

## **Table of Contents**

- ***48 Chinese Christians detained New Year's Day***
- ***Shouwang church to end outdoor services; Gao Zhisheng alive***
- ***Beijing Shouwang Church announcement on December 4th outdoor worship service - Week 35***
- ***Court to hear arguments in challenge to Ten Commandments display***
- ***Interview with Pastor Jin Tianming of Beijing Shouwang Church***
- ***Two Tibetan monks immolate themselves***
- ***Christians in China suffer for supporting Shouwang Church***
- ***China yanks video that leaked hacking tool***
- ***China hacking video shows glimpse of Falun Gong attack tool***
- ***Few share the Pope's "pain and concern" for the Church in China***
- ***China ordains third bishop without Pope's approval***
- ***Taiwanese TV satellite operator refuses to continue relaying New Tang Dynasty signal***
- ***The 'diabolical cult' that threatens China***
- ***The relation between religion and government in China***
- ***EP Vice-President condemns China's use of force on Kirti monks***
- ***Ending siege of Kirti Monastery must be a priority at U.S.-China human rights dialogue***
- ***Illicit Church, evicted, tries to buck Beijing***
- ***Underground Beijing church members detained***
- ***Chinese police arrests Christians again for praying in public***
- ***Two underground priests arrested and beaten in Hebei***
- ***China keeps church leaders from public worship attempt***
- ***Hundreds of Christians, evicted from premises, arrested for wanting to pray in the streets***
- ***Christians persecuted in Henan and Jiangsu***

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## **48 Chinese Christians detained New Year's Day**

Baptist Press (03.01.12) / HRWF (19.01.12) - Beijing authorities detained 48 members of a large persecuted house church on New Year's Day, marking a total of more than 1,000 church members who have been taken into police custody during the church's 38 weeks of attempting to hold outdoor worship services.

"By arbitrarily detaining peaceful religious believers in the capital city on the first day of 2012, Beijing authorities show that they are determined to continue their crackdown on independent religious groups in the coming year," Bob Fu, president of China Aid, said.

"In defiance of universal values and in violation of its own laws and constitution, which guarantees religious freedom, China's communist leaders are walking further down the road of the wrong side of history," said Fu, a former Beijing house pastor who was imprisoned for his beliefs.

Among those taken into custody Jan. 1, 30 were believed to have been released by 10 p.m. and the remainder were held overnight at various police stations across the city, China Aid said. Many other church members had been kept under house arrest beginning Friday, the watchdog group said.

Shouwang Church began meeting outdoors in April after being evicted from its rented meeting space and after authorities prevented the church from gathering in a portion of an office building it had purchased.

The church tried three times to rent three different venues, but Beijing authorities have ordered landlords not to rent to them, China Aid said.

Police arrest the Christians before the services even start and typically free them within 24 hours. China's Domestic Security Protection Squad has maintained constant surveillance outside the homes of senior church leaders, while police have camped outside the doors of other church members from Saturday night until noon Sunday, when service times technically are over, according to China Aid.

Compass Direct News Service reported that early on Christmas morning church members arrived at a public square only to find it heavily guarded with industrial-strength rails blocking access. Police arrested 41 believers who attempted to worship at the site that day, Compass said.

On the church's Facebook page, one church member said Christians who were detained indoors usually felt sorry for those waiting outside in the cold as they were able to "read books and have fellowship in a warm room," Compass reported.

The Facebook post explained that the believer was interrogated on Christmas Day with an officer taunting him for being afraid to give his home address and threatening to hold him long enough for the man to lose his job, Compass said.

Despite the ongoing persecution and winter weather, Shouwang Church leaders say they plan to continue meeting outdoors until a solution is reached.

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## **Shouwang church to end outdoor services; Gao Zhisheng alive**

***Embattled Beijing house church to celebrate last open-air service on Christmas Day***

*By Sarah Page*

Compass Direct News (23.12.11) / HRWF (18.01.12 – Key issues in Chinese religious rights are taking a pivotal turn at year's end as the beleaguered Shouwang house church

in Beijing will celebrate its last outdoor service on Christmas Day, and “disappeared” human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng has ostensibly resurfaced – in an undisclosed prison.

Denied access to a building they had purchased as a worship venue, the Shouwang church has been meeting outdoors – and facing weekly arrests – since April 10. A source in Beijing told Compass that next year church leaders will renew their fight to retain the venue the government had denied the congregation.

“Shouwang’s governing committee said that this coming Christmas, which fell on a Sunday this year, would see the last outdoor worship since it began on April 10,” the source said. “They said the church would actively pursue realizing the goal of returning to meet indoors after Christmas. And they still believe the best way to resolve the issue is that the government would permit the church to enter into the space it bought.”

Shouwang held its 37th outdoor service last Sunday (Dec. 18). According to a Dec. 20 post on Shouwang’s Facebook page, as Christmas approaches the police presence has increased at the plaza where the church has been meeting. Many church members were detained at home on Saturday (Dec. 17) to prevent them from traveling to the plaza. Police detained a further 35 either on arrival or on their way to the designated venue and violently seized five church members who had gathered outside Haidian Street police station to meet with detainees.

Church leaders said in the post that they are hoping for a resolution to Shouwang’s dilemma this Christmas.

“Today is the day we call all the members of our church to fast and pray for Shouwang,” the post stated. “May God have mercy on his church ... and grant us the place for worshipping that he prepared for His church.”

Church leaders have issued an appeal for prayer for “the key to the space the church has bought may be given before Christmas so that the issue of worship place can be solved,” they said in a Dec. 16 statement. “Whether the key is secured or not by the end of 2011, may God provide a permanent worship venue so that the whole congregation can meet together.”

Church leaders say the landlord of their previous venue had been under mounting pressure from authorities to terminate the lease. The government also prevented the church from using the premises it had purchased in late 2009.

Shouwang had paid 27 million yuan, or about US\$4 million, for the second floor of the Daheng Science and Technology Tower in northwest Beijing’s Zhongguancun area. Authorities interfered, and the property developer has refused to hand the key over to the church. Earlier this month, the church leaders said, the church paid off all the money borrowed for the space.

The members of the church’s governing committee, two pastors and three elders, and other major co-workers, have been under house arrest for the whole or much of the time since April 9. Hundreds of other people, including many Shouwang parishioners and some members of other churches in Beijing and other cities, were detained for between a few hours to two days.

### **Gao Alive**

After 20 months of secret detention, the Beijing First Intermediate People’s Court ordered Christian human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng to serve what had been a suspended three-year prison sentence – supposedly for violating terms of his probation.

The order came just as the five-year probation period for Gao expired yesterday (Dec. 22). In 2006 he had been charged with "subverting the power of the state" for defending Christian house church members and members of the Falun Gong spiritual movement.

The state-run Xinhua News Agency reported last week that since Gao had violated terms of his probation, he would now be required to serve the prison term in an as yet unnamed facility. Mainstream press such as *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) and The Associated Press scoffed at the notion of Gao "violating" the terms of his probation when police have held him in undisclosed locations, incommunicado, for all but two months of the past three years.

This was the first sign in several months that Gao, an outspoken human rights defender and a Christian since 2005, was still alive, despite months of requests for information from family members and international advocacy groups.

Following an international outcry in 2006, Gao's sentence was suspended but he and his family faced constant surveillance and harassment. Police tormented Gao's wife Geng He whenever she left the house and accompanied Gao's teenage daughter, Gege, to school.

Geng He escaped from China in early January 2009 along with her daughter and son Tianyu, and they were quickly granted political asylum in the United States, according to the China Aid Association (CAA).

Less than a month later, on Feb. 4, government agents abducted Gao, and he simply "disappeared." (See [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org), "Action Urged for Missing Rights Activist in China," March 24, 2009.)

The self-taught lawyer was last seen in April 2010 when police allowed him a brief respite from his secret detention. In an interview with an AP reporter during that period, Gao said he had been shunted between detention centers, farmhouses and apartments across north China, repeatedly beaten and abused and threatened with death.

In January 2009, AP released a report written by Gao in November 2007, while under house arrest, describing the torture he endured for a 50-day period in police custody in 2007.

Gao's family still doesn't know where he is, or which prison he'll be sent to, WSJ reported after speaking with Geng He, although friends and family say being in prison is better than "being disappeared."

### **Enforced Disappearances**

A former Chinese political prisoner and author, Liao Yiwu, who fled China in July, claims China is currently experiencing the worst crackdown on activists since the Tiananmen Square protest in 1989, the Inter Press Service reported earlier this month.

Fearing a transfer of the so-called Arab Spring to China, government agents since mid-February have "abducted" at least 26 high-profile artists, writers and human rights defenders, holding them in secret locations, according to IPS. The news service also cited a 2009 report by Human Rights Watch that asserting that thousands of ordinary citizens who had petitioned the government on human rights issues languished in a network of "black jails" across the country, where they were subject to frequent physical and psychological abuse.

Enforced disappearances may soon be enshrined in law, according to the IPS report. China on Aug. 30 published proposed revisions to the Criminal Procedure Law that, if passed, will allow police to secretly detain suspects in cases involving state security,

terrorism or severe corruption for up to six months with no right to contact their families or a lawyer.

The proposed revisions could also legalize the common tactic of placing people under lengthy house arrests, IPS said.

Officials have illegally held blind activist Chen Guancheng under house arrest since 2010, according to the CAA.

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## **Beijing Shouwang Church announcement on December 4th outdoor worship service - Week 35**

China Aid (06.12.2011) / HRWF (07.12.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net>

Dear brothers and sisters:

Peace in the Lord! On December 4, Shouwang had her thirty-fifth Sunday outdoor worship service. In the past week, many believers were detained at home since Saturday. As far as we know, on Sunday morning, at least twenty-two believers were taken away for going to the planned location to join the outdoor service, either at the spot or on their way there. Except three believers who were released on the way, the rest of them were sent to nine local police stations of their respective area. Till midnight, twenty-one believers were released home. The last believer, a sister, who was detained in Xiangheyuan police station of Chaoyang District, was sent home by police around 2:00am in the morning, and then was under the guard of police from Huajiadi police station of her area, and finally got released later.

We have gone through four seasons since we started outdoor worship. A few days ago, Beijing had its first snow, and the temperature drops again. However, many believers still have the passion and the burning heart to worship God no matter under what circumstances. In the last journey of our outdoor worship, we need to pray to our Lord more fervently. May he continue to be "very jealous for" (Zechariah 1:14) his church, and to accomplish his work he started among us, so that we won't be ashamed because of it. We do not have many outdoor worship services left since we set Christmas as the point for us to end outdoor worship, and we need to continue to look to our Lord and to ask him to open a way for us, so that we can enter the place he gives to us soon. We also pray that he will reveal his will to us, so that we can make the decision on which path the church should take after Christmas according to his will, and that the church can walk under his guidance.

May peace and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the mercy and love of Father God, and the console and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, be with each brother and sister of Shouwang Church and all the churches who remember Shouwang Church in prayers, from this time on and forevermore! Amen.

Beijing Shouwang Church

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## **Court to hear arguments in challenge to Ten Commandments display**

By Saransh Sehgal

The Independent (26.11.2011) / HRWF (29.11.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - A handicapped monk in his 30s is among the few Tibetans who made their way past Chinese border guards to reach a reception centre for new arrivals at Dharamsala this week.

Now the monk, called Guru by his fellow refugees, sits and waits to meet the Dalai Lama, the desire of every new arrival. He has taken a vow of silence, say the others; something that would not have been possible back in Tibet.

"He came alone, crawling by his hands day and night, with barely any sleep or food. It took him a month to cross the mountains," claims one of the refugees.

There was a time when thousands managed the journey every year, lured by the prospect of religious freedom and a chance to glimpse their spiritual leader. Between 2004 and 2007, about 12,000 refugees arrived.

But following a crackdown by the Chinese after an uprising in 2008, an average of just 50 people a month now make the journey across snow-capped mountains, first to Nepal and then on to India.

"China has put a lot of pressure on Nepal to act against Tibetans escaping across the border and hundreds get deported each month and then are tortured by Chinese police," said Mingyur Youdo, deputy director of the US-funded reception centre. "The recent news of suppression inside Tibet and the series of self-immolations is enough evidence for the world to know that after 2008, Tibetans are constantly watched and denied human rights."

International Campaign for Tibet, a non-governmental organisation, said: "As Nepal-China relations develop, Tibetan refugees in Nepal face increasing dangers both on the journey into exile and within the long-standing Tibetan community in Kathmandu."

A 15-year-old young girl was among those who reached Dharamsala. Jugsangkyi, from Kham province, made it here on her second attempt, leaving her family behind in Tibet. On her first attempt she was captured and placed in jail in the city of Shigaste.

Despite the dangers, she tried again, paying a Nepali guide 20,000 Yuan (£2,000) to help her get to Nepal. "I have always been told there is nothing left inside Tibet," she said. "I would be with no education and future. The situation inside Tibet is very tense and Chinese police are always watching us."

Barry Sautman, a Tibet expert at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, said there may be other reasons for the decline in new arrivals.

