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New massive wave of persecution against the Church of Almighty God

Over 900 members were arrested in Zhejiang Province in one day. One died after three days in custody.

[Bitter Winter](#) (11.08.2023) - The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which has never ceased its persecution and surveillance activities against [The Church of Almighty God](#) (CAG), the largest Christian [new religious movement](#) in the country, recently launched a new

coordinated arrest operation against the group. As reported by CAG members to “Bitter Winter,” the persecution was most severe in the provinces of Zhejiang, Fujian, and Jiangsu. On June 15, in just a single day, at least 905 CAG members in Zhejiang [Province](#) were placed under arrest, and until this day 282 are still in custody, facing prosecution and sentencing. One died just three days after her arrest.

Insiders within the Zhejiang provincial government told “Bitter Winter” that this coordinated arrest operation was planned up to a year ago. On the evening of June 14, the provincial [Public Security Bureau](#) issued a direct order, providing a list for arrest to [Public Security Bureau](#) departments in various [municipalities](#). Public security, national security, armed police, and special forces police carried out this joint operation to arrest CAG members. In the city of Hangzhou, 189 of them were arrested in just one day. 170 were arrested in the city of Wenzhou. Over 100 people were arrested in the cities of Jinhua and Quzhou.

Police focused on arresting leaders and active workers in an effort to entirely eradicate the CAG. It was reported to “Bitter Winter” that, while interrogating a CAG member, one officer said, “This time, we’re uprooting leaders from regions down to smaller districts, and then to [local churches](#), and the intensity of the strike will continue to increase.”

One CAG devotee who has been released revealed that in the room adjacent to where he was held, a church leader was tortured and abused for five days. Later, another church leader was also confined and then subjected to torture. This witness said, “I could hear her screams.”

One CAG member over the age of 60 died suddenly after three days of confinement. The authorities claimed that she hanged herself, but after her family viewed the corpse, they reported to “Bitter Winter” that there were no marks from hanging on her neck, but there were wounds on her head and there was blood visible in her eyes. The marks of torture were apparent.

Reportedly, many of those arrested were placed under surveillance as early as one or two years before the arrest. Government insiders revealed to “Bitter Winter” that on August 31, 2022, Zhejiang and Fujian [Province](#) authorities jointly launched “Operation 831,” comprehensively following and tracking CAG members with a combination of high-tech surveillance, Skynet system inspections, and manual tracking, leaving them with nowhere to hide. The police also hired undercover agents to implant themselves in churches by pretending to be interested in the CAG teachings. They surveyed the situation in those churches and subsequently carried out arrests.

As reported to “Bitter Winter,” during an interrogation one police officer said, “Where you’ve gone, the times you enter and leave a place, all is perfectly transparent to us. You think you’re being very cautious, but we can see right through all of you.” He also said, “The government has acquired plenty of advanced surveillance equipment just to catch people like you. We can identify you even with your hats and masks on.”

Another released CAG member stated, “This time when I was arrested, I realized that the police had used drone surveillance to lock in on me, then arrested all the brothers and sisters I came into contact with.”

According to reports, the majority of CAG devotees detained in this arrest operation were forced to attend heavy indoctrination courses, which are generally held at locations such as hotels and rural resorts and kept secret from the public. The [CCP](#) invited experts in indoctrination, high-level professors in psychology, and legal consultants. Lower-level officials were also employed to act as chaperones. They forced CAG believers to watch videos extolling the Communist Party and tried to inculcate them with a wide variety of atheistic ideas. Devotees were forced to sign the “three letters” of “repentance, guarantee, and break-up” from the CAG, thus betraying their faith.

One CAG member reported, “They forced us to watch those videos every day, report on our thoughts, and curse Almighty God—every day!” According to this informant, they were forbidden to pray, were watched while eating and sleeping, and humiliated and condemned during those classes. Many were tortured because they refused to cooperate with the indoctrination. One released CAG member told “Bitter Winter,” “If we didn’t confess, the police wouldn’t allow us to sleep, in an effort to break our spirits.”

The arrest operation is still in progress, and the persecution is just as severe in other regions. It was reported to “Bitter Winter” that during the afternoon of July 13, a CAG devotee in Jiangsu [Province](#) escaped from a basement room where she was being held, and after being pursued by the police and left without any way to escape, was forced to jump to her death from the eleventh story of the building.

It was also reported to us that a public security official announced that later this year, a second and third round of arrests of members of CAG will be carried out. The CAG remains [the most persecuted religious movement in China](#).

Photo: Zhejiang Police Real-Time Monitoring Center (screenshot).

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest July 16-31

Falun Gong

Persecution deaths of 120 Falun Gong practitioners reported in the first half of 2023

Minghui - A total of 120 cases of Falun Gong practitioners persecuted to death for upholding their faith were confirmed in the first half of 2023.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a mind-body practice based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Forbearance. Since its introduction to the public in 1992, countless people have been drawn to its profound principles and health benefits. Fearing

its ever-growing popularity, the Chinese communist regime launched a nationwide campaign in July 1999, attempting to stamp out the practice.

Hundreds of thousands of practitioners have since been harassed, arrested, detained, imprisoned, and tortured. A total of 4,974 deaths have been documented by Minghui.org as of July 14, 2023. Due to the strict censorship of information in China, however, the actual number is likely much higher.

Among the 120 newly-confirmed deaths, 26 (21.7%) took place between 2003 and 2021, 37 (30.8%) died in 2022, and 54 (45%) practitioners passed away in 2023. It isn't clear in which years three practitioners died.

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25.07.2023 - Save Ma Xiuyun and Tang Pingshun, there is still time

Bitter Winter - The persecution of the practitioners of Falun Gong exercises, or disciples of Falun Dafa teachings, is not a sad story confined in the past, to be piously remembered at anniversaries. It is a bewildering current and recurrent event, especially because its victims are guilty of one "crime" only, pacifically and harmlessly following a spiritual way. The case of **Ma Xiuyun** and her husband **Tang Pingshun** exemplifies it well.

Ma was born on August 14, 1957, Tang on April 14, 1955. They lived in Beijing, Chaoyang District, and were both practitioners of Falun Gong. When the black day of the movement, July 20, 1999, came and open persecution exploded, Ma was arrested. She ended up in different forced labor camps all over China. The reason was laughable. In August 2000, she had participated in a pacific demonstration in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, to protest the government's decision to ban Falun Gong.

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24.07.2023 - "Help free my parents": The story of Ding Lebin

Bitter Winter - **Ma Ruimei** and her husband, **Ding Yuande**, were arrested on May 12, 2023. Ma was freed on bail, Ding is still in prison. Their son is relentlessly fighting for their freedom. We interviewed him.

All cases of religious persecution are similar, yet all are also unique. They are similar, or analogous, in their dynamics and horrors, and in the suffering of the victims. But they are also unique, not only because details and circumstances obviously differ, but because human beings are not numbers only. They are real, and all are irreplaceable. This is why, when one human being suffers, all humanity suffers. When one human being is persecuted or dies, an intimate part of every one of us also experiences persecution and death.

[Continue reading...](#)

20.07.2023 - Two reports nail the CCP to its crimes

Bitter Winter - The 450+ pages of the 2020 Minghui Report have now been updated by the 190-page "The Persecution of Falun Gong." July 20 is the 24th anniversary of the beginning of Falun Gong's ordeal.

For the Marxist-Leninist dogma, which is the basis of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s doctrine, all religions are alienations. Followers of all creeds or beliefs are affected by mental disorders and should be cured. The state, acting as a doctor, a cop, and a nanny all at the same time, sets up facilities to "cure" and "re-educate" these poor souls. In the Soviet Union and its satellite countries this was an industry. It happened in all Communist regimes of the world. It still happens in the People's Republic of China (PRC).

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19.07.2023 - Sanction persecutors of Falun Gong

European times - About Falun Gong // July 20 marks the anniversary of one of the bloodiest, and yet widely unacknowledged assaults on religious freedom in the contemporary world, medieval in its violence. The terror continues and obligates national governments and civil society to defend its victims and sanction its perpetrators.

In 1999, the Chinese Communist regime began repression and persecution of Falun Gong (also called Falun Dafa). Falun Gong is a new religious movement, established by Li Hongzhi in 1992 in China. It is nonpolitical and total pacifist and teaches both a variety of traditional Chinese gymnastics and a spirituality rooted in the "Three Teachings," a Chinese religion including Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, with some New Age variations.

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Catholics

19.07.2023 - Vatican adapts communications strategy on Chinese bishop appointments

When China's communist government transferred Bishop Joseph Shen Bin from the Diocese of Haimen to Shanghai last April it caused quite a stir in Rome. But when it was announced on July 15 that Pope Francis has now accepted Shen Bin's promotion to China's largest diocese, there was just as much commotion.

In what is becoming a familiar practice, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican Secretary of State, issued a strong statement to coincide with the pope's confirmation of the appointment. Indeed, for the past several months, this has become part of the Vatican's communication strategy regarding its 2018 agreement with China on appointing bishops. Though the exact content of the accord remains secret, it is believed that the fundamental principle was that the two sides would come to a mutual understanding on such appointments.

[Continue reading...](#)

17.07.2023 - The Vatican-CCP compromise on the Bishop of Shanghai: Who won and who lost

Bitter Winter - The Holy See has accepted an appointment illegally made by Beijing. But the incident led the Vatican to acknowledge that a "clandestine church" still exists. On April 4, Bishop Shen Bin, until then Bishop of Haimen, was installed as the new Bishop of Shanghai by the CCP. The Vatican stated officially that "the Holy See learned from the media of the installation" the morning it happened.

The text of the Vatican-China deal of 2018, renewed in 2020 and 2022, is secret, but it is known that it regulates the administration of the Catholic dioceses and the appointment of bishops. The latter are still selected by the CCP but should be officially appointed by the Vatican. In the case of Shanghai, Shen Bin was not appointed by the Vatican as Bishop of that city. Yet, he was installed.

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Buddhists

26.07.2023 - Sinicizing Buddhism: Buddhists dressed in Red Army uniforms sing the "New Internationale"

Bitter winter - In recent years, as the CCP's campaign to "Sinicize Buddhism" advances, not only have a large number of Buddhist statues and temples been dismantled and "remodeled," but government-run temples and Buddhist groups have also become increasingly politicized. "Bitter Winter" has reported on government-run Buddhist temples being forced to perform flag-raising ceremonies, celebrate National Day, and even hold "Party movie classes." "Sinicization," as our readers know, does not mean adapting Buddhism to Chinese culture, a process that was completed centuries ago, but making it subservient to the Communist Party ideology.

[Continue reading...](#)

20.07.2023 - Chinese police stop Tibetan Buddhist gathering, prevent lama from preaching

RFA - Tearing down tents and destroying a colorful sand mandala, Chinese authorities on Wednesday stopped a gathering where a Tibetan Buddhist lama was scheduled to preach – and tried to block online photos and descriptions of the incident, two Tibetans with knowledge of the situation said.

The actions in northwestern China's Qinghai province are the latest efforts by China to suppress Tibetan religious and cultural expressions.

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Protestants

31.07.2023 - Trial for Christian music school principal Xu Feng begins

ChinaAid- Chinese Communist authorities tried **Xu Feng**, a Christian music school principal, with "illegal business operations." The case began its trial on July 14th, but all information about information has been restricted.

Local authorities arrested Xu Feng, the principal of Maizi Christian Music High School, in 2021. He and his co-workers were detained for nearly two years before their trial began. July 14th was full of twists and turns. Defense lawyers summarized several features of the trial. According to the attorneys, the court violated the law before and after the trial.

Meanwhile, the defense argued that the judge should not let an unjust verdict destroy the “goodness” still in society.

