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2010 Report on International Religious Freedom - China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)

[Covers the period from July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2010]

Reports on Tibet, Hong Kong and Macau are appended at the end of this report.

The constitution states that Chinese citizens "enjoy freedom of religious belief." It also bans the state, public organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion. The constitution and laws protect "normal" religious activities," which are overseen by the five (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant) state-sanctioned "patriotic religious associations." By law only they may register religious groups and places of worship. Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members are discouraged from participating in religious activities. The government permits proselytizing in registered places of worship and in private settings. Proselytizing in public, unregistered places of worship, or by foreigners is not permitted. Some religious or spiritual groups are outlawed, including the Falun Gong. Other religious groups, such as Protestant "house churches" or Catholics loyal to the Vatican, are not outlawed, but are not permitted to openly hold religious services unless they affiliate with a patriotic religious association. In some parts of the country, authorities have charged religious believers unaffiliated with a patriotic religious association with "illegal religious activities" or "disrupting social stability." Punishments for these charges range from fines to imprisonment.

During the year the government increased the severe religious repression in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Following unrest in July 2009 authorities pledged to crackdown more on "illegal religious activities," which included unauthorized religious instruction and wearing religious clothing. Authorities temporarily closed some mosques in the XUAR. During the reporting period the government's repression of religious freedom remained severe in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and other Tibetan areas. In other parts of the country, the government tightened controls on religious groups during "sensitive periods" such as the 60th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, and the Shanghai Expo. During these periods, some house church groups reported that government authorities pressured them to stop meeting, while others reported no bans on regular meetings.

Both Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns reported increased societal discrimination around these sensitive periods, including being denied lodging by hotelkeepers.

In its 2009-2010 National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP), the government stated that it would "encourage and support religious circles in launching social welfare programs [and] exploring methods and channels for religions to better serve society and promote

the people's well-being." The central government supported the social service work of registered religious groups by publicly stating the positive role that religious groups can play in society. Certain overseas faith-based aid groups were allowed to deliver services in coordination with local authorities and domestic registered religious groups. Public discussion of house churches in official media and at academic conferences also increased.

The Department of State, the U.S. embassy in Beijing, and U.S. consulates general in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Wuhan consistently urged the government to expand the scope of religious freedom in keeping with the rights codified in the constitution and internationally recognized norms. U.S. officials condemned abuses and acknowledged positive trends. U.S. officials in the country and Washington met with religious believers, family members of religious prisoners, and religious freedom defenders. The U.S. embassy protested the imprisonment of individuals on charges related to their religious practice. Religious freedom was one of the main issues discussed during the May 2010 U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue. U.S. officials encouraged the government to address specific policies that restricted the freedom of religion of Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims. Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated the country a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 3.5 million square miles and a population of 1.3 billion. A February 2007 survey conducted by researchers in Shanghai and reported in state-run media concluded that 31.4 percent of citizens ages 16 and over are religious believers. About two hundred million respondents to the survey described themselves as Buddhist, Taoist, or worshippers of folk gods. In its report to the United Nations Human Rights Council during its Universal Periodic Review session in February 2009, the government stated there were 100 million religious believers in the country. It is difficult to estimate the number of Buddhists and Taoists, because they do not have congregational memberships, and many practice exclusively at home. A 2007 Chinese public opinion polling firm found that 11 to 16 percent of adults identify themselves as Buddhists, and less than 1 percent of adults identify themselves as Taoists. The Xinhua news agency estimated there are 100 million Buddhists in the country.

According to the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), there are more than 21 million Muslims in the country. Independent estimates range as high as 50 million or more. According to SARA there are approximately 36,000 Islamic places of worship in the country (more than half of which are in the XUAR), more than 45,000 imams nationwide, and 10 Islamic schools. The government subsidizes the construction of state-sanctioned places of worship and religious schools.

There are 10 predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in the country. Certain Muslim communities have adopted the practice of designating separate mosques for female worshippers. According to media reports, the Islamic Association of China (IAC) licenses female imams. The 2000 census reported a total of 20.3 million members of Muslim nationalities, of which again 96 percent belonged to just three groups: Hui 9.8 million, Uighurs 8.4 million, and Kazakhs 1.25 million. Hui Muslims live throughout the country but are concentrated primarily in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Qinghai, and Gansu Provinces. Uighur Muslims live primarily in the XUAR.