"Another factor may be the growing off-farm economic opportunities for Tibetans and, since 2008, an intensification of 'aid Tibet' measures [introduced by the government] that directly enhance the incomes of Tibetan individuals and families," he said. "An increasing number of Tibetans are migrating not to India but to mainly Han Chinese areas; indeed, in Chengdu there are now about 50,000 Tibetans – more Tibetans than in Dharamsala."

But refugees who make it to Dharamsala say many more want to follow. Karma Ngidung Guyamtso, a 36-year-old monk from a monastery on the outskirts of Lhasa, left Tibet two weeks ago.

"There are many factors for Tibetans to come to India – modern traditional education, political freedom, monastic education and to see our Dalai Lama," he said. "Many are trying to go into exile, but it's a matter of chance."

"If everyone gets this chance to go into exile, then Tibetans will rush to see the Dalai Lama and fight for the cause and go back only when Tibet attains freedom."

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## **Interview with Pastor Jin Tianming of Beijing Shouwang Church**

Interviewer: Yikun

Time: October 28, 2011

Location: Pastor Tianming's apartment

China Aid (31.10.2011) / HRWF (07.12.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Since April 10, three pastors, three elders, and one minister of Shouwang Church have been under house arrest for the past few months. During this special period of time, what are the changes and challenges for them in their daily life? What a typical day look like for them? How do they pastor church? This series of "Interview with Pastors" will bring you to their lives under house arrest, so that you will be able to look at this period of having outdoor service from their perspectives, and to count abundant grace of God in the midst of sufferings. The current issue presents you the interview with pastor Tianming.

### **Life of Washing Dishes**

Network Journal of Shouwang Church (NJ): We are very concerned of your life in this period. How are you doing? How's your health? Do you have time to work out or do exercise?

Pastor Tianming (TM): I am doing well, and I am in good physical condition. I actually did not do much exercise before this period of time. Long time ago in the past, I enjoyed working out, but I stopped later. And I even did not make plans to work out any more a few years ago. It is not good. I feel like that I am getting old and my body starts to deteriorate.

NJ: What's a typical day look like for you? What's your weekly plan?

TM: I usually have quiet time when I get up, and then I will read some books after breakfast. We have Church Governing Committee meetings in the mornings of Tuesday and Friday. I usually write sermons on Thursday. And on Sunday and Monday, I keep up with believers who attend the outdoor service.

NJ: So for a sermon, you usually write it down and then read it, right?

TM: Yes, I first write it down. I once tried to preach it, record it, and then reorganize it, but I found it more difficult since I did not have audience. So I started to write it down before I read it.

NJ: When do you usually record your sermon?

TM: Friday.

NJ: How do you spend your Sunday?

TM: I usually worship together with my wife. We follow the program to sing hymns, read the Scripture, and listen to the recorded sermon. Then we respond to the sermon and

pray together. After our worship, we start to follow up with believers who attend the outdoor service.

NJ: Do you have time to do household chores?

TM: You should ask my wife this question. I have changed a lot; I started to wash dishes. I rarely washed dishes in the past—less than ten times a year. Now I wash dishes everyday. So it is a big change for me. However, I did not start to wash dishes until the middle stage of this period, a few months after we began to have outdoor service.

NJ: You must be too busy to do household chores before, right?

TM: I should not say that I was too busy to do it. The thing is that I was not concerned about it; I was concerned about other things. When I was too tired, I would say, "I will wash it tomorrow," trying to put it off.

Several months later after we started to have outdoor service, my wife told me that I should do some exercise, or wash dishes. I agree with her, and I cannot escape from washing dishes any more since I stay at home all the time. So now, it is my job to wash dishes everyday.

NJ: It is rare for Korean men to do household chores, right?

TM: Yes, in our tradition, men rarely do housework. When I was young, few men of my father's generation do housework. But when I went to high school, things started to change; some husbands would help their wives with housework. Now there are more men doing housework. However, in my hometown, wives still take care of main things like cooking, washing dishes, and mopping the floor. If boys go to the kitchen, elder women like my grandma would drive you out, since they think it is not building up for a boy to work in a kitchen. However, I think that a husband should help his wife with housework.

NJ: What are you reading in the Bible?

TM: I am reading Second Corinthians for my quiet time; I have read it for two times. Before this, I read Psalms, focused on the second book where many experiences of David are described. I feel the urgency to read since Christmas is approaching. I just finished Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, I am reading Moral Treatises of Augustine now, and I plan to read Theological Orations of Augustine. I really enjoyed reading Ecclesiastical History, and found many parallels between Chinese church history and the early church history as the early church both suffered persecutions from outside and had many challenges from inside. And I really like Moral Treatises of Augustine. I was not good at reading before and was a slow reader, but now I read better and faster. I prefer books that extract information directly from the Bible, rather than books with a bunch of annotations.

NJ: How long is your quiet time?

TM: It usually takes half an hour. I pray, read the Scripture and meditate on it, and then read some reference books and organize my thoughts. For different books, I have different ways to read. For example, when I read the prophets, I would read several chapters to gain an overall understanding of that era, of the people, and of the destiny of a country and a nation. But when I read Psalms, I would read it together with stories of David, and mediate on it.

**A Family with Freedom**

NJ: During this period of time, is there any tension in the family? Is there any quarrel between you and your wife as you have to spend all day together?

TM: We rarely had a quarrel. One reason is that I was greatly relieved after my sermon on March 27. Although I was under house arrest, I feel the freedom as I entrust myself to the Lord. The physical confinement does not affect me emotionally. Another reason is that we still have different roles and different work to do even we spend more time together.

NJ: What about the two children? How are you doing?

TM: They are doing well. Although they will see policemen in front of our apartment everyday when they go to school or come home, they have good attitude. They have heavy schoolwork, but they still have positive attitude when they talk about the number of guards watching us.

I do not think the fact that many policemen guard us affects them. They do not receive as much restriction as we do. And they already get used to this kind of environment from a very young age. The key is that us being parent should have a positive attitude. If we do not have the freedom inside, but hold bitterness and fear, then we will have negative influence on them.

NJ: What do they usually do after school?

TM: They are very busy after school with a heavy load of schoolwork. They usually start to do homework right after dinner, and sometimes even have to work till midnight.

NJ: What are your expectations for them?

TM: My expectations are more general. First, they have strong faith and good health, and then they have good characters. I won't expect them to have big achievements since gifts and wisdom are from God. I hope that they can become missionaries, but I won't be able to decide for them.

NJ: Their teachers and classmates should know about their faith, how do they view it?

TM: Our children, especially James, are facing challenges in school. When James was in 8th grade, his teacher and classmates expected him to join the Chinese Communist Youth League. But after we talked to him, he decided not to join it. However, the whole class voted and recommended him to join it later, which was a big challenge for him. So we prayed with him and shared with him together, and he finally made up his mind not to join it. His teacher called several times trying to persuade him, but James told him that our whole family believed in Christ. The teacher stopped doing it as he understood our position.

### **God's Blessings**

NJ: You mentioned about the sermon on March 27, could you share more about your thoughts at that time?

TM: The Friday before March 27, I came home with sober mind and determination after the co-worker's meeting. I still had struggles before that Friday. From the bottom of my heart, I did not want to hold outdoor service: it is not good for the church, and I do not want our church to present itself in this way in public, being misunderstood as a human rights group. From this perspective, I would try my best not to have outdoor service.

I was tired and weary. There are already many challenges in the church, and here comes another big one. Many would think that the church is "trying to commit suicide" by holding outdoor service. And I know that it would be impossible for man to make this decision unless it is from the Holy Spirit. As it is from the Holy Spirit, I am not worried any more; I feel safe in abiding in the Lord no matter how big the wave is. Therefore, I was convinced that I would wait for God to open a way for us. God will make a way when we are in desperation.

As I was released from being controlled by the environment, I had the great relief when I preached on March 27. I took my bag with me to the podium, and I knew that I would actually escape from my responsibility if I were arrested on that day.

NJ: Since Shouwang's outdoor service, have you changed the focus of your sermons?

TM: At the very beginning, we focused on outdoor service; we talked a lot on the church-state relationship, on our standing, and on spiritual warfare. Now I think we have communicated a lot on that topic, so I start to share more on the life building of a Christian, and on what a new life looks like for a Christian.

NJ: Do you see any changes in believers' life during this period?

TM: The pressure from outside as well as the tension from inside, both have brought a big strike to believers, and have caused much pain. It is a big challenge. However, as we gradually process it, we have seen that this challenge actually builds believers up.

Sometimes I wonder why God is being so "cruel," since many believers are experiencing persecutions that many pastors have never confronted. However, I believe that, though the process is difficult, it will build them up. It is not easy for them to persevere to the end. Suffering produces endurance, and endurance is the ability for us to bear the pressure; God enlarges our ability to endure persecutions and pressure, which is a huge blessing.

NJ: So your most urgent prayer for now is to pray for the issue of purchasing a church building?

TM: Actually I have three prayers. First, I pray that we can successfully move into the building we purchased. Second, I pray for our directions after Christmas, which is related to purchasing the building. Third, I pray that conflicts and disputes among believers brought by different perspectives on outdoor service will be removed. These are the main things I am concerned and I am praying for.

NJ: In this process, you must have confronted misunderstandings and criticism, have you ever felt sad?

TM: What makes me sad is not that people do not understand our decision, for God's guidance is very clear for us. I feel sad on the fact that it is hard for us to have unity. I am clear on God's guidance, but I did not expect that the process has been so hard and so challenging, which is painful if we do not have unity.

### **Seeing God's Guidance**

NJ: How do you view "vision"? People agree on the vision when things go smoothly. However, when in adversity, some would say that this is not my vision, but is the vision of the Church Governing Committee. In small groups, many believers take the vision of Shouwang as a remote and big thing, which is not as tangible and relevant as marriage and work, so they think the task of pastoring would be delayed if the church focus on purchasing a church building.

TM: It is common for people to agree on the vision in good times, but disagree in adversity. Vision is what God sees. When we say that we see the vision (of course God already sees it), it is rather abstract and is about an overall direction. Therefore, it should be received as the direction for the whole church. It would not be the vision for the church if it were only seen by the five members of the Church Governing Committee. Just as Exodus, it would be meaningless for one person to get out of Egypt.

The vision might not appear very clearly at the very beginning; we might not be able to take the next step with clear guidance. However, it is clear for us to see the vision in the progress, and it gets clearer. It is difficult and challenging, but we need to have faith.

The vision is not wrong in terms of our direction. At the end of 2005, we decided to have public gathering, which is recognized by many pastors later. Of course, it is not the only way for God to lead house churches. However, it is a direction for God to lead us from semi-underground to go public in mainstream society. The key question is not where we should gather, but whether God's church should go public. Then not only go public, but also have positive influence on Chinese society. As there are already seventy to eighty million Christians in China, the church should have its own direction.

In addition, as we are in current situation, we find that God's guidance is right. Who is the head of the church? Who should be the head of the church? Who should govern the church? It is not decided by the government, but should be governed through the order in the church. This issue is exposed in this spiritual warfare. Not everyone is ready for this battle; not everyone is ready to see that the church has to pay such a price.

NJ: Is your wife especially supportive in such a hardship? Some say that the older generation of ministers went to prison with the support of determined wives.

TM: I should say that she is not especially supportive this time, since she has been always very supportive. She serves the Lord wholeheartedly, and never thinks of herself.

### **Submit to the Truth**

NJ: How to shape our life in terms of submitting to authorities in the church?

TM: We can talk about it from two aspects. For church leaders, in order to establish this authority in Christ, one needs to do it according to biblical teachings as well as to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But how to make people know that the authority is from God and from the Holy Spirit? The answer is to serve. As you serve more, you have more authority. And when you rarely serve and rarely sacrifice for others, you have less authority. The leaders have the responsibility to establish authority in truth and love.

For believers, there is a lesson of submission. It is not about submission to a pastor, but about submission to the church order; the church belongs to God, not to a person. Is the church governed through an appropriate means, and in a recognized order? When we question about it, we need to ground it on biblical teachings, but not on personal opinions.

Believers should not criticize it as if he or she were a prophet (above the church), or an outsider (outside the church). God never sets an individual as the prosecutor of the church. When we criticize Shouwang, we need to remember that we are members of Shouwang, but not outsiders. We should not say, "You are wrong." Rather, we should say, "We are wrong. What shall we do?" And then give suggestions through an appropriate way.

Many of us have interpreted the doctrine of "priesthood of all believers" wrong. No matter in 1 Peter, or in the understanding of the reformers, it is not about church governance. It means that each believer can come before God in Christ, but does not mean that each believer can govern the church. This kind of misunderstandings can easily bring the concept of civil rights into the church. To submit to authorities in the church, is not an issue of submission to church leaders, but an issue of submission to the truth, to God's appointed, and to the church order.

### **A Better Tomorrow**

NJ: Have you ever thought about the future of Shouwang church and Chinese house church after Christmas, and in the long run?

