortured and 14 killed, according to the [Church's records](#). China has become the world's worst abuser of religious freedom, violently suppressing other minority communities like Falun Gong, Buddhism, and, in a region-wide program of incarceration and torture in Xinjiang, Islam.

Protestant Christianity is [growing faster](#) in China than anywhere on Earth, by about [10 percent](#) annually. Today there are about 38 million believers, up from 22 million just a decade ago. If this trend holds by 2030, China could be the "[world's most Christian nation.](#)"

Because the government insists on being the sole source of authority and meaning for the Chinese people, the authorities feel threatened by this dramatic development, itself a sign of the spiritual vacuousness of Marxist materialism. Against the growth of religious denominations, the government has responded with violent crackdowns and persecution, as well as by clumsy efforts to insert state ideology and propaganda into Christian houses of worship.

Following a 2017 [regulation](#), the State should "actively guide religion to adapt to socialist society" and "practice the core values of socialism." In April 2016, at the [National Religious Work Conference](#), Xi stated: "Providing active guidance for the adaptation of religions to socialist society is to guide religious believers to love the motherland and the people, safeguard the unity of the motherland and... uphold the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system." At another [conference](#) in 2021, Xi stressed the need to guide religious figures and believers to "cultivate and practice the core values of socialism."

The CCP degrades and subjugates historical faiths, attempting to make them into propaganda tools, as Stalin did with the Russian Orthodox Church. But in claiming to [construct](#) a "spiritual civilization," and pretending socialism is a religion, Xi has drawn upon a language of religious idealism, and thus inadvertently validated their moral power. In Tibet, so many images of Xi saturate daily existence that party bosses [claim](#) many Buddhists consider him a living Bodhisattva.

By promoting the belief that he is some form of deity, Xi is mimicking, and revealing his envy of the transcendental faith he has tried to stamp out. But while arrogating to himself unlimited power in both the political and spiritual realm, unconstrained by civil society and democratic institutions, he has also set China on a course that is dangerous to itself, and to other societies.

Aaron Rhodes is Senior Fellow at the Common Sense Society and President of the Forum for Religious Freedom-Europe. Cheryl Yu is Senior Researcher in China and human rights at the Common Sense Society.

Photo: In this June 4, 2018 photo, a painting of the Last Supper is displayed next to posters quoting China's constitution on religious freedom in a house church shut down by authorities near the city of Nanyang in central China's Henan province. Credit: AP

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest Feb 16-28

General

27.02.2023 - "The most important feature of Chinese Communism is atheism"

If you live in China, chances are you have seen at least some episodes of the TV series "The Knockout," whose last installment was aired on February 1. It was well done, and immensely popular. It was also very political. Those who care to look at the titles noticed that the series was officially produced "under the guidance of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission of the Chinese Communist Party," the all-powerful overseer of all police, security and courts of law in China.

[Continue reading...](#)

Church of Almighty God

16.02.2023 - More than 10,000 Church of Almighty God members were arrested in 2022

More than 3,000 were tortured and at least 14 were killed. These are the shocking figures of the church's own yearly report on persecution. And they are believable.

"The most persecuted religious movement in China." This was, in 2020, the subtitle of my book "Inside The Church of Almighty God" (CAG), published by Oxford University Press. It received positive reviews by specialized scholars (included by a leading Sinologist, David Ownby, in the authoritative "Journal of the American Academy of Religion") and enjoyed better-than-usual sales for an academic book.

[Continue reading...](#)

Buddhists

28.02.2023 - Geshe Phende Gyaltzen: The Mysterious death of a Tibetan Tantric scholar

We all know that jails where Tibetans are kept by the Chinese authorities are insalubrious, but now it seems that a few months there can kill even a healthy man. That is, if you believe the CCP.

One month has passed from the death of the celebrated Tantric scholar Geshe Phende Gyaltzen and rumors continue to circulate in both Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan province, which is part of historical Tibet and where he lived, and in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region—although the authorities have warned that discussing the circumstances of his demise in any way or forum is prohibited.

[Continue reading...](#)

22.02.2023 - Recognition of new Dalai Lama must be conducted in China

The just finished TV series Tashilhunpo on China Central Television gave a detailed account of the search for the reincarnations of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, who hold equal positions in Tibetan Buddhism. It emphasized that this religious ritual has been supervised by the Chinese central government and conducted within Chinese territory since the late 13th century.

However, a few days ago, an organization in Japan "warned China not to interfere in Tibetan religious matters, including the selection of high Tibetan lamas." This totally exposes its ignorance of history and China's religious policy.

[Continue reading...](#)

Protestants

28.02.2023 - House church pastors describe torture in secret detention

Xi'an Church of Abundance ('Fengsheng') released a statement on 22 February with details of the torture and mistreatment that three detained leaders of the church were subjected to in custody.

Senior Pastor Lian Changnian, 69, his son, Pastor Lian Xuliang, 41, and preacher Fu Juan, 38, had been held under 'Residential Surveillance in a Designated Location' (RSDL, a type of incommunicado detention that has been recognised by the UN as a form of forced disappearance) by Xi'an police since August 2022. On 15 February 2023 they were transferred to a detention centre where they were allowed to meet with their respective lawyers for the first time on 22 February.

[Continue reading...](#)

28.02.2023 - Wang Zang and his wife reunited for the first time in three years

Pioneering Chinese poet Wang Zang has been imprisoned for nearly a thousand days. His wife, Wang Liqin, escaped from surveillance personnel stationed on the ground floor of her home. She went to Yunnan No. 2 Prison by car and reunited with her imprisoned husband. The couple has been separated for more than three years.

[Continue reading...](#)

24.02.2023 - Bishop Augustine Cui Tai forcibly disappeared since 2021

Bishop Augustine Cui Tai has been illegally detained, without any legal procedure, by the authorities for nearly 16 years. Since the Spring of 2021, the bishop has not returned home nor appeared in public.

CONSTANT MONITORING

Since 2007, Bishop Augustine Cui Tai has been regularly detained by the authorities on several occasions. He was often placed under isolation in secret detention centers or hotels. Government officials took him on "trips," a form of kidnapping.