According to statistics reported by SARA in June 2010, the official Protestant population is 16 million. Government officials stated there are more than 50,000 Protestant churches registered under the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the state-approved Protestant patriotic association, and 18 TSPM theological schools. The Pew Research Center estimated in 2007 that 50 million to 70 million Christians practice in unregistered religious gatherings/house churches. A Chinese scholar estimated that the number of Protestants, including those in both registered and unregistered churches, was nearly 90 million.

According to SARA, there are more than 5.3 million Catholics worshipping in sites registered by the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA). The Holy Spirit Study Center in Hong Kong estimated there are 12 million Catholics in the country. Official sources

reported that the CPA has more than 70 bishops, nearly 3,000 priests and nuns, 6,000 churches and meeting places, and 12 seminaries. Of the 97 dioceses in the country, 40 reportedly did not have an officiating bishop in 2007, and more than 30 bishops were over 80 years of age.

Local governments have legalized certain religions and practices in addition to the five nationally recognized religions. Examples include Orthodox Christianity in some provinces, including Xinjiang, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, and Guangdong. Some ethnic minorities have retained or reclaimed traditional religions, such as Dongba among the Naxi people in Yunnan and Buluotuo among the Zhuang in Guangxi. The worship of the folk deity Mazu reportedly has been reclassified as "cultural heritage" rather than religious practice.

Falun Gong is a self-described spiritual discipline that combines qigong (a traditional Chinese exercise discipline) with the teachings of founder Li Hongzhi. Prior to the Government's 1999 ban of Falun Gong, it estimated that there were 70 million adherents.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The government has signed, but not ratified, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which provides the right to belief and manifest belief through "worship, observance, and practice." The constitution protects the right to hold or not hold a religious belief, and protects "normal religious activities." It is not possible to sue the government on the basis of the religious freedom protections in the constitution. Religious groups were vulnerable to action by local officials who often regulate through administrative orders. A provision in the criminal law allows the state to sentence government officials to up to two years in prison if they violated religious freedom.

The central government banned certain religious and spiritual groups. Some individuals belonging to or supporting banned groups have been imprisoned. The criminal law defines banned groups as "evil cults." A 1999 judicial explanation stated this term "refers to those illegal groups that have been found using religions, Qigong 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 the society." There are no public criteria for determining, or procedures for challenging, such a designation. The government maintained its bans on the Guan Yin (also known as Guanyin Famin or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy); Zhong Gong (a qigong exercise discipline); and Falun Gong. The government also considered several Protestant Christian groups to be "evil cults," including the "Shouters," Eastern Lightning, the 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 the South China Church.

At the national level, the United Front Work Department (UFWD), SARA, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs provide policy "guidance and supervision" on the implementation of the 1998 Religious Affairs Regulations and 2005 Regulations on Social Organizations that allow 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. Patriotic religious leaders have a close relationship with the state, are sometimes paid by the government, and are required to support the leadership of the CCP. They also serve in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, an advisory body that provides non-CCP advice to the central government.

Religious groups independent of the five patriotic religious associations have great difficulty obtaining legal status and are vulnerable to coercive and punitive action by Public Security Bureau (PSB) and Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB). In some parts of the country, local authorities tacitly approved of the activities of unregistered groups and did not interfere with them. In some rural areas, unregistered churches held worship services attended by hundreds. In other areas, local officials punished the same activities by confiscating and destroying property or imprisoning leaders and worshippers.

Several religious leaders reported that their applications for registration were rejected because they would not affiliate with a patriotic religious association although officials pressured them to do so. They cited the politicization of religion as a primary reason for their reluctance to affiliate, including reconciling Christianity with socialism. House church leaders expressed concern that they would have to deny certain theological beliefs because of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement/China Christian Council (TSPM/CCC) prohibition on denominations. They also cited reluctance to accept restrictions on evangelism and religious sacraments.

Since 2005 SARA has publicly acknowledged that family and friends have the right to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study without registering with the government. This statement has been posted on SARA's Web site at various times. Respect for this policy at the provincial, county, and local levels was uneven, and there were several reported cases of local officials disrupting religious meetings in private homes.

