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## **Lawyers and Christians supporting jailed Chinese pastor attacked on Christmas Eve**

Calgary Herald (24.12.2013) - A group of rights lawyers and churchgoers supporting a jailed Chinese Christian pastor were attacked by hired thugs on Christmas Eve at his house in central China, his wife and two lawyers said.

Wang Fengrui, his wife, said dozens of thugs kicked and punched members of the group on Tuesday when they attempted to leave the house in Nanle county in Henan province.

Pastor Zhang Shaojie and his aides were arrested more than a month ago over a land dispute and have been denied access to lawyers. His case has drawn the scrutiny of rights lawyers and activists who say it exposes a county government's ability to act with impunity against a local church even if it is state-sanctioned.

While land disputes are common in China, Zhang's popularity has prompted many of the country's Christians to rally around him to defend what they say is religious freedom. They say the county government reneged on an agreement to provide Zhang's congregation with land for a building, leaving them without a place of worship.

Among those kept at the house Tuesday were three lawyers and an assistant, who had travelled to Nanle to seek meetings with Zhang and his aides.

Five churchgoers who were at Zhang's house along with the lawyers had hoped to hold a prayer meeting on Monday to rally support for him, but were prevented by authorities.

The conflict became violent when the thugs forcibly prevented the lawyers and churchgoers from leaving the house on Tuesday, according to Wang and two lawyers at the house.

"About 20 or so people had staked out the house overnight with lights and bonfires, and they used violence to prevent some of us from leaving, grabbing their clothes, taking their possessions such as bank cards and beating them," said Zhang's lawyer, Xia Jun.

Among those beaten was 63-year-old lawyer Cheng Weishan, who said he was praying for forgiveness of the thugs when they came after him, pulling his briefcase while punching him in the back and hitting his hands to force him to release it.

"I thought they would have some limit when dealing with an elderly person like me, but they had none," said Cheng, who was left with only the briefcase's two handles.

The crowd of thugs grew to about 40, and the lawyers said they called police for help but to no avail. A man who answered the phone at the local police station said he had no knowledge of the incident, and calls to the county government office rang unanswered.

Both Xia and Wang said Cao Nan, a preacher who came from Shenzhen to Nanle for the prayer meeting, told them he was placed inside a cage at the local police station, beaten, and sprayed with pepper water on Monday before being allowed to go to Zhang's house.

"I saw his shredded clothes and bruises on his body, his legs and his face," Wang said. "He could not sleep at all last night."

Witnesses said Cao was determined to leave the house on Tuesday but was beaten again.

The thugs grabbed Cao by his limbs, dumped him in front of the house and beat him before he grabbed a kitchen knife for self-defence, Cheng said.

"We have been calling police since yesterday for help, but they never came," Cheng said. "The moment Cao went out with a cleaver, they appeared instantly to chase after him."

Cao was believed to have been taken away again by police.

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## **China's mysterious 'anti-cult' office**

Want China Times (29.12.2013) - The recent announcement of a graft investigation into public security vice minister Li Dongsheng has cast a spotlight on the mysterious "anti-cult" office he has headed since October 2009, reports Duwei News, an outlet run by overseas Chinese.

Li, 58, was last Friday placed under investigation for violations of the law and party discipline — party code for corruption — according to a press release from China's official Xinhua news agency.

For the last four years, Li has been the vice chief in charge of the group responsible for the government's handling of religious cults, otherwise known as the Central 610 Office.

This mysterious office was said to have been originally set up by the Communist Party on June 10, 1999 — giving rise to its name — to stamp out the banned Falun Gong spiritual sect, which had been spreading throughout China at the time. Sources say the full name of the office was actually the "Leadership Team to Handle Falun Gong Issues of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee."

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In September 2000, China's State Council set up its own "Office of the State Council to Prevent and Handle Cult Issues," which effectively merged with the Central 610 Office in practice but remained separate entities in name. The office was unveiled publicly after a self-immolation incident involving Falun Gong practitioners in January 2001, after which then-office chief Liu Jing announced that the central government had decided to set up a special unit to deal with the complex issue of religious cults.

As both a state body and party body in one, the Central 610 Office is an unusual department which has the ability to affect policy and strategy in both spheres. Sub-divisions of the 610 Office have also been set up in local governments across the country. Usually these sub-divisions are headed by the deputy chief of the local public security bureau.

What the 610 Office actually does remains shrouded in mystery, though from publicly available information it appears that the body is responsible for work relating to Falun Gong and other religious cults that are considered "harmful to society." The office is believed to be in charge of developing targeted strategies for the party and government on preventing and dealing with incidents stemming from cult activities, including controlling education and issuing propaganda aimed at deterring and "reforming" Falun Gong enthusiasts.

While the key words in the name of the office has changed from "Falun Gong" to "Cult" since it was first established, its primary focus on cracking down on Falun Gong appears unchanged. On Dec. 12, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the Chinese government "to end immediately the practice of harvesting organs from prisoners of conscience," including from large numbers of Falun Gong practitioners. In response to the resolution, a media spokesperson for the Mission of the PRC to the European Union dismissed the Falun Gong organ harvesting claims as complete fabrications.

"Falun Gong is a cult in every sense and an anti-China political organization," the spokesperson said in a statement. "The European side should not be misled by its lies nor provide platform for its deceptive tricks."

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## **Tibetan Monk karma tsewang detained by China along with 16 supporters**

AP (27.12.2013) - Chinese authorities have detained a highly regarded Tibetan monk and 16 of his supporters, a Tibetan writer said Friday, as Beijing tightens its grip over the region.

The writer, Tsering Woeser, said that rights lawyer Tang Tianhao confirmed the detention of Karma Tsewang, a popular monk in Nangqian county in western Qinghai province. Aside from preaching Tibetan Buddhism, the monk is known for his work on disaster relief, environmental protection and teaching youth the Tibetan language.

Tsering Woeser said Karma Tsewang was taken away by police Dec. 6 while traveling on business in the city of Chengdu. She said the monk was taken to Chamdo prefecture, where he has been detained since.

More than 100 laypeople and monks in Nangqian petitioned the government Dec. 18 to release Karma Tsewang, but 16 of them were detained in the following days, the writer said.

Tsering Woesser said she obtained the information from local residents as well as Tang, who declined to speak to the media out of fear of governmental retaliation but asked Tsering Woesser to relay the information.

The writer said the authorities have warned the families of Karma Tsewang and of the detained supporters not to hire lawyers.

Police in both Chamdo and Nangqian said they had no knowledge of the case. Calls to local governments were either unanswered or answered by people who said they did not know about the case.

Tsering Woesser said that Tang, who was retained by Karma Tsewang's family, had been denied visits with the monk in Chamdo.

Tsering Woesser said she is concerned that any conviction against the popular monk could upset local residents and cause unrest.

For decades, ethnic Tibetans have resented Beijing's strict limits on Buddhism and Tibetan culture, as their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, remains in exile. Although Beijing says it has made vast investments to boost the region's economy and improve the quality of life for Tibetans, many Tibetans say Beijing's economic policies there have mainly benefited ethnic Chinese migrants.

More than 100 people have self-immolated since 2009 to protest China's rule over Tibetan areas.

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## **China's illegal detention of Christian Pastor**

Sky News (16.12.2013) - A Chinese Christian pastor and 23 members of his congregation have been held at an unknown location illegally and without access to lawyers since mid-November.

The case of Pastor Zhang Shaojie is evidence that in parts of China the violent suppression and unlawful arrests of the faithful by local government officials continues.

China's poor record on religious tolerance has been showing signs of improvement in recent years.

The Communist government had pledged to improve the rights of religious groups but this case suggests challenges remain.

Our research led us first to a small town on the border of Hebei and Henan Provinces.

We arrived at 1am to meet the daughter of Pastor Shaojie. Her name is Zhang Yunyun and she is a mother on the run.

We meet her in the hotel room she is hiding in for the night with her 11-month-old daughter Jessie.

Yunyun is on the run because she fears the arrest of her father could lead to her own detention.

She has received repeated threats on the phone from officials. One caller threatened to "wipe out her family" if she talks to reporters. But she is undeterred.

It is nearly a month since she last saw her father. Speaking in whispers, she explains what happened.

"My father went to work (in the church) as usual, it was a Saturday.

"Suddenly a dozen police came, they forcefully took my father away.

"There was no paperwork at all, they just took him away. we haven't seen him since."

We look at photographs she took of the government men who turned up at the church on November 16.

"Government," she says, pointing at a group of plain-clothed men. They look threatening.

She describes how they tied up her father and took him away with some of his parishioners.

She selects another photograph and points to some of those who have disappeared.

"Her, her, him, her," she says. In all, 24 people were taken away.

This is a case that pits a Christian community, which had been growing in numbers and influence, against a local government that has seized the land bought for a new church.

Our conversation with Yunyun wakes Jessie, who begins to cry. It is time for us to leave.

She shows us the location of her church on a map. It is in a town 20 minutes' drive away, over the border in Henan Province.

We arrive at Nanle County Church at dawn. It is a rundown building in centre of the town. The front door is closed but a side door is ajar. We go inside.

It does not resemble a European Christian church. It looks more like a theatre: 600 or so seats and a large stage with a pulpit in its centre.

This is where Pastor Zhang and his worshipers were dragged from a month ago.

There are two types of church in China: some are sanctioned and authorised by the state and others are not.

Nanle County Church is sanctioned and so, in theory, its worshippers should face no problems from the authorities.

As we are looking around, some of the parishioners emerge from a side room. They recall the day of the arrests.

"Pastor Zhang was negotiating with our local government here. Suddenly a dozen people arrived, and they took Pastor Zhang away," one woman says.

"We did some charity work, perhaps some of that was too much? They always discriminate towards religions."

"We are very worried about my dad," another says.

"My mother was arrested here too, at the church. No arrest warrant, no evidence, just arrested."

I ask whether it is hard to practise their religion in China.

"I think it's really unsafe here and there's no freedom. Whenever we come to services there are always restrictions."

The parishioners then receive a phone call. It is from one of a group of lawyers who have taken up the case and who have just arrived at the prosecutor's office across town.

We drive over to meet them. For 10 minutes we chat to them about the case.

"Christianity in the Chinese system does not have any real standing," one lawyer explains.

The lead attorney for the detained Christians is Xia Jun. "Our rights as lawyers to meet our client have been blocked," he says.

"I've been in Nanle for more than 20 days, I'm representing Pastor Zhang Shaojie. We went to the detention centre to see him five times, but all been denied.

"Four times I went to the Public Security Bureau to report about it, all been rejected. Then I was followed, every day. I drive around the roundabout three times, the car following me drove three times too."

They explain the complexity of the case. It combines a number of themes: intolerance of religious groups, land-grabs for financial gain, and rampant local corruption by officials who operate above their own laws.

"The key problem is the power of officials in our country. They behave like uncaged monsters ... out to harm us all. For them, the law doesn't exist," Mr Xia says.

Moments later we all discover what he means. A coach pulls up next to us. We assume those who disembark are more Christian supporters, but they're not. They are just the opposite.

In a split second, our civilised chat with the lawyers turns into a melee of chaos. The coach-load of women backed by some men attack the lawyers, the Christians and us.

One of the lawyers is beaten and kicked in front of us. Our camera is then pulled from the Sky News cameraman's shoulder and damaged.

We retreat inside the prosecutor's office, which turns out to be deserted. One of the lawyers puts a chair leg through the door to stop the mob from entering the building. It doesn't work.

The mob move into the lobby and we retreat with the lawyer and one of the Christians into another room: a dead end.

The lawyer barricades us all inside the small room using a sofa, a chair, a desk and a drawer to wedge the door handle. Inches away on the other side of the door the determined mob are trying to get to us.

"Who are they? I ask.

"They are paid and backed by the local government. They come and go as required. All this is organised behind the scenes by the government," Mr Xia explains.

The same group had attacked him the previous day.

We watched through the barred window as another lawyer, stuck outside, is struck on the head with a small rock.

"This case is for pure religious causes," Mr Xia says.

"More than 20 people were arrested. Pastor Zhang Shaojie and most of them are church staff: the core leaders of the church.

"When they are arrested, all the activities like worshipping and services, can't take place as normal."

For four hours, the local government rent-a-mob did their best to get inside. We watched a police car pull up outside and then drive away again.

The violent spectacle is a demonstration of a determined intolerance of religion incited by a corrupt local government.

The lawyers tell us that they believe the government seized the church land because it can be used for their own lucrative construction projects.

We call the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Beijing, who "handle" foreign reporters in China, to explain the situation.

Eventually, the same authorities who refuse to tell anyone why they are holding Pastor Zhang and his congregation escort us out of the building and out of the town.

They have given us safe passage out but continue to intimidate the Christians within their town.

"I miss my father very much," Zhang Yunyun had told me the previous night. It is exactly a month since she last saw him.

I ask if she thinks he will be home for Christmas.

She pauses: "I don't think so."

She and her baby daughter Jessie remain on the run, in hiding and frightened.

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## **Has China given birth to a monster?**

Persecuted church (20.11.2013) - The new National Security Agency could spell disaster for many, Church included.



The Third Plenum of the 18th Party Central Committee, which ended on November 12, attracted international headlines for the relaxation of the country's one-child policy.

But something that should have received more attention was a one-line announcement on the creation of a new National Security Council.

According to People's Liberation Army Major General Luo Yuan in the People's Daily, the Council will be led by the party leader and should be cross-departmental, including the military, security and police forces, as well as the departments in charge of foreign affairs and the economy.

This means that the party continues to control China and its people and is assigning all rights for the supervision of change, not to the government, but to the party's ideological leaders.

In China, where the rule of law is incomplete, such a council could turn out to be a monstrous "Big Brother," depending on who is in control of the party at the time.

It would be practically unaccountable and even more powerful than the feared and despised Political and Legislative Affairs Committee, which oversees all law enforcement authorities – the courts and the police force – and is routinely accused of abusing human rights.

But the creation of this National Security Council could perhaps have been foreseen. About two weeks before the party's meeting a 92-minute documentary, produced by the National Defense University, leaked onto the internet.

It was later taken down. But in a country where everything is controlled – citizens need permission from their workplace for everything from marriage to childbirth – it could be assumed that this film, produced by a university closely linked to the Army and allegedly prepared for senior party officials, did not appear by accident.

The documentary, *Silent Contest*, expresses the views of some powerful groups and individuals in China. It describes the threats posed by "foreign powers" such as the United States, seeking to infiltrate China. It emphasizes the foreign powers' strategy of "political genetic modification".

Abandoning any reference to what used to be called "peaceful evolution," the documentary focuses on the corruption of China's culture and public processes by alien influences.

The film lists external infiltration in five categories: political, cultural, public opinion and ideology, organizational and social.

It also claims that the Western world has launched "secret missionary activities" in China, "introduced Western belief systems to Chinese society," and there is a "clear objective of Western religious infiltration."

Among the five recognized religions in China, party officials are more at ease with Chinese Buddhism and Taoism which are believed to be usually peaceful.

In late September, Reuters news agency quoted "sources close to President Xi Jinping" that he hoped traditional faiths would fill a moral void in China. The report added that President Xi was referring to Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.

As for the other three religions, Tibetan Buddhism and Islam are linked to territorial interests in Tibet and Xinjiang. In the documentary, Christianity – Catholic and Protestant – is seen as a “foreign religion,” which arouses the suspicions of party officials.

Pope Francis and Chinese President Xi Jinping were elected less than 24 hours apart last March. Some Catholic observers and scholars expressed the belief that it was time for both sides to put aside historic conflicts and turn a new page.

Pope Francis appointed Archbishop Pietro Parolin as his Secretary of State in August. Some commentators believed the Holy See would revert to the China policy it had held before 2009 when Parolin was chief negotiator with the People’s Republic.

But now, after this Third Plenum, any optimism about a warming of relations between China and the Vatican – especially as there has been no noticeable improvement in the trust between the two sides – would seem to be premature.

Meanwhile, the fortunes of the local Church have not improved. While there has not been a recurrence of ordinations of bishops without Vatican approval, the harassment of clergy continues. In August, four unregistered priests were detained in Hebei; their whereabouts remain unknown.

In October, in Handan, again in Hebei, government and Vatican approved priests were placed under house arrest and taken for ‘re-education’ after they participated in a private episcopal ordination to avoid having another bishop, not approved by the Vatican, attend the ceremony.

The stakes are high, yet the life of the Catholic Church in China will be a subset of developments on the larger canvas of China’s direction. The fear is that China could slip back into the paranoid “Middle Kingdom” politics that have been evident throughout Chinese history, most recently during the Cultural Revolution of the 60s and 70s.

To avoid this, an approach other than that outlined at the Third Plenum is needed.

Joseph Wang is the pen name of a journalist based in Hong Kong.

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## **Two priests from underground Church in prison. Doubts about Xi Jinping’s “unprecedented” reforms**

Asia News (09.11.2013) - Two priests from the underground Church are in prison since early October. They are “guilty” of having organized catechism classes for adults in the town of Qinyuan, near Baoding (Hebei ). The two men are Fr. Tian Dalong and another priest whose identity is unknown to AsiaNews, both in their 40s. They were arrested and isolated in police barracks in Baoding, an area with one of the largest non-official communities. Four lay faithful, who helped the priests in their pastoral activities have been forced to pay a fine of 4 thousand yuan each (about 400 EUR), accounting for more than two months’ salary of a skilled worker.

According to AsiaNews sources, there are at least 10 priests in similar conditions, some have even been sentenced to the lao jiao (forced labor camps for “reform through labor”) for years. What is important about these latest arrests is that they took place just weeks after the Third Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party, a meeting which the leadership loudly proclaimed would produce “unprecedented” reforms.

The world media, coached by Xinhua's carefully controlled reports, have praised these possible reforms, focusing on the economic novelties: a gradual reduction of government influence in the economy; promotion of private investment and foreign tax reform, the elimination of mandatory residence visas ( hukou ) for migrants; reform of the one-child law, etc...

Chinese Catholics are wondering if the plenum will bring more hope of freedom for Catholics and for religious freedom in general. These questions focus on the future function of the new National Security Council launched by the Plenum as an example of the new reform.