TM: Certainly there will be difficulties, but certainly a better tomorrow. It is not accidental for us to experience this stage. No matter in rural areas or in cities, churches are growing, and churches are holding to the unchanging and uncompromising stand. Kings will change, but the truth stands, and the church stands.

Now the church comes to a critical point, from the tradition of gathering indoors to a point which is close to protecting civil rights. However, I do not think that the church is protecting civil rights; we are holding on to our faith, which has never changed, but only from indoors to outdoors, and from underground to public.

It is inevitable to have controversy when we come to this point. It seems like that the church has become a strong force, which is unacceptable to some people. It is too much if we cross the boundary. So it is normal to be criticized or to be doubted at this point. Chinese house church has the tradition of pietism, but we have a different kind of church-state relationship now. Actually, we have broadened this border, and won't be able to retreat. In the space from the original boundary to the current one, church grows. If there is no space through the expansion of the boarder, the church won't be able to impact the society, and then won't be able to do mission like apostles. Therefore, this process is good for the spread of the gospel.

NJ: How do you view the special way of sharing the gospel during this period of time?

TM: This is not our purpose of having outdoor service, but Shouwang has shared the gospel with many policemen. Till now, believers have visited more than a hundred police stations. We find that many policemen have changed their attitude and gradually come to know more about Christianity, as we communicate with them. Just as Paul said, that the whole city got to know Jesus Christ because he was arrested. Though he did not go there for this purpose, the emperor's army heard the gospel. It is God's grace for Shouwang to share the gospel with policemen, this special people group; it is a huge testimony for them to know about church and Jesus Christ.

In addition, someone criticize me for being tough and inflexible. In fact, I am the most active minister who is willing to communicate with policemen and the government in the past six or seven years.

<http://www.helpsw.org/2011/12/interview-with-pastor-tianming.html#more>

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## **Two Tibetan monks immolate themselves**

By Jeremy Page

The Wall Street Journal (26.09.2011) / HRWF (30.09.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Two Tibetan monks in southwestern China set themselves on fire, the government and

Tibetan freedom activists said, the latest in a spate of such self-immolations that the campaigners said represented an unprecedented escalation of protests over curbs on religious freedom.

China's state-run Xinhua news agency said the two monks were in stable condition after being "rescued" by police on Monday morning. The London-based Free Tibet group said their condition and whereabouts were unclear.

China's Foreign Ministry on Monday also rejected a weekend statement from the Dalai Lama in which the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, who is now 76 years old, suggested a decision on his successor would be made when he was "about 90," and argued that Beijing should play no role in selecting his reincarnation.

The Chinese government, which says Tibet has been part of its territory for centuries and claims the right to approve all new lamas, has long tried to suppress Tibetans' loyalty to the Dalai Lama, who fled his mostly Buddhist homeland in 1959 after an abortive uprising against Chinese rule.

While Beijing has brought massive improvements in infrastructure and basic living standards to Tibet, it has made little progress in discouraging reverence for the leader of Tibetan Buddhism, or in preventing regular protests against restrictions on cultural and religious freedom.

Self-immolations are rare among Tibetans, though, and represent a new challenge for a government whose policies toward ethnic minorities were shaken by rioting against ethnic Han Chinese across Tibet in 2008, and by similar unrest in the neighboring northwestern region of Xinjiang the following year.

Xinhua, one of the main government mouthpieces, said the two monks were rescued by police shortly after they set fire to themselves in Aba prefecture in the southwestern province of Sichuan. They were given prompt medical treatment, it said, and were suffering from "slight burns."

"The suicide attempt is under further investigation," Xinhua said, without identifying the monks or their monastery or giving further details.

Local officials said they were unaware of the incident.

Free Tibet named the monks as Lobsang Kalsang and Lobsang Konchok, saying they were both aged between 18 or 19, and both from Kirti Monastery, one of the largest monasteries in the region and the site of frequent unrest in the past three years.

"The monks called for religious freedom and 'long live the Dalai Lama' before they self-immolated," Free Tibet said in a statement.

The group also said that one of the monks is the brother of another 21-year-old monk at Kirti Monastery called Rigzin Phuntsog, who died after setting fire to himself in March. Chinese authorities have deployed paramilitary police around the monastery and prevented monks from conducting large-scale religious activities since, according to Free Tibet and other activist groups.

Another 29-year-old Tibetan monk called Tsewang Norbu died in August after setting fire to himself in Tawu, site of another monastery about 100 miles away, according to activist groups.

"This is now the fourth act of self-immolation in six months, an unprecedented trend, underlining the growing desperation among some young Tibetans," said Free Tibet

Director Stephanie Brigden. "It is impossible to confirm what prompted this act of protest, but it is believed to be in response to mounting pressure on the monastic community at Kirti Monastery and Phuntsog's family members."

Ms. Brigden said that in the past few weeks, six monks, including an uncle and brother of Phuntsog, had been sentenced for their alleged involvement in his self-immolation.

Chinese state media reported late last month that three Tibetan monks had been given jail sentences of 10, 11 and 13 years for "intentional homicide" after being convicted of helping Phuntsog to set himself on fire.

The latest self-immolations came two days after the Dalai Lama released a statement saying he would consult Buddhist scholars when he was "about 90" to evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue.

If it was to be continued, then he would follow Tibetan Buddhist traditions, which he said allowed him either to be reincarnated after his death, or to choose his own successor while he was still alive. "I shall leave clear written instructions about this," he said. "Bear in mind that, apart from the reincarnation recognized through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People's Republic of China."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei responded at a daily news conference by accusing the Dalai Lama of "distorting and denying" history. He insisted that the title of the Dalai Lama was traditionally conferred by Beijing and was otherwise illegal.

"There has never been a practice of the Dalai Lama identifying his own successor," Mr. Hong said.

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## **Christians in China suffer for supporting Shouwang Church**

***Members of other house churches detained, threatened, or condemned to labor camp***

By Sarah Page

Compass Direct News (01.09.2011) / HRWF (06.09.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Last Sunday (Aug. 28) five members of a house church in Fangshan, Hebei township woke at 4 a.m. and traveled for two hours to a public square in Beijing in order to worship with members of the embattled Beijing Shouwang house church.

On their arrival at 7 a.m., waiting police sent the five back to their local police station, according to a report posted Tuesday (Aug. 30) on Shouwang's Facebook page. Officials then urged them to sign documents repenting of their decision to support the Shouwang church. All five refused but were eventually released.

The Fangshan five are part of a growing wave of house church Christians determined – despite the consequences – to support Shouwang church in its stand for greater religious freedom.

Shouwang members have attempted to meet in the outdoor venue every Sunday since April 11, after government officials repeatedly denied them access to a permanent worship place. Church leaders prayerfully decided on this course of action as a means of

forcing the government to resolve their dilemma. (See [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org), "China Keeps Church Leaders from Public Worship Attempt," April 11.)

Besides the Fanshan church members, police detained at least 15 Shouwang members who turned up for worship last Sunday (Aug. 28), holding them for up to 48 hours in interrogation rooms. The Domestic Security Protection Squad maintained constant surveillance outside the homes of senior church leaders, while less senior police camped outside the doors of other church members from Saturday night until noon Sunday, when service times were technically over, according to the China Aid Association (CAA).

"If we count the time from April until Christmas as the longest journey, we have gone through half of it," Shouwang's leaders said in a message of encouragement to church members last week. "If it is God's will, he is [then] able to end this journey and make us shout in his victory. But if it is his will for us to continue this journey ... let us pray that he will grant us perseverance and hope."

### **Finding Courage**

Two weeks earlier, on Aug. 14, police detained some 16 worshippers at the square. Among them was pastor Wang Shuanyan of Beijing's Xinshu house church.

In a letter written after her release on Aug. 16 and smuggled out of China, Wang described how police detained her at 7 a.m. and took her to the Zhongguancun Boulevard police station. The previous Sunday, a police officer had threatened to lock her up for 48 hours if she persisted in coming to the worship site; this time Wang came prepared with a sleeping bag.

Throughout her detention, Shouwang church members, including the wife of senior pastor Jin Tianming, took turns waiting outside the police station for her release.

Wang described how she wrestled with her natural inclination to obey orders and her conviction that "the things [the officers] have done are violations of the law."

"I believe deeply that all things considered ... Shouwang's outdoor worship, done [at] this time and this way, is right," she wrote.

By the time fellow Xinshu church members convinced officers to allow Wang snacks and bottled water, Wang had decided to go on a hunger strike.

"Was I fasting or on a hunger strike?" she wrote. "To me it was both. To God I prayed earnestly. To the relevant authorities I was protesting against the repeatedly occurring violence."

She had seen police forcefully leading away a female Shouwang member who was physically abused on a previous Sunday – with one officer grinning sadistically at the woman's fear.

"Formerly I went onto the platform, talked with government authorities and petitioned the People's Congress," she wrote. "Now with conflicts lasting and violence rising, to a weak, insignificant and detained person like me, a hunger strike became the only means by which I could express my protest."

Some China watchers believe the government has shown relative toleration and restraint towards Shouwang's outdoor worship. But "this can only be true in comparison to extreme violence," Wang countered in her letter. "We are now used to unrighteous and illegal behavior."

## Petition Ignored

Wang was one of 17 house church pastors who signed and submitted a groundbreaking petition to the National People's Congress (NPC) on May 10, calling for a complete overhaul of China's religious policy.

To date the NPC has failed to respond, although CAA claims the backlash against Shouwang and associated churches has since increased.

Since Wang signed the petition, police have stationed themselves outside Xinshu church every Sunday, sometimes entering the meeting room and checking identity cards. Xinshu church members have also received threats and pressure from their work units, according to CAA.

Police on May 31 detained another signatory, Shi Enhao, pastor of Suqian house church in Jiangsu Province and deputy chairman of the Chinese House Church Alliance (CHCA), in a church raid. In late July he was sentenced – without trial – to two years in a labor camp for “illegal meetings and illegal organizing of venues for religious meetings.” (See [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org), “House Church Alliance leader in China sentenced to Labor Camp,” July 29.)

Police have since ordered Shi's church members to stop meeting and have confiscated musical instruments, choir robes and donations, according to CAA.

Responding to the Shouwang events and Shi's sentencing, Zhang Mingxuan, president of the CHCA, wrote a letter addressed to Chinese President Hu Jintao; CAA translated and published it on Aug. 3. According to Zhang, when Shi's family hired a lawyer on his behalf, officials refused to grant access to Shi on the grounds that state secrets were involved.

“Isn't this a joke of the century that a peasant Christian knows classified state secrets?” Zhang wrote.

Shi's lawyer appealed to higher authorities, including the NPC and the Department of Public Security, but received no response.

Zhang said he had taught church members to abide by the law and respect the government but in return had been deprived of many rights, including the right to a passport. Many others shared his fate, Zhang said, such as house church pastor Zhang Tieling of Fan County, Henan Province. Officials recently sealed Zhang Tieling's house with bricks and knocked his wife to the floor, leaving her in the hospital with a brain injury.

“This is the so-called religious freedom and harmony of China,” Zhang Mingxuan declared.

In his letter to the president, he concluded, “In the past 26 years I have been arrested, beaten and placed under house arrest 42 times just because I speak the truth. Even if you misunderstand me or even kill me or imprison me, I still have to tell you the truth in this letter ... As long as [it means] Christians can freely worship God, I don't mind dying for this cause.”

It seems many other Chinese Christians are fast forming the same opinion.

While the Chinese government claims freedom of religion through approved bodies such as the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), many Protestant and Catholic churches prefer to worship independently, rejecting government censorship and theological

interference – and paying the price. House church pastor Zhang Rongliang – who has been detained five times and served a total of 12 years in prison – was released last night (Aug. 31) from a Kaifeng prison after being detained since 2004. He was convicted on ambiguous charges in 2007 and has languished in prison while suffering chronic diseases and a stroke in 2007.

Experts estimate there are anywhere between 60 and 130 million people attending unregistered Protestant churches in China, compared with just 23 million attending TSPM churches. During the past decade of relative openness, many of these unregistered churches have come “above ground” to meet in large numbers in public spaces – highlighting the inadequacy of current religious policies and creating a government backlash often targeting church leaders.

“Now the shepherds are separated from the flocks of sheep,” wrote Yuan Xin, a Christian who recently visited Shouwang senior pastor Jin Tianming – currently under house arrest – and described his visit on CAA’s Shouwang petition website. “The sheep are being beaten, but the shepherds cannot stand out to fend off the blows.”

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## **China yanks video that leaked hacking tool**

By Robert McMillan

Macworld (29.08.2011) / HRWF (30.08.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - The state-run China Central Television network has yanked a video that inadvertently included a short clip of a cyber-attack tool targeting Falun Gong websites.

Posted in mid-July, the video was a documentary entitled "The Internet storm is coming!" Eleven minutes into the show, without explanation, it showed b-roll footage of a customized computer tool, apparently choosing from a list of Falun Gong websites to hit with a distributed denial-of-service attack.

