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Executive Summary

The constitution states citizens have "freedom of religious belief" but limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities." The constitution also proclaims the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. The government exercised state control over religion and restricted the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents when these were perceived, even potentially, to threaten state or Chinese Communist Party (CCP) interests, including social stability. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned "patriotic religious associations" (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant), are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services.

There were reports the government tortured, physically abused, detained, arrested, sentenced to prison, or harassed a number of religious adherents of both registered and unregistered groups for activities related to their religious beliefs and practices. Human rights organizations stated police shot and killed Uighur Muslims during house raids and protests after disagreements arose due to stricter government controls on religious expression and practice. The government increasingly cited concerns over the "three evils" of "separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism" as grounds to enact and enforce repressive restrictions on religious practices of Uighur Muslims." Four lawyers were detained and reportedly tortured in Heilongjiang Province after they attempted to investigate an extrajudicial detention facility where Falun Gong practitioners were reported to be held. The government sentenced Zhang Shaojie, a prominent state-sanctioned Christian pastor, to 12 years in prison on charges connected to his advocacy on behalf of his church community. Local authorities also shuttered many churches under the pastor's jurisdiction as head of the district Protestant organization. As a result, hundreds of individuals were unable to worship in the church of their choosing. Authorities in Zhejiang Province ordered the destruction of hundreds of Christian churches and crosses as part of a campaign to demolish illegal structures. Media sources reported one pastor was arrested on public order charges for protesting the destruction of his church. In Guangdong Province, police took nearly 50 Zen Buddhists into custody, including 20 children, after raiding their businesses and homes to examine residency registration documents. Authorities later arrested leader Wu Zeheng and more than a dozen followers on charges of using an "evil cult" to undermine the implementation of the law. According to media and nongovernmental organization (NGO) reports, 11 Tibetans, including monks, nuns, and laypersons, self-immolated in protest of restrictive religious policies. Authorities often justified official interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by associating them with separatism and

pro-independence activities, including routinely blaming the Dalai Lama for instigating self-immolations and other protests against government practices.

Local authorities in many areas pressured unaffiliated religious believers to join patriotic associations and used a variety of means, including administrative detention, to punish members of unregistered religious or spiritual groups. For example, authorities in Sichuan Province arrested 36 members of several unregistered churches, reportedly including children and elderly persons, many of whom received sentences of at least 10 days. In some parts of the country, however, local authorities tacitly approved or did not interfere with the activities of unregistered groups. After months of increasingly restrictive policies for Uighur Muslims, the Xinjiang government approved a ban on the practice of religion in government buildings and wearing clothes associated with "religious extremism." Authorities also approved a ban on the wearing of Islamic veils in public in the capital city of Urumqi.

Because religion, culture, and ethnicity are often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on religious identity. Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists experienced severe societal discrimination, especially around sensitive periods.

U.S. officials at the highest levels, including the President and the Secretary of State, repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns and pressed for the expansion of religious freedom. U.S. officials consistently urged the government to adhere to internationally recognized rights of religious freedom, protested violations of religious freedom, acknowledged positive trends, and met with members of religious communities, including those being persecuted for their beliefs. The embassy protested the imprisonment of individuals on charges related to their religious practices and other abuses of religious freedom. The Ambassador hosted functions for various religious groups and highlighted the importance of religious freedom during a visit to Xinjiang. The embassy arranged for religious leaders and scholars to visit the United States to deepen their understanding of the role of religion in American society. Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated China a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom, and most recently redesignated the country in July.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 1.4 billion (July 2014 estimate). In its report to the UN Human Rights Council during China's Universal Periodic Review in October 2013, the government stated there were more than 100 million religious believers, 360,000 clergy, 140,000 places of worship, and 5,500 religious groups. Estimates of the numbers of religious believers vary widely. For example, a 2007 survey conducted by East China Normal University states that 31.4 percent of citizens aged 16 years and over, or approximately 300 million people, are religious believers. The same survey estimates there are 200 million Buddhists, Taoists, or worshippers of folk gods, although accurate estimates are difficult to make because many adherents practice exclusively at home.

According to the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), there are more than 21 million Muslims in the country; unofficial estimates range as high as 50 million. Hui Muslims are concentrated primarily in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. Uighur Muslims live primarily in Xinjiang. According to Xinjiang Statistics Bureau data from 2012, there are 10.37 million Uighurs in Xinjiang.

Prior to the government's 1999 ban on Falun Gong, a self-described spiritual discipline, it was estimated that there were 70 million adherents.

The 2011 Blue Book of Religions, produced by the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a research institution directly under the State Council, reports the number of Protestants to be between 23 and 40 million. A June 2010 SARA report estimates there are 16 million Protestants affiliated with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the state-sanctioned umbrella organization for all officially-recognized Protestant churches. According to 2012 Pew Research Center estimates, there are 68 million Protestant Christians, of whom 23 million are affiliated with the TSPM.