According to Xinhua, the National Security Council ( NSC ) should "perfect the national security system and strategy, guaranteeing the nations security". The few explanations on how the NSC would function were given by Xi Jinping, who stated that the new body should "strengthen the unity of the leadership in state security", making "national security and social stability preconditions for reform and development" (Xinhua, 15/11/2013).

Several experts think that "the unity of the leadership in state security" means that the NSC will be a superior power to the army, the police, the intelligence services and the judiciary, which should ensure social stability and internal relations with foreign countries.

Some Catholics in the north and east of China believe this concentration of power in the hands of the central government, and perhaps the same Xi Jinping, will promote religious freedom. Very often, the imprisonments, the expropriation of church land, the arrests of priests and faithful depend on the decisions of local leaders, who have no qualms in ignoring national regulations on religion. In addition, strengthening central power could weaken the Ministry of Religious Affairs - currently among the most Stalinist government offices - and patriotic associations.

As proof of a certain relaxation of control in the peripheries, Catholics are quoted as saying that the police leave underground communities room to breathe, are concerned about the health of the bishops (for fear of having to face a more serious crises in the case of an appointment ), maintain dialogue (perhaps to control) with underground priests .

Instead other believers in Beijing and central China say that "nothing has changed" and that the situation is always the same: underground priests are imprisoned (such as the two mentioned above); meetings among the faithful are banned; the Patriotic Association's control is absolute. If you add to this the list of bishops that have disappeared in police custody over the years, the bishop of Shanghai still under house arrest, control over other bishops (even official ones), and their conclusion is understandable: "So far, nothing has changed. We'll see in a few months' time if there is a change of policy. Anyway, this will depend on the idea of reform that leadership has in mind: the concentration of all power in the hands of a few may even worsen the situation. "

According to the activist Hu Jia, the concentration of power "may be used against human rights defenders, those who support the universal values and freedom of speech and religion - people who the Party cannot tolerate because they see them as a threat to government."

This is confirmed by the Xinhua reports on the final document of the third Plenum (The final official version of which has yet to be released) reiterates that all the reforms serve to reinforce the Chinese Communist Party's monopoly of power.

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## **Three-Self sanctioned church pastor and 20 believers detained in Henan**

China Aid (17.11.2013) - More than 20 believers from Nanle County Christian Church, a Three-Self sanctioned church, were detained between yesterday morning and today.

The series of detainments began yesterday when, around 9:30 a.m., Pastor Zhang Xiaojie met with the Nanle County Public Security Bureau Chief and a deputy at the church in what appears to have been a trap set to detain Zhang.

During the meeting, approximately a dozen police officers entered the church and "tied up" Zhang without showing any formal documents, according to the church.

Church members and Zhang's family members gathered in front of the police station to protest Zhang's detainment. The group was denied entry to the building and some were beat, "causing Pastor Zhang's old age parents' hospitalization for high blood pressure," church members said. Zhang's two sisters were detained during the protest.

Over the course of the night, local government officials had church members come to a local government building where officials "lectured them, threatened them and instilled fear in them," the church said.

This morning, every gate to the church was guarded and anyone who tried to enter was detained, an unnamed church member said.

No information on the location of any detainees is available; however, it is known that they are being tortured, according to the church. Additionally, no arrest notices have been given to the families of the detainees.

Government workers disguised as Zhang have published comments from Zhang on the Internet in order to calm the public.

Since Zhang's detainment, church funds have been frozen.

ChinaAid condemns the government violence against these peaceful Christian leaders and believers. "This case against even the officially approved churches again shows the current Chinese regime has no intention to relent its increasing persecution on citizens for religious freedom," Bob Fu, founder and president of ChinaAid, said. "The mere proclamation of a blueprint for economic reform cannot make the Chinese Dream fully realized unless the Chinese government respects its citizens' fundamental rights and freedom of religion and conscience. We call upon the Chinese top leaders to intervene immediately and release these leaders and hold abusive officials accountable."

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## **Twenty police break up Beijing house church meeting, destroy venue, confiscate Bibles, etc**

Radio Free Asia (14.10.2013) - The meeting site of a Christian house church in Shunyi District, Beijing, was raided on Sunday for being an "illegal gathering." More than 20 people, including police officers, religious affairs officials and [civil] joint defense team members burst into a meeting of 25 believers, breaking up the meeting, destroying installations in the room, and removing four or five cases of Bibles. According to the

believers, at least three house church meetings in the local area were raided by police. When this radio station contacted the local police and religious affairs officials on Monday, they told us that, due to security concerns, believers are not allowed to meet in private. Also, Beijing's Chenguang Bookstore, which mainly sells religious literature, was subjected to multiple inspections from different [government] departments around [the] October 1 [National Day holiday], and could be shut down.

On Sunday morning, a meeting of Christians from Harvest Church, [part of] the Christian Orchard Church in Ma Village, Gaoliying Town, Shunyi District, was broken up by more than 20 people from Gaoliying Police Station. Mr. He, an evangelist, told this station on Monday that the police cut short the sermon, forcibly dispersed the believers, and searched the rooms for religious items. He said: "More than 20 of them came in yesterday while we were meeting. As soon as they arrived, they starting removing computers, projector and stools from the room. Their director said that we were not welcome, and [they] took all our books, hymnals and Bibles. These past few days, we've been getting ready to negotiate with them and get our things back."

***Reporter: These people, which departments did they come from?***

Answer: The police brought with them Domestic Security Protection officers and people from the Shunyi District Office for Religious Affairs, they all came together [acting] like law enforcement. There were also people from the town's Section for Religious Affairs as well as some members of joint defense team.

He said these people didn't show identification. "At the time, there were 25 of us. One of our sisters was called outside where they talked with her for a while and then let her go. At that time, our pastor wanted them to show a search warrant but they didn't say anything. Those members of the joint defense team pulled out all the electric plugs in the rooms and moved out stools, making trouble so we couldn't meet."

Another believer, Ms. Xing, said the police officers were rude and outrageous after they entered the room, shouting "'Stay seated! Don't move!' [They were] like bandits, even grabbing the Bibles we were holding in our own hands. We had about four or five cases of Bibles, notebooks and hymnals that were all taken away. Then we said these books belonged to us personally, [but] they said it didn't matter whose they were. When we tried to make a video recording of them with our cell phones, they grabbed the phones and deleted everything."

On Monday, this radio station called Officer Wang at the police station that went to the meeting. He explained: "To meet, they must get our approval. If they want to meet, we have churches here and they can to church for sermons and Bible lessons."

***Reporter: So this wasn't the first time they met?***

Answer: No. We have been trying to persuade them for a long time, telling them many times that they should go to a regular church for worship, but they don't listen.

House church believers hold small meetings throughout Beijing, and most of the time, the authorities don't interfere, but Officer Wang explained that this meeting was broken up because "there was a relatively large number of people there, there were children and elderly people. If something dangerous happened, they themselves cannot be held responsible. The reason they need to get approval is because it's a security concern."

An official surnamed Jia from Gaoliying town's Section for Religious Affairs told this reporter: "That was an illegal meeting. A meeting site for Christians must be reviewed and approved by [one of] our relevant departments. Those without approval are all illegal

meetings.”

***Reporter: Will those items be returned to them?***

Answer: [They] should go to the District Bureau for Civil and Religious Affairs for the handling of that.

Ms. Xing, one of the Christians, said what the police seized was not just the church's religious items. She said: “They didn't give us an inventory of the items seized. Today I went to the place where the [town's] Section for Religious Affairs has stored our [confiscated] items. They had taken away my personal bag, with my car keys in it. In their storage room, I also saw the Bibles from other churches. I asked them when they were going to return our items to us and they said we should go to and deal with the District Government Office for Civil and Religious Affairs

Mr. He said that after October 1, many house churches in that town met with the same fate: “Now we know, first of all, that three locations were all raided recently.”

***Reporter: Where were the three other locations?***

Answer: They are all nearby. We heard that similar things happened there.

***Reporter: Do you have their names?***

Answer: At the moment, I'm not clear about this.

In addition, the Wudaokou, Tiantongyuan and 3927 branches of the Beijing Chenguang Bookstore, which mainly sells religious literature, were successively inspected by several relevant departments before and after October 1 and are now facing closure.

Bookstore founder Pastor Cui Yuese, told this radio station on Monday: “The situation is not clear right now. We're waiting for the results of their inspection and then we'll see. For the moment, we are not accepting any interviews. If they intentionally come looking for us [to make trouble], we'll speak out again then. Thank you for your concern.”

***Reporter: Which kinds of accounts are they inspecting?***

Answer: Various departments were here. For the time being, let's not say which departments. Anyway, many departments were here.

***Reporter: How long will their inspections take?***

Answer: I reckon this week there will probably be a result, since they've been inspecting [the books] for two weeks already.

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## **Twenty police break up Beijing house church meeting**

China Aid (14.10.2013) - The meeting site of a Christian house church in Shunyi District, Beijing, was raided on Sunday for being an “illegal gathering.” More than 20 people, including police officers, religious affairs officials and [civil] joint defense team members burst into a meeting of 25 believers, breaking up the meeting, destroying installations in the room, and removing four or five cases of Bibles. According to the believers, at least three house church meetings in the local area were raided by police. When this radio station contacted the local police and religious affairs officials on Monday, they told us

that, due to security concerns, believers are not allowed to meet in private. Also, Beijing's Chenguang Bookstore, which mainly sells religious literature, was subjected to multiple inspections from different [government] departments around [the] October 1 [National Day holiday], and could be shut down.

On Sunday morning, a meeting of Christians from Harvest Church, [part of] the Christian Orchard Church in Ma Village, Gaoliying Town, Shunyi District, was broken up by more than 20 people from Gaoliying Police Station. Mr. He, an evangelist, told this station on Monday that the police cut short the sermon, forcibly dispersed the believers, and searched the rooms for religious items. He said: "More than 20 of them came in yesterday while we were meeting. As soon as they arrived, they starting removing computers, projector and stools from the room. Their director said that we were not welcome, and [they] took all our books, hymnals and Bibles. These past few days, we've been getting ready to negotiate with them and get our things back."

Reporter: These people, which departments did they come from?  
Answer: The police brought with them Domestic Security Protection officers and people from the Shunyi District Office for Religious Affairs, they all came together [acting] like law enforcement. There were also people from the town's Section for Religious Affairs as well as some members of joint defense team.

He said these people didn't show identification. "At the time, there were 25 of us. One of our sisters was called outside where they talked with her for a while and then let her go. At that time, our pastor wanted them to show a search warrant but they didn't say anything. Those members of the joint defense team pulled out all the electric plugs in the rooms and moved out stools, making trouble so we couldn't meet."

Another believer, Ms. Xing, said the police officers were rude and outrageous after they entered the room, shouting "'Stay seated! Don't move!' [They were] like bandits, even grabbing the Bibles we were holding in our own hands. We had about four or five cases of Bibles, notebooks and hymnals that were all taken away. Then we said these books belonged to us personally, [but] they said it didn't matter whose they were. When we tried to make a video recording of them with our cell phones, they grabbed the phones and deleted everything."

On Monday, this radio station called Officer Wang at the police station that went to the meeting. He explained: "To meet, they must get our approval. If they want to meet, we have churches here and they can to church for sermons and Bible lessons."

Reporter: So this wasn't the first time they met?

Answer: No. We have been trying to persuade them for a long time, telling them many times that they should go to a regular church for worship, but they don't listen.

House church believers hold small meetings throughout Beijing, and most of the time, the authorities don't interfere, but Officer Wang explained that this meeting was broken up because "there was a relatively large number of people there, there were children and elderly people. If something dangerous happened, they themselves cannot be held responsible. The reason they need to get approval is because it's a security concern."

An official surnamed Jia from Gaoliying town's Section for Religious Affairs told this reporter: "That was an illegal meeting. A meeting site for Christians must be reviewed and approved by [one of] our relevant departments. Those without approval are all illegal meetings."

Reporter: Will those items be returned to them?

Answer: [They] should go to the District Bureau for Civil and Religious Affairs for the handling of that.

Ms. Xing, one of the Christians, said what the police seized was not just the church's religious items. She said: "They didn't give us an inventory of the items seized. Today I went to the place where the [town's] Section for Religious Affairs has stored our [confiscated] items. They had taken away my personal bag, with my car keys in it. In their storage room, I also saw the Bibles from other churches. I asked them when they were going to return our items to us and they said we should go to and deal with the District Government Office for Civil and Religious Affairs.

Mr. He said that after October 1, many house churches in that town met with the same fate: "Now we know, first of all, that three locations were all raided recently."

Reporter: Where were the three other locations?

Answer: They are all nearby. We heard that similar things happened there.

Reporter: Do you have their names?

Answer: At the moment, I'm not clear about this.

In addition, the Wudaokou, Tiantongyuan and 3927 branches of the Beijing Chenguang Bookstore, which mainly sells religious literature, were successively inspected by several relevant departments before and after October 1 and are now facing closure.

Bookstore founder Pastor Cui Yuese, told this radio station on Monday: "The situation is not clear right now. We're waiting for the results of their inspection and then we'll see. For the moment, we are not accepting any interviews. If they intentionally come looking for us [to make trouble], we'll speak out again then. Thank you for your concern."

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Answer: Various departments were here. For the time being, let's not say which departments. Anyway, many departments were here.

Reporter: How long will their inspections take?

Answer: I reckon this week there will probably be a result, since they've been inspecting [the books] for two weeks already.

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## **U.S. doctor denied humanitarian visit with ailing jailed dissident and Christian Zhu Yufu**

China Aid (13.10.2013) - A retired Washington, D.C. medical doctor who wanted to provide medical attention to ailing jailed dissident and Christian Zhu Yufu that Chinese authorities have reportedly denied him was refused permission to see him when she arrived at the Chinese prison Saturday.

Devra Marcus and American human rights advocate Kody Kness arrived at the Zhejiang No. 4 Prison in the provincial capital of Hangzhou at 10 a.m. to apply for a humanitarian visit with the 60-year-old longtime critic of the regime. Although prison officials received them in a prison office, they angrily refused to allow them even to formally submit an application for the visit, and one prison official forcibly confiscated Kness' cellphone.



Marcus had wanted to give Zhu a medical exam after learning from his family that, despite repeated requests, he had been denied basic medical attention for his multiple health problems, which include acute high blood pressure and coronary artery disease, and had not been seen by a doctor in over a year. Zhu, whose political activism dates back to the 1978 Democracy Wall movement, was sentenced in February to a seven-year prison term for "subversion of state power."

ChinaAid's earlier reports on Zhu's case include:

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2012/02/dissident-zhu-yufu-sentenced-to-seven.html>

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2013/04/efforts-intensify-to-save-long-time.html>

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2013/04/chinaaid-launches-high-level-diplomacy.html>

Marcus and Kness were kept in the prison for two hours on Saturday morning before prison officials returned their passports and Kness' cellphone and ordered the two to leave the prison.

Marcus, 73, an internist who had a medical practice for four decades, decided to attempt the prison visit after having twice hosted Zhu's family in her home outside Washington, D.C., when Zhu's relatives met with Congressional leaders and State Department officials in the spring in an attempt to draw attention to Zhu's case.

ChinaAid spearheaded the high-level diplomacy campaign and made the arrangements for Zhu's family to stay in Marcus' home because of its long association with Marcus' husband, Michael Horowitz, a former Reagan administration official and longtime human rights activist.

"The heroic sacrificial act of Dr. Devra Marcus reflects both her deep compassion and professionalism as a distinguished medical doctor for the fundamental rights of a fellow human being," said ChinaAid president Bob Fu. "I hope Dr. Marcus' trip can raise the awareness of the international community about the brutal inhuman treatment of Mr. Zhu and many other prisoners of conscience in China like him."

ChinaAid played an instrumental role in Marcus' trip, including coordinating communication with Zhu's family and providing translation of his medical records and other documents related to his case and health.

"When I saw the report that he was afraid he was going to die in prison and a list of the conditions that he was said to have, I thought... that maybe if I went and was able to call attention to these medical problems that it would be possible for him at least to get medical attention," Marcus said in the video interview above, conducted at her home in McLean, Va., before her departure for China.

Zhu had earlier served two prison terms for his political activism. This most recent prison sentence stemmed from a poem that he posted online during the time of the Arab Spring protests in the Middle East. A translation of the poem is below. Zhu had served an earlier seven-year prison term beginning in 1999, also for subversion, and in 2007 was sentenced again, to a two-year prison term.

Horowitz, a Hudson Institute senior fellow who in February was arrested for protesting outside the White House on behalf of China's political and religious prisoners during a U.S.-China summit, said, "I believe that the 21st century will be defined—not by what the Islamists do, but by whether China remains autocratic, dictatorial or becomes a civil, democratic society. Thus, people like Zhu—and the other Uyghurs, Falun Gong practitioners, attorneys, Christians and other brave dissidents of the China 16, and others like them—are at the cutting edge of defining the character of the world for the next hundred years or so."

See ChinaAid's report at: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2012/02/american-human-rights-activist-arrested.html>

Horowitz also said, "How sad that the Chinese government feels threatened by a doctor seeking only to examine a patient who has been denied access to medicine and medical treatment for almost a year, and who may be at risk of death." He added that the Chinese authorities "will learn that if the AIDS virus didn't stop Devra from putting patients first, Chinese jailers won't."

**Zhu Yufu's poem "It's Time":**

*IT'S TIME*

*It's time, people of China! It's time. The Square belongs to everyone. With your own two feet*

*It's time to head to the Square and make your choice.*

*It's time, people of China! It's time.*

*A song belongs to everyone. From your own throat*

*It's time to voice the song in your heart.*

*It's time, people of China! It's time. China belongs to everyone.*

*Of your own will It's time to choose what China shall be.*

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**Inner Mongolian house church members arrested**

China Aid (10.09.2013) - In Aug. 2013, Wang Yongfeng and five other Christians in A Lashan county, Inner Mongolia were arrested by local policemen because they continued to have fellowship after being banned by the local Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB). These Christians were fined 500 yuan per person. Three, including Wang were released after 15 days of detention, but the other two church members remain in custody.

The believers from Wang's church originally separated from a local Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) church due to a difference in opinion concerning whether the church was led by the Holy Spirit or the Communist Party.