It's unclear where the footage came from, but its appearance in a state-sponsored film appeared to offer an accidental peek into China's cyber-attack capabilities. Falun Gong computers have been targeted for years by what many consider to be a state-sponsored hacking campaign.

China Central Television has not returned calls asking for comment on the video, but on Thursday China's Defense Ministry told the Washington Post that "the content and opinion of the program do not represent the policy and stance of the government."

The page where the video was hosted returned an error message Friday, saying, "This page does not exist anymore." However, a clip showing the attack tool is still floating around on YouTube.

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## **China hacking video shows glimpse of Falun Gong attack tool**

By Robert McMillan and Michael Kan

IDG News (23.08.2011) / HRWF (25.08.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Beijing, China - The clip shows up without explanation, lasting for about six seconds during a rather mundane documentary about hacking produced by the state-sponsored China Central Television.

The video appears to give a peek at a state-sponsored hacking tool used to disrupt the operations of a spiritual movement that the government of China considers a threat to its authority. The video does not explain where the tool comes from. With a few clicks, the on-screen computer fires up a custom-built attack program, apparently giving the user a way to knock out any one of a range of websites affiliated with the movement, Falun Gong.

Computers affiliated with Falun Gong and Tibetan dissidents have been targeted in online attacks for years, in what many security experts considered to be an organized hacking campaign sponsored by the Chinese government.

China has consistently denied these allegations, but the fact that a Falun Gong attack tool has popped up in a state-sponsored video raises new questions.

The report, entitled "The Internet storm is coming!" focuses on the Pentagon's cyberwarfare strategy, concluding that a cyber-attack against the U.S. could be construed as an act of war against a country that is prepared to fight back. The report then looks at how the Internet can affect national security and examines U.S. efforts to counter cyber-attacks.

The attack tool shows up almost as an afterthought, in a collection of b-roll footage used to give viewers something to look at while the narration continues.

During the six-second attack-tool segment (starting at 11:04 of the video), the narrator talks about how Trojans and back doors can infiltrate computers, and mentions that there are many ways to conduct online attacks.

With a few clicks, the attacker selects a website hosted by the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) from a list of Falun Gong websites. Buttons on the bottom of the screen say 'attack' and 'cancel'.

As an attack tool, however, it isn't exactly state of the art. It goes after a website that's been offline for a decade.

The University of Alabama website was a personal site that once hosted Falun Gong material. The site was created "by a former student and was decommissioned in 2001 as it violated our acceptable use policy," according to Kevin Storr, a UAB spokesman.

News of the video clip was first reported Sunday by the Epoch Times. China Central Television could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

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## **Few share the Pope's "pain and concern" for the Church in China**

Spero News (18.07.2011) / HRWF Int. (18.07.2011) – [www.hrwf.net](http://www.hrwf.net) - Vatican City - Only hours after the illegitimate ordination of Fr Joseph Huang Bingzhang as bishop (excommunicated) of Shantou (see photo), which saw the - forced - participation of eight bishops in communion with the Pope, the director of the Vatican Press Office, Fr. Federico Lombardi, told reporters that the Vatican is closely following this event, "with sorrow and concern."

"The position and feelings of the Holy See and the Pope - said Father Lombardi - have already been recently expressed in previous circumstances," and arise from the fact that it is "an act which is contrary to the unity of the universal Church".

The pope's "pain and concern," were evident in the words he expressed at the end of the audience on May 18 last, when he called on Christians worldwide to pray for "our brother bishops" who "suffer and are under pressure in the exercise of their Episcopal ministry. " "I ask Mary - the pontiff had added - to enlighten those who are in doubt, to call back the straying, to console the afflicted, to strengthen those who are ensnared by the allure of opportunism".

Since last November, China has decided to proceed with the election and ordination of bishops without waiting for papal mandate: Fr. Guo Jincan Chengde (November 2010), Fr. Paul Lei Shiyin for Leshan (June 29, 2011), Today, Fr. Joseph Huang Bingzhang for Shantou; several others for the future.

The ordinations of bishops without a mandate from the Holy See mean automatic excommunication for the candidate and the ordaining bishop. Many of these - like today - were forced to participate in the function, so it is possible that they are not excommunicated. But at least a dozen of them are in a situation of causing scandal which divides the Chinese community.

The Pope's "pain and concern," is due to the fact that through these moves to dominate the Church in China, the patient work of mending bonds between the underground and official Church that John Paul II and Benedict XVI both attempted, is unravelling. A divided church is slow to evangelization and moreover, it fails to guarantee its right and space for religious freedom from the Chinese Communist Party which, in theory, the same Chinese constitution allows.

It must be said that faced with the absolutist pretensions of the Chinese government many of the faithful and bishops have become more daring: websites publish Vatican documents, even those critical of Beijing, an increasing number of bishops are saying no to the illicit ordinations because of their faith and relationship with the pontiff.

The "pain and concern" is also for the lives of these bishops. Because of the Shantou ordination, Mgr. Paul Pei Junmin of Liaoning has not been able to leave his diocese, helped by all the priests who were with him to praying continuously for days, to prevent their bishop being kidnapped. Another pastor, Mgr. Cai Bingrui Xiamen managed to hide. But he is now wanted by the government authorities. Last December, another bishop, Mgr. Li Lianghui of Cangzhou (Hebei), went into hiding in order not to have to participate in another gesture against the Pope (the Assembly of Representatives of Chinese Catholics). The police hunted for him for days like a "criminal" and after finding him, forced him to three months of isolation and brainwashing to convince him of the Party's "good intentions" towards the Church. It is possible that Mgr. Pei and Mgr. Cai have been subjected to isolation and political sessions, to tear them from their ministry and destroy them from a psychological point of view.

With all of this, we must say that those sharing the Pope's "pain and concern," are all too few.

And first of all, they are too few in the Church. The World Day of Prayer for the Church in China, commissioned and implored by Pope Benedict XVI with the appeal of last May 18, found few dioceses ready to pray for the Church in China, its persecuted and "opportunistic" bishops.

Not to mention civil society. By now, the Yangtze River's white dolphin, which risks extinction due to pollution in China, provokes a greater outcry than the extinction of freedom in a country that is destined to rule the world, but which uses heavy handed methods without batting an eyelid.

A rosé of presidents further encourages this attitude (including the Italian president) as well as Secretaries of State, who visiting China never fail to eulogise the "positive path" taken by Beijing on human rights, while - beyond bishops and priests - thousands of activists, petitioners, artists and writers are imprisoned and forcibly silenced.

As the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had to admit on her first trip to China "with Beijing we can talk about everything, including human rights, but without jeopardizing our economic relationship."

It is not just a case of simple greed, of interest in the Chinese market, it is a matter of short-sightedness in not seeing that attacks on religious freedom, sooner or later, become attacks on all freedoms. The Chinese workers, enslaved and under paid, the farmers cheated of their land, the children and disabled people forced to work in brick factories, in preference to adults because "more docile", know this all too well. But even economic freedom is beginning to choke: by now there is not even one entrepreneur left who, having invested in China, was sooner or later robbed of his patents, or forced to pay bribes of up to 25 per cent of his turnover to be able to set foot on the Chinese El Dorado.

There is also short-sightedness in the Chinese leadership who instead of responding to the lack of political reform and respect for human rights with the change, prefers oppression and a police state and thus prepares the ground for an increasingly explosive social conflict. The 180 thousand riots that break out in the country every year are just a drop in the ocean of what might happen if China and the world continue to pat each others backs to exploit the Chinese people and together suffocate their human and religious rights.

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## **China ordains third bishop without Pope's approval**

By Sui-Lee Wee

Reuters (14.07.2011) / HRWF Int. (29.08.2011) - [www.hrwf.net](http://www.hrwf.net) - China ordained a third bishop without the Pope's approval on Thursday, the honorary president of the state-backed church said, in a move likely to further strain tense relations between the Chinese government and the Vatican.

China's state-sanctioned Catholic church ordained Joseph Huang Bingzhang as bishop in Shantou city in southern Guangdong province on Thursday morning, the honorary president of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, Liu Bainian, said, citing sources with direct knowledge.

Two other sources, who declined to be identified, told Reuters that Huang's ordination was a public ceremony attended by about 1,000 people.

Eight bishops loyal to the Holy See participated in the ceremony, a source close to the Vatican told Reuters, citing six sources who had direct knowledge of the situation. He declined to be named, citing the sensitivity of the matter.

"All 8 bishops were requested by civil authorities to go and ordain the new illicit bishop," said the source. "All of them were accompanied by the police to the place of the event. The majority of the bishops refused and resisted to go."

Calls made to Huang's church in Shantou went unanswered.

The ordination is the latest in a long-running dispute between the Vatican and Beijing over the status of China's state-backed Church, which has disregarded injunctions not to name bishops without papal authorization.

China's 8 to 12 million Catholics are divided between the state-sanctioned church that names bishops without the Vatican's approval and an underground church wary of government ties.

The source close to the Vatican said that the Holy See believes China has plans to consecrate more bishops, a move that could further damage a relationship that is "deteriorating."

"With this insistence to ordain them, we have to react," he said.

Huang could be excommunicated for his role in the ceremony, as the Vatican had told him ahead of time that it was not approved, the source said.

He added that Paul Lei Shiyin, who was named as bishop of the city of Leshan on June 29, has been excommunicated after the Vatican condemned the ordination that took place in late June without papal authorization, saying it was an illegitimate act that damaged the unity of the Church.

Last November, the pope's office issued a similar condemnation following the ordination of Joseph Guo Jincai, a member of the state-backed church in Chengde in north China.

The source close to the Vatican said four other bishops, who were unwilling to attend the ordination, were held for days and placed under surveillance in separate places.

Beijing and the Vatican broke formal diplomatic relations shortly after the Chinese Communists took power in 1949. They differ over who has the authority to appoint bishops but had previously been engaging in a secretive and cautious exploration of normalizing of ties.

The Vatican has previously condemned what it called "external pressures and constrictions" on Catholics in China.

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## **Vatican: Pope blasts 'unacceptable' Chinese bishop Appointment**

ADN Kronos International (04.07.2011) / HRWF (05.07.2011) – [www.hrwf.net](http://www.hrwf.net) – Pope Benedict XVI on Monday denounced the unauthorised appointment of a Catholic bishop in China, attacked it as an act done without "papal mandate and hence illegitimately."

Rev. Paul Lei Shiyin, ordained in 29 June in the diocese of Leshan in China's southwest Sichuan province "has no authority to govern the diocesan Catholic community, and the Holy See does not recognise him as the bishop of the diocese of Leshan," the Vatican said in its sternly worded statement.

"Fr. Lei Shiyin had been informed, for some time, that he was unacceptable to the Holy See as an episcopal candidate for proven and very grave reasons."

The Vatican has been locked in a protracted tit-for-tat with Beijing over China's insistence on overseeing nominations and management of the state-sponsored Church. That runs counter Roman Catholic rules giving the pope final say over all Church decisions.

In 1951, two years after the Communists were victorious in the Chinese Revolution, China forced its Roman Catholics to sever ties with the Vatican.

An estimated one-third of China's 12 million Catholics worship in a clandestine Church that has stayed loyal to the Vatican throughout decades of repression under China's Communist Party.

State-approved clergy have increasingly sought the Vatican's blessing since the easing of restrictions on religion in the 1980s.

"The survival and development of the Church can only take place in union with him to whom the Church herself is entrusted in the first place, and not without his consent as, however, occurred in Leshan," the Vatican said in its latest statement.

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## **Beleaguered Chinese Church to provide legal aid to members**

***Government continues harassment, propaganda campaign, assisted by Three-Self churches***

By Sarah Page

Compass Direct News (30.06.2011) / HRWF (04.07.2011) – [www.hrwf.net](http://www.hrwf.net) – Leaders of the troubled Shouwang house church in Beijing have established a legal committee to assist church members facing arrest or house arrest, the loss of employment or homes and forced relocation to their home towns.

In a press statement issued Tuesday (June 28), the unregistered church described the forced relocation of one church member to Shandong province as "a flagrant violation of the law." (See [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org), "Chinese Authorities Expel Shouwang Church Member from Beijing," June 29.)

Leaders charged the committee, composed of legal experts within the church and officially formed last week, with collecting evidence of "citizens of faith being forced to leave their jobs or being evicted because of their religious belief." The church would hold officials legally responsible for these violations, as outlined in an earlier press statement on May 12.

For the past three months, Shouwang church members have committed to meet in a public square in Zhongguancun, northwestern Beijing, in response to repeated attempts by the government to deny them access to a permanent worship venue. (See [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org), "Church in China to Risk Worshipping in Park," April 7.)

Shouwang represents the "third church" phenomenon in China – consisting of large Protestant or Catholic churches functioning openly rather than underground, but refusing to register with government approved bodies such as the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) or the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA).

China is also currently embroiled in a tense debate with Vatican leaders over the unauthorized ordination of Catholic bishops within the CCPA, according to a Union of Catholic Asian News report on Tuesday (June 28).