According to SARA, more than 5.5 million Catholics worship in sites registered by the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA). The Pew Center estimates there are nine million Catholics on the mainland, 5.7 million of whom are affiliated with the CPA.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution states citizens have "freedom of religious belief," but limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities." The constitution does not define "normal." The constitution provides for the right to hold or not hold a religious belief and states that state organs, public organizations, and individuals may not discriminate against citizens "who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion." The law does not allow for legal action to be taken against the government on the basis of the religious freedom protections afforded by the constitution. Criminal law allows the state to sentence government officials to up to two years in prison if they violate a citizen's religious freedom. There were no reported cases of such prosecutions during the year.

The government has signed, but not ratified, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides all individuals the right to "adopt a religion or belief" of choice and manifest belief through "worship, observance, and practice."

CCP members are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. Members who belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion, although these rules are not universally enforced. The vast majority of public office holders are CCP members.

Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned "patriotic religious associations" (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Protestant) are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services. Other religious groups, such as Protestant groups unaffiliated with the official patriotic religious association or Catholics professing loyalty to the Vatican, are not permitted to register as legal entities. Proselytizing in public or meeting in unregistered places of worship is not permitted. Tibetan Buddhists in China are not free to venerate the Dalai Lama (see Tibet section). Religious groups independent of the five official government patriotic religious associations have difficulty obtaining any other legal status and are vulnerable to coercive and punitive action by SARA, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), and other party or government security organs.

All religious organizations are required to register with SARA or its provincial and local offices. Registered religious organizations are allowed to possess property, publish approved materials, train staff, and collect donations. According to regulations, religious organizations must submit information about the organization's historical background, doctrines, key publications, minimum funding requirements, and a government sponsor. Due to the difficulty of fulfilling these requirements, many religious organizations either remain unregistered or register as commercial enterprises.

In addition to the five nationally recognized religions, local governments have legalized certain religious communities and practices, such as Orthodox Christianity in Xinjiang, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, and Guangdong provinces. Some ethnic minorities retain traditional religions, such as Dongba among the Naxi people in Yunnan Province and Buluotuo among the Zhuang in Guangxi Province. Worship of the folk deity Mazu has been reclassified as "cultural heritage" rather than religious practice.

Certain religious or spiritual groups are banned by law. The criminal law defines banned groups as "evil cults," and those belonging to them can be sentenced to prison. A judicial explanation states this term refers to: "those illegal groups that have been found using religions, *qigong* [a traditional Chinese exercise discipline], or other things as a camouflage, deifying their leading members, recruiting and controlling their members, and deceiving people by molding and spreading superstitious ideas, and endangering society." There are no published criteria for determining, or procedures for challenging, such a designation. The government maintains a ban on the Guanyin Method Sect (Guanyin Famen or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy), Zhong Gong (a *qigong* exercise discipline), and Falun Gong. The government also considers several Christian groups to be "evil cults," including the Shouters, Eastern Lightning, Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), Full Scope Church, Spirit Sect, New Testament Church, Three Grades of Servants (or San Ban Pu Ren), Association of Disciples, Lord God Sect, Established King Church, Unification Church, Family of Love, and South China Church.

The religious and social regulations permit official patriotic religious associations to engage in activities, such as building places of worship, training religious leaders, publishing literature, and providing social services to local communities. The CCP's United Front Work Department, SARA, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs provide policy guidance and supervision on the implementation of these regulations, which are often enforced in an arbitrary manner. Most leaders of official government religious organizations serve in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a CCP-led body that provides advice to the central government from business leaders, academics, and other segments of society.

SARA has stated through a policy posted on its website that family and friends have the right to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study, without registering with the government.

The law permits domestic NGOs, including religious organizations, to receive donations in foreign currency. The law requires documented approval by SARA of donations from foreign sources to domestic religious groups of more than one million renminbi (RMB) (\$161,160). Overseas donations received by religious organizations receive favorable tax treatment if the funds are used for charitable activities.

The government offers some subsidies for the construction of state-sanctioned places of worship and religious schools.

The government and the Holy See do not have diplomatic relations, and the Vatican has no representative in the country. The CPA does not recognize the authority of the Holy See to appoint bishops; approximately 40 Catholic bishops remain independent of the CPA and operate unofficially. Several of those bishops have been detained for many years or are under close government surveillance. In April 2013, the CPA promulgated the Regulation on the Election and Consecration of Bishops, requiring candidate bishops to publicly pledge support for the CCP. The CPA allows the Vatican discreet input into selecting some bishops, and an estimated 90 percent of CPA bishops have reconciled with the Vatican. Nevertheless, in some locations local authorities reportedly pressure unregistered Catholic priests and believers to renounce all ordinations

approved by the Holy See. Most of the Catholic bishops previously appointed by the government as CPA bishops later were elevated by the Vatican through apostolic mandates.

By regulation, if a religious structure is to be demolished or relocated because of city planning or construction of key projects, the party responsible for demolishing the structure should consult with its local Bureau of Religious Affairs (administered by SARA) and the religious group using the structure. If all parties agree to the demolition, the party conducting the demolition should agree to rebuild the structure or provide compensation equal to its appraised market value.