After separating from the TSPM church, the group was banned by the local RAB. The RAB also illegally destroyed and ransacked the church building and beat many believers. Believers filed suit against the RAB after the incident, but the A Lashan court refused to accept the suit, which violated administrative procedure law. After learning of the church's attempt to file suit, A Lashan Public Security Bureau claimed that the attempt violated the "Public Security Administration Punishment Law" and attempted to arrest the followers.

See the video shows footage of the Public Security Bureau in the church attempting to arrest believers: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2013/09/video-inner-mongolian-house-church.html>

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## **Tongren, Guizhong: Religious affairs bureau interrupts house church gathering and detains preachers**

China Aid (22.08.2013) - Workers from the religious affairs bureau and local police in the city of Tongren, Guizhong Province interrupted a house church gathering consisting of more than 20 members, according to the social networking site of a Chinese human rights lawyer. The officials detained the preacher and other house church members who had organized the gathering. The officials demanded that the preacher join the Three-Self Patriotic church; however, the preacher and other church members refused. After several hours of talking, the preacher and other church members were released.

In search of help, members of the church sent out news of the disturbance. The news spread quickly via Wiebo, a Twitter-like Chinese social networking site. Because of this, many fellow Christians were praying over this event all at once. "The church can be killed, but it cannot be merged," Wang Yi, a house church preacher, said. "It is insatiable to force one company to join another one; it is evil-doing to force one church to join one company... However, we should thank God, because he never gives sufferings which his children cannot bear, and he never lets his children drink from the cup which they need not drink." Wang used "company" to refer to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement.

Christianity has a long history in the city of Tongren. In 1912, the first missionaries, Bai Daoqi and Ke Maolin, came to Tongren along the Chen River from the U.S. From 1912 until 1949, there had been a total of 26 missionaries in Tongren. These missionaries built four churches, a church hospital, three clinics, an elementary school and a middle school.

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## **Hebei underground Catholic priest arrested**

***A group of law enforcement officers stopped Fr. Song Wanjun of the clergy of Xiwanzi, while driving his car at 4 in the morning***

AsiaNews (10.08.2013) - A group of police officers from Qiaodong District, in the northern province of Hebei, have arrested and taken to an unknown location an underground priest of the diocese of Xiwanzi, Fr. Song Wanjun. The priest had already risked arrest some time ago, but had managed to escape. He was stopped and detained by 10 law enforcement officers at 4 in the morning of August 7 last while he was driving his car.

Fr. Song Wanjun, 39, was ordained a priest 11 years ago. He carried out his pastoral mission for years in Zhangbei county before being assigned to Chongli county. The news of his arrest was confirmed by the Joseph Cardinal Kung Foundation, based in the United States.

The Diocese of Xiwanzi is located in the northern part of the province. In recent years, the Chinese government has clamped down harshly on the local underground Church: many priests and bishops were imprisoned, placed under house arrest or forced to undergo "study sessions" to convince them to join the Patriotic Association, a government organization that Benedict XVI described in his letter to the Chinese Church as "incompatible" with Catholic doctrine.

In recent years other arrests of clergy include Msgr. Yao Ling, who has since died, Fr. Li Huisheng, sentenced to 7 years, Fr. Wang Zhong, sentenced to 3 years. Two underground bishops from Hebei province were also arrested several years ago, whose

fate remains a mystery. The first is Msgr. James Su Zhimin, almost 82 year, bishop of Baoding (Hebei), arrested by the police on October 8, 1997. The charges against him, whether he was given a trial or where he is being held remain unknown.

In November 2003, he was located by chance while receiving hospital care in Baoding, but he was surrounded by police. After a brief and hurried visit from relatives, he once again disappeared in police custody. The second is Msgr. Cosma Shi Enxiang, 92 years old, bishop of Yixian (Hebei), arrested on 13 April 2001. All traces of his wellbeing or whereabouts have been lost, despite the constant pleas of his relatives and faithful to the authorities for the smallest amount of information. Some time ago AsiaNews launched a campaign for their release.

Hebei is one of the strongholds of the Catholic China: the diocese of Baoding alone, one of the largest and with a strong presence of underground Catholics, has at least 50 thousand Catholics. There are 120 priests, official and underground. For several years the government has launched a campaign to force Hebei priests and bishops of the underground community to officially register, along with their inscription as members of the Patriotic Association.

According to AsiaNews sources, over the past 20 years at least 20 Catholic priests of the underground area of Zhangjiakou (Hebei), in the diocese of Xuanhua and Xiwanzi, have been tortured and suffered tremendous pressure join the Patriotic Association (PA) , controlled by the Communist Party of China.

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## **Arrest of an underground Catholic priest in Hebei Province**

### ***An appeal to the Chinese Authority to release religious prisoners***

Cardinal Kung Foundation (09.08.2013) - The Cardinal Kung Foundation, based in Stamford, Connecticut, USA, reported today that Father Song Wanjun, a Roman Catholic priest belonging to the underground diocese of Xiwanzi was arrested at about 4 p.m. on August 7 (Beijing Time) at the Qiaodong District of Zhangjiakou City (in Hebei province). He was arrested by more than 10 Chinese Public Security officers while he was driving and was taken to the Public Security Bureau of Qiaodong District and then to Zhangbei County. We do not know where he is at this time. We understand that the Chinese Public Security tried to arrest him some time ago, but the priest managed to get away. The Chinese Authority finally arrested him yesterday.

The Xiwanzi Diocese is located in north Hebei Province. It has a remarkable Catholic population of the Underground Church in China with its territory ranging from some parts of Hebei Province to Inner Mongolia. In recent years, the Chinese government repeatedly put priests of this diocese into custody and tried to force them to join the Patriotic Association. In previous years, the Chinese Communist Authorities had arrested or house arrested a number of priests of this Diocese, such as Bishop Yao Liang (deceased), Father Li Huisheng ( seven-year sentence), Father Wang Zhong (three-year sentence). Many other priests were "invited " forcibly to participate in "Study Sessions" in an attempt to convert them to the Patriotic Association without much success.

Father Song Wanjun, aged thirty-nine, was ordained a priest eleven years ago. He conducted apostolic missions at Zhangbei County for years. He was assigned to serve the Catholics at Chongli County (before he was arrested two days ago).

Joseph Kung, the President of the Cardinal Kung Foundation, reminds the public that there is still no freedom of religion in China and the persecution of various religions, especially the Roman Catholic Church, is ongoing. The following two examples together with many other continuing arrests of those of other religious faith are evidence that religious persecution is very much alive in China at present.

Bishop SHI Enxiang the underground Roman Catholic bishop of Yixian (Hebei), was arrested while visiting in Beijing on Good Friday, April 13, 2001 - more than twelve years ago. We do not know where he is detained at present and how he is healthwise. Other details of his arrest are unknown. Bishop SHI is now over 90 years old and was ordained a bishop in 1982. He was previously in jail for about thirty years. He was last arrested in December 1990, held in custody for three years, and released November 1993. The authority tried to arrest him in 1996, but failed, as Bishop SHI got away. He then went into hiding until his arrest on April 13, 2001.

Another bishop must not be forgotten is Bishop Su Zhiming. He is the underground Roman Catholic bishop of Baoding, Hebei. He is now over eighty years old. He was arrested at noon on October 8, 1997 in Hebei after 17 months in hiding and after many previous arrests. He, too, has been held incommunicado for the last sixteen years. No one knows where he is at present and how he is healthwise.

We appeal to all people, especially to those who have power and authority, international religious communities, and major renowned social services organizations like Red Cross who partners with the Chinese government, not only to remember those confessors of Faith who are still suffering in the Chinese jails for such a long period for their religious faith, but also to exercise their influences so that these religious prisoners could be released immediately and enjoy this very basic human rights of religious freedom. Could these organizations request the Chinese government to at least allow them to visit these religious prisoners to find out their situations?

Thank you.

Joseph Kung  
President

Cardinal Kung Foundation

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2013/08/pastor-tan-wen-urumqi-house-church.html>

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## **Pastor Tan Wen, Urumqi house church leader, detained again**

China Aid (05.08.2013) - Pastor Tan Wen was leading a worship service at Muen Church in Urumqi, Xinjiang, attended by several dozen believers. Around 9:30, more than 20 police officers from Shayibake Regional Branch of the Urumqi Municipal Public Security Bureau and from the Xishan Police Station broke into the church. The officers did not show identification papers or follow other applicable procedures. Instead, they forcibly terminated the worship service and seized the Bibles, hymnals, and other books that the believers were using. The police also tried to take away Pastor Tan, but the congregation blocked the door and negotiated with the police, asking why they were being harassed, to which the officers answered that they were not permitted to gather and would be

arrested every time they came together. The police then exited the church through a back door, taking Pastor Tan with them to the police station. That same night, Pastor Tan was transferred to the Xishan Police Station and then to a detention center; the police announced that he would be detained for 15 days.

Pastor Tan has been detained before. (See China Aid's report dated June 9, 2013: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2013/07/two-more-house-churches-raided-in.html>.) Following his release from that detention, Pastor Tan and the Muen Church filed an application for administrative reconsideration with the Urumqi Municipal Public Security Bureau, and were also preparing to file a lawsuit to safeguard their religious freedom and rights and to protect the church's property. Yesterday's detention is retaliation for those actions.

The past few Sundays, China Aid has received many reports of persecution from around China, including the detention of many pastors and hundreds of believers. The persecution has been particularly severe in Xinjiang, and the house churches there have come under unprecedented pressure. This oppression, including the persecution of the Muen Church, is a serious violation of the believers' religious freedom. China Aid calls on the Christians in China and around the world to pray for the house churches and believers that are suffering persecution.

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## **Two more house churches raided in Xinjiang**

China Aid (22.07.2013) - China Aid has learned of two more police raids on house churches in Xinjiang.

The first occurred on Sunday, June 9, 2013. Brother Tan Wen, who lives on Aletai Road in the Shayibake District of Urumqi, was leading a worship service at a friend's house with many elderly people in attendance. During the service, three men and two women broke into the house and shouted loudly: "Yours is an illegal assembly and all of you must stay still." Because the disruptive newcomers were not wearing uniforms and did not show official identification, some of the worshippers feared initially that they were being robbed.

Although the police officer refused to provide any identification themselves, they interrogated the worshippers for more than an hour, threatening to take the young people to the police station for further questioning. When the worshippers demanded to see official identification, one of the officers stated that those who raid illegal Christian gatherings do not need to show identification. Eventually, the police took Tan Wen to the local police station, where they determined that the worship service was an "illegal gathering" and sentenced Tan Wen to 10 days of public security detention and fined him 500 yuan.

The second raid occurred on Sunday, June 23, 2013. Sister Lu Xia, who lives at 27 Cangsonger Lane in the Shayibake District of Urumqi, attended a house church gathering at 26 Xisi Lane, East Cangfanggou Road. Officers from the Shayibake District Branch of Urumqi Municipal Public Security Bureau broke in during the meeting and, without showing identification, took Lu away. She was sentenced to five days administrative detention.

Also, as China Aid reported yesterday, sister Zhu Jinfeng of Urumqi hosted a Bible study at her home on Sunday. During the study, her home was raided by the local Public Security Bureau and other agencies, and she was fined 500 yuan.

These three incidents share five common characteristics:

- First, the police officers violated legal procedure by failing to show their law enforcement identification.
- Second, the officers failed to notify the Christians of their right to argue their cases and provide reasons for their arguments, as required by law.
- Third, the relevant facts and applicable law were misstated by the officers and did not support the penalties imposed;
- Fourth, the officers' actions violated the Christians' religious freedom and personal rights;
- Fifth, the penalties imposed on the Christians had no basis in law because religious affairs are governed by the Bureau of Religion; the officers in this case had no authority to regulate the citizens' religious faith.

China Aid notes that house churches in China continue to be persecuted and suppressed, and asks the international community to also take note of the escalating suppression on the house churches in China. The Chinese government must respect the basic rights of the people and truly safeguard the right to religious belief, as stipulated in the Chinese Constitution and international law.

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## **Xinjiang Christian desperate after police raid 'house church'**

China Aid (19.07.2013) - Xinjiang Christian Zhu Jinfeng, 60, says she attends "house churches" - religious services at home - instead of state-sanctioned ones because she prefers to talk to God without going through China's administration of religious affairs.

But Zhu's habits of more than 10 years came to an abrupt end after local policemen stormed into her home in Urumqi last month during a bible study session she held with elderly neighbours. The group was dismissed on site. Zhu was briefly detained, charged with conducting "illegal" Christian activity, and fined 200 yuan (HK\$250).

Zhu, while still shaken by the raid, hasn't given up her fight for her freedom to worship in her own home. She decided to appeal her case by filing an application for "administrative reconsideration," a legal action pursued by Chinese citizens when they feel their rights are infringed upon.

"Christianity is not a cult, and we are not criminals," Zhu told South China Morning Post on Friday. "We do pray for our country, too, in our gatherings."

ChinaAid, a non-profit Christian organisation monitoring religious persecution in China and an activist lawyer in Beijing, offered to help Zhu draft the application letter. But when she tried to submit it, a local official told her to visit at another time when "at least two people were present" - presumably to follow government protocol.

"I am lost and desperate now," Zhu sobbed while revealing her frustrations in a phone interview with the Post . She has stopped worshipping God at home since, but still refuses to go to a state-sanctioned church - as suggested by law enforcement officers.

Bob Fu, founder and president of ChinaAid, said government harassment of Christians who go to "unauthorised" places to worship have been increasing in the last few years. Christians are also being given harsher punishments, he said.



In a separate case, Ren Lacheng and Li Wenxi, two Christians bookstore workers, were sentenced to five and two years jail by Shanxi court after they were found guilty of "illegally operating a business" in June.

Li's wife, Li Caihong, told the Post the accusations were unfounded and she would appeal to a higher court.

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## **Imprisoned Christian rights activist denied medical parole**

CSW (05.07.2013) - Imprisoned Chinese housing rights activist Ni Yulan has been denied medical parole despite suffering from a number of serious health problems including an untreated thyroid tumour, her daughter has said. Ni, who is a Christian, is serving a two-and-a-half-year sentence for "causing a disturbance".

Ni began practising law in 1986. She worked on a variety of rights-related cases, including a number relating to religious freedom. From 2001 onwards she specialized in housing rights. In 2002, she was beaten and tortured for more than 50 hours while in police detention. As a result, she has been left permanently disabled and is unable to walk without crutches.

After her release, Ni continued to represent petitioners, despite having been disbarred, and was detained on several occasions between 2004 and 2008. On 14 April 2010, Ni was released but left homeless, living with her husband in a donated tent near Tiananmen Square. On 7 April 2011 Ni and her husband were detained by police and she was formally charged with "provoking trouble" in 2012.

In October 2012 Ni's family and lawyer submitted an application for medical parole which the authorities rejected in March 2013. On a visit to Ni in June this year, her daughter noticed that an untreated thyroid tumour detected in 2012 had swollen considerably.

In December 2011 Ni was awarded the Dutch Government's Tulip Award for Human Rights Defenders following her nomination by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and China Aid. Her daughter, who planned to attend the ceremony on her behalf, was stopped at the airport en route to Amsterdam and prevented from attending.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "CSW is deeply concerned at the Chinese authorities' refusal to grant medical parole to Ni Yulan. CSW believes that Ni has been detained for her defence of basic rights and that the charges brought against Ni are unjust. In light of her deteriorating condition, CSW calls on the Chinese government to grant her access to appropriate medical care. In addition, we urge the government to review her case without further delay".

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## **FORB incidents in China: January – June 2013**

### ***A chronology of events: January - June 2013***

HRWF (27.06.2013) -

#### **1 January**



On January 1st, Zhang Keding's home in Mengzhou City, Henan Province, was raided and an electronic organ, accordion, printer, TV, audio equipment, cell phones, beds and bedding, passports and other legal papers, clothing, were taken. They failed to show a search warrant or inform Zhang why they were seizing these items. Officials simply informed the believers that their meetings were illegal.

#### **4 January**

Local police raided a Bible study of the Chinese House Church Alliance in the city of Nanyang, Henan province. The police officers and government officials ordered the Bible study attendees to register their names and banned the alliance from ordaining new clergy.

#### **20 January**

At least twenty-one members of the Beijing Shouwang Church were arrested for attending an outdoor worship service. Some were released soon after, and the remainder were detained at two police stations. Most were released around 11:00 am, while the rest were released around 10:00 pm on Sunday.

#### **25 January**

- The wife of imprisoned Christian and former house church leader Uyghur Alimujiang Yimiti has been informed by the prison authorities that her monthly visits are being reduced to one visit every three months.
- Leaders and believers of various Protestant house churches in Beijing held a seminar on the Cape Town Commitment at a private residence in Wangjing Community in Chaoyang District. There, they were harassed by a police officer from a local police station who booked everyone's information.

#### **19 March**

Over 200 people were attending a training session at the gathering site of Enxin Church when it was raided. The landlord also came under pressure to terminate the lease. He said the Public Security Bureau and the Bureau of Religion had exerted pressure on him.

#### **27 March**

Chinese courts have sentenced 20 people of the Uyghur ethnic minority to up to life in jail on charges of separatism, "religious extremism" and spreading propaganda. Others claim they are only guilty of listening to US funded Radio Free Asia.

#### **28 March**

- A Protestant house church in Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province received a notice from the landlord on Thursday that they must vacate the premises within seven days. The landlord specifically said that he had received instructions from agencies in charge of religious affairs and the Public Security Bureau.
- Gao Aijun, pastor of a Reformist House Church in Shanghai, reported that his lease was cancelled by his landlord: The landlord said the authorities won't let him lease the place for use by our church.
- Enxin House Church in Gulou District, Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province received a notice from the landlord that they must move out. The landlord said that the authorities won't allow him to rent the place saying that he had been notified by a superior that the place cannot be rented for use by a church.

#### **30 March**

- A house church in Xinjiang has been shut down by local police and the religious affairs bureau. The religious affairs bureau told believers that if they had any objections, they could file for an administrative reconsideration or file a lawsuit.
- A Reformed Church in Shanghai has been ordered by the local government to shut down and has put the senior pastor under surveillance. Pastor Gao's currently is followed by plain clothes policemen every time he leaves his home.