[Continue reading...](#)

24.02.2023 - China ramping up persecution of Christians as it demands 'worship and allegiance' of Xi Jinping: watchdog

The Chinese Communist Party escalated its persecution of Christians throughout 2022 as the country clamped down on churches and online religious content while demanding allegiance to Chinese President Xi Jinping, according to a watchdog group.

A report released last week by the U.S.-based non-governmental organization ChinaAid warned that the Chinese government is using charges of "fraud" to financially suffocate the house church movement, which consists of Christian congregations that have not registered with China's official Protestant church.

[Continue reading...](#)

22.02.2023 - Police place early rain leader Dai Zhichao under home confinement again.

Since Sunday service on February 12, seven to eight community workers gathered at preacher Dai Zhichao's apartment. They guarded the entrance to his building, stopping him from attending Early Rain's Sunday service. Dai decided to worship online.

EVANGELISM TO POLICE OFFICERS

At around 10 am on February 12, as Dai watched his church share Holy Communion, two police officers suddenly pounded on his door. They said they wanted to speak with him. He opened the door and invited them to watch with him.

[Continue reading...](#)

17.02.2023 - Yuhuan Church raided during Sunday service - three leaders arrested

So-called street and community workers disturbed Yuhuan Church's Chengguang Branch during Sunday worship. Three church leaders were arrested and taken away for questioning; however, authorities released them later that afternoon. Community workers also took all the church's Bibles and hymn books and sealed off the meeting space.

PREVIOUS MEETING SPACE

Yuhuan Church's Chengguang Branch was established in 1990. They built four separate four-story houses in 1997 to host church functions. Since the pandemic in 2020, the location has been banned. However, many still maintain small-scale gatherings.

[Continue reading...](#)

16.02.2023 - Report documents rampant Christian persecution in China

Christians in China have continued to face various forms of persecution including sinicization, educational reforms, and widespread rights abuses coupled with stringent laws under the repressive regime of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), says a Christian rights watchdog.

The persecution of Christians in China was highlighted in the 63-page Annual Persecution Report 2022 by US-based China Aid released on Feb. 14.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

24.02.2023 - 34-year-old man sentenced to eight years for practicing Falun Gong

A 34-year-old Chengdu City, Sichuan Province resident was sentenced to eight years on February 15, 2023 for practicing Falun Gong.

Mr. Qu Xing was arrested outside of his rental apartment on June 8, 2021. His mother, Ms. Xu Yanping, who also practices Falun Gong, was arrested on the same day.

Mr. Qu had his arrest approved and remains in custody. Ms. Xu was later released and placed on house arrest. The police fined her 900 yuan on February 13, 2022.

[Continue reading...](#)

19.02.2023 - Harbin woman dies 11 months after serving 5 years in prison for her faith

A Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province resident was sentenced to five years for practicing Falun Gong, a mind-body practice that has been persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party since July 1999. By the time Ms. Zhang Chunyu was released from Heilongjiang Province Women's Prison on February 24, 2022, she had been reduced to just skin and bones, and almost all her teeth had fallen out.

Several months later, however, the local police and community administration kept harassing her, forcing her to live away from home to avoid further persecution.

Ms. Zhang died on January 31, 2023, at age 69. She was predeceased by her husband and their son, who both developed heart diseases after being traumatized by her repeated harassment, arrest, and detention. Her son died on September 24, 2014, and her husband passed away on February 16, 2017.

[Continue reading...](#)

16.02.2023 - The Hongshan District brainwashing center in Wuhan City, Hubei Province

Almost every district in Wuhan City, Hubei Province has a brainwashing center specifically set up to persecute Falun Gong practitioners. The brainwashing center in Hongshan District

is located in the former building of the Shiju Middle School and its operation depends on funding from the city government and the Political and Legal Affairs Committee, an extra-judiciary agency tasked with persecuting Falun Gong.

[Continue reading...](#)

16.02.2023 - A Heilongjiang Woman's uphill battle in getting her suspended pension reinstated

Many Falun Gong practitioners who were sentenced to prison for upholding their faith in recent years also had their pensions suspended by their local social security bureau. Most of the social security bureaus cited a letter issued by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security in 2001, titled "Reply Letter from the General Office of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security on Issues Relating to Pension Insurance Benefits for Retirees After They Are Sentenced." They argued that according to the letter, any retirees sentenced to prison aren't entitled to any retirement benefits while serving time.

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More than 10,000 Church of Almighty God members were arrested in 2022

More than 3,000 were tortured and at least 14 were killed. These are the shocking figures of the church's own yearly report on persecution. And they are believable.

By Massimo Introvigne

[Bitter Winter](#) (16/02/2023) - "The most persecuted religious movement in China." This was, in 2020, the subtitle of my book "[Inside The Church of Almighty God](#)" (CAG), published by Oxford University Press. It received positive reviews by specialized scholars (included [by a leading Sinologist, David Ownby](#), in the authoritative "Journal of the American Academy of Religion") and enjoyed better-than-usual sales for an academic book.

However, after three years, there is the risk that news about the persecution of the CAG in China would have a lesser impact on Western audiences, due to a phenomenon called "persecution fatigue," which scholars have studied with respect to the kidnapping and killing of thousands of Christians in Nigeria.

In 2014, when the first Christian girls in Nigeria were kidnapped, raped, and in some cases killed, U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama joined hundreds of other celebrities throughout the world and was photographed holding a poster "Bring Back Our Girls." After nine years, unfortunately kidnapping and killing Christians in Nigeria has become routine, and news about it struggle to find a few lines in the internal pages of the Western newspapers.

The same may happen with the CAG in China. With the exception of Bitter Winter, not many media remind the world that the persecution continues. The CAG itself publishes a yearly report with data on the persecution, and [the report for 2022](#) has been published last

week. Somebody may object that these data come from the CAG itself: how can we be sure that they are true? The answer is that for the precise figures we should trust the CAG, but the CAG or Bitter Winter are not the only or even the main source about the movement's persecution in China.