Registered religious organizations are allowed to compile and print religious materials for internal use. To distribute religious materials publicly, an organization must follow national printing regulations, which restrict the publication and distribution of literature with religious content. Under the law, religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles and Qurans, may be confiscated and unauthorized publishing houses closed.

Parents are permitted to instruct children under the age of 18 years in the beliefs of officially recognized religious groups and children may participate in religious activities. Xinjiang officials, however, require minors to complete nine years of compulsory education before they can receive religious education. The law imposes penalties on adults who "force" minors to participate in religious activities.

The teaching of atheism in schools is allowed.

The law states job applicants shall not face discrimination in hiring based on factors including religious belief.

Strict birth limitation policies remain in parts of the country despite relaxations proposed by the CCP in November 2013. Some religious adherents oppose the state's family planning policy for reasons of religious belief and practice.

Foreign residents who belong to religious groups not officially recognized by the government report being permitted to practice their religions, although, according to the rules, foreigners may not proselytize, conduct religious activities at unregistered venues, or conduct religious activities with local citizens at religious venues. The constitution states official government religious bodies are not "subject to any foreign domination." A CCP directive to universities provides guidance on how to prevent proselytizing among university students by foreigners.

The government allows some foreign educational institutions to provide religious materials in Chinese, which are used by both registered and unregistered religious groups.

Some critics state amendments to the mental health law still do not provide meaningful legal protections for Falun Gong practitioners, members of unregistered religious organizations, and others sent to psychiatric facilities for political reasons.

Government Practices

There were reports the government tortured, physically abused, detained, arrested, sentenced to prison, or harassed a number of religious adherents of both registered and unregistered groups for activities related to their religious beliefs and practices. Human rights organizations stated police shot and killed Uighur Muslims during house raids and protests after disagreements arose due to stricter government controls on religious expression and practice. The government increasingly cited concerns over the "three evils" of "separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism" as grounds to enact and enforce repressive restrictions on religious practices of Uighur Muslims." Throughout the country, religious affairs officials and security organs scrutinized and restricted

the religious activities of registered and unregistered religious and spiritual groups, including assembling for religious worship, expressing religious beliefs in public and in private, and publishing religious texts. The government's repression of religious freedom remained severe in Xinjiang and in Tibetan areas (see Tibet section).

Human rights organizations reported in some instances security forces shot at groups of Uighurs in their homes or during worship. Authorities typically characterized these operations as targeting "separatists" or "terrorists." According to reports, these actions bred resentment, and at times, deadly protests. Media reported 37 civilians and 50 "terrorists" were killed and another 13 civilians wounded after protestors gathered in front of a police station and government offices in Kashgar Prefecture's Shache (Yarkand) County on July 28. Police arrested 215 people in connection with the incident, which protestors stated stemmed from the detention of women and girls who had refused to uncover their faces covered by headscarves. According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), on May 20 police killed two Uighurs when firing on protesters in Aksu Prefecture's Kucha County after they threatened to storm a government building. The protesters had gathered following the detention of 25 Uighur women and girls who had refused government instruction to uncover their faces covered by headscarves. RFA also reported police shot and killed 14 Uighurs during a house raid in Kashgar Prefecture's Konasheher County on December 15. While the government stated the security forces were attacked by a "terror gang," residents reported the violence was triggered by the lifting of a woman's veil by a police officer.

According to RFA, authorities in Xinjiang sentenced to prison 22 Uighurs for alleged illegal religious activities and other infractions in November. State media reported the Uighurs, including Muslim religious leaders accused of preaching illegally, received jail terms ranging from five to 16 years at a public sentencing in the western Xinjiang town of Kashgar.

In July a Nanle County, Henan Province, court sentenced Three-Self Church Pastor Zhang Shaojie, president of Nanle County's Christian TSPM Committee, to 12 years in prison for "picking quarrels and disturbing public order" and "fraud." Li Cairen, the prosecution's sole witness on the fraud charge, reportedly held in extrajudicial detention since December 2013, was unable to testify in person. In November local authorities placed Zhang Shaojie's daughter, Zhang Linxin, under extrajudicial detention for several days. Zhang Shaojie and more than 20 members of his Nanle County Christian Church had originally been detained by authorities in Henan province in November 2013. Many of the detainees had reportedly traveled to Beijing to petition authorities about a land dispute between the church and the Nanle County government. Advocacy groups reported authorities harassed and detained family members and other members of the church throughout the year.

Alimujiang Yimiti, the Uighur leader of an unregistered Christian church, continued to serve a 15-year sentence for "illegally providing state secrets or intelligence to foreign entities." An advocacy organization reported he was being kept under harsh conditions and visits with family had been reduced. Yimiti was sentenced in December 2009 by the Kashgar Prefecture Intermediate People's Court. His appeal was denied in March 2010, and he has not been permitted to meet with his lawyers since 2012.