### **1 April**

The People's Court of Ye country convicted seven leaders of a house church who had been administratively detained or arrested for almost a year of "using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement" and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from three to 7-1/2 years.

### **4 April**

Li Wenxi, a Christian bookseller from Beijing who was helping to open a religious book store in Taiyuan (Shanxi), was beaten, threatened and arrested by local police. Li has been held without trial in a provincial prison for the past three months after being charged with "illegally operating a business". They also refused to grant him bail, stressing the seriousness of his "crime".

### **13 April**

The Alashan Left Banner Religious Affairs Bureau of Alashan (Inner Mongolia) have banned the Grace Holy Love (Enhua Shen'ai) house church and gave it a deadline to shut down and to register with the local government sanctioned Three-Self church to participate in its activities.

### **26 April**

Pastor Li Ming and 15 lay leaders of a house church in Langzhong, (Sichuan province) were taken into custody while learning how to play musical instruments. Ten were released the following day and six were administratively detained. Three were held for three-five days then released and Li Ming, Wang Yuan and Li Chengxi were released after fifteen days.

### **28 April**

A house Church in Inner Mongolia was raided by more than 60 police and government officials. They stopped the worship service with batons and tear gas, checked ID papers, interrogated/lectured more than 10 lay leaders and lead four lay leaders away. The United Front Work Dept. of the Alashan Left Banner Party Committee led the raid in their attempt to clean up and rectify house churches.

Source: China Aid

## **May**

- Chinese police have surrounded the village of Donglu (a few hours from Beijing) to prevent Catholic pilgrims from traveling to the city for celebrations to honour the Virgin Mary. The city is famous among Catholics for the apparition of Our Lady in 1900, and has attracted pilgrims since 1929. Police have attempted to stop pilgrims from accessing the city every May since 1996.
- Sanya's Mengai Church, Hexing Church and at least ten other house churches have been shutdown in Hainan province. Some churches in Baoting county have also been shut down.

### **26 May**

While the Sanya Hosanna Church (Hainan province) was meeting, around seven people from the Religious Affairs Bureau and the neighborhood committee delivered a document titled "Announcement by the Hongqi Street Community of the Voluntary Dissolution of

Irregular and Illegal Religious Meeting Sites." The believers were told to go to the cities registered religious sites and that if they met again next week officials would take measures and hold that believers accountable. The local neighbourhood committee also put pressure on the landlord to stop renting the meeting site to the church and gave them 15 days notice to move out. The leader of the church was also barred from traveling to Hong Kong to attend a conference, as it might jeopardize national security and national interests. The Elim Church, Bethel Church, and Xinju Church have also faced the same kind of persecution as the Sanya Hosanna Church in Hainan province.  
Source: China Aid

### **5 June**

The Union Church in Xinyang was raided by police during a meeting with an American missionary couple. The twenty believers in attendance were taken to the local police station. The police also seized the church's offering box, computer, CDs, and a Chinese Union Bible. At the station Zhang Yinan (the leader of the church) was issued in order to close down the church, which he refused to sign. Zhang and the couple were then taken to a hospital where they were warned that house church meetings are not allowed and encouraged them to meet in the official Three-Self Church.

### **21 June**

Authorities in Liaoning barred an 11 member team of defence attorneys from attending the trial of 13 members of Falun Gong.

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## **Bishops and priests currently being held in China**

Sunday Examiner (22.06.2013) – Bishop James Su Zhimin, from the unofficial community of Baoding, is nearly 80 years of age and was arrested by police on 8 October 1997. The charge that led to his arrest has never been revealed, news of a trial has never been released and the place of his detention is unknown.

Before his last arrest, Bishop Su spent at least 26 years on and off in prison or forced labour camps. He was branded as counter-revolutionary because he refused to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. He has already spent 40 years in detention.

- Bishop Cosma Shi Enxiang, from the unofficial community of Yixian, is now 90-years-old.

He was arrested on Good Friday, 13 April 2001, and nothing is known about him, although his family and local Catholics continue to ask police for at least some news of his wellbeing.

Bishop Shi suffered long periods of imprisonment between 1957 until 1980, and was forced into hard labour, first on a farm in Heilongjiang, then in coal mines in Shanxi.

He was arrested again and imprisoned for three years in 1983, followed by three more years of house arrest. In 1989, he was arrested again and was only released in 1993, before being rearrested in 2001. He has already spent 51 years behind bars.

- Father Joseph Lu Genjun is the vicar general of the unofficial diocese of Baoding. He disappeared in police custody 17 February 2006. Father Lu was arrested along with another priest and a friend, whom he had met at the railway station in Baoding. The other priest was released, but Father Lu's whereabouts are unknown.

He was jailed for a short period in 1998 and in 2001 he was sentenced to three years of re-education through labour then released in 2003.

- Father Zhang Jianlin, from the unofficial diocese of Xuanhua, was taken away by staff of the Religious Affairs Bureau on 22 June 2011. Up until now, no-one knows where he is being held.
- Father Cui Tai, from the same diocese in Hebei, disappeared into police custody on 22 June 2011. His whereabouts are unknown.
- Father Liu Honggen, from the unofficial diocese of Baoding, was arrested with eight other priests on 27 December 2006. He is currently detained in the prison of Qingyuan.
- Father Ma Wuyong, from the unofficial diocese of Baoding, was arrested with eight other priests in August 2004. Before the Chinese New Year in 2006, he was released temporarily, but rearrested a month later.
- Father Wang Chengli, from the unofficial diocese of Heze, was sentenced to two-and-a-half years re-education through labour on 25 August 2011. He is being held in Jining.
- Bishop Wu Qinjing, from the unofficial diocese of Zhouzhi, has been under house arrest in the seminary in Xi'an since November 2007. He has been forced to memorise the Regulations on Religious Affairs, forbidden to wear his episcopal insignia or carry out any activities as a bishop.

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## **China jails 11 in Xinjiang for religious hatred**

BBC news (20.06.2013) - China has jailed 11 people for crimes of ethnic and religious hatred in the far western region of Xinjiang.

One man was sentenced to six years for using the internet to promote Islamic holy war, state media said.

Eight others received sentences of between two and five years for destroying televisions in what state media called a religious frenzy.

The defendants' ethnicity was not given but their names suggested they were from the minority Muslim Uighur group.

The sentences, announced in the Chinese Justice Ministry's official newspaper Legal Daily, come days ahead of the fourth anniversary of deadly clashes in the regional capital, Urumqi, between the Uighur and Han Chinese communities.

About 200 people - mostly Han Chinese - were killed in the rioting that erupted on 5 July 2009.

Uighurs, who make up about 45% of the region's population, say an influx of Han Chinese residents has marginalised their traditional culture.

There are sporadic outbreaks of violence. In April, clashes in Kashgar left 21 people - including 15 police and officials - dead.

The government said the violence began when "terrorists" were discovered in a building by officials searching for weapons.

But local people told the BBC that the violence involved a local family who had a long-standing dispute with officials who had been pressuring the men to shave off their beards and the women to take off their veils.

Beijing authorities often blame violent incidents in Xinjiang on Uighur extremists seeking autonomy for the region. Uighur activists, meanwhile, accuse Beijing of over-exaggerating the threat to justify heavy-handed rule.

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## **Government shuts down at least a dozen house churches in Hainan Province**

China Aid (01.06.2013) - The Chinese government has shut down at least a dozen house churches in the southern province of Hainan in recent weeks and many others have been threatened with closure, a sign that little has changed under the new leadership of Xi Jinping.

On May 26, while the Sanya Hosanna Church was holding a morning worship service, seven or eight people from the Religious Affairs Bureau and the neighborhood committee came to deliver a document with the title "Announcement by the Hongqi Street Community of the Voluntary Dissolution of Irregular and Illegal Religious Meeting Sites." They told the believers to go to the city's registered religious meeting sites, and said if the believers met again the next week, then the officials would take measures and would hold the believers accountable for the consequences.

The local neighborhood committee also exerted pressure on the landlord to stop renting the meeting site to the church and gave them 15 days' notice to move out. The leader of the church was also restricted from going to Hong Kong to attend a special conference; the reason given was that it might jeopardize national security and national interests.

Also on May 26, three other house Sanya churches -- Elim Church, Bethel Church, and Xinju Church -- also faced the same kind of persecution. Two weeks earlier, Sanya's Mengai Church, Hexing Church, and three others house churches were also shut down. A church in Haikou has also faced the same situation, and seven or eight other churches have been shut down. Some churches in Baoting county have also been shut down.

"Closing a dozen churches in Hainan is an alarming sign that little has changed with Xi Jinping as president," said ChinaAid founder and president Bob Fu. "The government is carrying out its plans to 'eradicate' the independent house church movement, a crackdown that would affect up to 100 million people. China must end this repression if it wants global respect as a rising power. We urge President Obama to raise this issue at the upcoming summit with President Xi."

ChinaAid expresses its shock and concern that the relevant administrative departments of the Hainan government are systematically closing down house churches. Recent reports from many other provinces and regions indicate that the same thing is happening to house churches elsewhere as well, further confirming ChinaAid's report last year of the intensification of the Chinese government's secret 10-year plan to eradicate house churches. We will be paying close attention to China's worsening religious persecution and call upon the global church and good-hearted people of the world to pray for the church in China. We should use prayers and action to show those in power the Apostle

Paul's warning in Acts 26:14, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." God's church will be eternally victorious!

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## **Latest updates on cases of persecution of Christians in Sichuan, Henan and Shanxi provinces**

China Aid (11.05.2013) - Sichuan province: On April 26, Pastor Li Ming and 15 lay leaders of a house church in Langzhong were taken into custody when they were learning to play musical instruments. Ten were released the following day and six were administratively detained. Three who were held in administrative detention for three and five days respectively have already been released, and Li Ming, Wang Yuan and Li Chengxi who were in administrative detention for 15 days, were released on Thursday (May 9). Our earlier report is at:

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2013/04/news-flash-16-house-church-leaders-in.html>

**Henan province:** On April 1, 2013, the People's Court of Ye county convicted seven leaders of a house church in Ye County who had been administratively detained or arrested for almost a year of "using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement" and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from three to 7-1/2 years. They have appealed, and a total of 12 Christian lawyers, including the well-known young lawyer Zhang Kai and Yang Xingquan, are headed to Ye county to provide their defense at the trial of the second instance. See our earlier reports at:

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2013/04/seven-christians-in-henan-province.html>

and <http://www.chinaaid.org/2012/11/seven-house-church-christians-in-henan.html>

**Shanxi province:** In mid-December last year (2012), Pastor Ren Lacheng of a college students' church in Taiyuan was taken into police custody. The court convened on Thursday (May 9) to hear the case, and attorney Zhang Kai was authorized to give the defense. After the hearing, Zhang Kai said, "Taiyuan Xiaodian Court convened to hear Ren Lacheng's case. Although we don't know the result, the court proceedings were carried out properly and were orderly, the attorney's right of defense was fully guaranteed, and the Prosecutor was mild and rational. They are to be complimented... In his final statement, my client said, 'Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.'" See our earlier report at:

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2013/03/online-government-report-in-shanxi.html>

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## **Religious Affairs Bureau orders closure of "Grace Holy Love" house church in Inner Mongolia**

China Aid (11.05.2013) - Local religious affairs authorities in Inner Mongolia have banned a house church, giving it a deadline to shut down and to register with the local government-sanctioned Three-Self church to participate in its activities.

The full text of the two-page April 13 document issued by the Alashan Left Banner Religious Affairs Bureau of Alashan (Alxa) ordering the closure of the Grace Holy Love (Enhui Shen'ai) House Church reads as follows:

"In accordance with the requirements of administering and reorganizing Christian 'house churches' in Alashan Meng [prefecture], the Banner's Religious Affairs Bureau has conducted a serious and careful investigation and examination of religious sites

throughout the Banner. It has found out that a privately established Christian gathering site headed by Huriledai has been in place for a long time, with frequent activities and a large congregation. They disregard the relevant stipulations in the Regulations for Religious Affairs and are not willing to accept the correct guidance and management of the government's religious affairs departments. They have shown a tendency of illegal expansion, causing extremely negative social impact, seriously disrupting the otherwise normal religious activities in the entire Banner and obstructing the normal administration of religious affairs by the departments in charge of religious affairs. To ensure a good situation of religious harmony throughout the entire Banner and pursuant to Article 43 of the Regulations on Religious Affairs that states: "Where a site for religious activities is established without approval,...the religious affairs department shall ban such site ...," the order is hereby given that, upon receipt of this notice by the believers of Grace Holy Love Church, they shall immediately stop their illegal meetings and must go together before April 17 to register with the Christian church in Bayanhot in accordance with the law to participate in its activities. Alashan Left Banner Religious Affairs Bureau. April 3, 2013."

It is clear that this Inner Mongolia document bears a lot of similarities with the document issued by the United Front Work Department of Jiaozhou, Shandong province that ChinaAid obtained and reported on last month (<http://www.chinaaid.org/2013/04/local-government-in-shandong-province.html>). Both require serious and careful investigations of house churches and verification of whether these house churches are willing to accept management by the government's religious affairs departments. They also formulated and adopted measures to handle suggestions. Both of these documents reflect the Chinese government's plan formulated in 2011 to "abolish the house churches in 10 years."

In September 2011, at the State Administration for Religious Affairs's first training class for "Patriots in the Christian Community," a secret document jointly issued by the State Administration for Religious Affairs and the ministries of Public Security and Ministry for Civil Affairs was circulated with the stated aim of eradicating house churches, primarily through:

1. Phase One: from Jan. to June 2012, conduct thorough, intensive and secret investigations of house churches throughout the country and create files on them.
2. Phase Two: in two to three years, concentrate on cleaning up the "house churches" that have been investigated and have had files created.
3. Phase Three: in 10 years' time, completely wipe out "house churches."

Phases One and Two took place in 2012, as confirmed by reports collected by ChinaAid. Throughout China, many house churches and their leaders have been examined and investigated, and their information has been archived and they have been the target of suppression. Based on the facts observed so far this year, Phases One and Two are still being implemented.

Though some overseas observers of China's churches once took a wait-and-see and doubtful attitude toward the facts reported by ChinaAid, naively thinking that the Chinese government would not have such a plan of eradicating house churches, these new documents and the implementation measures further prove that this plan is still being carried out at the local level.

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## Seven house church leaders given long prison sentences

China Aid (26.04.2013) - On 1 April, seven house church leaders in Henan Province were given prison sentences ranging from three to seven and a half years, according to the well-known Christian lawyer Li Baiguang. Their defence lawyers received the verdict and sentencing papers last week.

The Christians were detained on 14 April 2012, when more than 200 police and government officials surrounded and raided a house church Bible study meeting in Daying village in the city of Pingdingshan, Henan province. The entire county police force was involved, equipped with two water cannons, along with local government officials, the fire brigade and anti-terrorism police. They took 54 Christians into custody, including a mother and baby, and held them in a yard for half a day, before transferring them to an animal quarantine station for a week.

After an investigation, eight of the Christians were criminally detained. One of the eight, Qi Siyu, from Liaoning province, was released after her friends paid 3000 yuan (approximately €373) in unspecified fees. She is about 18 years old and is an orphan. The remaining seven were formally arrested and charged with *"organising a cult to undermine law enforcement"*.

### ***The seven who have been sentenced are:***

**Han Hai** (60), given a seven-and-a half-year sentence. Previously he was administratively detained twice and also sentenced to imprisonment in a labour camp for three years. He is in the Ye County Detention Centre.

**Hu Linpo** (49), given a seven-year sentence. He is from Singapore and is the house church's main preacher. Previously detained for 30 days, in 1989, he is in the Ye County Detention Centre.

**Yang Lianbin** (23), given a four-year sentence. He is in the Ye County Detention Centre.

**Zhang Mian** (37), given a three-year sentence. She owns the residence where the church meets, and is in the Pingdingshan Detention Centre.

**Cao Xia** (in her 50s), given a three-and-a-half-year sentence. She owns another residence where the church meets. Police seized from her home CDs of Hu Linpo preaching and a computer used to make copies of the sermon CDs. Police also confiscated a SUV parked outside, which belonged to a Christian attending the meeting. Cao Xia is in the Pingdingshan Detention Centre.

**Wang En** (in her 20s), given a three-year sentence. She was said to have helped make copies of the sermon CDs, and is in the Ye County Detention Centre.

**Li Dan** (in her 20s), given a three-year sentence. She was probably involved in copying CDs, and is in the Pingdingshan Detention Centre.

### ***Ye County People's Court of Henan Province: Criminal Verdict***

(2012) Ye Xing Chu Zi Di No. 203

Prosecutor: Ye County People's Procuratorate of Henan Province.



**Defendant Han Hai**, pseudonym Gengxin, nickname Han Shixin, male, DOB April 16, 1953, ID number 410422195304164813, peasant, Han ethnicity, elementary school education, lives at 1, Mengzhuanghanzhuang, Yeyi Town, Ye County, Henan Province. Taken into custody on April 14, 2012 for attending a cult meeting, and on April 18, 2012, he was placed under criminal detention on suspicion of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement. He was arrested on May 25, and is now being detained at the Ye County Detention Center.

Defense counsel Li Fuchun, a lawyer from Beijing Lanpeng Law Firm.

**Defendant Hu Linpo**, nickname Hu Zhenling, male, DOB November 27, 1962, ID number 410422196211275914, peasant, Han ethnicity, junior high school education, lives at Group 1, Qianwang Village, Xiantai Town, Ye County, Henan Province. On April 14, 2012, he was caught attending a gathering of a cult organization. Taken into custody on April 14, 2012 for attending a cult meeting, and on April 18, 2012, he was placed under criminal detention on suspicion of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement. He was arrested on May 25, and is now being detained at the Ye County Detention Center.

Defense counsel Li Baiguang, a lawyer from Beijing Gongxin Law Firm.