The first source is the Chinese government itself. It has [a specialized website](#) coordinating the fight against religious movements banned as "[xie jiao](#)" ("heterodox teachings," sometimes translated as "evil cults") in China, operated by a China Anti-Xie-Jiao association that is an emanation of the Chinese Communist Party ([CCP](#)). Every week, this website hails the success of the Chinese police in fighting the [xie jiao](#), and dozens of articles chronicle the arrest, prosecution, and sentencing to heavy jail terms of CAG members throughout China. Local national and Chinese media also publish the same news from time to time, and they confirm that the figures offered by the CAG's own reports are highly believable.

What are these figures? While admitting that its statistics may be incomplete, the CAG reports that "between 2011 and the end of 2022, more than 430,000 CAG Christians were arrested by the Chinese authorities, and the documented number of believers who have died as a result of persecution since the Church's establishment has reached 231." Additionally, "at least 10,895 CAG Christians were arrested in 2022; of them, 3,257 were subjected to torture" or psychological pressure, and "1,901 were given prison sentences.

Of those sentenced, 1002 received sentences of three years or more, 116 received sentences of seven years or more, and 19 were given heavy sentences of 10 years or more." An additional source is the Association for the Defense of [Human Rights](#) and Religious Freedom (ADHRRF), which [has published information](#) on 4,056 CAG members detained in the year 2022 in its database of prisoners of conscience. It should be added that "a total of at least RMB 240 million (approximately USD \$35.37 million) in assets were appropriated and illegally held from [The Church of Almighty God](#) and its members by the [CCP](#) in 2022."

2022 was the third year of the [CCP's](#) campaign, called an "all-out war," seeking a "final solution" to eradicate the CAG. The preparation of the 20th National Congress of the [CCP](#) saw a "Clean-up 2022" special operation launched to further suppress the CAG.

The report states that, "Out of all the provinces nationwide, persecution in Anhui and Jiangsu was most severe; by the end of December, the number of known arrests of [CAG] Christians in Jiangsu totaled 1,343, while in Anhui it totaled 1,360." Sentences were heavy, particularly against those CAG believers who sent evidence of the CAG persecution to foreign media, including Bitter Winter. This was, for example, the only "crime" for which a CAG member was sentenced to the long jail term of 15 years in 2022.

According to the report, at least 14 CAG members were victims of extra-judicial killings. They included Liu Jianjun, a 50-year-old believer from Jiangsu who, as it often happens in China, was detained in an hotel for secret interrogation. He died after ten days.

"The autopsy showed a large, blunt trauma to the head, blood clotting in the cranium and chest cavity, three fractured ribs, and no food residue in the stomach or intestines," meaning he had not been given any food during his last days. Zhu Xiaohong, a 37-year-old woman, also from Jiangsu, committed suicide after several days of torture. When relatives could see her body, they noticed that "her entire face was swollen, there were

wounds on her right cheekbone, blood in the corners of both eyes, and both nostrils were bloodstained.”

Others, including Huang Fenfang in Jiangxi and Fan Limin in Shandong, were not properly cured after the authorities had learned they had cancer. When she started having health problems, Huang was not allowed to cease the hard labor she was subjected to. She “was required to fold between 2,400 and 3,200 joss paper ingots every day, and was made to stand for long periods without rest as punishment if she didn’t complete the allotted amount.” “The [detention house](#) food was very poor-quality, lacking oil and salt, and rations were meager.” Doctors admitted to the family that Huang’s cancer “was directly correlated with her depression, inadequate nutrition, and hard labor in jail.”

Several believers reported torture. Wu Hua, a 58-year-old female victim of the crackdown in Jiangsu [province](#), reported she was interrogated about the church’s situation in her area. As she would not cooperate, “They locked each of her hands and feet separately to ring buckles on the interrogation chair so that her entire body was dangling off the chair, taped a jug of water to the front of her chest, and then picked up the chair and swung it around forcefully.”

Before she almost miraculously managed to escape, Wu was tortured again. “They locked each of her hands and feet separately to ring buckles on the interrogation chair so that her entire body was dangling off the chair, taped a jug of water to the front of her chest, and then picked up the chair and swung it around forcefully,” the report says.

A 48-year-old believer from Henan reported that “the police smacked her across the face dozens of times, then used the ‘threading the rod’ form of torture on her, cuffing both her hands and feet, making her squat down and hug her knees, threading a wooden rod behind her knees and in front of her arms, then lifting her up so her body was suspended. One officer hit her on the soles of her feet with a rubber rod while another continued smacking her in the face.”

They then “used a suspension form of torture, handcuffing both her wrists and hanging her from a pole by the handcuffs, then tying her right foot to the rod with a rope so that her left leg was dangling in the air. One officer hit her repeatedly in the right foot with a rubber rod while another smacked her in the face, beating her and interrogating her simultaneously. They continued this torture until she lost consciousness again. The questioning continued after the police used water to awaken her. They used metal rods to viciously beat her in the ribs, making her tremble uncontrollably in pain, and also electrocuted her with electric batons until she passed out.”

These stories continue for pages and pages, and those wanting to have a complete picture should read the 2022 report, as well as the reports for the previous years. They can also read my Oxford book, where I report several torture and extra-judicial killing cases based on sworn affidavits by those who were tortured and managed to escape abroad (in some cases, supported by medical records), and by eyewitnesses and relatives in the cases of those who died.

These affidavits were also filed as enclosures to complaints lodged with the United Nations [Human Rights Council](#). While there are no affidavits in the 2022 report, the fact that the stories there are so similar to those documented in my book certainly supports the conclusion that they are true.

This means that nothing has changed since 2020. During and after the COVID lockdown, the [CCP](#) has continued to persecute, arrest, torture, and in some cases kill, thousands of CAG members in China. Again, you should not take CAG's or Bitter Winter's word for it. There are plenty of [CCP](#)'s own documents and reports in the Chinese media proving that the Chinese authorities have vowed to eradicate the CAG "like a tumor," as they said, without regard for the beliefs, [human rights](#), liberty, or life of the devotees they so mercilessly persecute.