**Pressure Mounts**

On Sunday (June 26) police arrested 15 people who showed up at Shouwang's designated outdoor worship venue, including several from other house churches. Many church leaders remained under permanent house arrest, while scores of church members were detained in homes or hotel rooms, according to a China Aid Association (CAA) report.

One of those detained on Sunday had traveled all the way from Henan province to express her support, the CAA said.

Two other women from Shuangshu house church in Beijing had planned on traveling to the venue, but police prevented them from leaving home. Within 24 hours their landlord also asked them to move out of their rented apartment, according to CAA.

CAA also claimed that officials pressured the management of the Beijing office of World Vision to dismiss employee and church member Xia Xiao, a claim that World Vision refutes.

"World Vision has fired no one and has come under no pressure to fire anyone," World Vision spokesperson Cynthia Colin said in a press statement. "The staff member in question has in fact been working as normal out of her office this week."

For the second week in a row, pastors from TSPM were called in to "counsel" Sunday's detainees, according to the CAA.

In mid-May the director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs convened a meeting of Three-Self leaders from 15 provinces and municipalities, asking them "not to heed Shouwang church's statement of faith," and repeatedly slandering Shouwang church, according to Bob Fu, president of the CAA.

The national daily Xinhua published an article on Monday (June 27) extolling the freedom of TSPM churches. As evidence, the article listed several TSPM churches around the country with congregations of over 4,000 people; the construction of 11 new churches in Nanjing, including one with seating for 5,000 people; the "abundant" provision of Bibles through China's Amity Printing Press, and the training of over 2,000 TSPM clergymen through the government-approved Nanjing Union Theological Seminary.

"I feel that the most pressing issue for Chinese churches is to figure out how they can be helpful to society, and how they can become integrated with traditional Chinese culture," Pastor Kan Renping of St. Paul's Church in Nanjing province told Xinhua.

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## **Chinese authorities expel Shouwang church member from Beijing**

***Christian detained at market, sent to parents' home in Shandong Province.***

Special to Compass Direct News

Compass Direct News (29.06.2011) / HRWF (04.07.2011) – [www.hrwf.net](http://www.hrwf.net) – Chinese authorities detained a member of one of Beijing's largest unregistered churches on Monday (June 27) and sent him to his home town in Shandong Province, sources said. Three officers from Beijing's Dongsheng police station detained the Shouwang church member at about 5 p.m. while he was at a market to get a mobile phone fixed, they said. They handed him over to a Shandong office based in the capital, which sent him to his hometown that evening. He was the second member of the church to be expelled from

the city since authorities allegedly compelled the owners of the church's rented facility to stop leasing to the congregation in April, forcing them to meet outdoors the past three months.

The same Dongsheng police station in Beijing's northwest Haidian district sent the first Shouwang member to be expelled from Beijing to his hometown in Hubei Province on May 8, sources said.

After Monday's expulsion, the Shouwang member was forbidden to use his mobile phone, but at noon yesterday he was sent to his parents' home and was able to send a text message to church members. He said his identity card was confiscated, and he was warned not to return to Beijing before July 1, the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. Authorities told local village officials to monitor him. In the church's weekly statement issued yesterday, Shouwang Church leaders said they had filed a protest against the expulsion.

"The forced expatriation by Dongsheng Police Station and Haidian Public Security Bureau has constituted a complete contempt for and a flagrant violation of the law, in effect depriving a citizen of any guarantee of the most basic of foundational existential rights," the statement read.

The first expulsion of a Shouwang member came after the church held a fifth consecutive Sunday of outdoor worship. At least 15 people were taken to 10 police stations across Beijing on May 8th. All were released within 24 hours, except one who was jailed at Dongsheng police station for 48 hours and then turned over to the Wuhan municipal governmental office in Beijing. Wuhan is the capital of Hubei Province, where the household of the detained Shouwang member was registered.

After previous detentions, he had already been forced to quit his job as an instructor at an international school for children under 3 years old. As he had lived at the school office, he also lost his lodging.

The church member on May 10 told a contact by phone that he had been sent to Wuhan's Beijing office from the police station earlier that day. Police ordered the office to buy a train ticket for his return to Hubei, he said. Police confiscated his identity card, later telling him that they could not find it. They told him to go to Hubei to apply for a new one.

The detained Christian later told another church member by phone that he wanted to see his parents and his maternal grandmother, and that he also wanted to rest after being detained four times for having attended five Sunday outdoor worship services.

With a police officer from the Wuhan Public Security Bureau based in Beijing's Wuhan office, he took a train to Hubei's provincial capital on the evening of May 11. More than 20 Shouwang congregants went to the Beijing West Railway Station to see him off, praying hand-in-hand and singing a hymn in the waiting area of the station.

The Shouwang member and the police officer arrived in Wuhan the next morning, then went to his hometown in Hubei. After having lunch, the police officer returned to Wuhan. On May 16, two local police officers came to the church member's home asking for basic information on his family. He returned to Beijing in mid-June and has continued to attend outdoor worship, being detained every Sunday since.

Hundreds of Shouwang parishioners have been detained or confined to their homes on Sundays as well as weekdays since April 10. Some church members have lost their jobs or rented homes, or both. They are mostly young professionals working at companies or universities.

Before April 10, the Shouwang congregation had gathered in a conference hall of the Old Story Club in the northern area of Beijing for more than a year. But according to Shouwang Church leaders, the owner of the rented venue was under mounting pressure from the government.

In March, Shouwang planned to rent a conference hall of a hotel in the northwest of the city, but the church said some government agencies again interfered and prevented it from renting the new premises.

Shouwang Church first started as a family Bible study group in 1993. By 2005, Shouwang, which means "keeping watch," had more than 10 fellowships. At that time, the church decided to apply to register with the government. But in 2006, authorities rejected Shouwang's application, asking it to join the official Three-Self Patriotic Movement church.

In late 2009, Shouwang paid about 27 million yuan or about US\$4 million for the second floor of the Daheng Science and Technology Tower in northwest Beijing's Zhongguancun area, known as "China's Silicon Valley." Funding came from the Shouwang congregation and other contributors for the purchase of a permanent worship place. Authorities once again interfered, according to church leaders, and the property developer refused to hand the key over to the church.

Shouwang Church had more than 1,000 worshippers each Sunday before the outdoor worship began in April. It still has dozens of family groups and fellowships.

In a related development, China Aid Association (CAA) reported yesterday that two women from another Beijing house church, Shuangshu Church, were planning to join Shouwang's outdoor worship service on Sunday (June 26), but that police prevented them from leaving their home. Their landlord later came to pressure them to move out, according to CAA.

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## **China's official Church members 'admonish' Shouwang group**

### ***Another 16 arrested on Sunday; house churches petition for greater religious freedom***

By Sarah Page

Compass Direct News (16.06.2011) / HRWF (20.06.2011) – [www.hrwf.net](http://www.hrwf.net) – Police last weekend detained a further 16 members of Beijing's Shouwang house church and placed several more under house arrest, while members of China's government-approved churches have gone to police stations to "admonish" detained house church members, according to a statement issued yesterday by church leaders.

Of those detained, police held two in protective custody in hotels, beginning on Friday night (June 10), while another 14 who turned up at Shouwang's designated outdoor worship site on Sunday morning (June 12) were taken away and sent to 10 different police stations. Of those detained Sunday morning, 13 were released by midnight while the last was released the next day.

Police at Haidian station also locked into a basement three Christians who had come to visit detained church members, the statement said.

The church reported that members of government-approved Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) churches had in the previous two weeks come to many local police stations to “educate” and “admonish” detained Shouwang congregants, urging them to leave Shouwang and join TSPM churches.

“Half a century ago, this practice failed for those who have gone before us; they would rather be put into jail for holding on to their position,” the statement said. “We believe that for our generation, this practice will fail as well.”

Following a series of evictions from rented facilities and denial of access to a property they purchased late last year, Shouwang church in April decided to meet outdoors as a form of protest against the government’s restriction of their right to worship. (See [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org), “China Keeps Church Leaders from Public Worship Attempt,” April 11.)

On their first attempt to meet in a public plaza in Zhongguancun, northwestern Beijing, uniformed and plainclothes police arrived in droves, filming and interrogating bystanders, waving journalists away and herding church members into waiting buses, according to the China Aid Association (CAA). Church leaders said 169 people were detained, and most were then taken to a nearby school where they were fingerprinted and had their names recorded, *The New York Times* reported.

Similar confrontations have occurred every Sunday since, with church members determined to continue their peaceful protest despite many of the leadership team, including Senior Pastor Jin Tianming, being confined to house arrest. All key leaders, including four pastors and three elders, have been under house arrest almost constantly since April 9, said one source who spoke to Compass on condition of anonymity.

The number of people turning up to the outdoor venue has dwindled as members of the highly educated and influential church face consequences in their personal lives.

“Some church members have lost their jobs or rented homes or both,” the same source said.

International media agencies have followed events closely, particularly on Easter Sunday (April 24) when CNN reported that police had detained at least 36 church members and blocked more than 500 from leaving their homes.

By early June, police had detained some 300 people. During the same period, police held many church members under house arrest, preventing them from traveling to the outdoor venue.

As the weeks progressed, police officers also asked church members to refrain from attending Shouwang’s evening prayer meetings, held in a room rented from the New Tree Church in Zhongguancun.

Towards the end of May, the church was shocked by the departure of Pastor Song Jun, fellow minister Jian Lijin, and deacons Ji Cheng and Yuan Yansong, who left because they disagreed with plans to continue outdoor worship, the source reported.

### **Petition for Religious Freedom**

While some house churches also disagree with Shouwang’s approach, claiming their “confrontation” with the government can only bring harm for house churches in general, others have chosen to stand in solidarity with them.

On May 11, 17 pastors or church workers from almost 20 house churches in six Chinese

cities delivered a petition to the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, asking that the keys of Shouwang's property be handed over to them, and that the national Regulations on Religious Affairs be dropped and replaced by a more favorable law governing religious freedom, CAA reported.

, "It is for our Faith: A Citizen's Petition to the National People's Congress on the Church-State Conflicts," the petition made oblique reference to an article entitled, "We do everything for faith," written by renowned Christian Wang Mingdao years earlier, defending the church before Communist officials.

In a recent program dedicated to Shouwang, Radio Free Asia (RFA) interviewed several of the petitioners, including Wang Wenfeng of the Wenzhou China Theology Forum.

"I hope the government can see that the Shouwang incident is not an isolated case; rather, many churches in China want the same thing," Wang told RFA. "The most basic request is, 'Let us meet in public, and let us register.'

"We Christians have nothing to hide," he continued. "At the same time, our faith itself requires us to be open with non-Christians, society and the state."

### **'City on a Hill'**

Shouwang first made global headlines in November 2009, after U.S. President Barack Obama visited China. The Wall Street Journal ran a piece entitled, "The China President Obama Didn't See," recounting Shouwang's first outdoor meeting in a snowstorm on Nov. 1 after officials pressured their landlord to evict them from an office space in northwest Beijing's Huajie Mansion.

Founded in 1993 as a simple Bible study in the home of Senior Pastor Jin, the church soon grew into 10 separate fellowships throughout Beijing. In 2005 the church made an application for registration, soon rejected by officials. They then formed an integrated church with a vision to be like a "city on a hill," broadcasting the light of the gospel. At this point they began to rent office buildings for Sunday worship.

The most serious direct crackdown prior to 2011 came on May 11, 2008, when the armed forces broke into Shouwang's Sunday meeting and ordered the church to stop meeting. The church then realized that government pressure on landlords was a detriment to its survival and began gathering funds to purchase its own property.

The church eventually bought the second floor of the Daheng Science and Technology Tower in Zhongguancun in late 2010. Officials warned the property developer, however, not to hand over the keys and pressured the owners of their then-meeting place, the Old Story Club, not to renew a 2010 lease, leaving Shouwang "no choice" but to worship outdoors.

Evictions are not confined to Shouwang or to Beijing; several other large house churches, including the All-Nations Alliance Church in Shanghai and Liangren Church in Guangzhou, have resorted to outdoor worship after being driven out of rented facilities, according to the Rev. Liu Tongsu, a California-based Chinese pastor and scholar.

"The 'outdoor' in the outdoor worship is not a means to an end, but a stand," Shouwang's Senior Pastor Jin stated in a letter issued to church members on April 23. "It is a stand when we face our Lord of glory and the authorities ... in this period of time it is a worship that is more precious than any hymn or sermon."

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## Taiwanese TV satellite operator refuses to continue relaying New Tang Dynasty signal

RSF (25.05.2011) / HRWF Int. (31.05.2011) – [www.hrwf.net](http://www.hrwf.net) - Reporters Without Borders has asked the Taiwanese authorities to explain why the country's leading telecom company and TV satellite operator, Chunghwa Telecom (中華電信), is refusing to continue relaying *New Tang Dynasty Asia Pacific (NTD-AP, 新唐人電視臺)*, a TV station that broadcasts programmes in Mandarin, mainly to Taiwan but also to mainland China.

The press freedom organization has written to Prime Minister Wu Den-yih expressing its concern that Chunghwa Telecom is discriminating against *NTD-AP*.