On July 29, police officers in Guangdong Province arrested Buddhist leader Wu Zeheng after raiding the businesses and homes of members of his Buddhist spiritual group. Almost 50 people, including 20 children, were detained during the raids, and reports indicated Wu and 20 followers remained in detention at the end of the year as authorities gathered evidence to try his case. Wu had previously served 11 years in prison and continued to face harassment since his release in 2010.

Huang Yizi, pastor of Fengwo Church in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, was placed under criminal detention and formally arrested in August for "gathering a crowd to disrupt public order" after he and several congregants protested the demolition of a cross of a nearby church in July. He remained in custody at the end of the year.

In September authorities in Sichuan Province's Leibo County arrested 36 members of several unregistered village churches on charges of practicing cult worship. The detainees were reported to include children and elderly individuals, many of whom received administrative sentences of at least 10 days.

In August 2013, media reported public security officers from Qiadong District, Hebei Province, detained and took to an unknown location Song Wanjun, an underground Catholic priest of Hebei's Xiwanzi diocese. At year's end, his whereabouts remained unknown. There was no new information on Su Zhimin, an unregistered Catholic bishop who disappeared after being taken into police custody in 1996.

Thaddeus Ma Daqin, who is recognized by the Vatican as the successor to Aloysius Jin Luxian as Bishop of Shanghai, was rarely seen in public since announcing his resignation from the CPA during his July 2012 Vatican-sanctioned consecration ceremony. According to the Shanghai Religious Affairs Bureau, the CPA suspended Ma's right to conduct religious services for two years due to "improper consecration." He reportedly spent most of his time since in seclusion at the Sheshan Catholic Seminary outside Shanghai, although he occasionally posted on social media and his blog. The Shanghai diocese did not have a leader after Jin Luxian's death in April 2013, and at year's end it was being managed by a five-priest caretaker council.

Some unregistered Catholic clergy remained in detention, in particular in Hebei Province. Harassment of unregistered bishops and priests continued, including government surveillance and repeated detentions.

Individuals belonging to or supporting other banned groups were imprisoned or sentenced to administrative detention on charges such as "distributing evil cult materials" or "using a heretical organization to subvert the law."

Local authorities pressured religious believers to affiliate with patriotic associations and used administrative detention, including confinement and abuse in administrative detention centers, to punish members of unregistered religious or spiritual groups. While the National People's Congress Standing Committee passed legislation in December 2013, to abolish reeducation-through-labor camps and state media announced inmates would be released, state media later issued a clarification that all pre-abolition penalties would be considered legitimate. Advocacy groups reported some camps simply had been relabeled, and authorities continue to detain members of religious and spiritual groups in these renamed facilities.

According to the law, inmates have the right to believe in a religion and maintain their religious beliefs while in custody. In practice, some prisoners and detainees of faith were told to recant their beliefs (particularly Falun Gong practitioners, who reportedly endured "thought reform") or were not provided adequate access to religious materials, facilities, or clergy. Reports stated some prisons failed to accommodate prisoners' religious dietary requirements.

According to *Legal Daily*, a newspaper published under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice, the MPS directly administered 23 high-security psychiatric hospitals for the criminally insane (also known as *ankang* facilities). Unregistered religious believers and Falun Gong adherents were among those reported to be held solely for their religious associations in these institutions. Despite October 2012 legislation banning involuntary inpatient treatment (except in cases in which patients expressed an intent to harm themselves or others), critics stated the law did not provide

meaningful legal protection for persons sent to psychiatric facilities. Patients in these hospitals reportedly were given medicine against their will and sometimes subjected to electric shock treatment.

International Falun Gong-affiliated NGOs and international media reported detentions of Falun Gong practitioners continued to increase around sensitive dates. Authorities reportedly instructed neighborhood communities to report Falun Gong members to officials and offered monetary rewards to citizens who informed on Falun Gong practitioners. Detained practitioners were reportedly subjected to various methods of physical and psychological coercion in attempts to force them to renounce their beliefs. It remained difficult to confirm some aspects of reported abuses of Falun Gong adherents. Reports from overseas Falun Gong-affiliated advocacy groups estimated thousands of adherents in the country had been sentenced to terms of up to three years in administrative detention. According to the human rights monitoring NGO Dui Hua Foundation, there were 2,201 Falun Gong prisoners as of June 30.

In August a Falun Gong practitioner was detained in Mudanjiang City, Heilongjiang Province. Authorities detained lawyers Wang Yu, Li Chunfu, and Li Dunyong for seven hours when they attempted to visit her. Yu Ming, a Falun Gong practitioner from Shenyang, reportedly remained in detention at the end of the year and suffered physical and psychological abuse while imprisoned.