**Defendant Zhang Mian**, female, DOB May 13, 1975, ID number 410422197505132227, peasant, Han ethnicity, elementary school education, lives at Group 4, Daying Village, Rendian Town, Ye County, Henan Province. Taken into custody on April 14, 2012 for attending a cult meeting, and on April 18, 2012, she was placed under criminal detention on suspicion of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement. She was arrested on May 25, and is now being detained at No. 1 Detention Center in Pingdingshan City.

Defense counsel Liu Peifu, a lawyer from Beijing Gongxin Law Firm.

**Defendant Cao Xia**, female, DOB February 15, 1961, ID number 410422196102152229, peasant, Han ethnicity, illiterate, lives at Group 3, Daying Village, Rendian Town, Ye County, Henan Province. Taken into custody on April 14, 2012 for attending a cult meeting, and on April 18, 2012, she was placed under criminal detention on suspicion of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement. She was arrested on May 25, and is now being detained at No. 1 Detention Center in Pingdingshan City.

Defense counsel Lin Qilei, a lawyer from Beijing Ruikai Law Firm.

**Defendant Wang En**, female, DOB October 28, 1988, ID number 410422198810283341, peasant, Han ethnicity, junior high school education, lives in Group South, Xiali Town, Ye County, Henan Province. Taken into custody on April 14, 2012 for attending a cult meeting, and on April 19, 2012, she was placed under criminal detention on suspicion of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement. She was arrested on May 25, and is now being detained at Ye County Detention Center.

Defense counsel is Li Dunyong, a lawyer from Beijing Gongxin Law Firm.

**Defendant Li Dan, female**, DOB August 10, 1988, ID number 410101198808102021, unemployed, Han ethnicity, junior high school education, lives at 41, Row 6, Chaohua Street, Zhengmei Group, Zhengzhou, Henan. Taken into custody on April 14, 2012 for attending a cult meeting, and on April 19, 2012, she was placed under criminal detention on suspicion of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement. She was arrested on May 25, and is now being detained at No. 1 Detention Center in Pingdingshan

City.

Defense counsel is Xue Junnan, a lawyer from Beijing Gongxin Law Firm.

**Defendant Yang Lianbing**, male, DOB November 19, 1989, ID number 410482198911195937, peasant, Han ethnicity. junior high school education, lives at Group 10, Mazhuang, Runan Office, Ruzhou City, Henan Province. Taken into custody on April 14, 2012 for attending a cult meeting, and on April 19, 2012, he was placed under criminal detention on suspicion of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement. He was arrested on May 25, and is now being detained at the Ye County Detention Center.

Defense counsel is Li Renbing, a lawyer from Beijing Gongxin Law Firm.

Indictments were rendered by the Ye County People's Procuratorate in Ye Jian Xing Su (2012) No. 194 charging defendants Hu Linpo, Han Hai, Yang Lianbing, Wang En, Li Dan, Zhang Mian, Cao Xia with using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement. The public prosecution was filed with this court on November 13, 2012. After this court accepted the case, it formed a collegial panel in accordance with law and tried this case at a public hearing on December 13, 2012. Ye County People's Procuratorate appointed its procurators Chen Jinrong, Chen Haitao and Li Xiaopeng to appear in the court to support the public prosecution. The defendants Hu Linpo, Han Hai, Yang Lianbing, Wang En, Li Dan, Zhang Mian, Cao Xia and their defense counsels Li Baiguang, Li Chunfu, Li Renbing, Li Dunyong, Xue Junnan, Li Peifu and Lin Qilei appeared at the court for the legal proceedings, which are now concluded.

Ye County People's Procuratorate alleges that around 10 a.m. on April 14, 2012, Ye County Public Security Bureau, using information it had obtained, ferreted out an illegal meeting of the Shouters cult at Daying Village, Rendian Town of Ye County, immediately taking into custody 32 people who were attending the illegal gathering and confiscating 440 copies of the Shouters cult book "Morning Revival," 340 copies of "New Testament Life Readings," 271 copies of "Works of Watchman Nee," 90 copies of the Bible, 50 copies of "Hymns," 20 copies of "Classes in Truth," 10 copies of "Correct Sisters," 16 copies of "A Trip of the Bible," 260 video tapes of the gatherings, 330 discs, three computer desktops, four LCD monitors and two electronic keyboards. Pingdingshan's Domestic Security Protection Squad and anti-terrorist branch determined that "Morning Revival," "Works of Watchman Nee" and "The Holy Bible Recovery Version" are the propaganda materials of the cult group the Shouters.

Defendants Hu Linpo, Han Hai, Zhang Mian, Cao Xia, Wang En, Li Dan and Yang Lianbing have long been involved with the illegal activities of the Shouters cult. Hu Linpo and Han Hai converted people into Shouters believers and often held classes and did propaganda work. Defendants Zhang Mian and Cao Xia provided food and lodging for the believers who attended the meetings. They prepared food and drove people around, while the defendants Li Dan and Wang En made CDs for the Shouters cult and composed songs. Yang Lianbing has been a member of this group for a long time.

The prosecutor believes that the conduct of the defendants Hu Linpo, Han Hai, Yang Lianbing, Wang En, Li Dan, Zhang Mian and Cao Xia violated Article 300 of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China and they should be held criminally liable for organizing and using a cult to undermine law enforcement.

Defendants Hu Linpo, Han Hai, Yang Lianbing, Wang En, Li Dan, Zhang Mian and Cao Xia all argued that the facts about the religious meeting were true, but that they believed that their faith was Christian and not a cult. Han Hai and Hu Linpo also argued that they had never organized a cult group, and Wang En and Li Dan claimed that they had not

copied any CDs, while Zhang Mian and Cao Xia claimed they had not provided transportation to people.

The opinion of the seven defense lawyers was that the activities of the seven defendants involved in this case constituted a house church meeting of believers and they did not violate legal regulations. As for the conclusion that the three books are Shouters cult literature, this cannot be used as evidence because the Domestic Security Protection Squad of the Pingdingshan Public Security Bureau is not qualified to make such a determination; besides, the actions of the people involved in this case do not [conform] to the cult characteristic of being anti-government, anti-human, anti-social and anti-science, therefore, they cannot be identified as a cult group. The conduct of the seven defendants constitutes legal conduct of religious believers and the seven defendants are innocent.

An investigation and trial have determined that at about 10 a.m. on April 14, 2012, Ye County Public Security Bureau, using information it had obtained, ferreted out an illegal meeting of the Shouters cult at Daying Village, Rendian Town of Ye County, immediately taking into custody 32 people who were attending the illegal gathering and confiscating 440 copies of the Shouters cult book "Morning Revival," 340 copies of "New Testament Life Readings," 271 copies of "Works of Watchman Nee," 90 copies of the Bible, 50 copies of "Hymns," 20 copies of "Classes in Truth," 10 copies of "Correct Sisters," 16 copies of "A Trip of the Bible," 260 video tapes of the gatherings, 330 discs, three computer desktops, four LCD monitors and two electronic keyboards. Pingdingshan's Domestic Security Protection Squad and anti-terrorist branch determined that "Morning Revival," "Works of Watchman Nee" and "The Holy Bible Recovery Version" are the propaganda materials of the cult group the Shouters.

Defendants Hu Linpo, Han Hai, Zhang Mian, Cao Xia, Wang En, Li Dan and Yang Lianbing have long been involved with the illegal activities of the Shouters cult. Hu Linpo and Han Hai converted people into Shouters believers and often held classes and did propaganda work. It has also been ascertained that Han Hai was punished in 1988 and 1996 for his participation in the Shouters cult group and Hu Linpo was punished in 1989 for his participation in the Shouters cult group. The den of the Shouters cult group at the home of defendant Zhang Mian was abolished in 2004.

The above-listed conclusions are based on the following evidence: The statements and attempts to offer an explanation of defendants Han Hai, Hu Linpo, Zhang Mian, Cao Xia, Wang En, Li Dan and Yang Lianbing, the testimonies from witnesses Qi Siyu, He Yan, Wan Xiaoguang, Zhang Lili, Geng Aobo, Wang Daxiang, Zhao Yan, Bai Shiyun, Shi Jinye, Fu Dan, Zhang Lianying, Zhao Ying, Wang Shuiqin, Liu Jiaxiang, Zheng Haijuan, Li Jing, He Lianjie, Zhang Ru, Zheng Xiaolei and others; the written records of the search, the list of items seized, photos of related material evidence; materials related to their previous offenses, proof from Daying Village Party Committee, conclusions of the Pingdingshan Municipal Public Security Bureau's Domestic Security Protection Squad, diagrams and photos of the meeting site, certificates of arrest, household registration certificates, fact sheets from the Ye County Bureau of Religion, etc.

This court believes that: Defendants Hu Linpo, Han Hai, Zhang Mian, Cao Xia, Wang En, Li Dan and Yang Lianbing have long participated in the activities of the Shouters cult group, holding illegal meetings and engaging in cult propaganda. Therefore, their conduct constitutes the crime of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement. The opinion of the defendants and their defense lawyers that they are innocent is groundless and this court does not support it.

The 789 copies of the three cult books were seized in this case constitute particularly serious circumstances as set forth in the June 11, 2001 "Answers to Some Questions

Regarding the Concrete Application of the Law in Handling Cases of Organizing and Using a Cult Organization for Criminal Purposes (2)" from the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate. Defendants Han Hai and Hu Linpo had been punished for participating in a cult group, but they did not repent and should be severely punished. Meanwhile, the conduct of defendants Zhang Mian, Cao Xia, Wang En, Li Dan and Yang Lianbing did not cause serious social consequences and their circumstance is relatively less serious. According to the explanation in the second part of the "Answers to Some Questions Regarding the Concrete Application of the Law in Handling Cases of Organizing and Using a Cult Organization for Criminal Purposes (2)," the circumstance can be regarded as not very serious. Hence, pursuant to Clause 1 of Article 300, Clause 1 of Article 25, Article 64 and Article 61 of the "Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China," the sentences are rendered as follows:

1. The defendant **Han Hai** is found guilty of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement and is **sentenced to seven years and six months**. (The term of criminal detention is counted as commencing on the date the judgment begins to be executed; where custody has been employed before the judgment, the term is to be shortened by one day for each day spent in custody. That is, from April 14, 2012 through October 13, 2019)

2. The defendant **Hu Linpo** is found guilty of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement and is **sentenced to seven years in prison**.

(The term of criminal detention is counted as commencing on the date the judgment begins to be executed; where custody has been employed before the judgment, the term is to be shortened by one day for each day spent in custody. That is, from April 14, 2012 through April 13, 2019)

3. The defendant **Zhang Mian** is found guilty of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement and is **sentenced to four years in prison**.

(The term of criminal detention is counted as commencing on the date the judgment begins to be executed; where custody has been employed before the judgment, the term is to be shortened by one day for each day spent in custody. That is, from April 14, 2012 through April 13, 2016)

4. The defendant **Cao Xia** is found guilty of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement and is therefore **sentenced to three years and six months in prison**.

(The term of criminal detention is counted as commencing on the date the judgment begins to be executed; where custody has been employed before the judgment, the term is to be shortened by one day for each day spent in custody. That is, from April 14, 2012 through October 13, 2015)

5. The defendant **Wang En** is found guilty of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement and is **sentenced to three years in prison**.

(The term of criminal detention is counted as commencing on the date the judgment begins to be executed; where custody has been employed before the judgment, the term is to be shortened by one day for each day spent in custody. That is, from April 14, 2012 through April 13, 2015)

6. The defendant **Li Dan** is found guilty of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement and is **sentenced to three years in prison**.

(The term of criminal detention is counted as commencing on the date the judgment begins to be executed; where custody has been employed before the judgment, the term is to be shortened by one day for each day spent in custody. That is, from April 14, 2012 through April 13, 2015)

7. The defendant **Yang Lianbing** is found guilty of using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement and is **sentenced to three years in prison**.

(The term of criminal detention is counted as commencing on the date the judgment begins to be executed; where custody has been employed before the judgment, the term is to be shortened by one day for each day spent in custody. That is, from April 14, 2012 through April 13, 2015)

8. The cult propaganda items seized in this case shall be confiscated.

Should there be an objection to this judgment, an appeal can be filed with this court or directly to the Pingdingshan Intermediate People's Court of Henan Province within 10 days of the day after this judgment is received. For written appeals, one copy of the original and two duplicate copies should be submitted.

Chief judge: Shi Qunli

Judge: Wang Kena

Judge: Dian Ruifeng

April 1, 2013

Clerk: Sun Xianghui

Seal: Ye County People's Court

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## **Christian arrested in Shanxi for daring to bring books to Christian residents**

AsiaNews (04.04.2013) - Li Wenxi, a Christian bookseller in Beijing who wanted to help the faithful in Taiyuan (Shanxi) open their own religious bookstore, was beaten, threatened and arrested by local police. "Don't you dare bring Christianity to Shanxi! This place is ours," they told him. Now Li Caihong, Li Wenxi's wife, is seeking help online because her husband has been held without trial in a provincial prison for the past three months.

Li's story began in December, when he left Beijing for Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi Province (in northern China), in order to help local Christians open a Christian bookstore. Knowledgeable about his market, he managed to run a bookstore in the capital and survive. In Shanxi, the situation was not as favourable.

Right after its opening, state security agents raided the new store and confiscated hundreds of religious books Li had brought with him. A few days later, they phoned him and said told him that they would return the books.

Without realising it was a trap, Li went to the local police station. That was the last time Li's wife Caihong heard from him. Since then, she has been praying for him every day. Police eventually told her that her husband had been charged with "illegally operating a business". They also refused to grant him bail, stressing the seriousness of his "crime".

Desperate, Caihong decided to turn to the internet to get her husband back to her two children, going on *Weibo*, China's popular social media website, to tell her story and ask for help.

Li's *Weibo* message was reposted over 4,000 times and received hundreds of comments. "Shanxi is one of the places where Christians are persecuted with the harshest measures," one blogger wrote.

Taiyuan's officials did the same in a statement on their website in March. "Yingze District successfully clamped down on a case of Christianity," they claimed in an article gloating about their raid against an 'underground' congregation. However, it was swamped with criticism after someone posted the article on *Weibo*, forcing the authorities to pull it.

In China, freedom of worship is allowed only in buildings and with staff registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Prayers and religious services held in unauthorised places are illegal.

Many Catholics and Protestants choose however to risk the wrath of the law to avoid the stifling control by local patriotic associations. Protestant groups have sometimes asked for a permit to build a church, but local governments have refused their requests.

Since 2007, a campaign has been underway against underground Protestant communities, which number around 50 million members according to conservative estimates.

The campaign's goal is to incorporate such communities into the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the state-controlled Protestant organisation, or simply suppress them.

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## **House church in Yili, Xinjiang shut down by police & Religious Affairs Bureau**

China Aid Association (30.03.2013) - A house church in the far western region of Xinjiang that has been meeting for 13 years has been shut down by local police and the religious affairs bureau, ChinaAid has learned.

The public security bureau and the religious affairs bureau of Yili Autonomous Prefecture, Xinyuan County, sealed up the house church's simple and crude meeting site on March 10. They also told the village chief that there was a deadline by which the meeting place had to be demolished. However, the village chief explained that he did not have the authority to do so.

The religious affairs bureau told the women believers Yang Aixia, Li Ruimin, Dai Shujun and others who attended this house church that, if they had any objections, they could file for an administrative reconsideration or file a lawsuit.

This house church in Xinyuan County has a wonderful history. Beginning in the first half of 1990, this house church started to evangelize the whole of Yili. A large group of young

Christian women threw themselves into the ministry of evangelizing across regional boundaries.

ChinaAid expresses its condemnation of the forced closure of this church and urges the local government to stop persecuting this church and to protect according to the law the legitimate right to religious freedom of Han Chinese citizens. ChinaAid will continue to monitor the developments in this case.

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## **Reformed church in Shanghai forced by Government to shut down, pastor under surveillance**

China Aid Association (30.03.2013) - A Reformed Church in Shanghai has been targeted by the local government for persecution, including ordering the church to shut down and putting the senior pastor under surveillance, ChinaAid has learned.

Senior Pastor Gao Baoluo (Paul) said that the situation has been increasingly tense since the beginning of March. He said, the government departments don't even bother trying to have any direct contact; instead, they go behind our backs to threaten the landlord and not allow us to continue worshipping here. Then they go to the work units of the individual church members and give them orders, telling them they do not have permission to come to our church anymore, otherwise, they must resign from their jobs or they will be fired.

The senior pastor said, "Last weekend, even my 70-year-old elderly mother was summoned by the neighborhood committee and forced to answer questions about my situation, which gave the old lady a great fright."

Pastor Gao's personal freedom is currently under threat: every time he leaves his home, he is tailed by plainclothes police.

ChinaAid expresses its surprise and dismay over this case happening in Shanghai and will continue to closely monitor developments.

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## **Radio Free Asia house churches face emergencies in various places in China**

Radio Free Asia (28.03.2013) - Recently, the situation for house churches in Shanghai, Shandong, Jiangsu, Yunnan and other areas has become very tense. Pastors are being investigated and believers are being threatened! Communist authorities are forcing the landlords of many gathering sites to void their leasing agreements and take back the rental units. This week, a house church in Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province with a congregation of nearly 300 people received a notice from the landlord on Thursday that they must vacate the premises within seven days. The landlord specifically said that he had received instructions from agencies in charge of religious affairs and the Public Security Bureau. After the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the National People's Congress were convened, news came in from house churches in various provinces and municipalities. Zhan Gang, vice president of the Chinese House Church Alliance, told this radio station on Thursday that the situation has become very tense: "Recently, I've received information from pastors in the provinces that the situation with them is very tense. A pastor in Shanghai was recently investigated and the work unit of

every member of theirs and of some families have been investigated. The authorities threatened the believers that they must not gather at this pastor's meeting place. In the meantime, the landlord of the site this pastor leases has been ordered to cancel the lease.