Photo: A summary of the report's findings.

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest Feb 01-15

General

14.02.2023 - Chinaaid releases annual persecution report for 2022

China Aid Association releases its Annual Persecution Report for 2022, cataloging persecution against Christians in Mainland China. Read the full report [here](#). Since 2006, ChinaAid released annual reports covering the CCP's oppression and persecution of Chinese Christians. Their reports are derived from an extensive network of Christians throughout the country to expose abuse of human rights, religious freedom, and rule of law. Due to the Communist Regime's extensive digital surveillance and totalitarian nature, the cases found within are not exhaustive. However, ChinaAid's annual report stands as one of the most comprehensive and accurate overviews of Chinese Christian persecution.

[Continue reading...](#)

07.02.2023 - An idolatrous state tries to smother the church

China's government "exercises comprehensive and extensive control over religion ... through a complex web of state laws, regulations, and policies," according to a new report from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). As prayerful citizens of the global church, Christians need to understand, and challenge, government attempts to control institutional aspects of religious life.

Beijing uses multiple mechanisms to control religion, including oversight bodies such as the State Administration for Religious Affairs and the Communist Party's United Front Work Department. The purpose of such organizations is to ensure that the religious content of "approved" houses of worship is patriotic, promotes national unity, and is in line with the messages of President Xi.

[Continue reading...](#)

03.02.2023 - US called out for criticizing Xinjiang on religion

China expressed on Friday its firm opposition to the United States for defaming its religious policies, and urged Washington to cease using religion and other issues as an excuse to contain its development.

The US defamation disregards basic facts, is filled with ideological bias and constitutes serious interference in China's internal affairs, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said, slamming recent comments made by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

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Buddhists

01.02.2023 - Ngaba Prefecture, Sichuan: Massive re-education to prevent Tibetan self-immolations

Ngaba (Ch. Ngawa) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture (population one million) in Sichuan is part of historical Tibet, although it is outside present-day Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). The majority of its population is Tibetan.

In a way, the situation in Ngaba Prefecture is worse than in the TAR. It has been under Chinese occupation for a longer period, and Communism was brought by the Red Army together with famine already in the 1930s. In 1958, Chairman Mao launched a brutal Sinicization program, a forerunner of the Cultural Revolution, in which monasteries were destroyed, lamas were killed, imprisoned, or forced to take secular jobs, and traditional family agriculture was replaced by collective farms. Mao also imported Han colonists to the Prefecture, where they went from 5% to the 20% of the population.

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Protestants

14.02.2023 - Beijing Shouwang Church: The House Church that refuses to die

Beijing Shouwang Church refuses to die. One of the most famous house churches in China, the CCP believed it had put an end to its glorious story in 2019, when it had declared the church illegal and "liquidated" it.

However, on February 8, 2023, the Haidian District police raided a rented venue where members of the Beijing Shouwang Church were gathering—illegally, from the point of view of the CCP.

The police took the names of all these presents, and detained the pastor, Zhang Xiaofeng, informing his wife on February 9 that he will remain in administrative detention for ten days—to start with.

[Continue reading...](#)

09.02.2023 - Li Shanshan, wife of imprisoned preacher, threatened to 'admit guilt'

Police summoned Li Shanshan, the wife of imprisoned Linfen Covenant House Church preacher Li Jie, to the police station. They threatened her for two consecutive days to "admit guilt" for the so-called accusation of fraud. Authorities ended up releasing her on

bail but promised to continue their harassment. Reports are unclear whether Wu Tingting, another Linfen Covenant House Church woman, is also being threatened.

[Continue reading...](#)

07.02.2023 - Authorities resume investigation of Linfen Covenant House Church

Chinese authorities decided to continue their so-called investigation concerning Linfen Covenant House Church. According to a prayer request from the church, this will cause the police to continue their persecution of church members.

FALSE CHARGES AND TESTIMONIES

During an outdoor family camp in August 2022, police arrested preachers of Linfen Covenant House Church—Li Jie and Han Xiaodong. Both of them were initially placed in residential surveillance at a designated location (RSDL) as authorities interrogated many believers of the church. Some coerced false confessions led to the arrest of Wang Qiang, a co-worker of the church. All three men were charged with “fraud,” and all false testimonies claimed that Li, Han, and Wang “defrauded” congregants through tithings and offerings.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

10.02.2023 - 74-year-old woman detained for talking to people about Falun Gong

A 74-year-old Fushun City, Liaoning Province resident was arrested on February 1, 2023, after being reported for talking to people about Falun Gong at a public plaza. **Ms. Zhu Yafen**'s home was ransacked in the evening and she has been placed in criminal detention.

[Continue reading...](#)

09.02.2023 - Wang Jiafang: Falun Gong Professor of mathematics persecuted for 23 years

The family of Professor **Wang Jiafang**, a Falun Gong practitioner, has been informed that her appeal has been rejected and she should remain in jail until September 9, 2025. She had been sentenced in July 2022 to a jail term of four years by the Liwan District Court of Guangzhou city, in Guangdong province, for being active in a movement banned as a xie jiao.

Wang was born in 1964 in Xiangfan city, Hubei province. A brilliant mathematician, she became associate professor at the Mathematics Department of Guangzhou University, but later lost her job for her practice of Falun Gong.

[Continue reading...](#)

09.02.2023 - 25-year-old man faces trial for his faith in Falun Gong

A 25-year-old Changsha City, Hunan Province resident is scheduled to stand trial on February 15, 2023 for practicing Falun Gong, a spiritual discipline that has been persecuted by the Chinese communist regime since 1999.

Mr. **Sun Yushan** was arrested on January 20, 2022 and taken to the Changsha City No.2 Detention Center two days later. Zhang Tong of the Kaifu District Procuratorate approved his arrest on March 25.

Mr. Sun's case was later transferred to the Liuyang City Procuratorate, which has been designated to handle Falun Gong cases in the region. Prosecutor Chen Liuyanghui indicted him on June 7 and moved the case to the Liuyang City Court.