Falun Gong practitioners He Wenting and her husband Huang Guangyu were tried on May 20 at the Panyu District Detention Center for "using an evil cult organization to interfere with the implementation of the law." According to news reports and advocacy groups, the couple was detained for more than five months at the Fuyong Detention Center in Shawan City in Guangzhou after they were arrested for distributing free copies of internet censorship circumvention software at a Guangzhou university. After going on a hunger strike to protest her detention, He Wenting reported being restrained and force fed in a manner resulting in bruising, vomiting, and extreme physical pain. She reported prison officials attempted to "brainwash" her and asked her to sign a statement denouncing Falun Gong.

The CCP continued to maintain a Leading Small Group for Preventing and Dealing with the Problem of Heretical Cults as well as "610" offices (named for the date of its creation on June 10, 1999) to eliminate the Falun Gong movement and to address "evil cults."

After the June 2 arrests of six members of the Church of Almighty God on allegations of murder, state-media reported in June that Ningxia Province police had detained more than 1,000 members since 2012 and Liaoning Province police had arrested 113 leaders since 2013. In June Huang Mingfei, a member of the Church of Almighty God, was sentenced to five years in prison in Guangdong Province for "organizing and using a religious cult to break laws." Huang reportedly invited 39 people to her home and organized religious study sessions. In December state media reported Liaoning Province officials sentenced Zhang Shuzhi and Geng Yuqin to seven and four years in prison, respectively, for their recruitment activities. Also in December, 19 other members of the group in Jilin Province were sentenced to prison terms of between two and a half and six years.

Authorities released Wang Zhiwen from prison in October after serving a 15-year sentence for activities related to his Falun Gong practice. Following his release from prison, Wang was held in an administrative detention center and then placed under house arrest.

Human rights lawyers defending religious adherents were subject to harassment, detention, and professional pressure. In March human rights lawyers Zhang Junjie, Jiang Tianyong, Wang Cheng, Tang Jitian, and others were detained and reportedly beaten in Heilongjiang Province after they attempted to investigate an extrajudicial detention facility where Falun Gong practitioners were being held. Jiang Tianyong reported he was beaten with a water bottle by police, suspended

from the ceiling and stretched by ropes while in handcuffs, threatened with brainwashing classes, and repeatedly slammed against the wall. Official media reported the lawyers and others were fined and held in administrative detention for five to 15 days for "using cult activities to endanger society."

Human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, who had defended religious minorities including Christians and Falun Gong members, was released from prison in August after completing a three-year term. After his release, authorities continued to restrict his movement and access to medical care.

The government did not renew the professional licenses of a number of attorneys who advocated for religious freedom, and it imprisoned other religious freedom activists or otherwise impeded their work on behalf of religious clients. Authorities also harassed or detained the family members, including children, of religious leaders and religious freedom activists.

In parts of the country, local authorities tacitly approved of or did not interfere with the activities of some unregistered groups. Officials in many large urban areas, for example, increasingly allowed services in unregistered places of worship provided they remained small in scale and did not disrupt "social stability." In other areas, local officials punished the same activities by restricting events and meetings, confiscating and destroying property, physically assaulting and injuring participants, or imprisoning leaders and worshippers. Some local governments continued to restrict the growth of unregistered Protestant church networks and cross-congregational affiliations. In some parts of the country, authorities charged religious believers not affiliated with a patriotic religious association with various crimes, including "illegal religious activities" or "disrupting social stability."

Unregistered house churches fell outside of the TSPM structure. The government did not recognize house churches and maintained they did not exist. Although SARA has said family and friends had the right to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study, without registering with the government, authorities still regularly harassed and detained small groups that met for religious purposes in homes and other locations. Some house church members said they had more freedom than in the past to conduct religious services, as long as they gathered only in private.

Authorities in Liuzhou, Guangxi Province arrested and charged four individuals with "illegal business operations," reportedly for their compilation and distribution of a Christian textbook. On February 18, police took Cheng Jie, director of a Christian kindergarten established by the Liangren Church in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, and Mo Xiliu, a teacher, into custody. On February 21, the women were placed under criminal detention and charged by the Liuzhou Public Security Bureau with "engaging in an illegal business operation." The arrest and charges were reportedly due to the Christian textbooks used at the kindergarten, provided by the Liangren Church. Mo Xiliu was later released on bail. On June 23, Liuzhou police officers forcibly entered the home of Liangren Church missionary Ma Jiawen's house. Ma was not home at the time, but the police took his wife, Li Jiatao, into custody and confiscated a computer with some religious material. Police also detained Huang Quirui, a Liangren Church elder, and Fang Bin, a non-Christian contracted to print the Christian textbooks that same night. Li, Huang, and Fang were also charged with "illegal business operations." The case was awaiting trial at the end of the year.

Authorities often confiscated Bibles in raids on house churches.

In June 2013, a Shanxi court sentenced a bookstore owner and a fellow Christian to imprisonment of five and two years, respectively, on charges related to distribution of Christian books. One of the employees, Li Wenxi, was reportedly released in December. In Xinjiang, government authorities at times restricted the sale of the Quran.