The description of court proceedings and the verdict in Xu Feng’s case were completely censored and restricted by the Chinese government’s internet censorship authorities. All information regarding the trial and its outcome was swiftly removed from the internet.

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25.07.2023 - Lawyers of Linfen Covenant House Church rejected

ChinaAid - Local government officials accused Linfen Covenant House Church preachers and a co-worker of “fraud.” Defense attorneys Fang Xianguo and Yuan Mao informed Linfen City People’s Procuratorate of the mishandling of the case by the lower district. However, the city prosecutors called the case “cult” related and refused to accept any materials.

According to Chinese law, the Yaodu District People’s Procuratorate of Linfen City made an error in this case. They did not investigate police suspected of illegal collection of evidence and bending the law for personal gain.

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18.07.2023 - Wife and son of Chinese human rights lawyer who died suspiciously escape to US.

ChinaAid - The wife and son of Dr. Li Baiguang, the Chinese human rights attorney who died under suspicious circumstances in 2018, have escaped to the United States, according to the Christian nonprofit groups ChinaAid and Voice of the Martyrs Korea.

Hanmei “Hannah” Xu and Qingxin “Pure Heart” Li arrived in the United States last month and are presently seeking asylum, according to representatives of the two groups.

Dr. Li Baiguang, known for his self-described “ant strategy” of traveling around China to take up hundreds of individual cases defending the religious freedom and human rights of ordinary citizens, rose to prominence internationally after receiving an award from the Washington-based National Endowment for Democracy in 2008 and being invited for three visits with then-U.S. President George W. Bush. Both Ms Hanmei Xu and Qingxin Li were summoned to the local police station nearby where they used to stay in Jiangsu province for intensive interrogation about Dr Li’s human rights activities.

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Sanction persecutors of Falun Gong!

See [HRWF Database](#) of over 2200 Falung Gong practitioners behind bars

By Aaron Rhodes and Marco Respinti

[The European Times](#) (20.07.2023) - July 20 marks the anniversary of one of the bloodiest, and yet widely unacknowledged assaults on religious freedom in the contemporary world, medieval in its violence. The terror continues and obligates national governments and civil society to defend its victims, and sanction its perpetrators.

In 1999, the Chinese Communist regime began repression and persecution of Falun Gong (also called Falun Dafa). Falun Gong is a new religious movement, established by Li Hongzhi in 1992 in China. It is nonpolitical and totally pacifist, and teaches both a variety of traditional Chinese gymnastics and a spirituality rooted in the "Three Teachings," a Chinese religion including Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, with some New Age variations.

Falun Gong was originally tolerated and even praised by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as a healthy practice that was good for citizens, but two elements eventually aroused concern among CCP authorities. As much as the regime tried to present it as a purely secular practice, its spiritual dimension could not be denied or removed. What is more, the movement rapidly grew in size.

Considering Falun Gong a threat to its monopoly on authority, the CCP banned it in 1999, including it in the list of "xie jiao," meaning "heterodox teachings." The traditional term has been used by Chinese political rulers to stigmatize groups and individuals they disliked. The CCP revived the expression, using it in the same manner term "cult" is used in some Western milieus, and started using it as a pretext to severely persecute Falun Gong practitioners and other groups.

The [Falun Dafa Infocenter reports](#) that the total number of believers documented to have died due to persecution now surpasses 5,000, with the youngest being a 17-year-old model student in Heilongjiang in August 1999, Chen Ying, and the eldest an 82-year old retired professor, An Fuzi, a Korean, who died in Jilin Province Women's Prison on May 22, 2023 after two years in detention.

The Center also documents that from January to June 2023, there were 3,133 documented cases of arrests and harassment, a 15.7 percent jump from the same period in 2022. No one should also forget that Falun Gong was for decades the preferred victim of organ harvesting, the forcible extraction of vital parts from the bodies of prisoners of conscience, some of whom are still alive, to feed the lucrative Chinese black market for transplants. Today, this practice continues and is extended also to Uyghurs and Tibetans, and possibly others; there are fears that the regime's massive DNA profiling may serve organ harvesting programs.

In 2018 and 2019, crimes perpetrated by the CCP against Falun Gong were thoroughly documented by the London-based "China Tribunal," chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice, former lead prosecutor at the trial of Slobodan Milošević in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

This year, approaching the anniversary of the beginning of their persecution, Falun Gong practitioners living in 44 countries compiled a list of perpetrators and submitted it to their respective governments, urging them to hold these individuals accountable. They ask their governments [to bar these criminals and their family members from entry in those 44 countries and to freeze their overseas assets](#). Minghui.org, a volunteer organization working as central communication hub for the Falun Gong community worldwide, underlines that "[o]fficials from the U.S. State Department informed several years ago that the materials provided by Falun Gong practitioners are authentic and credible, presented in a professional manner, and can be used as a model for other groups."

Victims and survivors among the Falun Gong appealing to governments and international organizations to take action against individuals responsible for crimes against them. To hold them accountable can ease pressure against Falun Gong, and help prevent members of other religious minorities from suffering similar abuses.

Aaron Rhodes is Senior Fellow in the Common Sense Society, and President of the Forum for Religious Freedom-Europe.

Marco Respinti is Director-in-Charge of [Bitter Winter: A Magazine on Religious Liberty and Human Rights](#)

The list of the 44 countries, available on [Minghui.org](#), includes all the “Five Eyes” alliance members (an international intelligence operation for security), many nations in Asia, America, and Europe, and all the 27 countries of the European Union:

the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand;

Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Belgium, Ireland, Austria, Denmark, Romania, Czech Republic, Finland, Portugal, Greece, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Latvia, Estonia, Cyprus and Malta;

Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Israel,

Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Chile and Dominica.

The list of persecutors involves officials from various regions. Among them are:

- *Fan Lubing: Director of the Prison Administration Bureau of the Ministry of Justice, former Secretary of the Party Committee of the Central Judicial Police Academy (National Lawyer Academy), former director of the Research Office of the Ministry of Justice (director of the Judicial Research Institute) and president of the "China Judicial" magazine.*

- *Li Rulin: President of China Institute of Integrity and Legal System, former Deputy Chief Procurator of the Supreme Procuratorate, former member of the Party Leadership Group and Director of the Political Department of the Supreme Procuratorate, former Director of the Labor Re-education Administration of the Ministry of Justice.*

- *Liu Jiayi: Member of the Standing Committee of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Director of the Proposal Committee, former Secretary of the Shandong Provincial Party Committee.*

- *Ye Hanbing: Vice Governor of Sichuan Province, Director and Party Secretary of the Provincial Public Security Department, Deputy Secretary of the Political and Legal Committee of the Provincial Party Committee, former Deputy Director of the Zhejiang Provincial Public Security Department, former Deputy Secretary of the Hangzhou Municipal Legal Committee, Party Secretary and Director of the Hangzhou Public Security Bureau And Inspector General.*

- *Li Chenglin: Deputy Governor of Shanxi Province, Deputy Secretary of the Political and Legal Committee of the Provincial Party Committee, Secretary of the Party Committee and Director of the Provincial Public Security Department, Former Secretary of the Party Leadership Group, Chief Prosecutor of the Liaoning Provincial Procuratorate, Member of the Political and Legal Committee of the Provincial Party Committee, Former Deputy Secretary of the Party Leadership Group of the Higher Court of Jilin Province, associate dean.*

- *You Quanrong: Secretary of the Party Leadership Group, Vice President, Acting President, and President of the High Court of Hubei Province;*

- *Zhang Yi: Secretary of the Party Leadership Group and Chief Prosecutor of the Hainan Provincial Procuratorate, Deputy Secretary of the Political and Legal Committee of the Provincial Party Committee, Former Party Secretary and Director of the Jilin Provincial Judicial Department, Former First Political Commissar of the Jilin Provincial Prison Administration Bureau, Former Executive Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee of the Ministry of Justice He is also Secretary of the Commission for Discipline Inspection and former Deputy Director of the Legal Affairs Department of*

the Ministry of Justice.

- *Tan Zunhua: First-level inspector of Heilongjiang Prison Administration Bureau, former member of the Party Committee of the Heilongjiang Provincial Department of Justice, deputy secretary of the Party Committee and director of the Provincial Prison Administration Bureau.*
- *Yi Jianmin: Member of the Party Committee of the Department of Justice of Heilongjiang Province, Secretary of the Party Committee and Director of the Provincial Prison Administration Bureau.*
- *Li Yilong: Deputy Secretary of the Wuhan Municipal Party Committee, Secretary of the Political and Legal Committee, former member of the Standing Committee of the Wuhan Municipal Party Committee, Deputy Secretary of the Political and Legal Committee of the Municipal Party Committee, Secretary of the Party Committee and Director of the Municipal Public Security Bureau, former Deputy Director of the Public Security Department of Hubei Province, director of the Political Department, former member of the Standing Committee of the Ezhou Municipal Committee of Hubei Province, Secretary of the Political and Legal Committee of the Municipal Party Committee, and Director of the Municipal Public Security Bureau.*
- *Xue Changyi: Member of the Party Leadership Group, Deputy Chief Prosecutor, Member of the Procuratorial Committee, Senior Prosecutor of the Henan Provincial Procuratorate, Former Chief Procurator of the Nanyang City Procuratorate of Henan Province.*
- *Li Qiang: Deputy Governor of Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province, Secretary of the Party Committee and Chief Inspector of the State Public Security Bureau, Deputy Secretary of the Political and Legal Committee of the State Party Committee, and former Chief of the National Security Corps of the Sichuan Provincial Public Security Bureau.*
- *Dong Kaide: Executive Deputy Secretary of Shenyang Municipal Legal Committee, former Director of Shenyang Municipal Bureau of Justice and Director of Prison Administration.*
- *Tian Zhi: Director of Shenyang Dongling Prison, former director of Shenyang Zhangshi Drug Rehabilitation Center.*
- *Qin Keping: Warden and Political Commissar of Jiazhou Prison, Sichuan Province.*
- *Luo Jiangtao: Director of the Political Department of Jiazhou Prison, Sichuan Province, former head of the Education and Reform Section of Jiazhou Prison.*
- *Shao Ling: Chief of the Education and Reform Section of Jiazhou Prison, Sichuan Province*

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest July 01-15

General

01.07.2023 - Religious leaders urged to enhance China's 'soft power'

UCA news - Religions should be guided by core socialist values and Chinese culture, said top govt official.

A state-sponsored training program for religious leaders in China has asked to strengthen religious exchanges with foreign countries and enhance understanding and friendship with people of other countries to create a "favorable external environment."

The leaders have been urged to accelerate efforts to promote traditional Chinese culture, values, and unique spiritual identity in the international community by renewing their commitment to state policies, Xinde Weekly reported on June 27.

The training program for Christian, Buddhist, Taoist, and Muslim leaders on June 13-19 in Changsha, Hunan province was sponsored by the United Front Work Department, an influential body of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

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Hui Muslims

11.07.2023 - "Sinicization" Galore: "Arabic" features removed from mosques, hospitals, restaurants

Bitter Winter - Informants continue to provide to "Bitter Winter" pictures of the iconoclastic fury of the Communist Party against traditional Islamic symbols and signs.

"Bitter Winter" has previously exposed the plans of the authorities in Xining, Qinghai province, to "Sinicize" nineteen local mosques, and last year reported on the "renovation project" of the Xining Dongguan mosque. Recently, Bitter Winter received a set of pictures from local Hui muslims in Xining, showing that the local mosques, which were once on the authorities' "renovation list," have now been "Sinicized" and are being publicly displayed as "exemplary models."

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Buddhists

14.07.2023 - China blocks prominent Tibetan lama from preaching

RFA - The Chinese government has canceled a Tibetan Buddhist religious event where a prominent lama was scheduled to preach, though organizers obtained permission from authorities in advance, two Tibetans with knowledge of the situation said.