[Continue reading...](#)

05.02.2023 - Shaanxi woman dies at 53 in the persecution of her faith

After the Chinese Communist Party began to persecute Falun Gong, an ancient spiritual discipline, in 1999, **Ms. Fang Liting** and her family were subjected to arrests, incarceration and torture. The long term mental distress took a toll on her health. The Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province resident passed away on January 19, 2023. She was 53.

Ms. Fang, a graduate of Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, took up Falun Gong before the persecution began. Her father-in-law, Mr. Yang Hengqing, the vice president of Xi'an University of Science and Technology, her mother-in-law, Ms. Long Aiqin, a retired university employee, as well as her brother-in-law, Mr. Yang Zhaojun, also practice Falun Gong

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Uyghurs

06.02.2023 - Abliz Abdulhek, Uyghur author of "independence or death," has passed away

One day, a wife of a Uyghur activist reproached her husband, "You work all day, and you are always busy. Even so, China has never once called you a terrorist." The husband replied with an apology, "That is indeed unfortunate. Let's be patient. Once the book I'm currently writing gets published, I hope China will add me to the terrorist list." This family anecdote is typical of the Uyghurs' reaction to China's accusation.

When a 2003 Chinese white paper accused the book by Abliz Abdulheq, "Independence or Death," of being the separatists' "terrorist handbook," I congratulated him over the phone. He accepted my congratulations and expressed his happiness. He said, "This is the power of truth. If you have the weapon of truth, any tyrant in the world will surrender to you, directly, or indirectly, openly, or covertly."

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Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest Jan 16-31

Buddhists

24.01.2023 - Report offers fresh examples of destruction of religious sites in eastern Tibet

A new report by a rights group details fresh evidence of destruction of religious heritage sites and the mistreatment of Tibetans by China in eastern Tibet since October 2021 in what locals say is a second Cultural Revolution.

Among the religious sites and objects destroyed in Drago county were three colossal Buddha statues, a Buddhist school, a building housing with 45 giant prayer wheels, the home of a revered spiritual leader and Drago Monastery's prayer flags, which were removed and burned, the report by London-based Free Tibet says.

[Continue reading...](#)

Protestants

30.01.2023 - Wang Hai: Miao Christian Pastor still harassed and investigated

Pastor **Wang Hai** is a legendary figure in Yunnan. He comes from a family of the Miao ethnic minority, where his father and brothers already served as elders of the Miao Trinity Church in Yongshan county, Yunnan province.

With great sacrifices, his father managed to enroll him at Yunnan Bible Seminary, and he was ordained in the government-controlled Three-Self Church in 2012. By then, he was already moving from village to village with his motorbike, planting new churches, and converting hundreds of Miao villagers. Most of them were very simple folks from villages with no regular water or electricity supplies. Yet, they were conquered by Wang's young, dynamic, and amiable ministry.

[Continue reading...](#)

25.01.2023 - Chinese Christians serving their persecutors

Many stories from Chinese Christians can be disheartening for those in the West. After all, Chinese Christians face constant harassment, detention, and mistreatment because of their faith. Americans, discouraged by persecution, may not have much hope for the church in China. However, there are plenty of reasons to celebrate Chinese house churches.

THE STORY OF DAI ZHICHAO

Dai Zhichao from Early Rain Covenant Church led the "Tashui" small group in 2021 and became a more prominent figure within the church. His rising influence in the church painted a target on his back, and his family was constantly harassed during the last year. Plain-clothed officers vandalized their doors with threats and jammed obstructions into their keyholes several times.

[Continue reading...](#)

23.01.2023 - Wife of imprisoned Xi'an pastor advocates for her husband

Authorities arrested two Xi'an Church of Abundance pastors for "fraud"—Lian Xuliang and his father Lian Changnian. Without any update in five months, **Pastor Lian Xuliang's** wife published an open letter on Chinese social media defending her husband and father-in-law.

In her letter, she said members of their church committed no crimes. Nobody in their congregation ever divorced. According to her, God transformed the hearts of the congregation:

Who doesn't want to see a marriage turning from the verge of collapsing into a good relationship? My husband and my father-in-law are both faithful people. I don't understand why they were charged with fraud and endangering national security.

[Continue reading...](#)

19.01.2023 - Police detain more ethnic Christians in rural Yunnan

Fugong police in China's Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan province, took four Christians into custody on 12 January for participating in a Bible study in August 2022. Five Bible teachers who also attended the meeting have been detained since early August 2022. According to a source familiar with the situation, the teachers include three ethnic **Nu men, Wang Shunping, Nu Sangdeng and San Luobo**, and two women, **Hua Xiuxia** and **Dong Mengru**. All five have been formally charged with 'organising and sponsoring an illegal gathering', which in reality consisted of prayer and free Bible and music lessons for young people.

[Continue reading..;](#)

18.01.2023 - Geng Zejun treated with respect in prison

Geng Zejun, the minister of the Church of the Rock in Ningxia province, was sentenced to one year and three months because he insisted on hosting Christian gatherings. Reports surfaced that while he is not in good health, guards and prisoners treat him with respect. His family has been banned from visiting him since his initial arrest on December 5, 2021.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

31.01.2023 - Persecution of Falun Dafa practitioners by Jiangjin District 610 Office and Domestic Security Office in Chongqing

The 610 Office, Political and Legal Affairs Committee (PLAC), and the Domestic Security Office of the Police Department in the Jiangjin District of Chongqing have been actively persecuting local Falun Dafa practitioners since the Chinese Communist Party launched a nationwide campaign against Falun Dafa in July 1999.

Many local practitioners have been arrested, jailed, and tortured for upholding their faith. Four of them died and three others were disabled. Forty-nine practitioners were sentenced to prison and another 35 were put in forced labor camps. Almost all of the practitioners in the district have endured some form of home raid, arrest, detention, and/or brainwashing. They were forced to pay a total of 44,600 yuan in illegal fines and extortion.