In an 11 April letter, Chunghwa Telecom told *NTD-AP* that it would not be able to renew their relay contract when it expires on 9 August because of "insufficient bandwidth" on its new satellite, ST-2, which is about to replace the existing one, ST-1.

"The contradictions in the reasons given by Chunghwa Telecom for not renewing the contract and the supposed limitations of the new satellite's technical capacity suggest that the real reasons lie elsewhere," Reporters Without Borders said. "The similarities of this dispute and the dispute between *NTD-AP*'s parent station, *NTD-TV*, and the [French satellite operator Eutelsat, make us fear the worst](#)."

"In the latter case, it was established that the Chinese authorities were involved and had pressured Eutelsat to stopping relaying *NTD-TV*, which they have repeatedly criticized. If it turns out that the same has happened with *NTD-AP*, the credibility of the Taiwanese government, which has a controlling share of Chunghwa Telecom, will be badly damaged."

Ever since its creation in August 2007 *NTD-TV*, which claims to have 3.7 million subscribers in Taiwan, has broadcast programmes that are very different from those carried by the official Chinese media. In particular, it has programmes about human rights, repression in Tibet and harassment of religious groups in China such as Falun Gong and Christian churches. Eutelsat stopped relaying its signal in 2008.

Taiwan is ranked 48th out of 178 countries in the 2010 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

After Sylvia Feng was ousted as president of Taiwan's Public Television Service (PTS) last October, [Reporters Without Borders reminded the government](#) of its undertakings to respect the state-owned media's independence.

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## The 'diabolical cult' that threatens China

By Ségolène Malterre

France 24 (25.05.2011) / HRWF (30.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Beijing, China - A series of government advertisements posted around the city of Tianjin (south of Beijing) warn against a "sick and diabolical cult" that is trying to "control people's minds". Is it a terrorist group that is such cause for alarm? Not exactly...

Although the government does not explicitly name the 'cult' it denounces, our Observers say the posters clearly target a spiritual movement called the Falun Gong. Labelled a

"heretical sect" by the Chinese authorities, the group describes itself as a variation of Qigong, a traditional Asian form of gymnastics that focuses on breathing and on energy flows in the body. Founded by former soldier Li Hongzhi in 1992, the group synthesises several religious schools of thought, and claims to advocate truth and tolerance. In France, the official agency dedicated to the surveillance of cultic deviancy does not consider Falun Gong to be a sect.

In the 1990s, Falun Gong's growing popularity began to worry Chinese authorities, who responded by launching a massive advertising campaign to discredit the movement. In 1999, over one million books related to Falun Gong were confiscated by Chinese authorities. A secret 'agency', 6-10, was reportedly created to restrict the activity of Falun Gong members. The Chinese government denies such an office exists.

According to the Falun Gong, people who are suspected of being members of the group are regularly subjected to arbitrary arrest and torture. However, there are no official figures concerning the number of people imprisoned in China for being associated with this movement.

'The propaganda started when the State began to worry that we were turning into a political force'

Alain Tong is the president of the Falun Dafa association in France, which teaches the Falun Gong method. He lived in China until he was 15.

Although it doesn't explicitly say so, this campaign obviously targets the Falun Gong. Defamatory messages such as these are nothing new. They have existed since authorities first started persecuting our movement at the end of the 1990s. Some cities post them more than others, it depends on the local government's agenda.

Falun Gong is a Qigong method which is based on slow movements and meditation techniques. It is a little like yoga or Tai chi. In theory, this method is only passed on from a master to a student. But at the beginning of the 1990s, the master Li Hongzhi decided to make this exercise technique public. Because it's effective and very beneficial for the body, Falun Gong quickly spread by word of mouth. At first, it was actually promoted by the communist party. The Sports Minister invited Li Hongzhi to conferences on several occasions.

"We were accused of being crazy, of driving our practitioners to suicide"

Following an inquiry carried out by authorities in 1998, the Chinese regime realised that there were 80 million Falun Gong practitioners in China [70 million, according to media reports]. Commentators at the time, particularly in the West, drew attention to the fact that this figure exceeded the number of Communist Party members, which was estimated at 60 million. It was at this moment that the defamation campaigns and persecution began. [In October 1999, the National People's Congress passed a retroactive law designed to suppress thousands of "heterodox religions", which legitimized the persecution of spiritual groups judged "dangerous to the State"]. A lot of absurd stories were published. We were accused of being crazy, of driving our practitioners to suicide, yet not a single incident had been reported before 1998.

The State was worried that we were turning into a political force, but we never tried to be political. [However, according to the researcher David Palmer, after it began to be persecuted, the Falun Gong became "a clandestine resistance movement, which continues its relentless struggle against the authorities under the watchful eye of the international media".]

On the Tianjin posters, one can see the word "superstition" several times. This is the word used most often by the authorities to discredit us. Since 1998, authorities have repeatedly called on Chinese citizens to denounce people who practise Falun Gong. Some people have been so brainwashed by anti-Falun Gong propaganda that they do. Others do it in exchange for money. What's more, the regime has banned lawyers from defending Falun Gong followers.

The former president said that he would eradicate Falun Gong in three months. But that was more than 10 years ago and we still have followers.

When we came to France, French authorities wanted to find out who we were and whether we were potentially dangerous. But they didn't find anything worth reporting. It sounds crazy, but the only reason we are persecuted is because we practise a certain kind of exercise and meditation."

"My neighbour was a Falun Gong follower. She lost her job and disappeared for several months"

Xigua (not his real name) lives in China. On condition of anonymity, he agreed to talk to us about the Falun Gong, which is a highly sensitive issue in the country.

In China, Falun Gong followers are usually viewed as suicidal and/or dishonest people. Many people hate them. I think the Communist party is largely responsible for this reputation.

I have a neighbour whom I often went over to have dinner with when I was younger. She sometimes talked about being a follower of Falun Gong. She was a lovely woman. Everybody liked her so I doubt that anybody denounced her. Nevertheless, she lost her job and disappeared for several months. People said she had been "re-educated". I also remember that two men came to search her house. She is back at home now but she is always in and out of prison.

At the beginning, the Falun Gong were not opposed to the Communist Party but now they have political ambitions.

At the beginning, the Falun Gong were not opposed to the Communist Party but now they have political ambitions. They wrote on bank notes that they want to overthrow the party.

Today the name "Falun Gong" is completely taboo in China. If you search for it on the Internet, you'll only find official articles. And on MSN Messenger, the name simply doesn't appear. Thankfully, we can access sites blocked by the Chinese censor using the software Freegate [a software created by Falun Gong practitioners], and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the people who created it.

Falun Gong is a minority movement in China, people practise it secretly. But I think they should have the right of freedom of expression and the right to practise their cult. I am a Christian, so I'm not a follower of Falun Gong, but I sympathise.

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## **The relation between religion and government in China**

By Thomas David DuBois

The Huffington Post (23.05.2011) / HRWF (30.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - China is again in the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Highlighted by the detention of artist Ai Weiwei and Nobel-laureate Liu Xiaobo, the past few months have seen what Assistant Secretary of State Michael Posner recently called a "serious backsliding" of human rights.

Even with China's growing clout on the world stage, human rights abuses do have consequences. Reports of secret detentions, censorship of the Internet, and intimidation of foreign journalists continue to harm the image of China's "peaceful rise," and stoke fears of what a rising China means for the world.

Nothing damages China's image more than its suppression of religion. The Dalai Lama wields greater international influence than any of China's domestic critics, due in no small part to his image as a spiritual figure. China's persecution of "house churches," underground communities of Christians that gather in small home meetings, remains a significant irritant to relations with the United States. Sometimes the policies themselves backfire spectacularly. In 1999, China moved aggressively to suppress a relatively obscure new age movement called Falungong. But rather than destroying the group, this campaign ended up launching Falungong to global prominence.

Why does China pursue a policy towards religion that costs it so dearly in terms of international image? Some observers assume that the governing regime is simply ideologically fragile to the point of paranoia, and too accustomed to taking a sledgehammer to any and all public security problems. There is certainly some truth to such an idea, particularly as far as its political critics are concerned. But China's leaders certainly know that throwing the weight of the state security apparatus against Tibetan monks or elderly Christians makes for fairly awful public relations, and it is worth our time to think about why they would consider such actions worth the bad press they inevitably bring.

What is easily forgotten when considering Chinese policy today is that for millennia, China was a profoundly religious state. Two centuries before Rome became an empire, China's Han dynasty had already tied itself to the idealistic rhetoric of Confucianism -- the idea that personal morality is the ultimate source of political authority. For six centuries -- from the 1300s until the last emperor was dethroned in 1911 -- the texts and ideals of Confucius were not only synonymous with civilized culture, they were also the foundation of actual government -- court ritual, the official bureaucracy, and the extensive code of laws were all grounded in Confucianism.

China conducted diplomacy with neighboring courts in Korea, Siam, Vietnam and Burma through the language of Confucian moral hierarchy. Officially at least, the Chinese emperor was unique in the world, and regarded lesser kings of neighboring states as something akin to junior partners. Foreign diplomats were to approach the Chinese emperor as humble servants coming to pay tribute to a cultural and moral superior. China took this aspect of diplomacy very seriously. A severe breach of protocol could spark a real crisis. Japan severed diplomatic contact with China for most of two centuries rather than accepting even the appearance of subservient status. Disagreements over terminology and protocol repeatedly derailed the crucial moments of diplomacy between China and Britain in the years before the Opium War.

But some of these same Confucian emperors also carried on a double life as Buddhist monarchs. The Qianlong emperor, who ruled for most of the 1700s, took this Confucian hierarchy deeply to heart, and without question saw his own august self as the greatest of the world's rulers. At the same time, Qianlong was also the center of a distinct but equally coherent system of Buddhist diplomacy, one based on the ideal of enlightened "wheel turning" kings who would advance the progress of the Buddha's teaching throughout the world.

During China's middle ages, a time when Confucianism had fallen out of political favor, it was Buddhism that served as the language of international relations. Buddhist exchanges created and strengthened alliances between kingdoms across northern China, the Korean peninsula and Japan. Even after Confucianism had supplanted political Buddhism in East Asia, political Buddhism remained vibrant in Central Asia, where incarnated Buddhas and lamas held real power, and supported a succession of Mongol khans who ruled as wheel turning kings. Later dynasties, especially the territorially vast Qing, spanned these two worlds. Emperors like Qianlong ruled their Chinese subjects as Confucian monarchs, but in their dealings with the lamaist belt of Tibet, Mongolia and Manchuria, they skillfully employed the idiom of Buddhist kingship.

The point is that for centuries, Chinese politics were deeply grounded in religion -- sometimes more than one at a time. Religion was part of the government -- it was never intended to be independent. Religions that were not tethered to state control were banned by law, and persecuted without mercy.

It is not difficult to see the influence of this long history on religious policy in China today. While Communist Party members are themselves supposed to be atheist, ordinary citizens are allowed to practice religion within certain strict parameters. The Chinese government recognizes Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Islam (it does not consider Confucianism a religion), but these official religions are essentially branches of the government, rather than independent organizations. As the successor of the imperial state, the current Chinese government claims for itself the authority to name religious leaders, including the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. Conversely, it rejects the authority of the Vatican to appoint bishops for the Catholic Church in China (which has anywhere from six to twelve million members, depending on who is doing the counting). As a result, both Tibetan Buddhists and Chinese Catholics have two sets of leaders, one set appointed by Beijing, and another shadow clergy chosen outside China's borders. Unsanctioned religions -- like the house churches or Falun Gong -- are still perceived as a direct threat to public order, and treated accordingly.

What many international observers who call for China to embrace religious freedom fail to appreciate is that religion in China has never been treated as a matter of personal choice. It's hard to imagine that the current regime would suddenly start to view things differently.

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## **EP Vice-President condemns China's use of force on Kirti monks**

VOA Tibetan Tuesday (19.04.2011) / HRWF (02.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Vice-President of the European Parliament Edward McMillan-Scott has condemned Chinese's use of force on Tibetan monks at the Kirti monastery in Ngaba, Sichuan. He has called on China to fully respect the UN Human Rights convention and exercise restraint over the region.

McMillan-Scott, who is responsible for Human Rights and Democracy and a member of the Tibet Intergroup, in a press release said, "The authorities must show restraint by withdrawing the armed security police and ending the lockdown of Kirti monastery. All those detained, an estimated of 35 Tibetans, must be released immediately and the threats of relocation of monks from the monastery for "re-education" must end."

MEP Fiorello Provera, Vice-Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee also expressed his deep concern over the deteriorating situation at Kirti Monastery. In a letter to EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Lady Ashton, Provera called on her to closely monitor

the situation in order to promptly condemn cases of arbitrary detention and prevent further human rights violations in Tibet.

MEP Kirstiina Ojuland and MEP Csaba Sogor have proposed the situation in Ngaba prefecture as the topic for Urgency Resolutions for the next Plenary in Strasbourg.