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

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

The government and the Holy See have not established diplomatic relations, and there was no Vatican representative in the country. The Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) does not recognize the authority of the Holy See to appoint bishops; therefore, approximately 40 Catholic bishops remained independent of the CPA and operated unofficially. The CPA has allowed the Vatican discreet input in selecting some bishops, and an estimated 90 percent of CPA bishops have reconciled with the Vatican. Nevertheless, in some locations, local authorities reportedly pressured unregistered Catholic priests and believers to renounce ordinations approved by the Holy See. The Vatican has also given official approval to the majority of Catholic bishops appointed by the government through "apostolic mandates."

Faith-based charities were required to register with the government. According to several groups, a prerequisite for registration was obtaining sponsorship of the local religious affairs bureau, rather than of a bureau with technical expertise in a relevant field such as health or medicine. These groups were often also required to affiliate with one of the five patriotic religious associations. Unregistered groups were not permitted to openly raise funds, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property.

The government supported social service work by registered religious groups. However, religious groups not affiliated with an official patriotic religious association reported difficulties registering as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or performing social service work. The Catholic Social Service Centre of the Diocese of Xi'an and Caritas International provided relief to victims of the April 2010 earthquake in Yushu, Qinghai Province. The Amity Foundation, a state-approved, Protestant-affiliated group registered as a national charity, continued to rebuild villages affected by the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan Province.

Registered religious organizations were allowed to compile and print religious materials for internal use. In order to distribute religious materials publicly, an organization must follow national printing regulations, which restrict the publication and distribution of literature with religious content. The government limited distribution of Bibles to TSPM/CCC entities such as churches and seminaries. Individuals could not order Bibles directly from publishing houses. Members of unregistered churches reported that the supply and distribution of Bibles was inadequate, particularly in rural locations. The government authorized the publication of at least 1,000 other Christian titles.

Under the RRA and regulations on publishing, religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles and Qur'ans, may be confiscated and unauthorized publishing houses closed. Authorities often confiscated Bibles in raids on house churches. Customs officials continued to monitor the importation of Bibles and other religious materials. In the XUAR, government authorities at times restricted the sales of the Qur'an. There were reports that XUAR regulations banned Uighur-language editions of the Bible.

In 2005 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that parents were permitted to instruct children under the age of 18 in religious beliefs and that they may participate in religious activities. The teaching of atheism in schools is allowed. In the XUAR, there were widespread reports of prohibitions on children participating in religious activities. The Xinjiang Implementing Measures of the Law on the Protection of Minors barred parents from allowing children to engage in religious activities, but children have been observed at Friday prayers in parts of the XUAR.

The law does not prohibit religious believers from holding public office. However, the CCP has stated that its members who belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion. The PRC Labor Law states that job applicants shall not face discrimination in job hiring based on factors including religious belief. However, religious believers reported that employers openly discriminated against them. There were widespread reports that employers, both local and foreign, were discouraged from hiring Falun Gong practitioners. There were also several reports from Protestant Christians that they were terminated by their employers due to their religious activities.

Some religious adherents opposed the state's family planning policy for reasons of religious belief and practice. In some areas of the country, government population control agencies required women to use contraception, be sterilized, and have abortions if their pregnancies violated government population control regulations.

In the XUAR, the Chinese government concerns over "separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism" have contributed to repressive restrictions on religious practices by Uighur Muslims. Authorities often failed to distinguish between peaceful religious practice and criminal or terrorist activities. It remains difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted those seeking political goals, the right to worship, or those engaged in criminal activities. In contrast, Hui Muslims in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan Provinces engaged in religious practice with less government interference.

Foreign residents who belonged to religious faiths not officially recognized by the government were generally permitted to practice their religions.

The constitution states that religious bodies and affairs are not "subject to any foreign domination." According to the Rules for the Implementation of the Provisions on the Administration of Religious Activities of Aliens within the Territory of the People's Republic of China, foreigners may not develop religious followers among local citizens, conduct religious activities at unregistered sites, or conduct religious activities with local citizens at temporary sites for religious activities.