The seventh Gungthang Rinpoche Lobsang Jamyang Geleg Tenpe Khenchen was to give a Kalachakra teaching in Dzoegge, Ngaba county, in the western Chinese province of Sichuan, where the he was born, the sources said.

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07.07.2023 - Bodhi Gong believers sentenced in Shandong

Bitter winter - The crackdown on the Buddhist qigong movement founded by Grandmaster JinBodhi continues.

Last month, Bitter Winter reported on the national crackdown on Bodhi Gong, called abroad "Bodhi Meditation," and presented a short history of the successful Buddhist-qigong movement created in 1991 by Di Yuming, known to his followers as Grandmaster JinBodhi. The headquarters of the movement are now in Canada, where the founder escaped in 1999.

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06.07.2023 - Chinese Government "will continue to control reincarnation of living Buddhas"

Bitter Winter - Rumors that the atheistic CCP may end the farce of authorizing who may reincarnate and into whom were denied at a press conference in Beijing.

Readers of "Bitter Winter" know that in 2007, the State Administration of Religious Affairs institutionalized the right of the CCP to decide which Tibetan Buddhist lamas should be authorized to reincarnate, to control the process for identifying the reincarnations, and to certify what reincarnations were genuine through its infamous Order no. 5.

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Protestants

10.07.2023 - Chinese evangelist refutes state propaganda

UCA news - Chen Wensheng alleged the communist regime is plotting to arrest and jail him based on false testimonies.

A popular Christian street evangelist has alleged that China's communist regime is conspiring to arrest him again by threatening his family and followers to get false testimonies.

Chen Wensheng, a member of the Xiaoqun Church in Hunan Province also dismissed allegations that he had betrayed his community by trying to get them arrested, reported ChinaAid, a US-based Christian rights group.

Chen said his ordeal came to light after he released a statement on social media in June.

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05.07.2023 - China plans to export "Sinicized christianity" internationally

Bitter Winter - "We will change the face of world Christianity!" A conference on June 27–30 launched a new grandiose plan—and a problem for the World Council of Churches.

Pastors of the Three-Self Church have understood for several years what a "Sinicized" religion is. "Sinicization" does not mean adopting a Chinese style, language, and aesthetics (in fact, the CCP is "Sinicizing" even a quintessential Chinese religion such as Taoism). It means adopting the style, language, of ideology of the CCP. Slowly but surely Three-Self

churches are being transformed into ideological indoctrination centers for Xi-Jinping-style Communism, with the tiny veneer of Christianity becoming tinier every year and every day.

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05.07.2023 - Hammer and sickle placed next to house church sign

ChinaAid - On July 3, a hammer and sickle, the emblem of the Chinese Communist Party, was placed next to Shinian Christian Church.

A pastor in Zhejiang province reported that the Taizhou Religious Affairs Bureau sent out notices to surrounding churches. They requested "all religious venues must put up large signs at their entrances that say 'love the Chinese communist party, love the country, and love the religion' and 'uphold the principle of developing religions in the Chinese context.'"

[Continue reading...](#)

05.07.2023 - House church leaders prosecuted as criminal 'clique'

csw.org - Three leaders of Linfen Covenant House ('Shengyue Jiayuan') Church in China's northern Shanxi Province have been accused of forming a criminal 'clique' and obtaining 'illegal income' amounting to 780,000 yuan (approx. £85,000), according to a statement published by the church on 29 June.

According to an indictment sheet shared by the church, the public prosecutors in Yaodu District, Linfen, Shanxi, have brought formal charges against preachers Li Jie, Han Xiaodong and their co-worker Wang Qiang. The indictment alleges that Li and Han, who do not hold religious clergy credentials, established an 'illegal organisation' without official approval in Linfen and set up several 'illegal activity sites' in the city together with Wang; it also alleges that they 'lured' many people into paying tithes and thanksgiving offerings.

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03.07.2023 - Hefei Christian Youth Fellowship: Leaders sentenced to jail terms

Bitter Winter - The group catered to the spiritual needs of Hefei college students and had refused to join the CCP-controlled Three-Self Church.

At the end of June, the Hefei Christian Youth Fellowship informed fellow house churches that two of its leaders, Mu En and Wang YINUO, had been sentenced to jail terms. **Mu En**, 35, who has an eight-year-old daughter and a six-year-old son, was sentenced to three and a half years in prison and **Wang YINUO**, 33, unmarried, to three years.

Hefei is a university city, and the Christian Youth Fellowship was established to cater to the spiritual needs of college students. From a dozen members in 2018, it grew to several hundred and attracted the malevolent attention of the CCP.

[Continue reading...](#)

03.07.2023 - Four Shengjia Church member officially arrested for 'illegal business operations'

ChinaAid - Public security forces formally arrested four Shengjia Church members on suspicion of "illegal business operations." Among them were **Pastor Deng Yanxiang** and three co-workers. Currently, they are detained in Foshan City Nanhai District Detention Center.

On the morning of May 24, police raided Shengjia Church's education center. Christians were getting ready for the school day. Suddenly, several dozen police, national security agents, staff of the religious affairs bureau, and the community management office rushed into the center. They searched the whole center and confiscated all the educational equipment. Officers arrested and detained **Pastor Deng Yanxiang** and three co-workers after the raid. Families received 30-day criminal detention notices the following day.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

14.07.2023 - Shandong woman sentenced to four years for writing to friends about Falun Gong

Minghui - A 58-year-old resident of Dongying City, Shandong Province was sentenced to four years and fined 5,000 yuan on June 28, 2023, for mailing letters to her friends in her hometown of Yucheng City in the same province.

Ms. Wang Ying shared in the letters how Falun Gong restored her health. She used to suffer all kinds of ailments, including severe skin peeling, eye degeneration, rheumatoid arthritis, headaches, digestive problems, and low blood pressure. All her symptoms disappeared only two months later after she took up Falun Gong in 1996.

[Continue reading...](#)

09.07.2023 - Shandong man given second 4-year prison term for his faith in Falun Gong

Minghui - **Mr. Zhu Tongchao** was sentenced to four years on May 30, 2023, for his faith in Falun Gong.

Mr. Zhu, a native of Tancheng County, Shandong Province, was arrested together with his younger brother, Mr. Zhu Tonggui, on May 23, 2018. The brothers had been repeatedly targeted for practicing Falun Gong and lived in a rental home in Linyi City, Shandong Province at the time of their arrests.

Officer Liu Helei and others from the Lanshan District Domestic Security Office and Xijiao Police Station, both in Linyi City, used a metal bar to pry open the brothers' rental home's skylight and climbed down to seize them.

[Continue reading...](#)

06.07.2023 - Retired Professor denied pension benefits for her faith since February 2019

Minghui - A retired college professor from Suihua City, Heilongjiang Province has been denied pension benefits since February 2019, when she started serving a one-year prison sentence for her faith in Falun Gong. Ms. Gao Jinshu and her husband struggled to get by on his meager pension income during the past four-plus years.

Things got even tougher after Ms. Gao was hit by a car in May 2022, and her husband had to be hospitalized for an illness six months later. The authorities, however, have refused to reinstate her retirement benefits.

[Continue reading...](#)

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest June 16-30

General

29.06.2023 - Bookstores searched for illegal religious literature in Henan

Bitter Winter - "Pornography and obscenity" and "xie jiao [a term indicating 'heterodox teachings' listed as such and prohibited, sometimes less accurately translated as 'cults'], illegal religion, and superstition" are now the two main illegal contents of books the Market Supervision Bureaus are supposed to confiscate in China.

This month, Market Supervision Bureau officers and police descended on bookstores in Shangcheng County, which is under the administration of the prefecture-level city of Xinyang, in Henan Province, and started examining shelves and books, telling store owners that they were looking for both pornography and unauthorized religious or "superstitious" publications.

Bookstores near schools and colleges were particularly targeted.

[Continue reading...](#)

Chinese Muslims

28.06.2023 - Yunnan, "Sinicization" of mosques, temporarily suspended after protests, started again

On June 1, 2023, Bitter Winter reported on protests over the "Sinicization" of the Najiaying Mosque in Yunnan and the authorities' plans to "Sinicize" the Shadian Grand Mosque in the same province. Ostensibly, the "Sinicization" of the Najiaying mosque was suspended after protests by local Hui Muslims and international media attention. However, Bitter Winter has received an update that local authorities in Yunnan have in fact continued to move forward with the "Sinicization" of the local mosques in June.

The day after the May 27 protest, authorities in the town of Nagu, Tonghai County, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province, posted on a local street bulletin board the same "Notice on Urging Relevant Criminal Suspects to Surrender" that authorities had posted online, and displayed a "rendering of the Najiaying Mosque" that clearly informed the local people that the mosque would be transformed into a Chinese-style building.

[Continue reading...](#)

Buddhists

26.06.2023 - Searching Tibetan monasteries, China requires monks to renounce ties to Dalai Lama

Radio Free Asia - Chinese authorities in Tibet are randomly searching monasteries and forcing monks to sign documents renouncing all ties to the "separatist" Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism's foremost spiritual leader, Tibetan sources living in exile told Radio Free Asia. The Dalai Lama is widely regarded by Chinese leaders as a separatist intent on splitting Tibet, a formerly independent nation that was invaded and incorporated into China by force in 1950, from Beijing's control.

[Continue reading...](#)

Protestants

27.06.2023 - Officials establish task force for Guangzhou Bible reformed church.

Chinaaid - Yesterday, four officials requested a meeting with the pastor of Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church. They asked him and his house church to join the government-sanctioned Three-Self Church. Also, they informed the pastor that a task force was formed specifically for his church.

Note from the Editor: Consider supporting this church

Officials invited Pastor Huang Xiaoning to discuss Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church. They told Pastor Huang they wanted him to move away from Panyu District in Guangzhou. During the meeting, they questioned him about tithe and offerings in his church.

Despite their threats and constant harassment, the pastor shared the gospel with them and answered their questions about Christianity. They were shocked by his preaching. "I'm very about what I believe," he told the officials. "I'm doing what I am supposed to do. And I will continue to do what I'm doing, regardless of the situation."

[Continue reading...](#)

26.06.2023 - "Endangering national security": New charge to Yu Wansheng case

Chinaaid - Chinese authorities arrested prominent human rights lawyer **Yu Wansheng** and his wife, Xu Yan. Recently, Beijing police refused lawyer visits for the couple and cited a new charge of "endangering national security."

The China Human Rights Lawyers Group reported that the couple's lawyer made two visits to Beijing. They negotiated with the Shijingshan branch of the Beijing Public Security Bureau, which is responsible for Yu Wansheng's case. The defense attorney also visited the detention center and requested a meeting with his client. Police managing the case rejected the meeting, citing an ongoing application for a new charge.

At the end of last month, the Shijingshan Detention Center in Beijing also refused a meeting between Xu Yan and her lawyer. According to the detention center, the meeting was rejected because Xu faced additional charges of "inciting subversion of state power."

[Continue reading...](#)

23.06.2023 - Pastor and members of Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church harassed

Chinaaid - On June 21st, an unknown individual cut off the power to Pastor Huang Xiaoning's home. They also blocked his door lock, rendering him unable to use it.

Just after 10 PM, the power was cut off at the home of Pastor Huang Xiaoning of the Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church. Surveillance photos revealed that an unknown person in civilian clothes was injecting objects into the door. Pastor Huang Xiaoning reported the case to the police station that night, respectively. He received an executive police report. Reports also indicate that unknown individuals also stalked and harassed other pastoral co-workers this past week.

[Continue reading...](#)

19.06.2023 - Chang Weiping, a Chinese human rights lawyer, sentenced

Chinaaid - Chinese human rights lawyer Chang Weiping was sentenced to three years and six months in prison for subversion of state power. He is expected to be released in July 2024.