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## **Ending siege of Kirti Monastery must be a priority at U.S.-China human rights dialogue**

International Campaign for Tibet (25.04.2011) / HRWF (02.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Today the International Campaign for Tibet called on U.S. and Chinese officials to make an end to the deepening crackdown against Tibetan monks and laypeople in Ngaba (ch: Aba), Sichuan Province, a priority at the U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue. The dialogue is scheduled for April 27-28 in Beijing; the U.S. delegation will be led by Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Posner.

"Ending the siege at Kirti Monastery is a clear deliverable in this U.S.-China human rights dialogue," said Todd Stein, Director of Government Relations at the International Campaign for Tibet. "Tibetans are facing a life-or-death situation in Ngaba. The Chinese side should respond positively to any U.S. request to lift the security clampdown at Kirti and to allow for diplomatic access to ascertain the veracity and severity of the situation." The crackdown in Ngaba, following the self-immolation of a 20 year-old monk on March 16, has deepened, as paramilitary police have forcibly removed more than 300 monks from the monastery, and two Tibetans have been reported killed (see ICT report <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/two-elderly-tibetans-killed-hundreds-monks-detained-kirti-crackdown-deepens>).

According to the State Department, the dialogue will focus on "human rights developments, including the recent negative trend of forced disappearances, extralegal detentions, and arrests and convictions, as well as rule of law, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, labor rights, minority rights and other human rights issues of concern." It is the first dialogue session in a full year, and comes during not only the crisis in Ngaba, but the government's continuing crackdown against Chinese artists, bloggers, human rights defenders and others exercising their right to free expression.

Recent human rights dialogues, with the U.S. and European governments, have not resulted in any demonstrable improvements in the human rights situation in China or the release of notable political prisoners. Some observers have questioned the utility of the dialogue as a tool to advancing rights in China, and asked whether the increasingly intransigent Chinese government uses the human rights dialogue as a means to limit human rights discussion in broader bilateral engagements with the U.S. and Europe.

"President Barack Obama raised 'America's fundamental commitment to the universal rights of all people' in his summit with Chinese President Hu Jintao, and Secretary Clinton recently re-affirmed identified human rights as a "core element" of U.S. foreign policy," said Todd Stein. "The ongoing crackdowns in Tibet and China further make the case that China's human rights record must be a central part of the larger Strategic and Economic Dialogue to be held in Washington next month."

In response to the crackdown at Kirti monastery and in advance of the dialogue, ICT has urged the State Department to:

- raise the situation at Kirti Monastery as a matter of priority in the upcoming bilateral human rights dialogue, requesting an urgent response by the Chinese

government in the form of de-escalation and an examination of underlying grievances;

- gain a commitment that U.S. diplomatic personnel be allowed to travel to Ngaba to ascertain as best they can what is the situation at Kirti Monastery and its environs;
- demarche the Chinese Foreign Ministry with the expectation that local authorities in Ngaba will end the lockdown, threats of relocation of monks from the monastery to unknown points for “re-education,” and pull back the armed police that are escalating tensions, battling with the crowds, and reportedly causing serious injuries; and
- launch an international action at the U.N. Human Rights Council to enquire into the consequences of China’s interference in Tibet’s monastic communities where there are clearly strong reasons to believe that gross violations of religious freedom systematically.

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## **Illicit Church, evicted, tries to buck Beijing**

By Andrew Jacobs

The New York Times (18.04.2011) / HRWF (19.04.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net>— It has all the trappings one would expect from the capital’s most well-heeled and prestigious Christian congregation: a Sunday school for children, nature hikes for singles and clothing drives for the needy. Last year, the church, called Shouwang, or Lighthouse, collected \$4 million from its 1,000 members to buy its own house of worship.

But Shouwang, according to China’s officially atheist Communist Party leadership, is technically illegal. It is a so-called house church, which in recent years had come to symbolize the government’s wary tolerance for big-city congregations outside the constellation of state-controlled churches. The church has been a release valve for an educated elite seeking a nonpolitical refuge for its faith.

That is, until now.

Evicted yet again from its meeting place by the authorities, Shouwang announced this month that its congregants would worship outside rather than disband or go back underground. Its demands were straightforward but bold: allow the church to take possession of the space it had legally purchased. Officials responded with a clenched fist.

On Sunday, for the second week in a row, the police rounded up scores of parishioners who tried to pray outdoors at a public plaza. Most of the church’s leadership is now in custody or under house arrest. Its Web site has been blocked.

“We are not antigovernment, but we cannot give up our church family and our faith,” Wei Na, 30, the church choir director, said last week just before more than 160 congregants were corralled onto buses and detained. “Satan is using the government to destroy us, and we can’t let that happen.”

The move against Shouwang, as well as other house churches, coincides with the most expansive assault on dissent in China in years, one that has led to the arrests of high-profile critics like the artist Ai Weiwei, but also legions of little-known bloggers, rights lawyers and democracy advocates who have disappeared into the country’s opaque legal system. The crackdown, now in its second month, was prompted by government fears

that the Arab revolts against autocracy could spread to China and undermine the Communist Party's six-decade hold on power.

Although many congregations continue to hold services unhindered, in recent weeks the pastors of two large unofficial churches in the southern city of Guangzhou have been detained and their congregations rendered homeless. In Shanxi Province, a house church organizer said the police attacked him with electric batons, and religious leaders in places like Xinjiang in the far west and Inner Mongolia in the north have reported increased harassment, according to China Aid, a Texas-based Christian advocacy group. Last year, the organization reported 3,343 instances in which house church members or leaders were detained or beaten, a 15 percent increase over 2009. Bob Fu, the group's president, said such incidents were part of the latest government campaign to try to force house church members into state-run congregations.

"I'm not optimistic a peaceful solution will be found to this crisis," he said. "The government's moves are forcing nonpolitical churches to commit acts of civil disobedience, which the government is not likely to tolerate."

Global Times, a state-owned newspaper that broke new ground last year by writing positively about house churches, gave voice to the most recent shift in official attitude with an editorial last week that condemned Shouwang as trying to "twist Chinese society by politicizing religion" and suggested that overseas Christian groups were using the church to subvert the government.

"All Christians, as well as those of other faiths, are Chinese citizens first and foremost. It is their obligation to observe discipline and abide by the law," it wrote.

Although house church leaders are careful to say that they have no interest in politics, their insistence on independence from state supervision and their real or imagined associations with foreign churches have stoked deep-seated fears among China's authoritarian leaders, who have been suspicious of Christianity since 1949, when the Communists took power, branded missionaries as agents of imperialism and threw them out of the country.

"The bottom line is that house church members believe in Jesus, not the party's version of Jesus," said Zhang Minxuan, a pastor and president of the Chinese House Church Alliance, who says he has been detained 41 times.

Some experts suggest that two-thirds of China's estimated 60 million Protestants worship at unregistered churches. Just as noteworthy, at least from the government's viewpoint, is that a growing number are young, educated urbanites — a demographic traditionally at the forefront of political change in China. (Many house church leaders are veterans of the 1989 pro-democracy protests who turned to Christianity in the bleak years of government repression that followed.)

Beyond the appeal of spirituality and the promise of redemption, many converts say they are drawn by the intimacy and sense of community fostered by unofficial churches. Others, in turn, say they are repelled by certain aspects of government-run congregations: the overcrowded services, the rules against evangelizing and the sermons salted with political propaganda.

Huang Yikun, 32, a magazine editor, described Shouwang as a tonic against the ills of Chinese society: corruption, media censorship and the fixation with money and power that dominates so many lives. "There is something so cold and empty about life outside the church," said Mr. Huang, an intense, bookish man who converted three years ago.

Once an idealist who thought he could change China through journalism, Mr. Huang grew depressed by the lack of political reform that he had hoped would accompany the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Becoming Christian, he said, removed such expectations because he now believes political change is beyond the power of mortals. "If I didn't believe in Jesus Christ, I'd probably be more of a rebel," said Mr. Huang, who devotes his energies to Bible study and proselytizing among friends and acquaintances, a cornerstone of many unofficial Protestant congregations in China.

Like many underground churches, Shouwang started out small, with 10 people in an apartment that the Rev. Jin Tianming rented near Tsinghua University. It was 1993, and to avoid detection, meetings were clandestine. When an apartment became too crowded, the congregation would split and spread to other apartments, a process that was repeated numerous times, especially after police raids.

As strictures eased during the last decade, Mr. Jin brought his congregation out of the shadows, renting space in an office building near Beijing's university district. That same year, in 2006, lawyers in the congregation helped the church apply for legal recognition with the State Administration for Religious Affairs.

With Shouwang's doors wide open, new parishioners poured in, forcing the church to operate three consecutive Sunday services. The number of paid staff grew to 10 and the congregation started a social welfare program, delivering food to the poor and financial aid to victims of the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan Province.

Shouwang's latest troubles began again three years ago, shortly after its application for official recognition was denied. Officers from the Beijing Public Security Bureau burst into Sunday services, pronounced the gathering illegal and wrote down the personal details of everyone in the room, one by one. In the days that followed, calls were made to congregants' employers or college administrators. Many congregants say they were threatened with dismissal from jobs or school if they did not switch to an official church. Some left, but Shouwang's ranks continued to grow.

In November 2009, after months of pressure from the government, the landlord declined to renew the church's lease. Congregants met at a park the following Sunday, enduring a snowstorm and drawing foreign media attention. After one more outdoor service, the government offered to find the church a new space. With President Obama set to arrive in China for his first state visit here, church leaders say, Chinese leaders were eager to avoid diplomatic distractions.

But if the government had reached an accommodation, it was only temporary. Church leaders say relations soured last October after 200 Chinese house church members — many of them from Shouwang — tried to join an international congress of evangelical Christians in South Africa. Furious that the group sought to represent China, and indirectly undermine the state-run churches, the authorities stopped all but two at the airport.

Not long afterward, the government injected itself into a real estate transaction between the owner of an office building and the congregation. Although the money to buy space had been delivered and the paperwork signed, the property's management, pressed by the authorities, refused to hand over the keys. The congregation, in turn, will not accept its money back.

Even as Shouwang faced its most serious existential challenge last week, Mr. Jin was defiant, saying the congregation would continue to gather in public until the government allowed it to occupy its new space.

"I urge the government to come up with a peaceful and responsible solution," said Mr. Jin, who was speaking from his apartment, its doorway blocked by the police. "I am fully prepared to go to jail for my church. I belong to the Lord, and if this is what God intended, so be it."

Mia Li and Zhang Jing contributed research.

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## **Underground Beijing church members detained**

By Alexa Olesen

AP (17.04.2011) / HRWF (19.04.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Beijing, China - Nearly 50 members of an underground Beijing church were detained Sunday and its leaders were kept under house arrest as part of a crackdown on the unregistered congregation, a U.S.-based rights group said.

Jin Tianming, pastor of the Shouwang church, was detained by Beijing police Saturday night and released Sunday morning, Bob Fu, president of the China Aid Association, a Christian rights group, said in an email.

Fu said 47 Shouwang members who tried to worship in an open-air public space on Sunday were detained and all the church's pastors and leaders were under house arrest or in detention. In an earlier statement, Fu said some church members had lost their homes or jobs amid an official campaign to shut down the church.

While China's Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, Christians are required to worship in churches run by state-controlled organizations, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement for Protestants and the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association for Catholics.

However, more than 60 million Christians are believed to worship in unregistered "house" churches, compared to about 20 million in the state churches, according to scholars and church activists. The growth of house churches has accelerated in recent years, producing larger congregations that are far more conspicuous than the small groups of friends and neighbors that used to worship in private homes that gave the movement its name.

Their expansion and growing influence have unsettled China's rulers, always suspicious of any independent social group that could challenge Communist authority.

Shouwang members have for years been at odds with Beijing officials over their right to worship. Tensions escalated earlier this month when the church was evicted from its usual rented place of worship, a Beijing restaurant. Church leaders decided to temporarily hold services in a public space, prompting police to tape off the area and detain anyone who showed up to take part, with nearly 200 people kept at a local school for several hours.

A second attempt at open-air services in northwest Beijing's Haidian district resulted in Sunday's 47 detentions. Numerous uniformed and plainclothes police were parked near the office and shopping complex where Shouwang members were supposed to gather. An Associated Press journalist was followed and warned by plainclothes police not to conduct any interviews in the area.

A woman who answered the phone at the Haidian Public Security Bureau referred calls to the bureau's propaganda department, where the phone rang unanswered. Calls to the Beijing Public Security Bureau also were not answered.

Shouwang tried in 2006 to register with the government but its application was rejected, the church said in a statement distributed by Fu.

"Shouwang is not willing to make any compromise on the stand of our faith despite that we are willing to register with the government," the statement said. "We cannot join an official state institution."

In December 2009, the church bought property in northwest Beijing for regular Sunday services but government interference prevented the group from occupying the space, it said.