Security officials frequently interrupted outdoor services of the unregistered Shouwang Church in Beijing and detained people attending those services for several days without charge. Reports indicated the average length of these detentions increased from hours to days. Several members of the church's leadership, including Pastor Jin Tingming, remained under periods of extrajudicial detention since leading open air services in 2011.

In Xinjiang, the government cited concerns over the three evils – "separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism" – as a reason to enact and enforce repressive restrictions on religious practices of Uighur Muslims. Authorities often failed to distinguish between peaceful religious practice and criminal or terrorist activities. It remained difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted those seeking political goals, the right to worship, or criminal acts.

The government reportedly sought the forcible return of ethnic Uighurs living outside the country, many of whom had sought asylum from religious persecution. Hundreds of ethnic Uighurs reportedly fled or attempted to flee to Southeast Asia through China's southern border. Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia all reported an increase in illegal immigrants believed to be Uighurs. In some cases third countries, Vietnam in particular, complied with Chinese requests for forcible return of Uighur asylum-seekers. There were reports of imprisonment and torture of Uighurs who were returned. The government's control of information coming out of Xinjiang, together with the increasingly tight security posture there, made it difficult to verify the conflicting reports.

In Xinjiang, retired CCP cadre Memetimin Tursuntohti was fined 1,000 RMB (\$161) by the Dol Township government for "ideological degradation," failure to attend political study sessions, and for praying at a mosque, according to the Lop County website.

On March 31, the People's High Court, Department of Public Security, Department of Culture, and Department of Industry and Commerce in Xinjiang announced a "joint crackdown" on videos and audio recordings the government defined as promoting terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism. It was forbidden to disseminate such materials on the internet, social media, and online marketplaces, according to the notice. As part of this "joint crackdown," the Xinjiang government announced on its website that police could randomly stop individuals to check their mobile phones for any sensitive content. Reportedly, many Uighurs subsequently opted to delete any religious content on their mobile devices, including Arabic audio files of Quran readings and photos featuring women in conservative religious dress.

There was increased pressure in official campaigns in Xinjiang to dissuade women from wearing religious clothing and men from wearing beards. Officials singled out lawyers and their families in these campaigns. The Xinjiang judicial affairs department website posted a statement in July saying, "Lawyers must commit to guaranteeing that family members and relatives do not wear burqas, veils, or participate in illegal religious activities, and that young men do not grow long beards."

In January newly appointed Hotan Municipal Government Party Secretary Chen Yuanhua asked all public and private medical organizations in Hotan to refuse service to women in religious dress, according to RFA. Chen stated that hospitals and clinics that treated women in religious dress, including veils, hijabs, and *jilbabs*, would risk losing their business licenses. This measure also forbade patients from performing the daily prayers while convalescing in hospitals or clinics.

Authorities in Bulaqsui reportedly kept "stability maintenance" registers that included information such as whether female Muslims wore a veil. Uighur sources also reported recipients of public welfare stipends were asked to sign a pledge not to cover their faces for religious reasons.

During July Kashgar Prefecture forced all current and retired government employees to sign a pledge not to grow long beards or wear veils during Ramadan, according to RFA. At least 70 Uighurs were arrested in Kashgar and Aksu Prefectures in April for growing long beards, possessing "illegal" religious materials, and for gathering, according to RFA. Turahan, a woman from Shayar County, Aksu Prefecture, was detained by police for wearing religious dress and fined 800 RMB (\$129). When she refused to pay the fine, RFA reported Turahan was forced to attend ideological study sessions at the police station, where there were at least 20 other women who were also detained for their religious dress, and only released after her family agreed to pay the police station 400 RMB (\$64).

According to the Kashgar Prefecture government website, 58,000 ethnic minority, primarily Uighur, CCP cadres signed the "4 Nots" pledge, which stipulated that they and their family members would not: wear religious dress, including *jilbabs* and veils for women and long beards for men; participate in religious activities; listen or disseminate religious content and publications; and apply to or attend the Hajj.

Authorities in Karamay banned individuals with long beards or veils from boarding buses in August, with the stated reason of temporarily strengthening security during a sports competition.

On November 28, the Xinjiang People's Congress Standing Committee approved a regulation banning the practice of religion in government buildings and wearing clothes associated with "religious extremism," due to be implemented in January 2015. On December 10, the Urumqi city People's Congress Standing Committee approved a separate ban on the wearing of Islamic veils in public in the capital city of Urumqi, with an implementation date of February 1, 2015.

Authorities in Xinjiang imposed strict controls on religious practice during Ramadan. The government barred teachers, professors, civil servants, and CCP members from fasting and attending religious services at mosques. Local authorities reportedly fined individuals for studying the Quran in unauthorized sessions, detained people for "illegal" religious activities or carrying "illegal" religious materials, and stationed security personnel in and around mosques to restrict attendance to local residents. Authorities reportedly hung Chinese flags on mosque walls in the direction of Mecca so prayers would be directed toward them.