[Continue reading...](#)

29.01.2023 - In a vegetative state and denied medical parole for two years, Hebei man dies two months before prison release

Mr. **Lai Zhiqiang**'s wife waited seven long years, eager to reunite with him, only to learn on January 3, 2023, that he had died two months before his scheduled release from serving a wrongful term for his faith in Falun Gong.

Mr. Lai's wife rushed to Jidong No. 2 Prison in Hebei Province after learning of his death, only to be told that she had to pay 1,000 yuan to see his body. While it's not clear whether or not she paid the 1,000 yuan, she wasn't allowed to see his body until the next day.

[Continue reading...](#)

26.01.2023 - Exposing the torture of Falun Gong practitioners in Sichuan Province women's prison

Female Falun Gong practitioners in Sichuan Province are held at the Sichuan Province Women's Prison in Chengdu City after they are sentenced for upholding their faith. As soon as they are admitted, they are subjected to brainwashing. There are also other cells in the prison with restricted access and no one knows what happens behind the closed doors.

The "study group" (brainwashing session) of each practitioner consists of four inmates: two felons (one with a higher education background), and two former practitioners who had been transformed.

Practitioners in the brainwashing session are ordered to write guarantee statements and repeat the communist regime's propaganda to smear Falun Gong. Various torture methods are used when the practitioners refuse to comply.

[Continue reading...](#)

23.01.2023 - US resident calls for the release of Sister and Nephew who are detained in China for their shared faith in Falun Gong

Ms. Kang Shumei and her son, **Mr. Zhang Gu**, both of Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province, were arrested on October 31, 2022 for practicing Falun Gong, a mind-body discipline that has been persecuted by the Chinese communist regime since 1999.

Ms. Kang's sister, Ms. Kang Shuzhi, who currently resides in Los Angeles, is calling on the international community to help rescue her sister and nephew.

[Continue reading...](#)

20.01.2023 - After enduring five arrests and seven years of torture for her faith, woman dies five months before daughter's fifth birthday

Ms. **Zhu Xiumin** and her husband were both arrested on March 21, 2017, for their shared faith in Falun Gong.

Ms. Zhu went on a five-month hunger strike in protest of the arbitrary detention. As she became extremely weak and suffered severe constipation, she was taken to a hospital for a checkup. She was shocked to learn that she was pregnant. She was released two days later.

[Continue reading....](#)

Seoul Sungrak Church: One of the world's largest Baptist Churches banned as a "cult" in China

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

by Chen Wangli

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

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

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

Bitter Winter has learned that pastors and believers have been interrogated in Liaoning and Heilongjiang, and some have been detained. "We do not criticize the government and we mind our own business, a lay church leader from Harbin, Heilongjiang, told Bitter Winter. We were never harassed until the [Three-Self Church](#) and the China Anti-Xie-Jiao Association started cooperating on a regular basis with movements fighting 'heresies' in Korea." "The latter, according to the believer, do not like us because we are one of the fastest-growing church in South Korea and their churches lose members who come to us. China should have nothing to do with these disputes, but it wants to please the Korean heresy hunters because they help them fighting [Falun Gong](#) and [The Church of Almighty God](#)."

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

Because of this growth, it was accused of "sheep-stealing" by the powerful Korean Presbyterian churches, which persuaded the Korean Baptist Convention to expel Sungrak

in 1987, citing an inappropriate emphasis on Pentecostal rather than Baptist practices and on demonology and exorcism. However, at that stage Sungrak was large enough to create its own rival Baptist Convention and keep the contacts with American and other Baptist bodies.

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

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

Police detain more ethnic Christians in rural Yunnan

CSW (19.01.2023) - <https://bit.ly/3kxYxUr> - Fugong police in China's Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan province, took four Christians into custody on 12 January for participating in a Bible study in August 2022.

Five Bible teachers who also attended the meeting have been detained since early August 2022. According to a source familiar with the situation, the teachers include three ethnic Nu men, Wang Shunping, Nu Sangdeng and San Luobo, and two women, Hua Xiuxia and Dong Mengru. All five have been formally charged with ‘organising and sponsoring an illegal gathering’, which in reality consisted of prayer and free Bible and music lessons for young people.

Mr Nu's younger brother Nu Sangkai, Mr San's girlfriend Liu Yanlan and two other Christians who participated in the same gathering were subsequently placed under administrative detention by police in Fugong county on 12 January. The grounds for their detention are as yet unknown.

Villages in the Nujiang Grand Canyon have significant numbers of Protestant Christians, and the area is known as “the Gospel Valley” due to its rich missionary legacy. The recent detentions are indicative of an increasing crackdown on churches in the area, some of which were established by Western missionaries in the early 20th century. One source told CSW that ‘it seems that the authorities want to root out the Christian faith’ from the area.

In a [document](#) dated February 2022, the Policy and Regulation Division of the Yunnan Provincial Ethnic and Religious Commission stated: ‘Religious issues in Yunnan are intertwined with ethnic and border issues, and there are more hidden problems and emergencies in the religious field.’

China's 2017 [Regulations on Religious Affairs](#) prohibit preaching in schools but do not prohibit under-18s from entering religious sites. However, the authorities in many provinces, including Guizhou, [Hubei](#), [Qinghai](#), [Shanxi](#), [Tibet](#) and Yunnan, have issued their own sets of religious regulations which proscribe ‘organising, inducing or forcing minors to participate in religious activities.’ This effectively renders any religious youth work illegal.

The offence of ‘organising and sponsoring an illegal gathering’, which was added to China's Criminal Code in 2015, carries a custodial sentence of up to three years. In August 2022, [Geng Zejun](#), a preacher from the Rock Church in Shizuishan, Ningxia, was convicted and jailed for one year and three months on this charge.