The 39-year-old human rights lawyer Chang Weiping was involved in the "Xiamen Gathering" case in 2019. After a private dinner gathering, over 20 citizens and lawyers were forcibly disappeared, summoned, or detained. All the attendees discussed current affairs and the future of China. Two of those involved, rights activist Dr. Xu Zhiyong and lawyer Ding Jiayi, were sentenced to 14 and 12 years, respectively. Dr. Xu's girlfriend, Li Qiaochu, was also implicated and remains in custody. Other activists including Zhang Zhongshun, Dai Zhenya, and Chen Jiaping have been released on bail pending trial.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

30.06.2023 - Woman previously jailed three times detained again for her faith in Falun Gong

Minghui - A 71-year-old resident of Shihe District, Xinyang City, Henan Province was arrested on May 16, 2023, while talking to people about the Chinese Communist Party's persecution of Falun Gong, a mind-body practice based on the principles of Truthfulness-Compassion-Forbearance.

The arresting officers were from Yangshan Police Department in Pingqiao District, Xinyang City. They turned **Ms. Zhang Qiuju** over to their counterparts at the Gongqu Road Police Station, Shihe District. She was later transferred to the Xinyang City Detention Center, where she remains.

This is not the first time that Ms. Zhang has been targeted for upholding her faith in Falun Gong.

[Continue reading...](#)

23.06.2023 - Sole Breadwinner for Extended Family Sentenced to Three Years for His Faith

Minghui - It's recently confirmed by Minghui.org that a Xianning City, Hubei Province, resident was taken to the Fanjiatai Prison in March 2023 to serve a three-year sentence for his faith in Falun Gong.

Mr. Liu Haiquan, in his 40s, received a call from a stranger on April 13, 2021, asking if he could install satellite dishes. The stranger hung up after he said yes. Shortly after, Zhang Shijun, the secretary of Xianning City Political and Legal Affairs Committee, and Liu Ning, the head of Xianning City Domestic Security Office, showed up at his workplace and arrested him.

[Continue reading...](#)

21.06.2023 - 70-year-old woman tortured in prison for 3.5 years for practicing Falun Dafa

Having suffered 3.5 years of frequent torture for not renouncing her faith in Falun Dafa, a 70-year-old woman in Chuxiong City, Yunnan Province, was finally released in December 2022. Now, over six months after Ms. Wang Meiling returned home, she still has persistent pain, especially in her lower back and pelvis. She also has headaches and often feels lethargic and drowsy.

According to **Ms. Wang**, the guards and inmates at Yunnan Province Second Women's Prison did everything to make her life miserable in an attempt to force her to renounce her faith, which has been persecuted by the Chinese communist regime since 1999.

[Continue reading...](#)

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest June 01-15

General

08.06.2023 - China's "Query system for Islamic, Catholic, and Christian clergy," another tool for repression

After the one for Buddhist monks and Taoist priests, a new data base will allow the authorities to identify priests, pastors, and imams not controlled by the CCP. Earlier this year, Bitter Winter reported that the "Buddhist and Taoist Clerical Personnel Information Query System" had been launched in Beijing. It was presented as a tool to "unmask" false and fraudulent Taoist priests and Buddhist monks. Where frauds are not unknown, the main reason for the creation of the data base was to identify, expose as illegitimate, and persecute Buddhist and Taoist clergy not subservient to the CCP nor part of the government-controlled China Buddhist Association and China Taoist Association.

[Continue reading...](#)

Chinese Muslims

12.06.2023 - Attempt to distort and slander mosque renovation truly ill-intentioned, malicious

Recently, the renovation of the dome of the historic Najiaoying Mosque in Tonghai County, Yuxi City, Southwest China's Yunnan Province, has been manipulated by certain forces and foreign media to attack China's religious policy. They deliberately and ill-intentionally view the localization of religion, especially the Chinese government's efforts to adapt religion to a socialist society, as "suppressing religious freedom."

Given the sensitivity of religious affairs, the renovation of mosques in China can easily lead to misinterpretations. However, in reality, the Chinese-style mosque has always been the tradition of Chinese mosque architecture, and is deeply supported by Muslim communities.

[Continue reading...](#)

05.06.2023 - Chinese Muslims told mosques should preach communism too

Just like Christians, Muslims should "Sinicize" more quickly, as they "celebrate" the 70th anniversary of China Islamic Association.

Just as there is a government-controlled Three-Self Church for converting "legal" Protestant churches into transmission belts of the CCP directives to Christians, there is a China Islamic Association playing the same role for Muslims. It is less well-known, and it is challenged by independent or underground mosques just as the Three-Self Church should face the competition of "illegal" but flourishing house churches.

[Continue reading...](#)

Buddhists

12.06.2023 - 'Rewards' for Tibetans meeting China-backed Buddhist leader

Chinese authorities are paying Tibetans 100 yuan (US\$14) each to meet, greet and receive blessings from a Beijing-backed Buddhist leader who is tapped as the spiritual successor of the Dalai Lama, says a report.

Gyaltzen Norbu, the China-backed Panchen Lama, is currently visiting the region to give his blessings, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported on June 7. Many Tibetans consider him an "imposter."

According to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama are reincarnated as children when they die.

[Continue reading...](#)

Protestants

13.06.2023 - Bible College Teachers indoctrinated at Beijing's Central Institute of Socialism

Christian professors from all over the country were summoned to the capital to attend a mandatory course on Marxism and Xi Jinping thought. The Central Institute of Socialism was founded in 1956 by Chairman Mao to educate to Marxism those who were not members of the Chinese Communist Party. It has become the main educational institution of the United Front.

[Continue reading...](#)

12.06.2023 - Beijing Lampstand Church: Pastor Qin Sifeng sentenced to five years in jail

Two co-workers were also sentenced but released. The successful house church is being punished for its national outreach. "Bitter Winter" reported last year that Pastor Qin Sifeng and Sister Su Minjun of Beijing Lampstand Church had been arrested in Zibo, Shandong, while traveling for evangelizing purposes to faraway Yunnan. Subsequently another co-worker, **We Ling'e**, was also arrested.

[Continue reading...](#)

12.06.2023 - Chinese preacher detains and charged with 'illegal business operations'

Public security arrested Chinese Christian Zeng Chuandao in May. After he served his 15-day detention, Zeng was charged with supposed illegal business operations. His wife, Wanjuan Quan, calls on Christians to pray for him. After a Sunday service on May 14th, the Lanshan Public Security Bureau arrested Zeng Chuandao. He suffered a 15-day administrative detention until May 30th. Police placed him in criminal detention for "illegal business operations" on June 1st.

[Continue reading...](#)

07.06.2023 - Christian students asked to study 20th Congress and Celebrate "Heroes" who betrayed the Church

Shaanxi Bible School held a study session on the CCP Congress. It also honored an early pro-CCP bishop and two "revolutionary heroes" who were raised as Christians. The Shaanxi Bible School, located in Xixian New Area, is in the forefront of "Sinicization," i.e., of adapting its programs and activities to the aims and ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. It also maintains a "cosmetic" ecumenical dialogue with, and receives support from, Western churches that fail to see the true nature of the Three-Self Church as a puppet of the regime.

[Continue reading...](#)

06.06.2023 - Hebei: Friends pray in your home, the CCP cuts off your water and electricity

In Sanhe, Yang Yingle was told that houses where illegal religious gatherings take place are subject to this and worse retaliations.

In Sanhe, a county-level city administered by the Langfang prefecture-level city in Hebei province, a Christian called Yang Yingle had his water and electricity cut off. It was not a technical failure but a punishment and a warning.

[Continue reading...](#)

06.06.2023 - Pastor Qin Sifeng sentenced to five years; other coworkers released.

In the recent case regarding the staff of Beijing Lampstand Church, ChinaAid sources discovered the verdict. The Court sentenced Pastor **Qin Sifeng** to five and a half years for "illegal business operations." Church co-worker Su Minjun was sentenced to three and a half years of probation. Authorities released Wu Ling'e, counting her 18-month sentence as time served.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

13.06.2023 - 74-year-old woman taken straight to brainwashing Center after serving five years in prison for her faith

May 18, 2023, was the day Ms. Wu Bilin, 74, was set to be released after serving five years for her faith in Falun Gong. Her family, who had not been allowed to visit her even once during her imprisonment, didn't see her when they went to pick her up. They later found out that the police had come before them and taken **Ms. Wu** to a brainwashing center for "further education," because she still refused to renounce Falun Gong after five years. Her continued detention crushed her 80-year-old husband, who is in frail health.

[Continue reading...](#)

11.06.2023 - Reported in May 2023: 133 Falun Gong practitioners sentenced for their faith

A total of 133 cases of Falun Gong practitioners sentenced to prison for their faith were reported in May 2023. Among the newly confirmed cases, 40 took place between 2016 and 2021, 8 in 2022 and 85 in 2023. The delay in reporting was caused by the strict information censorship under China's communist regime, which essentially keeps the persecution underground to avoid international scrutiny. The sentenced practitioners are from 23 provinces, centrally controlled municipalities and autonomous regions in China. Liaoning topped the list with 19 cases, followed by Shandong (18), Heilongjiang (11) and Hebei (10). The remaining 19 regions reported sentencing cases between 1 and 9.

[Continue reading...](#)

09.06.2023 - Liaoning man sentenced to 3.5 years, denied family visits in prison

A resident of Anshan City, Liaoning Province, was sentenced to 3.5 years for his faith in Falun Gong. **Mr. Bai Xuesong** has been denied family visits since May 2023 because he remains firm in his faith.

Mr. Bai was arrested on January 20, 2021, while visiting a local Falun Gong practitioner. He was convicted on September 29, 2022, after making four court appearances, on December 27, 2021, and January 7, August 19, and September 16, 2022.

Mr. Bai was transferred from Anshan City Second Detention Center to Nanguanling Prison in Dalian City, Liaoning Province on April 10, 2023. Fifteen days later, he was moved again, to Dalian City Prison. He was assigned to Division 2, and the guard in charge of monitoring him was Yang Deqiang.

[Continue reading...](#)

Others

15.06.2023 - China Cracks Down on the Bodhi Gong Movement

The international group, known internationally as Bodhi Meditation, may now have more practitioners abroad, but is still active in China despite a long repression.

Another group is being labeled as "xie jiao" ("heterodox teaching," sometimes incorrectly translated as "evil cult") by the China Anti-Xie-Jiao Association, which started a nationwide campaign in June 2023, with the police actively looking for clandestine practitioners of Bodhi Gong, or Bodhi Meditation, in several provinces.

[Continue reading...](#)

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest May 15-31

General

25.05.2023 - China: Theological seminaries inspected to check how "sinicized" they are

On May 10, 2023, Pastor Wu Wei, president of the China Christian Council, an umbrella organization for all Protestant churches in China affiliated with the government-controlled Three-Self Church, led a team of 17 experts of the China Christian Theological Education Committee to start an inspection of Zhejiang Theological Seminary. Members of the CCP Zhejiang Provincial Ethnic and Religious Committee accompanied them.

These inspections are being carried out throughout China to verify how advanced is the process of "Sinicization" of seminaries and whether they comply with the 2021 "Administrative Measures for Religious Schools."

[Continue reading...](#)

20.05.2023 - The U.S. Department of State 2023 religious freedom report: Excellent on enemies, soft on allies

As a magazine that started its publications in 2018 covering, originally, only Chinese issues, "Bitter Winter" reads every year with admiration and gratitude the section on China of the U.S. Department of State report about religious freedom. Always a comprehensive document, it does not have an academic approach but it is fair to say that it rivals the best academic treatments of religion in China for its richness of information and depth of analysis. The 2023 report, covering the year 2022, notes that the situation of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in China is further deteriorating with respect to all religions, from Tibetan Buddhists and Uyghur and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang to Catholic "conscientious objectors" and house church Protestants.