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## **Chinese police arrests Christians again for praying in public**

AsiaNews (18.04.2011) / HRWF (19.04.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Beijing, China – Police yesterday arrested the leaders of the Shouwang Protestant Church in Beijing. They also detained about 50 members of the congregation in order to prevent them from holding Sunday services in public after they were expelled from their usual premises a week earlier. This has raised fears that Chinese authorities might be tightening the screw on house churches ahead of Easter. Analysts see the crackdown on hundreds of dissidents and human rights activists starting in February as caused by fears over a possible Chinese-styled Jasmine Revolution.

The Shouwang Protestant Church in Beijing is one of the largest house churches on the mainland with nearly 1,000 members. Recently, police evicted them from their usual premises. Yesterday, large numbers of police were deployed near the building in the Zhongguancun area where the Shouwang church planned to worship.

As soon as worshippers began arriving, police shoved them into buses and took them to different police stations for interrogation. Most were still in custody late into the night.

The same happened a week ago when after police detained 169 worshippers of the same Church, and held them overnight.

Last Saturday night, Rev Jin Tianming was taken away by police and interrogated for nearly 12 hours. Rev Li Xiaobai and his wife were also detained Saturday night and held for a few hours. Rev Zhang Xiaofeng was also briefly taken into custody. Both Revs Li and Jin are now under house arrest.

Jin said that his Church bought a 1,500-square-metre office space in a commercial building for 27 million yuan, but the property's management was pressured by the authorities not to hand it over, even though the church had paid in full.

The Church had applied for recognition in 2006 but has not yet received an answer.

"We are accused of gathering illegally," a member of the congregation said. However, "This won't stop until we have an indoor site for congregation," another member said.

It is not yet clear whether those in detention will be released. Last Sunday, those who had been arrested were forced to sign a statement pledging not to pray in public again.

In the past, the Shouwang Church had already been thrown out of its premises, forcing its members to pray in parks and other public places. However, no one was ever arrested for that.

Also on Saturday night, police detained Rev Zhang Guangxia, who heads another Shouwang congregation in Zuozhuang, Shandong. Similarly, Rev Zhang Qingan and three members of his congregation were arrested yesterday for handing out religious brochures.

China's counts tens of millions of Protestants, mostly affiliated with unregistered house churches.

The authorities demand they all join the Three Autonomies Movement, a Protestant organisation controlled by the Communist Party; however, only about 20 million have done so. Another 50 (some say 100) million have preferred to join underground churches.

Given the fact that the Shouwang Church is one of the largest and better known of the underground churches, many fear that the persecution against smaller churches is probably even more intense.

Likewise, experts note that since many Christians are also human rights activists or supporters, the authorities have made a great effort to prevent any convergence between religious faith and human rights protection.

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## **Two underground priests arrested and beaten in Hebei**

By Jian Mei

AsiaNews (12.04.2011) / HRWF (18.04.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Since last January, at least two underground priests (in communion with the Pope), from Xuanhua dioceses (Hebei), near Beijing, have been detained and badly beaten up. They are among at least 20 underground priests in Xuanhua and Xiwanzi dioceses have been tortured and pressured to "register" with the government-sponsored Church associated with the Communist Party-controlled Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association over the past two decades, sources, anonymous per request, told AsiaNews.

On 9 April, Fr Chen Hailong of Xuanhua was taken away by officials in Yanqing Beijing County, and has not yet been released by today, 12 April, the source told AsiaNews.

Fr Zhang Guangjun, also from Xuanhua diocese, was detained in February, and badly beaten. His family was allowed to take him out on March 29 for medical treatment. He had bruises to the head and the legs, and had been visibly tortured.

Fr Zhang was tortured for refusing to concelebrate and to register and get the "priest card" as a means of accepting the independent and self-managed Church. "To concelebrate (with patriotic priests) is never possible. As being held, I don't expect to leave here freely," he was quoted as saying.

As early as 13 January, he was brought away from a layperson's home by officials disguised as technicians who had come to check the gas system. He was taken to a hotel in Zhuolu County, and barred from sleep for five nights.

After a short release for the Lunar New Year in February, Father Zhang reported to the local united front work office on March 8 but was badly beaten up and tortured.

According to sources in Zhangjiakou area, since 1990s, more than 20 priests from Xuanhua and Xiwanzi dioceses were detained, beaten, jailed, sent to study sessions in order to get them "registered" and "surfaced".

"We are angry at the threats, violence and inhumane means used by the government officials to go against the priests," sources noted.

"As the state advocates the building of harmonious society and religious freedom, we, as Catholics in China, hope the government would release all the detained clergy and respect their conscience," they said.

In addition, at least eight priests have been taken to undergo study sessions: Tian Yongfeng, Pei Youming, Hu Huibing, Liang Aijun, Wang Yongsheng, Yang Quanyi, Gao Jinbao and Zhang Guilin.

Below is a list of priests in Zhangjiakou area, who were detained and tortured since 1990s, compiled by Catholics in Hebei:

1990s: Father Wang Jiansheng and Father Cui Tai detained and jailed for 3 years; Father Zhang Li arrested, sentenced and jailed.

August 2006: Father Li Huisheng arrested in Zhangbei county, beaten up badly and hospitalized, sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, and still serving sentence.

Winter 2007: Father Wang Zhong arrested in Guyuan county, and jailed for three years. He has finished serving the sentence but under surveillance.

September 2007: Father Yu Zhongxun taken away for the second time, tortured. He was tied onto a basketball backboard for one night, stooped for more than 10 days, and burned by cigarettes butts all over his body, and forced to drink "chili waters".

July 2008: Father Zhang Jianlin arrested and detained for seven months, tortured and now under surveillance.

8 June, 2009: Father Liu Jianzhong arrested, prevented to sleep for six days, and stood and physically tortured for 18 hours each day, detained for six months.

14 June, 2009: Father Zhang Cunhui taken away by officials on his way to say Mass, forced to undergo study sessions for eight months.

30 May, 2010 (Trinity Sunday): Fr Wang Jiancheng and Li De taken by officials on their way to say Mass. Father Li was released after 2 months' detention, during which he was disallowed to sleep and physically tortured. Father Wang was released after six months' detention and now under surveillance.

February 2011: Father Ren He of Xiwanzi diocese taken and detained when leading a retreat for laypeople at a Catholic's home.

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## **China keeps church leaders from public worship attempt**

***Police put pastors under house arrest over weekend, before detaining at least 160 on Sunday***

By Sarah Page

Compass Direct News (11.04.2011) / HRWF (13.04.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Police in China held "about two dozen" pastors and elders of Beijing's Shouwang Church under house arrest or at police stations over the weekend to keep them from attending a Sunday worship service in a public location, according to Bob Fu of the China Aid Association.

Three top leaders of the church remain in jail and several others are under strict surveillance after hundreds of Chinese police yesterday cordoned off the walkway to a third-floor outdoor meeting area adjacent to a property purchased by the church in Haidian district, Beijing, and arrested at least 160 members of the 1,000-strong church as they tried to assemble.

The church members were bundled into waiting vans and buses to prevent them from meeting as planned in the public space, Reuters and The Associated Press (AP) reported, and most had been released by today.

Church leaders claimed officials had pressured their landlords, forcing them out of both rented and purchased locations and leaving them no choice but to worship in the open.

"The government cornered them into making this decision," Fu said, adding that the church had initially tried to register with the government. "They waited for two years, and when the government still denied them registration, they tried to keep a low profile before finally deciding to buy the Daheng New Epoch Technology building."

Shouwang is a very unique church, he said.

"Most members are well-educated, and they include China's top religious scholars and even former government officials, which may be a factor in the government's response to them," he said.

As one of the largest house churches in Beijing, Shouwang is unique in insisting on meeting together rather than splitting the congregation into smaller groups meeting in several locations, Fu said. Zion church, for example, may have more members than Shouwang, but members meet in smaller groups across the city.

"This is based on the founding fathers' vision for Shouwang Church to be a 'city on a hill,'" as stated in the Bible in Matthew chapter five, Fu explained. "So they've made a conscious decision not to go back to the small-group model. Either the government gives them the keys to their building or gives them written permission to worship in another location, or they will continue meeting in the open."

Police arrested anyone who showed up to take part in the service, AP reported.

### **'Most Basic Necessity'**

Church leaders last week issued a statement to the congregation explaining their decision to meet outdoors.

"It may not be the best decision, but at this time it is an inevitable one," the statement said, before reminding church members that the landlord of their premises at the time, the Old Story Club restaurant, had come under government pressure and repeatedly asked them to leave, while the previous owners of the Daheng New Epoch Technology building, purchased a year ago by the church for 27.5 million RMB (US\$4.2 million), had refused to hand over the keys.

The church had already met outdoors twice in November 2009 before officials gave tacit consent to move to the Old Story Club restaurant. Officials, however, again prevented Shouwang Church from meeting in May and August of last year.

Fu said it was common for government officials across China to pressure landlords into revoking leases for house church groups.

"For example, right now I know of at least two churches that were made 'homeless' in Guangzhou this week, including one church with at least 200 members," he said.

Shouwang's statement pointed to Article 36 of China's Constitution, which grants every citizen freedom to worship, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by China, which states that every citizen has the right to observe his religion or belief "either alone or in community with others and in public or private."

For this reason the church planned to meet outdoors until officials granted legal, written permission to worship in an approved location – preferably at the building purchased by the church.

The document also advised church members not to resist if they were held under house arrest or arrested at the Sunday venue.

"Objectively speaking, our outdoor worship must deliver this message to the various departments of our government: attending Sunday worship is the most basic necessity for Christians in their life of faith," the statement concluded.

The number of Protestant house church Christians in China is estimated at between 45 and 60 million, according to Yu Jianrong, a professor at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Rural Development Institute, with a further 18 to 30 million people attending government-approved churches.

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## **Hundreds of Christians, evicted from premises, arrested for wanting to pray in the streets**

Asia News (11.04.2011) / HRWF (13.04.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Beijing - About 200 Christians were arrested by police in Haidian district (north of Beijing), for having gathered yesterday in a public square for Sunday service. It's the largest operation against Christians in recent years. Christians fear the crackdown to prevent a jasmine revolution in China, has now extended to religious groups.

The faithful belong to the Protestant Church Shouwang, one of the largest house churches (not recognized) in the country with over 1000 members. Have recently been expelled from the premises of a restaurant where they had held meetings: the police forced the restaurant owner to evict the faithful. Hundreds of police patrolled the Zhongguancun area since morning and detained the faithful as they arrived to attend the church service set for 8:30 am, loading them onto waiting buses. The street liturgy was no secret: it was announced by the faithful on the Internet.

Since the evening of 9 April, the police also put under house arrest at least five pastors of the community. Among them, Pastor Jin Tianming explains that the police have asked many of those arrested not to attend the church of Shouwang. Last night only 10 people were released.

The police also detained a photographer from the *New York Times*, later released. Many citizens complain that the authorities turned off the mobile phone communications in the area to delay news of the arrests, which, however, immediately spread over the Internet.

"We have not violated the law - Jin protests - and there is no reason for government interference." In recent years the 18-year-old church had been harassed by the authorities and forced to move more than 20 times, but had never had so many worshippers taken away by police. The last time the church was kicked out of its place of worship, in November 2009, the church held its Sunday services in a park two weeks in a row. Jin explains that the Church had bought 1,500 square meters of office space in a commercial building for 27 million Yuan. But the owner refused to give them the keys, under pressure from the authorities, though the price has been paid. The Church has sought approval since 2006 and received no answer.

There are tens of millions of Protestant Christians in the country, mostly followers of unregistered house churches. Beijing demands that all the faithful adhere to the Three-Self Movement (Protestant all controlled by the Communist Party) but there are only 20 million Christians in the state Church, compared with more than 50 million members (though other sources say that more than 100 million) members of unofficial churches.

The episode comes a week after the arrest of the famous artist *Ai Weiwei*, taken by police on April 3 and who has since disappeared, his whereabouts unknown even to family members.

Since mid-February Beijing has been imposing the worst persecution since 1998, with arrests and sentencing to prison, for fear that protests could break out similar to the Jasmine Revolution taking place in North Africa and the Middle East. So far they have systematically cracked down on hundreds of rights activists and dissidents, but not religious groups. But it is true that many of those arrested were Christians. It is a known fact that among activists and dissidents a strong religious research often results in their conversion to Christianity.

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## **Christians persecuted in Henan and Jiangsu**

China Aid Association (07.03.2011) / HRWF (10.03.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - On the afternoon of March 1, agents from the DSPS (Domestic Security Protection Squad) of Xiayi County, Henan Province came to a house church in Hanzhen Town and took away three Christians, two of whom were women. The agents seized copies of the Bible, over 1,000 yuan of cash and copies of a book titled "A Stormy Life" by Zhang Mingxuan, president of the Chinese House Church Alliance. After the DSPS agents conducted an interrogation that lasted over three hours, they released the three Christians and warned them not to associate with Pastor Zhang Mingxuan. The agents also accused them of believing in a cult.

At 7 p.m. on March 4, Public Security Bureau agents from Suqian, Jiangsu Province went to Nanyang, Henan Province and took Pastor Shi Enhao, vice-president of the Chinese House Church Alliance, back to Jiangsu for detention. The latest update is that he was released on March 6.

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