The government allowed some foreign educational institutions to provide religious materials to Chinese leaders. Dallas Theological Seminary hosted online courses for clergy through the TSPM-run Yanjing Theological Seminary. Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) provided materials for clergy affiliated with both registered and unregistered religious groups. The CCC approved BSF's request to provide Bible study classes in Beijing, and BSF reported that approximately 50 percent of those in attendance were from house churches.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

During the reporting period, government repression of religious freedom in the XUAR increased and remained severe in Tibetan areas. Official tolerance for groups associated with Buddhism and Taoism has been greater than that for groups associated with other religions. The government continued to restrict the growth of house church networks and cross-congregational affiliations.

Following the July 2009 unrest, the XUAR government increased political training for imams, tightened restrictions on the religious activities of government workers, teachers, and students, and suppressed "unauthorized" religious activities. Authorities reportedly confiscated the passports of some Uighur Muslims which made it impossible for them to travel to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj.

Authorities closed some mosques temporarily and restricted construction on some others. The Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences held a mandatory training course for all imams in the XUAR, which included political issues. According to a January 2010 report, government officials in Aksu increased their oversight of mosques and regulation of sermon content. A May 2010 instruction on the Ili Party Committee Organization Department Web site forbade students from wearing religious clothing, participating in religious activities, fasting, and listening to or viewing materials with "reactionary content." In September 2009 the Bayingol Mongol Autonomous Prefecture implemented restrictions on elementary school students and teachers believing in religion, participating in religious activities, and wearing religious clothes. According to a May report on a government Web site in Aksu, officials battled against "religious fanaticism" by publicly destroying 34 scarves, 42 items of clothing, and 53 books. XUAR officials called on young persons not to wear beards or scarves, according to an international media report. Government offices in Turpan district and Shule (Qeshqer Yengisheher) county in the XUAR issued job advertisements for teachers and performing artists that required they "not believe in a religion" and "not participate in religious activities."

Blogs of a number of religious groups and individuals were periodically blocked during the reporting period.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the reporting period, officials continued to scrutinize and, in some cases, harass registered and unregistered religious and spiritual groups. The government detained, arrested, or sentenced to prison a number of religious leaders and adherents for activities related to their religious practice. These activities included assembling for religious worship, expressing religious beliefs in public and in private, and publishing religious texts.

The government denied detaining or arresting anyone solely because of his or her religion. Local authorities often used administrative detention, such as confinement at reeducation through labor (RTL) camps, to punish members of unregistered religious groups. The government also disbarred a number of attorneys who advocated on behalf of religious freedom and imprisoned other religious freedom activists. The family members of some religious leaders and religious freedom activists were also harassed or detained.

The whereabouts of attorney Gao Zhisheng were unknown at the end of the reporting period. Gao defended Falun Gong members and house church Christians. He disappeared in February 2009. NGOs reported that he had been tortured during imprisonment in 2007. In March 2010 he briefly reappeared and told foreign reporters he would no longer defend human rights cases or criticize the government. In April 2010 Gao disappeared again.

Attorney Guo Feixiong, who also defended religious freedom cases, remained imprisoned in Guangzhou at the end of the reporting period. In 2007 he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for the crime of "illegal business activities." Guo's family members reported that prison police tortured him. In November 2009 Guo's wife reported that police harassed her after she wrote open letters to domestic and foreign government officials calling for the release of her husband.

Several Beijing-based lawyers who had handled religious freedom and Falun Gong cases, including Li Subin and Jiang Tianyong, were denied renewal of their professional licenses. In May 2010 the Beijing Bureau of Justice disbarred lawyers Tang Jitian and Liu Wei who also represented Falun Gong members. Two of the sons of Uighur Muslim rights defender Rebiya Kadeer remained in prison. Certain religious freedom defenders were kept under surveillance, placed under house arrest, prevented from attending trials and meeting clients, and were not allowed to travel abroad.

It was difficult to confirm some aspects of reported abuses of Falun Gong adherents because they were often prevented from meeting with foreign reporters and officials. There were credible reports from NGOs and international media that detentions of Falun Gong practitioners increased around sensitive dates. In certain areas neighborhood groups were reportedly instructed to report on Falun Gong members; monetary rewards have been offered to citizens who informed on Falun Gong practitioners.