In another development, the landlord of the church site where I am at has told me that due to intense pressure from the government, he is not going to renew the lease with us. Pastor Zhan Gang who lives in Jiaozhou, Shandong Province said: "Last week, a leader of a house church in our area came under the same pressure. The local government told the landlord of the unit he rents that the church must move out, that the landlord must not renew the lease with them. A pastor and an elder from Kunming told me recently that the situation in Kunming is also very tense and they are being forced to move out." The police investigated the families of the believers and their work units. Gao Aijun, pastor of a Reformist house church in Shanghai, told this reporter that about 10 days ago the lease on his gathering site was canceled by the landlord: "Recently, the situation has become tense. We the Christian church in Shanghai rented a room, yet suddenly we received an order that the landlord won't let our church use the site. The landlord said the authorities won't let him lease the place for use by our church. That's why no matter how much money we give him, he won't be able to lease the place to us. Then brothers and sisters stopped gathering at his place. This is because state employees have come to investigate the pastor at the work units of these brothers and sisters. The message is clear. They want the brothers and sisters not to have anything to do with this pastor. If they attend services there again, they will be fired and lose their jobs." Pastor Gao Aijun, who is a logistics engineer, has lost his secular job. He said: "Before I was a logistics engineer and it was easy for me to find a job. I had already made arrangements with a company and we had already finished negotiating my salary. However, on the second day, they went back on their words. Last week, my mother was asked to go to her neighborhood committee because I went to attend a conference in America last December. At the neighborhood committee, they asked my mother what her son was doing and they asked many questions. My mother was very nervous." He also said that recently the minute his mother goes out the door of her house, she is stalked by some strangers which is making us uneasy. They are required to move out of their gathering site within seven days.

Enxin House Church in Gulou District, Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province has a gathering site that can accommodate over 200 people. This Thursday, they received a notice from the landlord that they must move out of the place by a certain date. A co-worker in the church by the name of Zhao told the reporter: "The landlord told me we must move out within seven days. The landlord said that the authorities won't allow him to rent the place to me, saying that they had been notified by their superior that the place cannot be rented for use by a church. They also said that meeting places of churches not approved by the state agencies must be taken back. On Tuesday of last week (March 19) when over 200 co-workers were attending a training session at the gathering site of Enxin Church, it was raided by dozens of police officers. In the meantime, the landlord who provided the site also came under pressure to terminate the lease. Ms. Zhao said that one week after the incident, they received a written notice from the landlord: "After we got the notice, it told us to move out unconditionally within seven days. He said the Public Security Bureau and the Bureau of Religion have talked with them and exerted pressure on them."

Reporter: "How long is the lease that you signed with the landlord?"

Answer: "It was a one-year lease which ends in November. He has breached the agreement. The church has over 200 people."

Reporter: "What's your plan for the next step?"



Answer: "We don't want to move out. This is because if we move out, there'll be no way for the church to rent such a big place."

Reporter: "How many square meters are there?"

Answer: over 200 square meters."

Pastor Zhang Mingxuan, president of the Chinese House Church Alliance, worries a lot about the current situation the house churches in China find themselves in. He said: "The local governments have consistently persecuted and attacked Christianity with the religious mentality of the past 50 years. Now that Xi Jinping has come to power and the two conferences (National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) are over, they still attack and persecute the churches according to their old mentality. This does not fit our expectation of the new administration in holding a more liberal policy toward religion. I'd like to express my hope through the media here that the new leaders of the state can correctly treat the house churches." The above is an interview report by Qiao Long, special reporter from Radio Free Asia.

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## **China jails 20 Uyghurs**

World Bulletin (27.03.2013) - Chinese courts have sentenced 20 people of the Uyghur ethnic minority to up to life in jail on charges of separatism, the government said on Wednesday.

According to the news website of the government in East Turkestan in western China, the courts in Kashgar and Bayingol has accused the 20 ethnic Uyghurs of "religious extremism" and spreading propaganda.

Dilxat Raxit, spokesman for the exiled World Uyghur Congress, said the 20 were actually guilty of no more than listening to the U.S.-funded Radio Free Asia and using the internet to discuss the importance of religious and cultural freedom.

"Giving heavy sentences to Uighurs (on the excuse) of terrorism is China's special way of carrying out suppression," he said in an emailed statement, expressing that "The aim is to terrorise Uighurs into abandoning their rights."

It is not known whether the 20 accused men pleaded guilty or not.

Regarding China's sentencing in December of 3 Uyghurs to death and 1 Uyghur to life in prison, Raxit said the four men had been denied their choice of lawyers. Many Uyghurs, a Turkic-speaking Muslim people native to East Turkestan, chafe at Chinese controls on their religion, language and culture, which have included the prohibition of fasting during the month of Ramadan. Chinese police raided and teargassed a Koran-teaching school in June, and a recently decision prohibits youths under 18 years old, women, and Communist Party members and civil servants from going to mosques.

China has detained and intimidated dozens of ethnic Uyghurs for speaking out on rights abuses following riots in the regional capital in 2009, according to Amnesty International.

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## **Henan Mengzhou house church raided**

China Aid (28.02.2013) On December 31, 2013, approximately a dozen Christians met to pray in Zhang Keding's rented home in Mengzhou City, Henan Province. About four o'clock in the afternoon, the house was raided by police and officials from the local public security bureau, religious department, and other government agencies. The officials questioned the Christians for more than an hour, although they did not write down or record the answers to their questions. The officials then took Zhang and two others to the local police station for further questioning and warned the rest not to meet again.

The next day, January 1, 2013, the officials returned to Zhang's home. Using several migrant workers and ten vehicles, they hauled away an electronic organ, accordion, printer, TV, audio equipment, cell phones, beds and bedding, passports and other legal papers, clothing, etc. The officials recorded only a few of the items they seized, and refused to give Zhang a list of the seized items; they also failed to show a search warrant or inform Zhang why they were seizing these items. Instead of providing a legal rationale for their seizure of the Zhang's property, the official simply informed the believers that their meeting was illegal.

A week later, on January 8, Zhang's property still had not been returned. Zhang and other members of the church therefore initiated legal proceedings against the local public security forces, accusing them of robbery because they had taken his property by force in violation of the Chinese Constitution and applicable laws. Citing the Chinese Constitution and laws, and quoting Chinese leader Xi Jinping himself, Zhang and the other church members asked that all of the property taken in the raid be returned and the public security bureau forced to pay all the costs of their lawsuit.

As of the date of this writing, Zhang's lawsuit remains pending. China Aid will update this story when a decision is reached in the case.

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## **A seminar attended by various house churches in Beijing was dispersed by the Public Security Bureau**

Radio Free Asia (28.02.2013) - Leaders and believers of various house churches in Beijing held a joint seminar on Monday of this week so that they could give their opinions on the Cape Town Commitment achieved at the Third Lausanne Congress. However, the seminar was harassed by the Public Security Bureau when a police officer booked by force the ID information of the attendants. The seminar was forced to stop. Besides this, Pastor Jin Tianming of Shouwang Church has been placed under house arrest for over two years and at this time he still does not have the freedom of movement.

Leaders and believers of various house churches in Beijing held a seminar on Cape Town Commitment achieved at the Third Lausanne Congress at a private residence in Wangjing Community in Chaoyang District. There, they were harassed by a police officer from a local police station that got the wind of it. Mr. Chu, one of the Christian organizers at the site, told this radio station that the police officer entered the room by force and booked the ID information of the attendants. "The seminar started at 2 o'clock and at about 4:30, a police officer knocked on the door to check our IDs. At first, we didn't let him enter, so we continued. He then again knocked on the door. After he entered the residence, we asked him to go to another room. He ordered to book our information (IDs). Teacher Hu Shigen and I went to a room to negotiate with him.

Hu Shigen, another Christian at the scene on that day, described the situation at the scene: "At about 4:30 in the afternoon, our seminar was already half through, a police officer came with his police certificate. He is an officer by the name of Chen from Nanhu Police Station of Chaoyang District of Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau. He said he wanted to come in to book our information. We didn't let him enter. Then, he broke through us and entered. He booked the information of all of us and disturbed us continuously. Finally, he booked everybody's information and the seminar was thus dispersed.

According to the believers, since 2012, house churches in Beijing have held seminars on Cape Town Commitment achieved at the Third Lausanne Congress. The seminar held on Monday was the 6th seminar. The previous five seminars were held peacefully. People who attended the seminars notified each other on a small scale, so they didn't catch much attention.

According to Mr. Chu, over 10 people from various house churches of Beijing attended the seminar. They called on Christian churches to follow the Lord, be humble, righteous and pious and do things according to some other Cape Town Commitments. There are two parts to it, because we have already held six such seminars.

Reporter: Was this activity organized by various churches or was it sponsored by Shouwang Church?

Answer: It was organized by various churches. We sent out invitations to various churches. Whoever is interested in this seminar would attend it.

Hu Shigen criticized the Public Security for abusing its power: "When they want to enter a residence to book the information, a police officer's certificate is not enough. To enter a room, they must have a search warrant or a certificate of detention or an arrest warrant. We think he doesn't have this power. He violated the safety of a citizen's residence and his freedom of religion."

Mr. Chu said that they would continue to have such seminars. After they have discussed all the contents of Cape Town Call to Action, they will hold various types of seminars under the title "Lausanne Movement Forum."

China Aid Association, a Christian human rights defense organization headquartered in Texas, USA, questions the conduct of Beijing police of harassing house churches. It thinks entering a private residence without legal authorization and forcing citizens to book their personal information won't help maintaining the stability of the society.

Shouwang Church continues to be under strict surveillance.

After the New Year's Day of this year, there is a tendency that the Chinese authorities are increasingly interfering with the freedom of religion. Since mid-April of 2011, believers of Shouwang Church of Beijing have been prohibited by the authorities to gather and worship outdoors. Its pastor and other leaders are strictly placed at their homes and their freedom is restricted. This radio station once reported that after Jin Tianming, the pastor of the church, led the believers in holding a prayer meeting a month ago, his right to go downstairs for a work-out has been canceled. Five police officers are deployed at the hallways of his residence and they don't let him go out of the building.

A believer told this reporter that at the eve of the Two Conferences (the National People's Congress and the Chinese Political Consultative Conference), the situation of Jin Tianming has not improved: "It has always been like this. There are always people guarding at his door and restricting his freedom."

The above is an interview report by Qiao Long, a special reporter of Radio Free Asia.

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## **Persecution rises in China as plan begins to end house churches**

Morning Star News (16.02.2013) - China's Christians felt a noticeable rise in persecution in 2012 as the Communist government began the first of a three-phase plan to eradicate unregistered house churches, a new report says.

Cases of persecution of Christians rose by about 42 percent last year compared with 2011, according to the report by human rights group China Aid. With the number of persecuted Christians rising by roughly 14 percent and detentions by nearly 12 percent, overall persecution was about 13 percent worse than in 2011 – though China Aid termed its statistics just “the tip of the iceberg.”

At least 132 cases of persecution affecting 4,919 Christians – 442 of whom were clergy – were reported in the country last year, according to China Aid's annual report. The Texas-based group tracked detention of at least 1,441 Christians, the sentencing of nine of them, and the abuse – verbal, mental and physical, including beatings and torture – of 37 Christians.

Beijing, administered directly under the central government, witnessed the highest number of persecution cases, at 62, affecting 934 Christians; Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China followed with at 11 cases involving 382 Christians. Persecution was also high in central China – comprising Henan and Hubei Hunan provinces – where 1,056 Christians were affected, and in east China, which includes Shandong, Anhui, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Jiangxi provinces, which witnessed harassment of 750 Christians.

The report also notes that persecution last year was 61 percent worse than in 2010; 85 percent worse than in 2009; 120 percent worse than in 2008; 308 percent worse than in 2007; and 372 percent worse than in 2006.

### ***Ending Unregistered House Churches***

The recent appointment of Xi Jinping as the new leader of China's Communist Party has made no difference in treatment of Christians, said a member of the Shouwang Church in Beijing, a congregation authorities have harassed for more than two years.

“I recently went to see the founding pastor, Jin Tianming, and his wife [under house arrest since April 2011] in their rented apartment in west Beijing,” the source told Morning Star News. “I was not allowed to enter their home, and the pastor was not allowed to go outside. We chatted for a while at their home's doorway, as two plainclothes police officers watched.”

Pastor Tianming was granted the right to do his workout outside his apartment every afternoon from November 2011 to early January this year. But since he attended a Shouwang weekly evening prayer meeting in the rented facility of Xinshu (New Tree) Church, a sister congregation of Shouwang, after jogging on the afternoon on Jan. 9, Tianming has not been allowed to leave his home.

The continued rise of persecution is not the only dynamic raising serious concerns; authorities have targeted unregistered house churches in a planned manner, according to the report. In 2008 and 2009, officials "targeted house church leaders and churches in urban areas," China Aid notes. In 2010, they "attacked Christian human rights lawyers groups and using abuse, torture and mafia tactics." The focus in 2011 was on increasing the intensity of attacks against Christians and house churches.

In 2012, a new three-phase approach was adopted to wipe out unregistered house churches, which the government saw as a hostile group of dissenters, and force them to join the official Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) church system. In the first phase, from January 2012 to June, the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) secretly investigated house churches across the country and created files on them, the report says. This was followed by a wave of crackdowns on house churches, which has continued into 2013, as part of the second phase. The second phase will also entail strongly encouraging unregistered churches to become part of the TSPM – at which point they would become known as "house gatherings," with the government banning the term "house churches."

Some house churches have registered with authorities to avoid arrests and harassment, but most do not as they object to TSPM beliefs and controls. Barriers to evangelical churches registering with the TSPM include theological differences, adverse consequences if they reveal names and addresses of church leaders or members, and government control of sermon content.

The number of Protestant house-church Christians has been estimated at between 45 million and 60 million.

The third phase is expected to begin from 2015 through to 2025, when the government would shut down house churches that do not comply with the requirement to join the TSPM, according to a joint-memo issued in September 2011 by SARA and the ministries of public security and civil affairs, the report says.

With this objective in mind, authorities in 2012 stepped up long-time tactics of banning and sealing churches, pressuring churches to join the official Three-Self structure, detaining church leaders and sending them to labor camps on the pretext of "suspicion of organizing and using a cult to undermine law enforcement," and strictly restricting the spread of the Christian faith among students, the report points out.

### ***China Aid cites Shouwang Church as an example of closures by authorities***

"Landlords were pressured to terminate lease agreements with church members, church members who had purchased real estate were unable to take possession of them, church leaders were placed under house arrest and church members were evicted – all of which was done to make it impossible for the house church to operate normally so that it would eventually disband," the report notes.

Last September, Shouwang Church leaders said members were detained 1,600 times, 60 members were evicted from their homes, and more than 10 lost their jobs because they attended the church's outdoor worship services or simply because they were members. Many others were sent back to their hometowns, and some were confined to their homes on the weekends.

In February 2012, two Christians in Yulin, Shaanxi Province, were sent to a labor camp on charges of being a cult. In April, seven leaders of a house church in Pingdingshan, Henan province, were arrested and tried on this charge. In August, nine Christians from Ulanhot, Inner Mongolia, were placed under administrative detention for engaging in

evangelism while providing free medical services, and two of them were sentenced to two years of re-education-through-labor.

Many summer camps for Christian students were raided, and the crackdowns were severe last year, the report adds.

Just as the Bible warns, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads," the approach of the Chinese government is "ignorant," concludes China Aid President Bob Fu in the report. "House churches will not be eradicated. What will be eradicated are any ideology and forces that try to resist the truth of Christ."

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## **Should religious freedom be a "core interest"?**

By Magda Hornemann

Forum 18 (07.02.2013) - What might lead to an improvement in China's freedom of religion or belief record? Are there any long-term factors that would influence China's new political leaders to improve the situation – or indeed to go in the opposite direction? Any analysis of such long-term prospects must take into account macro political factors, given that China's political establishment views religious freedom and related human rights through the lens of their perception of their political interests.

Increasingly, China's leaders have been stressing what they see as China's "core interests". If these interests are as important for the leadership as they say they are, the future of religious freedom in China is deeply connected to the relationship between this freedom and these core interests. In fact, it appears that religious freedom violations sponsored by the state are undermining China's core interests. If so, it will be in the interest of China's leaders to take effective measures to promote religious freedom.

### ***Recent freedom of religion and belief violations***

Dramatic improvements in the religious freedom of – for example - Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetan Buddhists, and Uighur Muslims, will be required before it can be said that there are very significant improvements in China's religious freedom conditions. Unfortunately, the religious freedom situation in 2012 demonstrates that such improvements have yet to be achieved.

Among numerous 2012 violations, a Christian Chinese-Canadian businesswoman was detained for visiting the Shouwang Church in the capital city of Beijing and another house church in Shanxi Province, while from January 2012 government officials were appointed to manage Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in place of "loyal" monks.

In June, officials of China's State Security Ministry forced a Hong Kong-registered religious non-governmental organisation (NGO) to halt a scheduled training camp for mainland Chinese students.

Catholic Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin was placed under house arrest after he resigned from the state-approved Catholic Patriotic Association. In December he was stripped of his title by the state.

Furthermore, in a sign of the Chinese government's refusal to engage with the international community on the issue of religious freedom, it denied a request by the

United States Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to visit China in February 2012.

### ***Explanations for freedom of religion or belief violations***

Different explanations have been offered for why such religious freedom violations continue.

The most commonly cited explanation is communist ideology. Diehard believers in communism find repugnant any belief that is not atheism. But communism has a declining number of real believers in today's China. Even many Communist Party of China (CPC) members do not believe in communism, given the evidence that senior state officials often engage in "superstitious" practices. Indeed, members of the banned Falun Gong movement originally included government officials and CPC members. Even though the CPC remains China's ruling party, communism exists in China mainly in name only.

A related explanation is that such violations occur because of the absence of the rule of law, which also affects other areas of Chinese society such as NGOs. This reflects the fact that the communist party-state is above the law and employs laws and regulations to serve state interests.

Other explanations are that such violations are the result of wider state policies. Thus, the state's wish to control the economy – also including the financial aspect of religious sites – promotes conflicts involving officials and religious communities. Similarly, the state's control of the media to limit popular knowledge of religious beliefs, and curtail criticism of the state, seems to promote a climate of hostility to freedom of religion or belief. State control of the internet also limits the ability of Chinese citizens to advocate for religious freedom.

### ***A fundamental explanation?***

These factors are all important in understanding why religious freedom violations continue. But they do not fully answer the important questions: Why does the Chinese state think it necessary to control manifestations of freedom of religion or belief? Why does the Chinese state adopt measures that result in religious freedom violations?