[Continue reading...](#)

Uyghur and Hui muslims

01.06.2023 - Hui Muslims clash with police over mosque's "sinicization"

Islam should be "Sinicized" in China, Xi Jinping said, and this has a visual as well as an ideological part. Visually, mosques that look "Arabic" should be "rectified." The process has been almost completed in the last few years, with minarets and domes disappearing throughout the country. Only a handful of "Arabic-style" mosques remain. The most prominent are the Najaiying Mosque and the Grand Mosque of Shadian, both in Yunnan, in an area inhabited by peaceful and well-off Hui .

[Continue reading...](#)

31.05.2023 - There are Christian Uyghurs, too: new organization launched in London

Refusing to be cowed by historical persecution and the prevailing narrative that Uyghurs must be Muslim, a group of twenty-first-century Uyghur believers in Jesus Christ have launched the World Uyghur Christian Union (WUCU), with a commitment to "spread the good news of their faith to their people."

At a conference to mark its official debut entitled, "The Uyghur Quest for the Gospel," exiled Uyghurs set out to give Uyghur Christianity a historical context and prove that in fact, far from being a new movement, many Uyghurs in Xinjiang were Christian long before Islam set foot on the shores of their desert land.

[Continue reading...](#)

Buddhists

25.05.2023 - Tibetan monk released from prison in poor health after serving two-year sentence

A Tibetan Buddhist monk serving a jail sentence for "sending money for prayer offerings" to the Dalai Lama and to the abbot of his monastery has been released from jail and has returned to the monastery, people in Tibet who are familiar with the situation said.

Authorities arrested **Sonam Gyatso** on April 3, 2021, while he was vacationing in Chengdu. On Tuesday, he was freed from Menyung Prison near the city of Chengdu in southwest China's Sichuan province, after completing his two-year sentence, the sources said.

On Thursday, he returned to Kirti Monastery in Sichuan's Ngaba county in poor health because of torture and maltreatment in prison, they said.

[Continue reading...](#)

Protestants

31.05.2023 - Local police blatantly smash and loot Zhongxing Christian church

On the morning of May 21, 2023, joint law enforcement stormed Zhongxing Christian Church. The Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau, Civil Affairs Bureau, and the Urban Management Brigade went into the building and destroyed personal property.

A ban notice was sent to the church, and a seal was placed on the front door. Church members left personal belongings at the scene, which were stolen. This is the second time since 2019 that the authorities have raided the church.

[Continue reading...](#)

27.05.2023 - Pastor and employees of christian education center detained

Police raided the Shengjia Christian Education and Help Center in Shunde City, Guangdong province on May 24th. Authorities searched the building and confiscated all teaching supplies. Four co-workers and **Pastor Deng** were arrested.

On May 25th, all their families received criminal detention notices. Each Christian was given a 30-day criminal detention for "illegal business operations." Pastor Deng and the four co-workers are detained at Shunde Nanhai District Detention Center.

On May 24 at 8:30 AM, a few dozen police officers, national security officers, and religious affairs personnel suddenly broke into the Christian Education and Help Center. They flooded into the office and searched the center, prying open doors and searching through personal belongings. The search ended in the afternoon as police took computers, desks, chairs, and coloring books. Once they sealed the door, officers dispersed everyone else who was present.

[Continue reading...](#)

25.05.2023 - House Church pastor Wan Changchun arrested twice for supposed financial crimes

Public security officers arrested **Wan Changchun**, the pastor of Cornerstone Reformed Church on May 19. Previously, the pastor was criminally detained for "illegal business operations" in another province. In the most recent arrest, authorities also charged three church co-workers with fraud.

On April 11, 2023, police arrested Pastor Wan Changchun of Cornerstone Reformed in Bengbu City, Anhui Province for "illegal business operations." He served another church in Lijiang, Yunnan province at the time. Currently, Pastor Wan is detained at Bengbu Municipal Detention Center.

[Continue reading...](#)

17.05.2023 - Bishop detained over two years for challenging CCP ordinations

Bishop Simone Zhang Jianlin has been detained for more than two years for challenging illegitimate ordinations. His family hopes Chinese authorities will release him on humanitarian grounds to care for his 90-year-old elderly mother.

According to AsiaNews, Simone Zhang Jianlin, vicar of the diocese of Xuanhua in Hebei province, has been detained since 2021. This is not the first time the bishop has been taken. The Chinese government detained him in 2009. Police also placed him under house arrest for two weeks in January 2019. Two months later, Bishop Zhang was arrested along with Bishop Augustine Cui Tai.

[Continue reading...](#)

16.05.2023 - Hohhot Bible trial: Defendants charged with "Collusion with foreign forces"

In the last month of March, Bitter Winter reported about the case of Wang Honglan and other twelve Inner Mongolia Christian believers, who were arrested for selling "illegally," meaning as part of the activities of a house church not controlled by the CCP, Bibles that had been regularly printed by a government-authorized publisher.

On May 9, 2023, Wang and other defendants should have appeared at the Huimin District Court of Hohhot City, Inner Mongolia. The court tried to rely on a pre-trial conference of March 20, which the defense lawyers regarded as held without them and irregular. Finally, the court agreed to reschedule a second pre-trial conference for May 8. However, when Wang's attorney arrived in court on May 8, he found that nobody was there and there was no conference.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

25.05.2023 - Cancer-stricken woman handcuffed and shackled throughout trial for practicing her faith

When **Ms. Chen Cuizhu** appeared in court on May 4, 2023 after eight months of detention for her faith in Falun Gong, her loved ones were shocked to see that the once healthy and energetic woman has become extremely emaciated and weak.

Despite her poor health, the bailiff still cuffed her hands and feet and chained the cuffs together. As a result, she couldn't straighten her back and had to bend over throughout the hearing.

Ms. Chen, of Zhanjiang City, Guangdong Province, was arrested on September 8, 2022, while studying Falun Gong's teachings with 14 other practitioners. She urged the police not to persecute Falun Gong. She also told them how her advanced bowel cancer disappeared after taking up the practice. The police confirmed it after examining her medical records. However, they still detained her at the Zhanjiang City Detention Center and submitted her case to the Chikan District Procuratorate.

[Continue reading...](#)

22.05.2023 - Xu Na's 8-year sentence confirmed on appeal

On May 18, 2023, Falun Gong poet and artist **Xu Na** had her sentence to eight years in jail confirmed by Beijing Second Intermediate Court. Bitter Winter had reported about the first-degree decision of January 16, 2022. Xu Na got eight years for posting on social media pictures of the COVID epidemic showing that the authorities were not in control of the situation as they claimed. She got a heavier sentence for being known as a Falun Gong practitioner.

[Continue reading...](#)

07.05.2023 - Liaoning man dies ten months following latest arrest for practicing Falun Gong

A Benxi City, Liaoning Province resident was forcibly injected with the so-called COVID-19 vaccine and started suffering severe side effects two days later. After having a persistent fever and cough for ten months, Mr. Tian Xiaofei passed away on May 5, 2023. He was 65.

Mr. Tian was arrested at home on July 13, 2022, for practicing Falun Gong, a spiritual discipline that has been persecuted by the Chinese communist regime since 1999. The police raided his home and confiscated his computer and cell phone.

[Continue reading...](#)

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest May 01-15

General

12.05.2023 - China demands 'total loyalty' from state-run churches

The annual inspection of churches and license renewal are seen as measures to 'governing religion according to the law'

Leaders of two pro-government Christian groups in southeast China organized a conference with the aim to strengthen the re-evaluation of state-controlled churches and control of religious clergy on annual inspection and license renewal for the clergy.

[Continue reading...](#)

10.05.2023 - 'The Yunnan Model' could be an indicator that life is going to get even harder for religious and ethnic groups across China

Wang Shunping, Nu Sangdeng, San Luobo, Hua Xiuxia and Dong Mengru spent the past nine months in detention.

Their crime? Holding a handful of Christian gatherings and teaching guitar and hymns to a group of young people in their rented home in Fugong County in the Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture of China's Yunnan Province.

Though they were released on bail on 7 May, the charges against them relating to 'organising and sponsoring an illegal gathering' are yet to be dismissed.

[Continue reading...](#)

Buddhists

04.05.2023 - How China is hell-bent on antagonizing Nepali Buddhists?

As part of its strategy to "antagonize" Nepali Buddhists, China seems to step up efforts aimed at crushing people's faith in the religion.

This is evident as some Chinese political leaders are attending a program in Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha and a UNESCO-protected World Heritage Site, on Friday.

Observers raise concerns as to how can political leaders of a Communist state, who do not believe in religion, attend a religious program and that too in a World Heritage Site on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti.

[Continue reading...](#)

03.05.2023 - China is blocking Tibetan monks and writers from spreading religious content online

China has been rigorously barring Tibetan writers, Buddhist monks and other influential people from spreading religious content online without prior approval, sources told Radio Free Asia.

The clampdown, based on a March 2022 regulation, gives authorities additional power to restrict online content that the ruling Communist Party considers damaging and is yet another example of how China has ramped up restrictions on expression, religion and culture in the western Tibet Autonomous Region.

[Continue reading...](#)

02.05.2023 - US Commission: China's suppression of Tibetan Buddhism intensified

China intensified its control and suppression of Tibetan Buddhism in 2022, but the United States took steps to increase support for the religion's followers, a new report from a US Commission says.

The 2023 annual report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, released May 1, says China's authorities restricted Tibetans' access to religious sites, banned religious gatherings, destroyed places and symbols of religious significance, and subjected monks and nuns to "political reeducation."

China even persecuted Tibetan Buddhists living in the United States, according to the report.

At the same time, the report notes the US arrested and sanctioned Chinese officials charged with violating Tibetans' rights, held hearings and events on China's abuse of the Tibetan people and raised the issue of Tibetans' religious freedom at the UN.

[Continue reading...](#)

Catholics

11.05.2023 - Confronting China's war on religion: The Catholic church

On Thanksgiving Day, 90-year-old Cardinal Joseph Zen, a Hong Kong priest, was convicted, along with five others, of failing to register a defunct charitable organization that tried to help pro-democracy demonstrators targeted by the regime.

Ostensibly, the charges stemmed from the group's failure to submit paperwork to authorities. But Chinese people of faith and governments around the world understood the real message Beijing was sending when it arrested **Fr. Zen**, known as "the conscience of Hong Kong," last May. The purpose of the prosecution, said U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price, was to show that China's government "will pursue all means necessary to stifle dissent and undercut protective rights and freedoms."

[Continue reading...](#)

Protestants

12.05.2023 - Abundance evangelical church: Christians fined for attending zoom meeting

30+ Christians of Abundance Evangelical Church attended a Zoom Sunday Service, hosted by one of the female congregants. Dozens of police and personnel barged into her home and disparaged her for the "unlawful gathering." Every Christian in the meeting had to pay a fine of 200 yuan (~\$29).

Personnel of the Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Affairs fined each congregant and made them pay via QR code. Afterward, everyone present was taken to the police station. Authorities released the last group of seven around 9 PM. One church co-worker was summoned to the police station and remained in custody.

[Continue reading...](#)

10.05.2023 - Rural pastor Chang Hao unable to meet with his lawyer

The detention center in Zhenxiong County denied a lawyer visit for rural preacher **Chang Hao**. According to officials, the pastor's case is "unique" and upper-level leaders won't allow the meeting.

On May 6, the attorney representing Chang Hao arrived at the detention center after traveling hundreds of miles. He requested to meet with his client, a local preacher detained on a false charge of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."

Chang Hao's wife, Enlin, and his attorney went to the Zhenxiong County Bureau of Public Security to learn more about the case. Guards let them in after writing down their information. Chang's advocates were initially treated well while talking about the purpose

of their visit. However, when the pair brought up the explicit and certain regulations and laws, staff working at the Bureau of Public Security ignored them.