Uighurs in Kashgar and Turpan reported officials interfered with fasting during Ramadan. In July local authorities in Xinjiang continued the annual practice of banning government employees and their family members from fasting during Ramadan. As part of the government's stability maintenance campaign, students and teachers in Karghilik County signed a pledge in June not to fast or participate in religious activities, according to the Karghilik County Education Bureau website. The Kashgar Teachers College forced students to drink water during Ramadan and students were asked to partake in group lunches by their teachers to ensure they were not fasting during the day, reported Radio Free Asia.

Media reported Muslims could apply online or through local official Islamic associations to participate in the Hajj. According to media reports in the country, more than 14,500 Muslim citizens participated in the Hajj in the fall, including 2,223 individuals from Ningxia; 2,228 from Gansu Province; 1,310 from Yunnan Province; and, 236 from the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. These figures included China Islamic Association and security officials sent to monitor Muslim citizens and prevent unauthorized pilgrimages. Figures were not available for pilgrims from Xinjiang. Uighur Muslims reported difficulties taking part in state-sanctioned Hajj travel due to the inability to obtain travel documents in a timely manner and difficulties in meeting criteria required for participation in the official Hajj program run by the China Islamic Association. The government restricted the ability of Uighur Muslims to make private Hajj pilgrimages outside of the government-organized program. Ethnic and religious committee staff from across Xinjiang

were sent to international airports in China in June and July to ensure Uighurs were not making private Hajj pilgrimages outside of government sanctioned programs, a government source reported.

Authorities continued their "patriotic education" campaign, which in part focused on preventing any illegal religious activities in Xinjiang.

There were widespread reports of prohibitions on children participating in religious activities in various localities throughout Xinjiang, but observers also reported seeing children in mosques and at Friday prayers in some areas of the region. In August and September state newspapers reported hundreds of children were "rescued" and dozens of persons were detained in a sweep of "illegal" religious schools.

The government continued to restrict religious education in institutions across the country. Islamic schools in Yunnan Province were reluctant to accept ethnic Uighur students out of concern that they would bring unwanted attention from government authorities and negatively affect school operations, according to local sources. Kunming Islamic College, a government-affiliated seminary, posted an official announcement stating it primarily accepted students from Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou Provinces, as well as the Chongqing Special Municipality.

Hui Muslims in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces engaged in religious practice with less government interference than did Uighurs, according to local sources.

Individuals seeking to enroll at an official seminary or other institution of religious learning had to obtain the support of the official patriotic religious association. The government required students to demonstrate "political reliability," and political issues were included in examinations of graduates of religious schools. Both registered and unregistered religious groups reported a shortage of trained clergy.

There were reports authorities restricted the acquisition or use of buildings for religious ceremonies and purposes.

Numerous international media sources reported that local authorities ordered the destruction of more than 230 Christian objects in Zhejiang Province throughout the year. While most incidents involved the removal of crosses and steeples, a handful of prominent churches were also affected, including the Sanjiang Church in the city of Wenzhou, which was leveled in April despite efforts by its parishioners to form human shields to protect it. Zhejiang officials stated the crosses and churches needed to be "demolished as "illegal structures" that violated local zoning laws.

There were reports authorities applied indirect pressure on house churches to cease their activities. In June advocacy groups reported a house church in Guangdong Province received an eviction notice from its landlord, who stated he had been pressured by the government. The church was in the middle of a three-year lease.

Officials continued to hold "anti-cult" education sessions and propaganda campaigns. Some officials required families to sign statements guaranteeing they would not take part in house churches and "evil cult" activities involving Falun Gong as a prerequisite for registering their children for school. Media reported government employees in Xinjiang were being forced to sign guarantees they would refrain from religious or political expression. The penalty for not signing could be barring their children from entering university or being subject to administrative investigation.

Pressure from authorities on unregistered churches in Guangdong Province continued. In January human rights groups reported Guangzhou police repeatedly interrupted Guangfu House Church gatherings and demanded the church cease the meetings.

Authorities continued to restrict the free printing and distribution of religious materials. The government limited distribution of Bibles to TSPM/Chinese Christian Council entities such as churches, church bookshops, and seminaries. Individuals could not order Bibles directly from publishing houses. Members of unregistered churches reported the supply and distribution of Bibles was inadequate, particularly in rural locations. There were approximately 600 Christian titles legally in circulation. According to a foreign Christian source, in the last 10 years an estimated 200 Christian bookstores and nine domestic Christian publishers had opened in the country.

A U.S. citizen aid worker was arrested in November on charges of embezzlement and counterfeiting receipts. His attorney stated he believed that the aid worker was being targeted because of his Christian faith.

On December 24, media reported the Modern College of Northwest University prohibited Christmas celebrations on campus, hung banners exhorting students to "oppose kitsch Western holidays" and "resist the expansion of Western culture." School authorities required students to attend a three hour screening of propaganda films. Municipal education authorities in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, forbade all high schools, middle schools, elementary schools, and kindergartens from holding Christmas-related events.