A fundamental explanation for the state of religious freedom in China might be found among the country's "core interests".

China views its core interests as non-negotiable items that have direct and significant implications for China's overarching national interest as defined by the leadership. Officials increasingly refer to them explicitly in their rhetoric, and in official domestic and international documents. For example, the November 2009 US-China Joint Statement, issued during a meeting between Chinese President Hu Jintao and US President Barack Obama, includes this sentence: "The two sides agreed that respecting each other's core interests is extremely important to ensure steady progress in U.S.-China relations."

According to Michael Swaine, a China specialist affiliated with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "major official and unofficial [Chinese] media mentions of China's core interests in a foreign-policy context increased notably beginning in the early 2000s". In this analysis, published in the China Leadership Monitor by Stanford University's Hoover Institution in February 2011, Swaine noted that the notion of core interest had been employed earlier, "but primarily in a domestic context".

### ***What are China's core interests?***

The range of core interests is undefined and unclear, and is seen by some as expanding.



Based on references in official speeches, Swaine identified "human rights" as a core interest relating to other core interests such as territorial issues like Tibet. In the Chinese government's "White Paper on China's Peaceful Development", issued in September 2011, the following core interests were listed:

state sovereignty; national security; territorial integrity and national reunification; China's political system; overall social stability; and ensuring sustainable economic and social development.

The Chinese authorities consistently view freedom of religion or belief-related matters through the prism of "core interests". They have cited the need for social and political stability, and the maintenance of territorial integrity, as reasons for adopting measures that result in religious freedom violations.

Given this linkage, religious freedom might significantly improve if the Chinese state changes its view of the relationship between its "core interests" and religious freedom. We can get a sense of the possible changes if we look at the 2012 religious freedom violations noted earlier.

Were the Chinese government to see religious freedom and other human rights as contributing to national security and social stability, then the case of the detention of a Christian Chinese-Canadian businesswoman for visiting the leader of the Beijing Shouwang Church and a house church in Shanxi Province might not have occurred.

If the Chinese government refrains from viewing Tibetan Buddhism through the sole prism of territorial integrity, then Tibetan Buddhist monasteries managed by monks would be likely to be the norm rather than the exception.

If the Chinese government changes its view that foreign religious organisations are agents of hostile foreign interests, then foreign religious NGOs would be free to conduct doctrinal and practical training sessions for Chinese religious believers and workers.

Similarly, the relationship between the Chinese state and the Holy See would improve dramatically, if the former no longer sees the latter as interested in subverting China's political system.

Finally, if the Chinese state does not use the vague political concept of "stability" to deal with religious organisations and activities, then prosecutions of religious groups and their members would be more likely to take place only if they harm the specific interests and well-being, notably the legal rights, of other people and themselves.

### ***Rethinking religious freedom's relationship to core interests***

It is thus possible that even non-democratic China might have much more genuine religious freedom. But it seems that the first step would be for the state to rethink the linkage between religious freedom and the Chinese state's core interests. How might this happen? To answer this question, we must address three issues: the legitimacy of China's core interests, Chinese officials' application of those core interests, and China's primary concerns that underlie those core interests.

First, there is nothing remarkable about these identified core interests, as they are shared by many other governments. So one can expect a high degree of consensus among the political elite, as well as ordinary citizens, that these are legitimate interests of any state.

However, in democracies, these core interests are generally accompanied by legal stipulations. Collisions between such core interests and religious freedom and other



human rights arise when the limits of core interests are not well defined and when they are placed above the law. This appears to be the main problem with China's treatment of its core interests.

This gets to the second issue. Aside from core interests that refer specifically to Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan, none of the stated core interests has been openly defined by the state. Observed practices, which involve wide-ranging applications of these core interests, certainly do not suggest that they have been well defined. The core interests that refer to Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan appear to focus on their implications for China's territorial integrity, but they are often invoked by Chinese officials to have applications beyond the protection of territorial borders and the prevention of internal insurrections. One result is that Chinese officials have adopted measures that lead to religious freedom violations.

It is beyond the scope of this analysis to examine the kind of legal stipulations and process that would help ensure implementing these core interests does not violate religious freedom and other human rights. The experience of democracies suggests that numerous inter-locking legal review mechanisms are necessary. One example would be the way Ireland and Britain have approached the relationships between territorial integrity, national security, social stability, and human rights in Northern Ireland; both states have found that respect for human rights reinforces their other core interests. Having a sound legal review system in place does not free governments from legal and human rights problems in relation to core interests. But without a sound legal system governments can find that their core interests are undermined – sometimes dramatically so.

But the fundamental issue is not legal; the basic problem here is political, not legal. Does the Chinese state have the political will to develop a system of appropriate legal stipulations and review mechanisms to ensure that religious freedom and human rights of its people are assured as it addresses its core interests?

Answering this question takes us to the third issue, which gives further proof that the fundamental challenge is a political one. Setting aside for a moment whether one supports Tibetan or Xinjiang independence, it is important to recognise that China does have a reasonable strategic interest in Tibet and Xinjiang, not least as these territories are sources of important natural resources for China. Similarly, it cannot be denied that the Chinese state has a legitimate interest in social order, as it is governing a country that is the fourth largest in the world in terms of area and the largest in terms of population. For the Chinese state to exercise the political will to erect and enforce a system to safeguard religious freedom, it must see that its strategic concerns are addressed satisfactorily.

With respect to territorial integrity, by and large the issue has been resolved. The last major insurrection in Tibet took place in the 1950s, when the Dalai Lama fled Tibet. By all accounts, that insurrection occurred because rumour spread, probably by CIA-supported guerrillas, that the Chinese communist government was planning to forcibly relocate the Dalai Lama to Beijing. There has been no known foreign government-involvement in any insurrection in Xinjiang since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. There has been, however, serious unrest and the Chinese state has publicly linked the unrest to Islamic radicalism and terrorism outside China.

But it is important to note that much unrest in Xinjiang has been in reaction to state-sponsored discrimination and interference against the Uighurs. Similarly, the dramatic actions of the Tibetans, which have produced tragic consequences, have largely been responses to the Chinese state's refusal to recognise the Dalai Lama as a legitimate religious figure. Put simply, much if not most of the unrest in both places have not necessarily been about attempts to achieve territorial separation from China. Indeed,

heavy-handed state crackdowns are likely to encourage a wish to separate from China. Moreover, given the importance of a stable China for regional and global stability, there is increasingly little likelihood of any foreign government being interested in supporting either the separation of Tibet or Xinjiang from China, or rapid radical change in China's political system.

If this assessment is accurate, instability in Tibet and Xinjiang is fuelled by the Chinese state's actions, notably its failure to recognise the right to religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims. The same conclusion can be applied to the religious freedom situation in the rest of China, which is dominated by Han Chinese. In other words, China's state-sponsored violations of religious freedom and human rights have constituted the primary factors that undermine the country's social and political stability.

Curiously, the Chinese state is already aware that failure to handle religion-related issues will negatively impact its core interests, notably social and political stability. For example, the 1982 party document on religious affairs, widely known as "Document 19" and which remains the leading state document on religious affairs, makes it clear that the adoption of "simplistic methods" to address religious issues will be "very harmful" to the interests of the state. The document also notes clearly that "discriminating and repressing the masses of religious adherents. can only enlarge the gulf between religious adherents and the masses of non-religious adherents. In addition, it will stimulate and intensify religious fanaticism and lead to seriously negative effects for the socialist enterprise."

The state's policies and practices, which have caused religious freedom violations, have clearly produced results that the document expressly warns against. Therefore, it is in the state's interests to adopt measures that lead to different results. Indeed, there are indications that some political leaders and their senior advisers are beginning to see that religious freedom and religious believers might contribute to the furtherance of social stability and other core interests of the state. So it is certainly in the state's interest to adopt measures that foster greater religious freedom.

That the state has not adopted those measures is a reflection of the central state's inability and unwillingness to rein in the excesses of the individual local officials, which reflect the state's lack of confidence in the legitimacy of the political system. However, the Guangdong leadership's effective handling of a major village protest in 2011, which involved the sacking of the village officials and the holding of a village election to elect new village leaders, suggests that some senior Chinese officials recognise that "sticks" are not always the best means to protect the state's core interests. Such examples encourage cautious optimism about the future of religious freedom in China.

### ***The future***

The Chinese state, by its own actions, has caused religious freedom violations which have undermined its own core interests. No major power in the world wants to see a politically unstable and socially chaotic China. Hence, the Chinese government has little to worry about any foreign conspiracy to harm China's core interests, notably social stability and territorial integrity. Ironically, Chinese leaders should be more concerned about how the state's actions are producing the very scenarios that they want to avoid.

Therefore, it is in the Chinese state's interests to take positive measures to improve China's religious freedom condition substantively. In fact, the Chinese leadership should seriously consider designating and implementing the protection of religious freedom as one of its core interests. Doing so will do more to bolster the state's stability and legitimacy than the use of violent force against unarmed civilians. It will require much courage and determination for the new Chinese leadership to accept this reality and take positive measures to respond to the situation. But a failure to do so will not only result in

more religious freedom violations; it may also result in significant negative political consequences for the Chinese state.

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## **Tibetans mourn as self-immolations near 100**

The Washington Post (29.01.2013) - Six Tibetan pilgrims prostrated themselves face down on the road, then rose, took three paces forward and repeated the dusty act of devotion around the 250-year-old monastery here.

It is a ritual that Tibetans have practiced for centuries. Despite wars and a communist takeover, the Tibetan people's age-old attachment to their Buddhist faith remains.

But a deadly development on this eastern edge of the high Tibetan plateau has made this small community tense and fearful.

On Tuesday (Jan. 29), Kunchok Kyab, 26, set fire to himself near the monastery in an apparent protest against Chinese rule. The Tibetan farmer, married with an infant son, died from his injuries, reported Tibetan exile media.

His self-immolation, the third in Bora, took the total to 99 since the first such protest in February 2009, according to the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India. More than 80 such desperate acts have happened in the past 12 months alone.

"We can understand those that self-immolate, as their feelings of frustration are shared by all Tibetans," said a wheat farmer, 23, near Labrang Monastery. "We all want the Dalai Lama to return and religious freedom for Tibet, that's why they do it."

Tibetans who spoke with a reporter requested anonymity out of fear of retribution from Chinese police.

The rise in public protest suicides is a major concern for the government, which in 2008 faced violent riots in the Tibetan capital Lhasa and a wave of protests in Tibetan areas. Government authorities have responded to the protesters with more crackdowns.

In its latest move, the Chinese government now treats self-immolation as a crime and charges anyone inciting the act with "intentional murder." Seven people in Tsoe were arrested this month for their alleged role in an October 2012 self-immolation, and two others went on trial Saturday in Sichuan Province on a similar charge, reported Xinhua, China's official news agency. Authorities have increased security and restricted access to the most restive towns and monasteries.

Tashi Thuntsok, spokesman for the Tibetan government-in-exile, says Beijing is to blame for the deaths.

The self-immolations are caused by "political repression, cultural assimilation, religious suppression and environmental destruction. If China could see reality and alleviate the sufferings and grievances of Tibetans in Tibet, there would be no such drastic actions or demonstrations," Tashi said.

China asserted authority over Tibet in 1951. Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, 77, fled to India after a failed uprising in 1959 and established a government in exile. Beijing tightly controls the Himalayan region and accuses the Dalai Lama and exile organizations

of plotting the self-immolations. Some Tibetans say that communist rule is denying them basic freedoms and that authorities are wiping out their culture.

Eight self-immolations have occurred inside what China calls the Tibet Autonomous Region, with the rest scattered across the ethnic Tibetan areas of three neighboring provinces. In the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of south Gansu province, in the region Tibetans call Amdo, local residents expressed sadness last week at the ongoing loss of life and appeared fearful of the security crackdown. Several strongly rejected Beijing's argument that the fiery protests are organized by outsiders.

Bora has a history of defying Chinese authorities. In 2008, horsemen descended on Bora for a dramatic protest that included raising the illegal flag of Tibetan independence. Last March, more than 60 monks from the monastery held a protest march.

"We must preserve our language and our religion; they are fundamental to Tibetan culture," said one student of Tibetan literature, rotating some of Bora Monastery's many Buddhist prayer wheels to gain spiritual merit. In nearby Tsoe, where she studies, new street slogans reveal the Chinese government's latest propaganda campaign.

"Respect life, love living" reads one red banner outside a college campus, joining the perennial calls for "national unity" and "harmonious society." In colleges throughout ethnic Tibetan areas, officials give lectures to warn students against self-immolation and to blame the Dalai Lama for causing trouble.

The Chinese government says it protects Tibetan culture, citing projects such as the \$48 million renovation of Labrang, one of the key monasteries in Tibetan Buddhism, two hours' drive from Bora. The surrounding town, Sangchu, is fast expanding, but the growth appears mostly in its Han Chinese half, not the traditional, one-story Tibetan quarters.

"Religion is a paradox in China, as the regime both suppresses it severely and sponsors it," said Michael Davis, an American expert on Tibet at the University of Hong Kong.

Chinese officials struggle to understand Tibetan frustration, Davis said.

Rising self-awareness among Tibetans combines with Chinese repression to spark resentment and resistance, Davis said. Self-immolations will continue as long as Tibetans feel they lack other avenues to express grievances, such as anger at language policies aimed at assimilating Tibetans, he added.

"They think, 'you ungrateful people, you're biting the hands that feed you,' but the money that has poured into Tibetan regions is often viewed as benefiting the Chinese, not the Tibetans," he said.

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## **Imprisoned Christian sees family visits cut**

CSW - The wife of imprisoned Christian and former house church leader Uyghur Alimujiang Yimiti (also known as Alimjan Himit/Yimit) has been informed by the prison authorities that her monthly visits are being reduced to one visit every three months.

On Wednesday this week Gulinuer went to visit her husband at Xinjiang No. 3 Prison, but was refused entry. Their last meeting in November 2012 lasted just 15 minutes. Since then she has spoken to her husband once by phone, on New Year's Day.

Alimujiang Yimiti is a Muslim convert to Christianity from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. He was detained in January 2008 and on 16 March 2010 he was sentenced to 15 years in prison and five years' deprivation of political rights for illegally providing "state secrets" outside China. His former lawyer, Li Dunyong, believes he was actually detained for speaking to foreign Christians. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has stated that "the deprivation of liberty of Mr. Alimujiang Yimiti is arbitrary, being in contravention of [...] the Universal Declaration of Human Rights".

Previously In 2007, the Kashgar Municipal Bureau for Ethnic and Religious Affairs in Xinjiang ruled that Yimiti had "engaged in illegal religious infiltration activities in Kashi area in the name of work. He preached Christianity, distributed religious propaganda materials and converted people to Christianity among ethnic Uighurs."

Two appeals filed by Yimiti's lawyers in January 2010 and March 2011 were rejected. Gulnuer believes the prison authorities' decision this week could be connected to her husband's current appeal. Lawyer Li believes the restrictions are illegal and "made up", since the normal allowance for visits is one per month. However, Yimiti's wife remains hopeful that the appeal will succeed.

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## **2012's top 10 cases of persecution of Churches and Christians in China**

China Aid (16.01.2013) - 2012 was a year of dramatic upheavals for the Chinese government and Chinese society. The eruption of one explosive and unexpected incident after another provided the Chinese people as well as the rest of the world with a stream of cliff-hanging, dramatic news stories. Current events changed, a leadership transition took place, but the church of Jesus Christ continued to be on the receiving end of various forms of persecution. Nevertheless, the church continued to quietly hold fast to the faith, awaiting the fullness of the days of suffering.

The selection of 2012's top 10 persecution cases (some are combinations of multiple cases) was made based on the severity, impact and significance of each incidence of persecution and is a highly representative list. These incidents took place in different parts of China and involved both urban and rural house churches, as well as "Three-Self" churches and Catholic churches, and included individual Christian victims, among them pastors, human rights lawyers, political dissidents, college students and victims of China's one-child family planning policy.

### **I. Attorney Gao Zhisheng is still alive, serving a three-year prison term in remote Xinjiang**

On Jan. 1, 2012, ChinaAid learned that prominent Christian rights defense lawyer Gao Zhisheng, who had been severely persecuted for many years by the Chinese government headed by Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao and forcibly "disappeared" for 20 months, had been sent to Shaya Prison (*see photo at right*) in the Aksu region of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to serve a three-year prison term. Soon after, Gao Zhisheng's eldest brother, Gao Zhiyi, accompanied by Gao Zhisheng's father-in-law and two sisters, travelled several thousand kilometers (miles) to the remote Shaya Prison to visit him, but on Jan. 10, the prison refused to allow them to see Gao, claiming that "Gao Zhisheng does not want to see his relatives." On August 27, Li Xiongbin and Li Subin, two well-known rights Beijing defense lawyers engaged by Gao Zhiyi, traveled to Shaya Prison and applied for permission to meet with Gao Zhisheng, but Shaya Prison and the Bureau of

Prison Management denied their request, saying that their "[legal] representation [of Gao] is invalid and attorney Gao himself does not want to meet with any family members or attorneys."

## **II. Beijing Shouwang Church – nearly two years of persecution, facing an uncertain future**

Since April 10, 2011, the well-known Beijing Shouwang Church has been forced to hold its worship services outdoors, enduring non-stop persecution to this day at the hands of the Beijing government. In the past 20-plus months, many believers were taken into police custody, verbally and physically abused, put under house arrest, and etc. The reason for Shouwang Church being forced to hold outdoor worship services was the government's long-term unlawful interference and pressure, locking the church out of its leased meeting site and then preventing the church from taking possession of the keys to property it had purchased. On Sept. 14, 2012, senior pastor Jin Tianming followed the unique model of house churches defending their rights by using the law and applied on behalf of Shouwang Church for an administrative review of the actions of the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau. According to the data collected by Shouwang Church, by September 2012, because they persisted in attending outdoor worship services, "members of Shouwang Church were detained 1,600 times by either Domestic Security Protection agents in various districts [of Beijing] or in more 90 different police stations across Beijing (for periods of several hours to 48 hours). Sixty people were evicted from their homes and more than 10 people lost their jobs because they attended Shouwang Church's outdoor worship services or simply because they were Shouwang Church members; others were sent back to their hometowns and some believers were confined to their homes on the weekends, while Shouwang Church's pastors, elders and ministers remain confined to their homes up to the present time."