[Continue reading...](#)

05.05.2023 - Qingcaodi Church: elder Wu Jiannan's father calls for son's release

Wu Tingmin, the father of imprisoned Elder **Wu Jiannan** of Qingcaodi Church, called for his son's release.

Elders Wu Jiannan and **Hao Ming** were arrested together on November 17, 2021. Police also took many church co-workers. The next day, authorities charged Wu and Hao with "fraud" because their church accepts a tithe and offering. According to Qingcaodi Church, the alleged amount money "defrauded" from church totaled 560,000 yuan (~\$81,000).

Wu Tingmin posted an article titled "A Father's Appeal: please release my son" on the Chinese social media Weibo. "Today I want to speak up for the persecution and injustice my son Wu Jiannan underwent because of his Christian belief," he wrote.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

13.05.2023 - Senior geological engineer and father of U.S. resident sentenced to eight years and fined 100K Yuan

A senior geological engineer employed by the Shengli Oilfield in Dongying City, Shandong Province, was sentenced to eight years with a 100,000-yuan fine on April 22, 2023.

Mr. Zhou Deyong was arrested on April 23, 2021, for practicing Falun Gong, a mind-body practice that has been persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party since July 1999. His arrest came six months after he returned to China from a trip to the U.S. His wife, Ms. You Ling, who traveled with him, stayed in the U.S. with their son Mr. Zhou You, who resides in Florida.

[Continue reading...](#)

10.05.2023 - 25 Falun Gong practitioner deaths due to persecution reported in April 2023

The deaths of 25 Falun Gong practitioners as a result of the persecution by the Chinese communist regime were reported in April 2023.

Six of the deaths took place between 2003 and 2020, another six in 2022, and the remaining thirteen in 2023. Due to strict information censorship in China, deaths can't always be reported in a timely manner, nor is all information readily available.

The 25 practitioners, including 16 females, hailed from 11 provinces. Hubei reported five cases, followed by four cases each in Hebei and Liaoning. Heilongjiang ranked the fourth with three cases. Hunan and Jilin each had two cases. The remaining five provinces, including Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Inner Mongolia, Shandong, and Sichuan, each had one case.

[Continue reading...](#)

07.05.2023 - Retired preschool teacher loses pension after serving three years for her faith

Ms. Li Caixia, a retired preschool teacher from Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia, walked out of prison in July 2022 after three years of incarceration for her faith in Falun Gong, only to find that her pension had been cancelled by the Chifeng Social Security Bureau. Meanwhile, officials from the judicial department, the police and the residential committee still constantly harass her and monitor her daily activities. Ms. Li filed a complaint with the Songshan District Court against the suspension of her pension. It's not clear whether the court has accepted her case.

Growing up in the countryside, Ms. Li married a man in the city at the age of 23 in the hope of a better life, only to become a victim of domestic violence. Her husband treated her even worse after she gave birth to a daughter. She had to divorce him in order to survive. She and her daughter led difficult a life until she took up Falun Gong in July 1999.

[Continue reading...](#)

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest April 16-30

Buddhists

28.04.2023 - Tibetan Buddhists traveling to Lhasa on pilgrimages face new hurdles

They now must file a form with a local official and have a city resident vouch for them.

Tibetans heading to the capital of Lhasa for pilgrimages or for other reasons must obtain a permission letter from a local official assuring that the traveler will not instigate or participate in any protests that would disrupt social order, Tibetans inside the region said. Many Tibetan Buddhists travel to Lhasa, which has a population of about 560,000, to visit the major religious sites such as the Potala Palace, Barkhor Street, Jokhang Temple and Norbulingka Palace.

[Continue reading...](#)

19.04.2023 - Representative Dr Arya appeals to G7 leaders to issue statement condemning China for violations in Tibet

With the G7 leaders' conference scheduled to take place soon in Hiroshima city next month, the representatives of Tibet, Uyghur, Southern Mongolia, and Hong Kong organised a press conference today at the Lower House of Japan Parliament.

The objective of the press conference, according to the moderator Fumie Furukawa, was to draw the attention of the G7 leaders to the deteriorating state of human rights violations and increased repressions in Tibet, Uyghur, Southern Mongolia, and Hong Kong.

Lawmaker Mitsubayashi Hiromi, General Secretary of the Japanese Parliamentary Caucus to Monitor Chinese Human Rights Violations (Chugoku Jinken Kyumei), and Lawmaker Ishikawa Akimasa, General Secretary of the Japanese Parliamentary Group for Tibet, attended the press conference.

[Continue reading...](#)

17.04.2023 - The Dalai Lama, the boy, and the CCP: The true story of a tempest in a teapot

Is the Father of Tibet a pedophile? The story can be dismissed as a tempest in a pot of Himalayan black tea but is being maliciously exploited by the CCP and its fellow travellers.

[Continue reading...](#)

Protestants

28.04.2023 - The small church that disturbed the CCP: Preacher Chang Hao detained in Yunnan

He had what looked like a good idea and distributed anti-COVID masks with Bible verses. The police did not appreciate it.

Not even small, rural house churches escape the persecution of the CCP if they are not affiliated with the government-controlled Three-Self Church and show a certain activism. On April 24, 2023, Sister Enlin, the wife of Preacher Chang Hao, sent a report about the confused situation of her husband. He runs a small rural church in Zhenxiong County, under the administration of Zhaotong City, Yunnan Province. On April 14, his church was raided by the police who took away Bibles, Christian books, and the anti-COVID masks inscribed with verses from the Bible he distributed, which had become popular in the area and had specially disturbed the authorities.

[Continue reading...](#)

28.04.2023 - Pastor Li Taiyun and Dr. Zhang Yi imprisoned for two years with no information on verdict.

Pastor Li Taiyuan and his wife Dr. Zhang Yi have been detained by Wuhan authorities for two years. Their case recently went to trial. The verdict is not known to the outside world because the government kept the information under tight control.

According to a church elder who knows Pastor Li Taiyuan, the case mainly involved the export of biological products, relating to their original professions. Specific details are unclear at this time. The elder who once interviewed Pastor Li said it was "too early to draw a conclusion."

Wuhan Public Security Bureau arrested Professor Li Taiyuan Dr. Zhang Yi of the College of Life Sciences of Wuhan University in May 2021. The authorities threatened them with capital punishment and heavy sentences.

According to ChinaAid sources, Li and Dr. Zhang were the project leaders of a DNA research project at the university. Authorities accused their scientific research team of traveling to Xinjiang without permission to collect Uyghur biological specimens. Police further alleged that the couple leaked research data pertaining to Uyghur fertility and genetic mapping.

[Continue reading...](#)

25.04.2023 - CCP establishes committee to advance the sinicization of christianity

The government-controlled Christian “patriotic organizations” established a new “Special Committee To Advance the Sinicization of Christianity,” which may be China’s first committee dedicated to promoting the development of Christianity in the Chinese Communist context.

The Qingdao Christian website reported that on the morning of March 16, 2023, the Qingdao City Christian Council held a ceremony to establish a special committee to advance the Sinicization of Christianity. More than 30 people, including the representatives of pastoral ministry, representatives of believers, and expert scholars from Qingdao, attended the ceremony. Officials sent personnel to attend and speak at the inauguration ceremony.

[Continue reading...](#)

24.04.2023 - Bengbu Dissident Christian Pastor arrested

Popular house church Pastor Wan Changchun was arrested earlier this month when he was traveling in Lijiang, Yunnan province, and taken back to the prison of his home city of Bengbu, Anhui province, where he is currently detained, according to information supplied by his co-workers to Bitter Winter and other human rights media.

Wan is the pastor of the Living Stone Reformed Church in Bengbu. In 2018, he was one of the house church leaders who signed a statement against the 2017 Regulation on Religious Affairs.

[Continue reading...](#)

20.04.2023 - New round of persecution: several pastors arrested or convicted.

A new round of persecution begins in China as several pastors and Christians have been arrested on arbitrary charges.

Beijing Christian entrepreneur Gao Guojie was arrested on September 24, 2022 for suspected “fraud.” Police classified a financial transaction between him and another entrepreneur as fraud. His wife Zhou Dahui has asked Christians to pray for them.

On April 11, 2023, Pastor Wan Changchun of the Living Stone Reformed Church in Bengbu City, Anhui Province was arrested while serving in Lijiang, Yunnan Province. His charge was suspicion of “illegal business operations.” The authorities currently hold Pastor Wan in the Bengbu City Detention Center. After Pastor Wan was arrested, police questioned his

wife and the church's leadership. All the church accounts were frozen and audited. Three days after Pastor Wan's arrest, police ransacked his home.

[Continue reading...](#)

19.04.2023 - Father Xie Tianming disappears, reportedly joining CCP church

Father Xie Tianming of the Diocese of Baoding, Hebei province, "lost contact" with the outside world at 6 PM on April 10. However, it may be because he decided to become a government-recognized priest. In order to join the official Church, he has to undergo compulsory secret sessions of "political indoctrination."

According to reports from AsiaNews, Fr. Xie Tianming's disappearance has to do with his decision to join the official Church and obey the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The authorities took the priest away and detained him in an undisclosed location, where he would be politically "re-educated." In other words, they will brainwash him. Priests may be detained for long periods of time until they prove that their mindsets have changed.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

27.04.2023 - After losing her daughter and husband, 73-year-old woman also dies due to the persecution of Falun Gong

After the tragic deaths of her daughter and husband years ago, Ms. Xiang Huaixiang, of Chenzhou City, Hunan Province, also died on April 2, 2023, due to the persecution of Falun Gong. She was 73.

Ms. Xiang's only daughter, Ms. Chen Lijuan, was arrested in 2000 while doing the Falun Gong exercises at Tiananmen Square in Beijing. She was around 20 years old at the time and still a college student. The police went to Beijing and took her back to Chenzhou. She became mentally disordered due to the torture in custody. She was released on bail and sent to a mental hospital in July 2000. However, her condition worsened and she died in November 2004.

[Continue reading...](#)

26.04.2023 - Five Liaoning residents detained for practicing Falun Gong

At least five Jinzhou City, Liaoning Province residents have been arrested since late February 2023 for their faith in Falun Gong.

Under orders from Li Meishan, director of the 610 Office branch in the Jinzhou City Police Department, the police monitored local practitioners' daily lives and photographed them. Some practitioners found tracking devices on their electric motorcycles while others noted button surveillance cameras on their front doors. There were also practitioners who realized that they were being followed by plainclothes officers in cars when they went out.

[Continue reading...](#)

21.04.2023 - Six-year-old girl orphaned in the persecution of Falun Gong

Having lost her mother in July 2022, a six-year-old girl Lily (alias) recently became an orphan when her father also died in April 2023.

Even before she was born, Lily's suffering had already started in her mother's womb. Not knowing she was pregnant, Ms. Zhu Xiumin held a five-month-long hunger strike to protest the arbitrary detention and torture of her for practicing Falun Gong. It was a miracle that her pregnancy remained viable throughout her ordeals and she delivered her baby Lily on December 8, 2017.

Only six days after her birthday, Lily's father, Mr. Wang Yudong, was sentenced to three years for his faith in Falun Gong. Ms. Zhu struggled to care for Lily all by herself while dodging police harassment.

[Continue reading...](#)

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest April 01-15

General

07.04.2023 - Coming soon in China: new (and worse) "administrative measures for religious activity venues"

What else needs to be regulated in Chinese religion? All religions are suffocated by a plethora of laws, regulations, and ordinances, not to mention the daily administrative and police surveillance. Yet, Xi Jinping has repeatedly stated that there are still risks that unchecked religion may threaten the CCP, and bureaucrats follow up with continuous new measures.