There were reports officials refused a request to hold the funeral of Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang, the leader of the "underground" Catholic Church in China, at the Shanghai cathedral. Services were instead held at a funeral home where thousands of mourners paid their respects.

Patriotic religious association-approved Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and some Buddhist monks were allowed to travel abroad for additional religious study. Religious workers not affiliated with a patriotic religious association faced difficulties in obtaining passports or official approval to study abroad.

There were reported incidents of government interference with Falun Gong activities abroad. According to advocacy groups, Chinese government officials pressured venues and governments in a number of countries to limit the broadcast time of Falun Gong-associated radio stations and cancel or otherwise delay dance performances by the Shen Yun Performing Arts Company, which is associated with Falun Gong.

Government policy allows religious groups to engage in charitable work, although charities are not allowed to share religious beliefs while conducting activities. Faith-based charities, like all other charitable groups, are required to register with the government. The government does not permit unregistered charitable groups of any sort to raise funds openly, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property.

Registered religious groups provided social services throughout the country, and authorities allowed certain overseas faith-based aid groups to deliver services in coordination with local authorities and domestic groups. Some unregistered religious groups reported local authorities placed limits on their ability to provide social services.

According to several unregistered religious groups, the government required faith-based charities to obtain official co-sponsorship of the registration application by the local official religious affairs bureau. These groups often were required to affiliate with one of the five patriotic religious associations. The government did not permit unregistered charity groups of any sort to raise funds

openly, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property. The government allowed some registered religious organizations to engage in disaster relief and social service activities.

On March 19, human rights groups reported authorities threatened to shut down a house church-run care center for the homeless, disabled, orphaned, and elderly called the Huizhou Loving Care Center. Police claimed that the center was housed in a building that was not legally registered, threatened to demolish the house, and ordered the inhabitants to move out.

Although authorities required CCP members to be atheists and generally discouraged them from participating in religious activities, attendance by party members at official church services was reportedly growing, as authorities increasingly chose to turn a blind eye to their attendance. In November a CCP Central Inspection Team openly criticized Zhejiang CCP officials for having religious beliefs that conflicted with CCP discipline. Zhu Weiqun, chairman of the CPPCC Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee wrote in a November *Global Times* editorial that adherence to non-belief was an "unshakable principle" of the CCP and that members "cannot follow any religion." Zhu suggested that scholars who advocated for allowing party members to adhere to religious faith had "already converted to Christianity long ago."

In May the University of International Relations and the Social Science Academy Press released a Blue Book citing religion among the four greatest challenges to national security faced by the People's Republic of China. The Blue Book identified "religious infiltration" as a challenge to the preservation of the current governmental system. In a speech on December 24, SARA Director Wang Zouan warned against the "foreign infiltration of Christianity into China" and instructed the Catholic Church to uphold the "banner of patriotism."

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because religion, culture, and ethnicity are often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on religious identity. Religious and ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims, experienced institutionalized discrimination throughout the country both because of their religious beliefs and their status as ethnic minorities with distinct languages and cultures. In Xinjiang, tension between Uighur Muslims and ethnic Han continued, as officials strengthened their enforcement of policies banning men from growing long beards, women from wearing veils that covered their faces, and parents from providing their children with religious education. Many hospitals and businesses would not provide services to women wearing veils. Tensions also continued among ethnic and religious groups in Tibetan areas, particularly between Han and Tibetans, and, in some areas, between Tibetans and Hui Muslims.

Despite labor law provisions against discrimination in hiring based on religious belief, some employers openly discriminated against religious believers. Protestants stated they were terminated by their employers due to their religious activities. Muslims in Xinjiang faced discrimination in hiring, lost their positions, and were detained by authorities for praying in their workplaces.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

U.S. officials at the highest levels repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns and pressed for the expansion of religious freedom. The President reiterated the importance of human rights of all people, including for ethnic and religious minorities, during his public remarks in his visit to Beijing in November. The Secretary of State raised religious freedom concerns with government officials during the U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue in July.

Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, regularly urged government officials at the central and local levels to implement stronger protection for religious freedom. The Ambassador met with members of religious groups and religious freedom defenders and highlighted religious freedom in public speeches and private diplomacy with senior officials. At the same time, government pressure led some religious leaders to decline requests for meetings with U.S. government officials. The Department of State, the embassy, and the consulates general regularly called upon the government to release prisoners of conscience, including religious prisoners.

U.S. officials met regularly with academics, NGOs, members of registered and unregistered religious groups, and family members of religious prisoners to reinforce U.S. support for religious freedom. The Ambassador hosted events for religious leaders and practitioners that had among its guests prominent religious leaders from around the country. The embassy nominated a number of religious leaders and scholars to participate in exchange programs related to the role of religion in American society. The embassy arranged for the introduction of government officials to members of U.S. religious communities and U.S. government agencies that engaged with those communities.

Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated China as a CPC under the IRFA for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. In August the Secretary redesignated the country as a CPC and extended existing sanctions under the IRFA related to restrictions on exports of crime control and detection instruments and equipment (Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, P.L. 101-246).

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