CSW's Founder President Mervyn Thomas said: ***'It is alarming to see more people detained for participating in a private Christian gathering, just before the Chinese New Year festivities. CSW calls for the immediate release of all Christians in Yunnan and Ningxia who are currently deprived of their liberty arbitrarily and unjustly. Again, we urge the Chinese authorities to respect the right of all citizens, including children and young people, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief. China must end the targeting of religious leaders who choose not to register with the government, those who work among ethnic minority communities and those who teach children and youth groups.'***

Photo: A village in Nujiang, Yunnan. Credit: China Source

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest Jan 01-15

General

06.01.2023 - Prison art from China's Ming Dynasty reflects a restriction of religious freedom

Ying Zhang, associate professor of history at Ohio State University, is exploring the connections among prison, art and religious freedom in a unique and meaningful way.

Zhang's Nov. 1 lecture at The American Academy in Berlin accompanies her book "Confucians and Confinement: Imprisoned Officials in Ming China (1368-1644)." It's the first book-length study of prison culture in premodern China, and it offers new insight on how religion adapts, how art helps express spirituality and the effects of imprisonment on the modern idea of religious freedom.

[Continue reading...](#)

03.01.2023 - USCIRF Charges China's Authorized Religious Bodies as Communist Party Accomplices

According to sociologist Fenggang Yang's famous distinction, China's religion is organized according to three "markets." The "red market" includes the five authorized religions: five government-controlled bodies that constitute the only legal religious organizations in China. They are the Three-Self Church for Protestants, the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association for Catholics, the China Daoist Association for Daoists, the China Islamic Association for Muslims, and the China Buddhist Association for Buddhists.

[Continue reading...](#)

Buddhists

05.01.2023 - China will interfere with Dalai Lama succession: Tibet's President-in-exile

China is expected to interfere in the succession of the Dalai Lama, and anticipating that eventuality, the Tibetan government-in-exile has worked out a plan for a democratic transition of the leadership role by the spiritual .

In an interview to PTI, President of the Tibetan government-in-exile Penpa Tsering pointed out that a replay of the 1995 appointment of a rival Panchen Lama by the Communist government of China while a boy chosen by the Dalai Lama as the incarnate of the Lama was whisked away from the public eye, can be expected.

[Continue reading...](#)

Catholics

06.01.2023 - Benedict XVI's "Non-negotiable principles" for a dialogue with China

When the Holy See and China were getting ready to sign the Vatican-China deal of 2018, later renewed twice in 2020 and 2022, Cardinal Joseph Zen, bishop emeritus of Hong Kong, published on his blog a very harsh attack against Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin. He accused him of manipulating Benedict XVI's "Letter to the Bishops, priests, consecrated men and women, and lay faithful of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China" of May 27, 2007, and even falsifying its text.

[Continue reading....](#)

Protestants

14.01.2023 - Armed Police demolish Nangang church overnight

On the evening of January 11, the Ruian County government of Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province forcibly demolished the Nangang Church, located in Nangang Village, Feiyun Street, to build commercial buildings. The church covered an area of 8 acres. A church worth tens of millions of RMB was ordered to be demolished at night without an agreed compensation plan.

[Continue reading...](#)

11.01.2023 - Qingcaodi Church: Wives raise concerns for imprisoned husbands

Cui Yanqin and Yang Yufeng, the wives of elders **Wu Jiannan and Hao Ming** respectively, posted on social media concerning their husbands. Wu Jiannan and Hao Ming served as elders of Qingcaodi Church in Deyang.

In her open letter, Cui Yanqin explained that she is a stay home mom taking care of two kids. Around 2017, Cui Yanqin joined Wu Jiannan to move hundreds of miles from Anhui province to Deyang city. Before, she was a teacher in the countryside. Even though Deyang was a small city, they liked it and found the locals to be kind. Cui Yanqin wrote that she and Wu cooperated with all kinds of projects in the neighborhood, which can be verified by the Hualian Neighborhood.

[Continue reading...](#)

09.01.2023 - Detained leaders of Church of Abundance accused of "Violating National Security"

The spouses' appeal of January 3.

Yet another appeal has been circulated on January 3, 2023, by the spouses of the detained leaders of the Church of Abundance (Fengsheng) of Xi'an city, Shaanxi province.

The wives of Pastor **Lian Changnian** and **Brother Lian Xuliang**, and the husband of **Sister Fu Juan** report that their spouses are still detained in government-designated residences and are now accused of "endangering national security" in addition to "religious fraud".

[Continue reading...](#)

06.01.2023 - Christian persecution highlighted in open letter to Chinese mayor

Tan Xiuhong, a Christian attorney, wrote an open letter to Li Yunfeng, the mayor of Linfen City, Shanxi province. Tan addressed the massive arrests of Christians in Linfen over the past couple of years and called on local authorities to stop Christian persecution.

On December 31, 2022, Tan Xiuhong wrote to Mayor Li, admitting Li must experience a lot of difficulties and hard times while governing Linfen, a city of four million, during COVID. However, before the new year, Tan candidly expressed "Authorities of Linfen City should stop persecuting Christian churches and immediately release detained Christians." The culture-rich city became notorious in China for its massive arrests of Christians. She gave examples of incidents related to Christianity that happened in Linfen in the past two years:

[Continue reading...](#)

03.01.2023 - 'There is no deceit': Mother of Li Jie defends son amidst fraud charges.

Police arrested Preacher **Li Jie** of Linfen Covenant House Church on suspicion of "fraud." Li Jie's 65-year-old mother Zhang Ruxin posted on the Chinese social media app Weibo airing grievances for her son and calling for international media attention.

[Continue reading...](#)

02.01.2023 - Chen Ziliang passes in detention center.

Chen Ziliang, a member of the China Democracy Party's Zhejiang Preparatory Committee, passed away on December 24, 2022, while in custody at the Jinyun County Detention Center in Lishui, Zhejiang province.

The Jinyun County Public Security Bureau informed the family that "on the morning of December 24, Chen Ziliang was found to be in critical condition at the detention center. The detention center sent Chen Ziliang to The First People's Hospital of Jinyun County. In the afternoon of the same day, Chen Ziliang passed away after the failure to rescue."

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

14.01.2023 - Shandong woman secretly sentenced for her faith, elderly parents deprived of care.

A police officer was held in a brainwashing center for three months. After he was released, he was forced to retire early and placed under strict surveillance, all because of his faith in Falun Gong.