The 2005 "Regulations for the Establishment, Approval, and Registration of Religious Activity Venues" were already bad enough. However, the 2023 "Administrative Measures for Religious Activity Venues," which will replace those of 2005, are worse. They have been published as a draft for comments, which interested parties may submit by April 24. As usual, this pseudo-democratic process will not result in significant changes, and most likely in no changes at all.

[Continue reading...](#)

Uyghurs

10.04.2023 - China using spies to keep Muslim Uyghurs from fasting during Ramadan

Chinese police are using spies to make sure that Uyghur Muslims are not fasting during the holy month of Ramadan – including members of their own ethnic group.

The spies – which Chinese officials refer to as “ears” – are drawn from ordinary citizens, police and members of neighborhood committees, said a police officer from an area near Turpan, or Tulufan in Chinese, in eastern Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. “We have many secret agents,” she told Radio Free Asia.

[Continue reading...](#)

Catholics

10.04.2023 - A Shanghaied Holy See: What is left of the Vatican-China deal?

First, it was Bishop Giovanni Peng Weizhao of Yujiang (Jiangxi), who was installed as Auxiliary Bishop of Jiangxi on November 24, 2022, without the authorization of the Holy See. Now, it is a much bigger diocese, Shanghai. On April 4 Bishop Shen Bin, until now Bishop of Haimen, was installed as the new Bishop of Shanghai.

In the case of Jiangxi, the Holy See knew of the installation ceremony, told China it had not authorized it, and was ignored. The case of Shanghai is worse. The Vatican stated officially that “the Holy See learned from the media of the installation” the morning it happened.

[Continue reading...](#)

Protestants

13.04.2023 - Qin Yongpei sentenced to five years for 'inciting subversion of State power'

Qin Yongpei, a Christian human rights lawyer from Guangxi, was detained by the Chinese authorities for more than three years beyond legal time limits. On March 31, Qin was convicted of “inciting subversion of state power” by the Nanning City Intermediate People’s Court of Guangxi. The verdict of the first instance sentenced Qin Yongpei to five years in prison, to be followed by three years of deprived political rights. Dissatisfied with the verdict, he has appealed.

On March 31, Qin Yongpei’s wife, Deng Xiaoyun, and his younger sister attended the court hearing. Two bailiffs brought him out, and he became slightly emotional. Qin Yongpei’s meeting with his wife and younger sister went on for about 10 minutes, in which he signed a power of attorney entrusting his wife and daughter to be the defenders of the second instance of his appeal.

[Continue reading...](#)

11.04.2023 - CCP-controlled three-self church mobilized to implement the two sessions directives

On March 20, 2023, the Three-Self Church organized a meeting of its local and youth associations to implement the directives of the recent Two Sessions in all government-controlled Protestant churches throughout the country.

Pastor Xu Xiaohong, who is not only the chairman of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement but also a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPC), and Reverend Shan Weixiang, deputy chairman of the Three-Self Church, "conveyed the spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's important speech, the spirit of the first session of the 14th National People's Congress and the first session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference," according to the official press release.

[Continue reading...](#)

08.04.2023 - Chinese Mayflower Church members resettled in US after 3-year quest for asylum

The 63 members of China's "Mayflower Church" who fled persecution in China arrived in the United States on Friday, intending to resettle permanently after being granted humanitarian parole status amid a harrowing three-quest for asylum. In November 2019, the Christians, comprising 32 children, from Pastor Pan Yongguang's Shenzhen Holy Reformed house church (dubbed "Mayflower Church") fled to Jeju Island in South Korea after encountering threats and interrogations from Chinese police.

[Continue reading...](#)

06.04.2023 - Police released Gao Heng; his whereabouts remain unknown

Police released Gao Heng from prison yesterday, but none of his fellow church members can contact him. The authorities claim he was picked up by his father and sent back to his hometown.

Gao Heng served one year and 10 months in prison for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." On the morning of April 5, ministers and Christians of Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church went to Guangzhou No. 2 Detention Center to pick him up, but he was not there. Prison staff told the church members that they released Gao Heng to his father. The two of them returned to Gao's hometown in Jinchun County, Huanggang City, Hubei Province. He is already back in his hometown. So far his church is not able to get in touch with him.

[Continue reading...](#)

04.04.2023 - Prominent house church leadership tried publicly; no verdict released

Yang Rongli, the leader of Golden Lampstand Church, and 11 other Christians stood trial for their alleged "fraud" case. Her brother, Yang Kai, issued three requests for prayer. ChinaAid has not yet received the verdict.

The "fraud" case of Golden Lampstand Church was heard in public on March 29. Linfen authorities target Wang Xiaoguang and his wife, Yang Rongli, as well as the remaining 10 Christians. Yang's younger brother Yang Kai asked all to pray for three things in a public prayer invitation letter.

[Continue reading...](#)

03.04.2023 - Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church's Gao Heng sentenced

On March 21, 2023, the Panyu District People's Court of the prefecture-level city of Guangzhou, the capital of the Guangdong province, sentenced **Gao Heng** to one year and ten months in jail for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."

Bitter Winter had reported on the case of Brother Gao Heng after he was arrested in 2021. An active lay member of the Bible Reformed Church in Guangzhou, the 38-year-old Gao became popular as a volunteer assisting those in need during the difficult days of the COVID-19 lockdown.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

15.04.2023 - Four arrested for reading Falun Gong's teachings, three have been sentenced

Ms. Yang Chunrong, a 38-year-old Chongqing resident, suffered all kinds of ailments from head to toe in her 20s. She tried all kinds of treatments, but none had any effect. In August 2012, she learned about the Chinese Communist Party's ruthless persecution of Falun Gong and realized that she had been deceived by the communist regime into harboring hatred toward this ancient mind/body practice. She read Falun Gong books and was drawn to the profound teachings. She took up Falun Gong and was surprised to see her health quickly improve.

[Continue reading...](#)

12.04.2023 - 67-year-old woman imprisoned for her faith

Ms. Guo Shufen's family was recently notified by the Liaoning Province Women's Prison that their loved one had been admitted to the 12th ward, the correction ward, to serve time for her faith in Falun Gong.

Since the Chinese communist regime ordered the persecution of Falun Gong in 1999, the Liaoning Province Women's Prison has been actively torturing incarcerated practitioners, especially those held in the 12th ward.

Ms. Guo's family requested to visit her. But a guard replied that she wasn't qualified for family visits. An insider revealed to the family that Ms. Guo is suffering from some medical condition, including dangerously high blood pressure. The family is calling on the International community to pay attention to her case.

[Continue reading...](#)

08.04.2023 - Once incarcerated for 11 years, Guangdong man gets another 5 years for his faith

Having served one labor camp term and two prison terms for a total of 11 years, a Zhanjiang City, Guangdong Province resident was recently sentenced to another five years for his faith in Falun Gong.

Mr. Wu Haibo, 58, was arrested on March 5, 2022. He was first held at the Suixi County Detention Center and then transferred to the Zhanjiang City Detention Center. The Chikan District Court sentenced him to five years with a 5,000-yuan fine on March 24, 2023. Mr. Wu, a former pharmaceutical company technician, has been repeatedly targeted over the past 23 years for practicing Falun Gong. He was brutally tortured in custody and barely survived.

[Continue reading...](#)

03.04.2023 - 25 Falun Gong practitioner deaths due to persecution reported in March 2023

The deaths of 25 Falun Gong practitioners as a result of the persecution by the Chinese communist regime were reported in March 2023.

Six of the deaths took place between 2014 and 2019, seven in 2022, and ten in 2023. The exact times of the remaining two practitioners' deaths remain unknown. Due to strict information censorship in China, deaths can't always be reported in a timely manner, nor is all information readily available.

The deceased practitioners were from 12 different provinces and centrally-controlled municipalities. Heilongjiang reported four cases, followed by Beijing, Jilin and Liaoning (each with three cases). Sichuan, Chongqing, Hunan and Shandong each had two cases. The remaining four provinces, including Anhui, Gansu, Hebei and Jiangsu, each had one case.

[Continue reading...](#)

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest March 16-31

General

23.03.2023 - Wenzhou, parents asked to sign a "Kindergarten Family Commitment not to believe in religion"

A good Communist Party education starts from kindergarten, and it should necessarily include atheism. At the beginning of March, Christian parents from the Longwan District of Wenzhou, Zhejiang, sent to several human rights media pledges they are required to sign to have their children, aged 3 to 6, continue to attend kindergarten. The documents look genuine, and similar texts have been circulated previously in China.

The document is called a "Kindergarten Family Commitment Not to Believe in Religion" and should be signed by the parents, who should indicate the name of the children.

[Continue reading...](#)

Uyghur

28.03.2023 - Cultural Genocide: The Indoctrination of Uyghur Children

"What is your biggest worry?" A six-minute video has attracted much attention from the Uyghur community. It shows how young Uyghur students lined up to respond in turn to a question: "What is your biggest worry?" To a casual viewer, there may be nothing improper in the clip, but to the Uyghurs to see and hear Uyghur children interrogated in this manner is worrisome and traumatic. These children have been "orphaned" and forcibly separated from their families, and are now isolated and under the total care, control and influence of Han Chinese "guardians" within orphanages and boarding schools for indoctrination, assimilation and sinicization.

[Continue reading...](#)

Protestants

31.03.2023 - Chinese Christians detained in Thailand while seeking U.N. protection

U.S. citizens taken in alongside 63 church members, who say they faced years of government harassment in China.

A self-exiled congregation of Chinese Christians seeking United Nations protection from religious persecution faces potential deportation from Thailand, where police have detained the group along with two Americans who were assisting them.

Thai immigration police rounded up 63 members of the Shenzhen Holy Reformed Church on Thursday, taking them from their hotel in the coastal city of Pattaya to a police immigration bureau facility, according to the church's pastor and an American activist who has been supporting the congregation's efforts to seek asylum.

[Continue reading...](#)

30.03.2023 - Hohhot trial of Christians who illegally sold legal Bibles scheduled for late April

Selling Bibles illegally printed without the government's authorization is a crime in China. But what about Bibles printed legally by an authorized publisher connected with the government-controlled Three-Self Church? Presumably, they can be sold without problems.

But this is not the case if you belong to an unauthorized house church. The authorities now claim that a "legal" Bible can still be "illegally" sold if those who sell it belong to a non-authorized religious organization.

[Continue reading...](#)

29.03.2023 - Early Rain Christians detained, families forcibly evicted

Three members of Early Rain Covenant Church (ERCC) in Chengdu, China, have been detained, and many families have been subject to forced evictions, according to a statement published by the church on 26 March.

On 24 March, police in Wenjiang District in Chengdu placed a deputy deacon of ERCC Jia Xuewei in administrative detention for 14 days. A preacher, Ding Shuqi, and another church member, Shu Qiong, were given the same punishment, also for 'activities in the name of a banned social organisation', a week earlier on 17 March.

[Continue reading...](#)

29.03.2023 - Xi'an police torture another innocent christian for "fraud" case.

The staff of Xi'an Church of Abundance, including Fu Juan and pastors Lian Changnian and Lian Xuliang, were officially arrested on March 22 for "fraud." Meanwhile, police torture another innocent Christian for a false confession.

On August 17, 2022, Xi'an Shilipu Police Station arrested the three staff members on the pretext of "fraud" and held them under residential surveillance at a designated location (RSDL). Their families did not receive any updates about them until six months later. Police tortured all three Church of Abundance members to obtain false evidence.

[Continue reading...](#)

27.03.2023 - Beijing house church leader released from prison after completing sentence

A veteran human rights defender and house church leader was released from prison in Tianjin, China on 26 March after completing his prison sentence.

Elder Hu Shigen was arrested as part of the government's infamous 709 crackdown in 2015. In August 2016, he was sentenced to seven years and six months in prison, with five-year deprivation of political rights, for 'subversion'.