## **III. A Chinese Christian businesswoman from Canada visited Shouwang Church and Jindengtai Church; kidnapped and tortured**

Just before Christmas in 2011, Jenny Chen, a Chinese Christian businesswoman who lives in Canada and does business in Canada, the United States and China, was in China for business, and while under surveillance by Beijing Domestic Security Protection agents, visited Jin Tianming, senior pastor of Shouwang Church, who had been under house arrest for over eight months. She also went to the Jindeng Church established by Shanxi Linfen house church and saw with her own eyes that regular and armed police had surrounded the church with armored personnel carriers, sealed the streets, closed nearby shops and prevented church members from attending a Christmas worship service. On Jan. 14, 2012, she was kidnapped from her own home in Tianjin by two men who refused to show identification and taken to a secret place for questioning. She later realized that she had been kidnapped by state security agents. She was interrogated in a cold, windowless cell with only one chair. During her two days of detention, state security agents punched and kicked this woman in her 50s, pulled her hair and fiercely slapping her in the face. Already ill from being deprived of food and water, this sister almost went into shock and had to be taken to the Tianjin Public Security Hospital from where she escaped and boarded a flight to Los Angeles. She arrived in Los Angeles on Jan. 17, where she received further medical treatment.

## **IV. Christian rights defense lawyers and dissidents given long prison sentences or are murdered; China's Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao government embarrasses the world**

During the Arab "Jasmine Revolution," Zhu Yufu posted the poems "It's time" and "To the Enemy's Rear" online, as a way to enlighten people. Because of this, he was summoned and detained by the Wangjiang police station, in the Shancheng District the Hangzhou

Public Security Bureau on March 5, 2011. On April 11, he was formally arrested for allegedly "inciting subversion of state power." This was Zhu's third incarceration for political reasons; he had previously been imprisoned for a total of nine years. He was tried by the Hangzhou Intermediate People's Court on Jan. 31, 2012 and convicted on Feb. 10, 2012 of "inciting subversion of state power" and sentenced to seven years in prison and three years deprivation of political rights. With credit for time served, his sentence runs from March 5, 2011 to March 4, 2018.

Ms. Ni Yulan, a Beijing human rights lawyer and Christian, started in 2002 to expose the forced demolition of housing in Beijing in advance of the 2008 Olympics Games and was sentenced to a one-year prison term for it. She was so brutally beaten that her legs were permanently disabled. On Feb. 11, 2011, John Huntsman, then U.S. ambassador to China, visited Ni and had a picture taken with her. On April 6, Ni and her husband, Dong Jiqin, were taken into custody by Beijing Xicheng district police for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," and the Xicheng district procuratorate approved her formal arrest. Around July 13, the charge of "fraud" was added to her alleged crimes. She was tried on Dec. 29 in Xicheng District Court, but the court did not announce a sentence. On the morning of April, 10, 2012, the Beijing Xicheng District Court sentenced well-known human rights defense lawyer Ni and her husband to prison terms of two-years, eight-months and two years, respectively, for fraud and "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."

Li Wangyang, a political dissident and Christian from Shaoyang, Hunan province, was a workers' movement leader in the 1989 pro-democracy protests and was released from prison in 2012 after serving 21 years. Because he had agreed to be interviewed by foreign journalists, Li was suddenly found dead on June 6 in a heavily-guarded hospital in Shaoyang's Daxiang district. The police maintained that he had "committed suicide by hanging" and quickly cremated his body. Li's infuriated family hired Christian rights defense lawyer Tang Jingling to file a criminal lawsuit in accordance with the law, but the local Domestic Security Protection agents and others deliberately created difficulties for him and detained him. On July 23, ten Chinese lawyers published an open letter asking the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee to re-open the investigation into Li Wangyang's death, but there have been no further developments.

## **V. Forced abortions in Shaanxi and Hunan; bloody reality shocks the world**

On June 2, 2012, in Zeng Family town, Zhenping county, in the city of Ankang, Shaanxi province, Feng Jianmei, more than seven months pregnant, was abducted by local government officials and taken to a hospital where she was forcibly aborted of her unborn baby. Her baby girl was brutally killed. The victim, Feng Jianmei, and her husband, Deng Jiyuan, are both Christians. Mr. Zhang Kai, a young well-known Christian lawyer from Beijing who had handled the infamous "My father is Li Gang" hit-and-run case outside the Hebei University campus and the Qian Yunhui case in Zhejiang province which shocked all of China, boldly and publicly took on this case. Mr. Yang Zhizhu, a former law professor at China Youth College of Political Sciences who has long been concerned about and has condemned the one-child policy, also started to take part in this rights defense case. In the meantime, Zhang Kai also took on the case of Wu Liangjie of Xianyou county, Fujian province, whose wife was aborted of her seven-month unborn son by the government on April 6. Overseas, ChinaAid actively appealed on behalf of this couple and made diplomatic efforts. Eventually, the government gave the two families large sums of money as financial compensation, the first such success in rights defense cases involving "family planning." On June 6, local family planning officials and government officials in Changsha, Hunan province, dragged Cao Ruyi, who was five months pregnant, to a hospital, beat her, and were about to force her to have an abortion. However, due to the immediate advocacy of ChinaAid, especially a timely letter from Congressman Chris Smith to the Changsha government in Hunan province, as well as the efforts of the international community, Ms. Cao gave birth to her child safely a few

months later. On July 5, the European Parliament voted on and passed a "Resolution on the forced abortion scandal in China (2012/2712(RSP)" in response to the tragedy of Feng Jianmei's forced abortion, strongly condemning the human rights abuses committed in the enforcement of China's one-child policy. (On June 19, Hu Xia of Zhengjiamen village, Shangche town, Jianli county, Hubei province, was forcibly aborted of her eight-month-old unborn baby by local officials.)

#### **VI. Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin publicly rebels against the official Catholic church, wins the praise and support of the Vatican**

On July 7, 2012, ignoring the Vatican's anger and strong protest, China's official Patriotic Catholic Association conducted ordination ceremonies in Shanghai and Harbin without the approval of the Vatican. In his speech at the ordination mass at St. Ignatius Cathedral in Xujiahui, Shanghai, auxiliary Bishop Ma Daqin (called assistant bishop by the government) of the Shanghai diocese said that, as an auxiliary bishop appointed by the Vatican, he would resign from his position in the Patriotic Association, effective immediately, and would focus on pastoral duties and evangelism. He was later taken away by the authorities and has disappeared. He was reportedly being detained at Sheshan monastery outside Shanghai of which he is a member. Ma Daqin was formerly a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association and the deputy director of Shanghai Patriotic Catholic Association. After the incident, the spokesperson of the "one association and one conference," i.e. the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Bishops Conference of the Catholic Church in China, said on July 11, "Serious violations of the regulations of the Bishops Conference of the Catholic Church in China regarding the appointment of bishops are suspected of having taken place during the ordination mass of Shanghai's auxiliary bishop on July 7. The 'one association and one conference' of the Chinese Catholic Church is currently conducting an investigation and assessment." In a statement issued after the incident, the Vatican praised Ma Daqin as "admirable and inspiring." ChinaAid also issued a statement expressing understanding and admiration for Bishop Ma Daqin's actions.

#### **VII. House church in Xinjiang's Hotan suffers continued persecution; minister Zhong Shuguang looks heavenward in faith**

On Sunday March 4, 2012, , more than 50 believers were attending a worship service at an ethnic Han Chinese house church in the city of Hotan, in the southern part of the Xinjiang Uyighur Autonomous Region, when it was raided by police and Domestic Security Protection agents. Minister Zhong Shuguang, in whose home the church meets, was taken to the police station and released later the same day. Computers, projectors and other items used in the service were confiscated and later returned. On March 9, Zhong was given a 15-day administrative detention sentence. In April and May, the church hired Christian rights defense lawyers to file for an administrative review and saw good progress. On July 2, the Hotan Public Security Bureau raided the church in retaliation, seizing church items again and putting Zhong under administrative detention again. On Sunday July 22, 17 brothers and sisters from this church, including Zhong Shuguang's wife, were taken into police custody and released later same day. Since July, the township government has illegally shut off the electric supply to Zhong's home, and his family has had to rely on candles for illumination at night. The local government told Zhong that house church Christians are not allowed to hold meetings, and would be seized whenever they gathered together; all meetings, regardless of size, are banned. The local government also said that this was due to "Xinjiang's special situation," and that there was nothing they could do, and this would not change.

#### **VIII. A "Three-Self" church in Yushu city, Jilin province, is persecuted by the government and developers for refusing to agree to the illegal demolition and relocation of its property**



From 2010 to 2012, because of collusion between the real estate developer and the municipal government, Chengjiao Street Christian Church in Yushu City, Jilin Province, was unable to reach an agreement on the demolition and removal of its church buildings, leading to a string of difficulties, threats and harassment. Church members petitioned higher authorities in accordance with the law, but were blocked at every turn. On July 20, 2012, developers beat and injured two women believers. In the three months following the attack, church members tried repeatedly to submit their complaint to various relevant government departments. But the Yushu offices of various national-level government departments refused to accept the complaints about the victims' medical bills and compensation, and also would not carry out their legal responsibility to investigate the criminal liability of the suspects and their illegal infringement of others' rights. Having no other recourse, church representatives in October applied for a permit to stage a protest march during which they planned to "bear six banners with slogans...make speeches along the way and shout slogans." On Oct. 30, their application was rejected by the Public Security Bureau. After Christian lawyers in Beijing were asked to intervene, church member Lu Yanping representing the majority of the congregation submitted an application for administrative review, seeking a decision on the legality of the Public Security Bureau's Oct. 30 "Notification of Rejection of Permit for Protest March (Yu, No. 201201)." Currently, the church's rights defense activities are still on-going.

#### **IX. Christians were punished for medical services and evangelistic activities in Inner Mongolia; two were sentenced to two years in labor camp**

In the morning of July 26, 2012, six Christians set out from the city of Tongliao in Inner Mongolia for rural parts of the autonomous region, stopping in places such as Jarud Banner, Tuquan County in Hinggan League, and the village of Shumugou, in Alide Sumu (township), in the Horqin Right Front Banner, where they held free medical clinics and evangelized among those who came for medical attention. On Aug. 1, they were in the hamlet of Zhongxinpu, in Shumugou village, Horqin Right Front Banner, in the city of Ulanhot, where they were providing medical services to the local people. Around 4 p.m., a local resident warned them that the police might be coming and advised them to leave quickly, which they did. However, they were stopped on the road by Domestic Security Protection agents of the Public Security Bureau, who detained them at the Horqin Right Front Banner police station and confiscated their van, medical equipment including an EKG machine and a laptop. At 5 p.m. on Aug. 3, the Horqin Right Front Banner's Domestic Security Protection agents called the families of the detainees and said they were being held for "being suspected of using cult activities to interfere with law enforcement." On Sept. 1, the Re-education Through Labor Management Committee of Hinggan League handed down its decision notification sentencing Ms. Sun Yuefen and Ms. Ren Zhimin to two years in a re-education-through-labor camp. From September to January, authorities detained three others who were involved in this medical-evangelistic effort. With the help of Christian rights defense lawyers, the victims have submitted a request for an administrative review of their case.

#### **X. Christians subjected to three kinds of persecution in Anhui, Guangdong and Shenzhen**

**Christian college student-volunteers encounter local thugs:** On July 16, 2012, when schools were on summer break, a house church in Jiangzhai town, Linquan county, Anhui province, with help from Beijing's Haidian Church, offered extra summer classes in an effort to help lower the dropout rates of local students. Eighty-two elementary school and middle school students were being tutored by seven college students studying in Beijing. On July 19 and 20, the local Public Security Bureau, Domestic Security Protection agents and government agents raided the class and forcibly shut it down. They expelled the college students, and violated the law in law enforcement, verbally and physically abusing church staff and creating a negative impact on society. Some of the student volunteers were subjected to political investigation by their schools after they returned to

Beijing. Lu Gensheng, a church staff member and coordinator of the college students' volunteer activities, was beaten by government agents and suffered a lower back injury. On Sep. 11, the church's pastor and all staff members submitted a complaint to the county-level People's Congress, Public Security Bureau and People's Procuratorate, asking that the legal responsibility of two of the perpetrators be investigated in accordance with the law.

**Dongguan House Church shut down:** On Aug. 20, 2012, Putian House Church in Gaobu town, Dongguan, Guangdong province, was shut down by the township government. The door of the church was sealed and water and electricity supply was cut off. The church had existed for five years and served migrant workers. In accordance with the law, Pastor Du Yaping submitted to the municipal government an application on behalf of the church for administrative review. On Sep. 18, he was notified that the government would not take on the case. The church then filed a lawsuit against the Religious Affairs Bureau and the township government. On Dec. 25, the court gave Du Yaping a written decision turning down the church's requests for litigation. On Dec. 28, continuing to defend its legitimate religious rights through the law, the church submitted an appeal to Dongguan Intermediate People's Court.

**Shenzhen Church engages in street evangelism, is accused of Qigong activities:** On Dec. 8, 2012, Cao Nan, a well-known preacher from the Shenzhen house church, was taken into custody by police from Yuanling Police Station, along with seven lay workers, when they were evangelizing in Lychee Park. They were released the next day. On Dec. 15, Cao Nan was detained again with eight other Christians when they were evangelizing and witnessing for Christ in the park. The others were released late that same night while Cao Nan was transferred to a detention center and held for 13 days under administrative detention. He was accused of engaging in Qigong activities and was held until Dec. 28. The two outdoor evangelistic activities in the park reached large numbers of people, and this pioneering approach will have a lasting and profound impact.

### **Conclusion:**

For the Chinese people, 2012 was a year of both anxiety and hope. Persecuted churches and Christians quietly held fast to the Bible's teachings, prayed for the persecutors, prayed for the peace of the city in which they suffered, thus becoming Chinese society's city on a hill and light in the darkness.

The representative cases above also show that the model of using the law to defend church rights has been popularized and that Christians have developed an unprecedented high degree of awareness of using the law to defend their rights, a development that has given strong impetus to the development of China's citizenship rights and civil society and improvements in the rule of law. The positive influence of ChinaAid, a Christian human rights organization, on China's overall situation has grown, bringing glory to the holy name of Jesus Christ.

Thus, in the midst of enduring persecution, in the midst of the selfless sacrifice and quiet perseverance of countless church leaders and Christians, the Christian church in China is growing by leaps and bounds, and exerting an unprecedented and beautiful influence on society through Christianity's unique ethical culture. The vibrant and powerful waves of this new culture are creating a brand new civilization for China.

Blessed are those who participate in advancing this civilization and history. As Beijing Shouwang Church stated in its year-end review, "You crown the year with your bounty and your carts overflow with abundance." (Psalm 65:11)

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## **Police raid Chinese house church Alliance's Bible study meeting**

China Aid Association (07.01.2013) - Local police raided a Bible study being held by members of the Chinese House Church Alliance on 4 January and banned the alliance from ordaining new clergy, ChinaAid has learned.

The raid was carried out at 12:30 p.m. on Jan. 4 in the city of Nanyang, Henan province, by seven people from the Nanyang Public Security Bureau, the Baihe township police station and the religious affairs bureau. The police officers and government officials ordered the Bible study attendees to register their names and banned the alliance from ordaining new clergy.

Alliance chairman Zhang Mingxuan negotiated with the authorities while the group continued with its lawful Bible study meeting. After the attendees had registered their names, the authorities left and the Bible study continued to meet.

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## **Hebei Catholics: Penal Code reform means Xi Jinping must free imprisoned bishops and priests**

AsiaNews (03.01.2013) - The new laws, in force since 1st January 2013, provide for immediate access to a lawyer; immediate notification for the relatives; limits detention without trial to six months. Bishops and priests imprisoned without trial for seven years or more, should be allowed return home or receive visits from their relatives. Optimism of some faithful Hebei; skepticism of other church figures.

Hebei priests and faithful are eagerly awaiting the return of their bishops and priests who have disappeared in police custody for years. From 1st January 2013, their hope of seeing their pastors, some detainees without trial for 15 years and more, it also has a legal basis.

Since the beginning of this year, in fact, the reformed penal code has passed into law which, at least in intention, aims to "respect and protect human rights." An example of this is that under the new law no one should be forced to incriminate themselves and all arrests must be based on evidence "obtained in a legal manner", i.e. not through torture.

The law also ensures immediate access to a lawyer within 48 hours of a request being made, and that the relatives of the suspect are to be informed of the circumstances and place of detention. Moreover during the period of detention, the suspect must be guaranteed an adequate diet and sleep. Finally, the police cannot detain a person without charge for more than six months.

A Hebei priest told *AsiaNews* that under these new laws, enacted in the era of Xi Jinping, Msgr. James Su Zhimin, the underground bishop of Baoding (ds in the photo), 80, who disappeared in police custody 15 years ago, should be able to return home. His family every year, on the anniversary of his kidnapping, ask the police where their relative is being held, as of this year they will finally have an answer different from the one received in the past ("We do not know!").

There is also "legal" hope for Msgr. Cosma Shi Enxiang, 90 years old, underground bishop of Yixian. Arrested by police and detained without trial since 201, according to the new laws he should be able to return to his family and its dynamic diocese.

Hope for all the priests arrested and sentenced to forced labor without trial: last year AsiaNews listed at least six. Among these, the most prominent personality is certainly Fr. Joseph Lu clergyman, vicar general of the underground diocese of Baoding (Hebei), missing in the hands of the police since February 17, 2006. His faithful await his return. They have told AsiaNews: "If he is not released, this would be unfair, under the new law, they must at least say where he is secluded and grant us the right to go and visit him."

Other church figures do not share the enthusiasm of these faithful in Hebei. They point out that the new legislation does not assert the independence of the judiciary from the Communist Party, which still oversees the application of each law. And they recall that in 2004 there was the amendment to the constitution to include the phrase "respect for and protection of human rights." But since then nothing has changed.

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