Mr. Yan Ji, an Anlu City, Hubei Province, resident in his 50s, was arrested at work on May 24, 2022. Agents from the 610 Office and Domestic Security Office first said that they needed to talk to him. But before he could respond, they pushed him outside and into the police car.

[Continue reading...](#)

08.01.2023 - Reported in 2022: 633 Falun Gong practitioners sentenced for their faith

A total of 633 cases of Falun Gong practitioners being sentenced for their faith were recorded in 2022. The newly confirmed cases included 21 (4%) that took place between 2013 and 2020, 166 (26%) cases in 2021 and 446 (70%) cases in 2022.

Due to strict information censorship in China, such cases can't always be reported in a timely manner, nor is all the information readily available.

[Continue reading...](#)

07.01.2023 - Former College professor given third prison sentence for talking to people about her faith

Since 2008, a former college professor has been sentenced three times for her faith in Falun Gong, with each arrest taking place only a few months after she finished the previous prison term.

Ms. **Wang Jiafang**, a 58-year-old Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province resident, was most recently arrested on September 10, 2021 while talking to people about Falun Gong outside of a mall. She was held at the Baiyun District Detention Center and had her arrest approved by the Baiyun District Procuratorate on September 25.

[Continue reading...](#)

USCIRF charges China's authorized religious bodies as Communist Party accomplices

A new report exposes the five authorized religions' "complicity in the government's systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom."

By Massimo Introvigne

Bitter Winter (03.01.2023) - <https://bit.ly/3imiugn> - According to sociologist Fenggang Yang's famous distinction, China's religion is organized according to three "markets." The "red market" includes the [five authorized religions](#): five government-controlled bodies that constitute the only legal religious organizations in China. They are the [Three-Self Church](#) for Protestants, the [Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association](#) for Catholics, the [China Daoist Association](#) for Daoists, the [China Islamic Association](#) for Muslims, and the [China Buddhist Association](#) for Buddhists.

The "black market" includes the groups singled out by the regime and banned as "xie jiao" ("heterodox teachings," sometimes translated as "evil cults"), which are mercilessly persecuted. In the middle lies the largest segment of China's religious life, the "gray market" of communities that refuse to join the [five authorized religions](#) and are regarded as illegal although they are not banned as [xie jiao](#): Protestant [house churches](#), [Catholic conscientious objectors](#) who refuse the [Vatican-China deal of 2018](#), independent Daoist and Buddhist temples and Islamic mosques. Under [Xi Jinping](#), life has become increasingly precarious for those in the "gray market" too.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is an independent U.S. bipartisan commission whose members are designated by the congressional leaders of both parties and appointed by the President. On December 29, it has released [a new report](#) on "State-Controlled Religion and Religious Freedom Violations in China," which focuses on the role the [five authorized religions](#) play in the Chinese system of anti-religious repression. We are thankful for the repeated references to Bitter Winter, including to [an important article by Marco Respinti](#) that exposed China's strategy for installing a Dalai Lama of its own when the current 14th Dalai Lama will die.

The report denounces the [five authorized religions](#)' "complicity in the government's systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom." It carefully explains how the five organizations exist not to promote religion but to control, limit, and transform it into a propaganda tool for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This role is not secret, the report notes. It is clearly spelled out in the by-laws of the five organizations, in [Xi Jinping](#)'s speeches, and in the 2020 "Measures on the Administration of Religious Groups." The five bodies are defined as "patriotic religious organizations," "with an express purpose to 'unite and guide' members of their respective religious communities to 'support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system.'"

In practice, the report explains, this means that they "assist or work with the [CCP](#) and government in promulgating, implementing, and enforcing state laws, regulations, and policies—often at the expense of the religious communities they claim to represent." They are asked to offer their support in tracking down, denouncing, and persecuting the [xie jiao](#) and other forms of "illegal" religion, and they do it zealously.

They lead their affiliates to study the [CCP](#) documents and the writings and speeches of [Xi Jinping](#). They make sure that authorized places of worship are “forced to display Communist propaganda posters, including images and quotes of Communist leaders such as [Xi Jinping](#) and [Mao Zedong](#), although the display of such images violates religious principles of some religions. Moreover, state-sanctioned clergy members are forced to incorporate [CCP](#) ideology and policies into their sermons or speeches.”

While the [five authorized religions](#) play their negative role throughout the whole of China, the report notes that their complicity with the [CCP](#) is specially obvious in [Xinjiang](#) and in Tibet. There, they assist the Communist Party in its repression of genuine expressions of Islam and Buddhism, and try to hide it through propaganda disseminated internationally. In Tibet, the [China Buddhist Association](#) is increasingly taking the lead in the [CCP](#) strategy aimed at installing a fake Dalai Lama of its own when the present Dalai Lama will die.

The report concludes that “State-controlled religious organizations remain an integral part of the [CCP](#)’s institutional control of religion. These organizations are expected to be absolutely loyal to the [CCP](#), to serve as conduits and endorsers of state propaganda, and to facilitate the implementation of the [CCP](#)’s religious policies—notably the deeply coercive policy on the [sinicization](#) of religion.

The integral involvement of these state-controlled religious organizations in such repression renders them complicit in the [CCP](#)’s systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations. On the other hand, these religious organizations are also ironically victims of the [CCP](#)’s religious policy; they are deprived of genuine practice of religion without state interference, and any perceived disloyalty and public disagreement with the [CCP](#) and government leads to severe punishment.”

The USCIRF report never mentions the Vatican. However, by recommending that after the 2018 agreement (renewed in 2020 and 2022) Catholics join the [Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association](#), the Holy See is implicitly criticized for directing Chinese believers to become part of an organization exposed as an accomplice of brutal violations of religious freedom.

Photo: On December 20, 2022, representatives of the [CCP](#) and the [five authorized religions](#), including Catholic Bishop Huang Bingzhang, attended a meeting on how to coordinate repression of religious movements banned as [xie jiao](#) in Zhuhai, Guangdong. From Weibo.