A former university lecturer, Elder Hu led several house churches in Beijing prior to his arrest. The authorities quoted his religious activities and ties to foreign groups and human rights lawyers as basis for his harsh sentence, saying that he had used 'illegal religious groups' to 'spread subversive thoughts and ideas'.

[Continue reading...](#)

27.03.2023 - Three families evicted due to their involvement with Early Rain

Officials continue to escalate their persecution of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu. They plan to evict three families from the church that reside in the same condo complex—Shu Qiong, Chen Yan, and Xu Jiali.

Various departments of the Shuangliu District including the Political Security Department, the police station, the sub-district, and the community workers collaborated to harass the three families living at Blue Light Long Island International Complex.

On the afternoon of March 21, the three families received the Notice of Terminating the Lease issued by the landlords. Due to their involvement in "illegal activities," the landlord claimed they all broke their lease agreement. Each family initially agreed to stay in their respective apartments for three years. Consequently, Xu Jiali and her family will be evicted after staying in the rental for one month and five days.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

31.03.2023 - Targeted in a Police Sweep, Two Shandong women sentenced to prison for practicing Falun Gong

Two Dongying City, Shandong Province residents were both sentenced to 3.5 years and fined 20,000 yuan in January 2023 for their faith in Falun Gong, a spiritual discipline that has been persecuted by the Chinese communist regime since 1999.

Ms. Guo Hongyan, a 46-year-old employee of Shengli Oilfield, and Ms. Chen Xiaohong, a retired middle school Chinese teacher, were both arrested on April 23, 2021, during a police sweep. The Dongying District Court held a hearing of their case through a video call on January 14, 2023, without telling them that they had the option to request an in-person hearing.

[Continue reading...](#)

29.03.2023 - Six Falun Gong practitioners tortured in a Shandong brainwashing Center

Six residents of Zhucheng City, Shandong Province were tortured in a brainwashing center for a month, following their arrests for practicing Falun Gong, a spiritual discipline that has been persecuted by the Chinese communist regime since 1999.

Ms. Li Yeshu, her husband Mr. Luo Wenxin, Ms. Li Mingxia, Ms. Xu Huancui, Ms. Li Hongmei, and Ms. Zheng Zhimei were arrested on March 4, 2022, and taken to the Zhucheng City Brainwashing Center, also known to the outside as the "Care Center."

Officers Song Wei, Hao Xiaojun, and Su Lei hit Ms. Li Yeshu's head, hands and body with a bamboo stick and also stomped on her. They then wrapped her hands with a wire connected to an electrical box, ordered her to sit on the ground, and turned on the switch to shock her. Her body was bounced up and down by the electric shock. Before she completely lost consciousness, she remembered someone stepping on her back against the ground.

[Continue reading...](#)

25.03.2023 - Once incarcerated for 17 Years, Hunan Man arrested again for practicing Falun Gong

Having served one labor camp term and two prison terms totaling 17 years, a Xiangtan City, Hunan Province resident was arrested again for his faith in Falun Gong.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a spiritual discipline that has been persecuted by the Chinese communist regime since 1999.

Several officers broke into Mr. Yang Shiyi's home on February 20, 2023 and took him to the Xiangtan City Detention Center. The police called his son the next day and asked him to deliver some clothes to his father. They also claimed that Mr. Yang and five other practitioners put up banners bearing information about Falun Gong and that they managed to catch him (while the other five practitioners escaped). But Mr. Yang denied having ever put up the alleged banners.

[Continue reading...](#)

18.03.2023 - Beijing Couple sentenced to prison for raising awareness about the persecution of Falun Gong

A married couple in Beijing were convicted for their shared faith in Falun Gong and had their appeals rejected.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a spiritual discipline that has been persecuted by the Chinese communist regime since 1999.

Mr. Li Wencai and Ms. Li Sujuan were arrested on April 18, 2020, after being reported for raising awareness about the persecution. The police raided their home and confiscated their Falun Gong books, computer, and printer. The couple were released on bail the next day after they were denied admission by the local detention center due to failing the physical examinations.

[Continue reading...](#)

Religious persecution and issues - Bimonthly digest March 01-15

Uyghurs

15.03.2023 - Uyghur Christian released after 15-year sentence

ChinaAid confirmed that Uyghur Christian **Alimujiang Yimiti** was released from prison after his 15-year sentence. While other details are unconfirmed, the Uyghur house church pastor is home with his family.

Alimujiang Yimiti, also known as Alim, converted from Islam to Christianity in 1995 and served as a house church pastor to Uyghurs in Kashgar, Xinjiang. His work in Xinjiang painted a target on his back, as the Chinese government began to scrutinize Uyghurs in the area. In 2007, authorities initially accused Alim of using his business to “infiltrate” Christian ideology into Kashgar.

Alim was criminally detained on Jan. 12, 2008, for “inciting separatism” and “unlawfully providing state secrets to overseas organizations” due to a conversation he had with an American colleague, possibly about his interaction with authorities in 2007.

[Continue reading...](#)

Buddhists

15.03.2023 - The “Buddhist and Taoist clergy database,” another CCP imposture

With great fanfare, the China Buddhist Association and China Taoist Association have launched in Beijing’s Guangji Temple, at the end of last month, the Buddhist and Taoist Clerical Personnel Information Query System.

Those attending the press conference saw the slogan, “Fake monks and priests now have nowhere to hide!” displayed prominently. The speakers insisted that both Chinese and tourists have been defrauded by fake monks and Taoist priests asking for alms. Indeed, that these incidents have occurred is not false, although tourists in popular temples have been more easily fooled than Chinese believers. Also, temples where tourists are taken are managed by the China Buddhist Association and the China Taoist Association, which are supposed to keep their own houses in order.

[Continue reading...](#)

Protestants

10.03.2023 - Wang Liqin heavily surveilled after visiting her imprisoned husband.

Following meeting procedures for China's prisons, Wang Liqin successfully met her imprisoned husband Wang Zang for the first time in three years. A few days later, Wang Liqin was immediately monitored around the clock by 24 government personnel. She posted a video revealing this information, and the authorities threatened her and her four children.

Dissident poet Wang Zang's wife, Wang Li (given name: Wang Liqin), has been under strict surveillance since March 2. When she went out to buy groceries, 5 people followed and even filmed her. Wang Li took a video of them and posted it on Twitter. Beginning on the 3rd, the number of surveillance personnel increased from 12 to 24, divided into four shifts.

[Continue reading...](#)

08.03.2023 - Another difficult Sunday for Chengdu's Early Rain Church

Bitter Winter has reported how the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, theoretically liquidated in 2018 before his pastor Wang Yi was sentenced to nine years in jail in 2019, continues to gather "illegally" by changing locations every Sunday, in a cat and mouse game with the police.

The game continued on May 5, according to a report shared by the house church members with Bitter Winter and other human rights media. Some twelve church members were blocked at home since Friday; one sister had the tires of her car punctured; another had to deal with the fact that water and electricity supplies to her home had been cut off, a frequent harassment strategy against church members. Four believers were taken to the police station on Sunday.

[Continue reading...](#)

06.03.2023 - 'Smart religion' app: christians must submit online form to attend church.

Christians in Henan province, China, must complete an online form and receive approval to attend church services. Officials refer to applications for church gatherings as a form of governance for "Smart Religion," but no legal basis has been provided for such a measure.

Henan has one of the largest Christian populations in China. According to the "Smart Religion" requirements formulated by Henan's provincial religious department, if religious believers want to participate in religious activities, they must make online reservations before they can attend services in churches, mosques, or Buddhist temples.

Local believers must register and make an appointment through an application called "Smart Religion," developed by the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Henan Province.

[Continue reading...](#)

03.03.2023 - Early Rain Church: Family blocked at home and forbidden to attend "illegal" Sunday service

Readers of Bitter Winter and friends of religious liberty are familiar with the saga of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, whose **Pastor Wang Yi** (not a relative of the chief of Chinese Foreign Affairs with the same name) was sentenced to nine years in jail in 2019.

Officially, Early Rain has been shut down in 2018 but unofficially members have continued to play a cat and mouse game with the authorities and meet for Sunday services outdoor or in private homes.

[Continue reading...](#)

03.03.2023 - Exiled church supported by Texas churches

More than 60 members of the exiled Mayflower Church received tremendous support from churches in Texas. The members of the Christian house church from Shenzhen have been adopted by the East Texas churches, but 10 more families still need resettlement sponsors.

Deana Brown, founder and CEO of Freedom Seekers International (FSI), partnered with Bob Fu and ChinaAid to resettle these Christians who fear repatriation back to China.

The "Mayflower Church" was established in 2012 as Shenzhen Holy Reformed. Due to Pastor Pan Yongguang's ordination in the United States, police interrogated him about his connection to overseas groups.

[Continue reading...](#)

Falun Gong

14.03.2023 - Drug experiment on incarcerated Falun Dafa practitioner

A resident of Xindian Town, Xingtai City, Hebei Province, was incarcerated for three years after she spoke up for Falun Dafa. The police arrested **Ms. Qiao Yunxia**, then 37, on October 25, 1999, for appealing for the right to practice Falun Dafa and gave her three years of forced labor in Shijiazhuang City Women's Forced Labor Camp, where she was tortured because she refused to renounce her faith.

The guards shocked her with electric batons, force-fed her chili powder, hung her up, suffocated her with wet towels, and beat her. As she stayed firm in her faith, the guards put unknown drugs in her food and subjected her to various tests in a hospital.

[Continue reading...](#)

10.03.2023 - Falun Gong's report on persecution in 2022: 172 killed, 633 sentenced

Just as The Church of Almighty God does, Falun Gong also publishes an annual report on the persecution it is subject to in China. The 2023 report, covering the year 2022, has now been released.

It claims that 172 Falun Gong practitioners died in 2022 as a result of the persecution, bringing the total to 4,984 (or more, as the Falun Gong organization abroad believes the data it collects from China are incomplete) since the crackdown started in 1999. Those who died in 2022 include "one 88-year-old woman in Heilongjiang [who] died hours after she was arrested. A 70-year-old man died the day after his arrest. Two practitioners, including an 83-year-old man and a 64-year-old woman, died shortly after being given toxic drugs while in custody..."

[Continue reading...](#)

08.03.2023 - Chongqing man dies in custody, four months after being arrested for practicing Falun Gong

A 74-year-old man died four months after he was arrested for his faith in Falun Gong, a spiritual discipline that has been persecuted by the Chinese communist regime since 1999. Mr. Lai Yuanchang, of Chongqing, was reported in 2020 for distributing informational materials about Falun Gong. Although he escaped from being arrested, he was forced to live away from home to hide from the police. Unable to find Mr. Lai, the police frequently harassed his daughter.

On September 7, 2022, one month before the Chinese Communist Party's 20th Congress, a group of officers from the Degan Town Police Station descended at the home of Mr. Lai's daughter. They smashed the door, broke in, and arrested Mr. Lai.

[Continue reading...](#)

06.03.2023 - Beaten and deceived by the police, Jilin Woman faces trial for her faith in Falun Gong

A Jilin City, Jilin Province resident was beaten and interrogated after being arrested for her faith in Falun Gong. The police also deceived her into going to the Procuratorate to sign her case documents. She is now facing trial after the prosecutor indicted her and moved her case to the court.

Ms. Wang Chunling, 45, was arrested on January 3, 2022, after being reported for distributing informational materials about Falun Gong. When she refused to get into the police car, an officer kicked her and forced her into the vehicle.

[Continue reading...](#)

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 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.

[Continue reading...](#)

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.

[Continue reading...](#)

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.

[Continue reading...](#)

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 Litong** 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

[Continue reading...](#)

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."

[Continue reading...](#)

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.