Falun Gong sources estimated that since 1999 at least 6,000 Falun Gong practitioners have been sentenced to prison. Falun Gong adherents have also been subjected to administrative sentences of up to three years in RTL camps. Falun Gong estimated more than 100,000 adherents in the country have been sentenced to RTL.

Family members reported the harsh treatment of Falun Gong practitioners, including the use of torture. Falun Gong practitioners were also subjected to detention in psychiatric hospitals on the orders of public security officials. There was no mechanism for appealing such psychiatric commitments. Falun Gong practitioners detained in psychiatric hospitals were reportedly administered medicine against their will and subjected to electric shock treatment.

In June 2010 the husband of imprisoned Falun Gong practitioner, Cao Junping, was told he would be tried on charges of harboring a criminal for assisting his wife. Authorities also reportedly forced him to perform hard labor for a month, fired him from his position as a policeman, and pressured him to divorce his wife.

In February 2010 Jiang Feng, the husband of a musician in Shen Yun, a Falun Gong-related performing arts show, was reported missing in the country. His family members have received no information on any arrest, charges, or sentence.

In January 2010 authorities detained Guo Xiaojun, a former lecturer at a Shanghai university and confiscated Falun Gong materials from his home. Although detained, Guo had not been charged with any crime during the reporting period. According to Falun Gong-affiliated Web sites, he was being held in the Baoshan Detention Center.

In 2009 Zhang Xingwu of Jinan, Shandong Province was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for "using a cult to undermine the law." According to reports from his family and international media, security officials prevented Zhang's attorney from participating in his trial. Police also placed Zhang's relatives under house arrest during the trial. Zhang's daughter reported that her father was not permitted to leave his cell and was under tight surveillance.

In March 2010 Li Yaohua and her daughter Zhang Yibo of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region were sentenced to three and a half and one and a half years in prison respectively for practicing Falun Gong. They were reportedly physically abused by police in detention.

The Falun Gong also reported several incidents of the government's interference with their activities abroad. According to NGO reports, the Shen Yun Performing Arts Company, and several media outlets, government officials pressured venues and governments in Asia and Europe to limit the broadcast time of Falun Gong-associated radio stations and cancel or otherwise delay Shen Yun performances. The performances artistically present Chinese culture through music and dance and reference the Government's treatment of Falun Gong.

Prior to the 60th anniversary of the PRC's founding on October 1, 2009, house churches in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shanxi reported that authorities pressured them to stop meeting. In November 2009 Public Security Bureau and SARA officials ordered the 1,200-member Wanbang Church in Shanghai to stop holding services, declaring that the church was engaging in "illegal religious activities." Authorities interrogated Pastor Cui Quan and other congregants and pressured them to join a local TSPM/CCC congregation. In fall 2009, the Shouwang house church, a large urban congregation in Beijing, lost its lease to office space it had previously used for services due to political pressure on its landlord. As a result, the congregation held two outdoor services in a public park in northern Beijing, while attempting to purchase a permanent meeting venue. In November, local authorities allowed the group to meet in a cinema. At the end of the reporting period,

the congregation was unable to obtain access to new property that it purchased. At various times, the church's Web site was blocked.

In fall 2009 the Jin Dongtai (Golden Light) branch of the 50,000 member Linfen house church network in Shanxi Province was involved in a dispute with local authorities over religious activities and property. Police raided the church in September 2009. On September 27, the Linfen Bureau of Religious Affairs issued a statement accusing Pastor Yang Rongli of "illegally holding religious activities" and "illegally sharing the Gospel" with youth. On November 25, five church leaders were convicted of "illegally occupying farm land" and "disturbing transportation through a mass gathering." Pastor Yang and Zhang Huamei were sentenced to seven and four years' imprisonment respectively. Pastor Wang Xiaoguang and two other congregants were sentenced to between three and four years in prison. Five other congregants were sentenced to two years of RTL.

On May 2, 2010, Guangzhou public security officers forced the landlord of the Liangren Church in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, to terminate the group's lease, effectively compelling the church to hold service outdoors. Authorities also detained Liangren Pastor Wang Dao and his wife on several occasions, raided their home, and threatened the couple. On May 9, 2010, while leading a service at Guangzhou People's Park, public security officials arrested Wang and charged him with "disrupting social order." Pastor Wang was released from custody on June 13, 2010. At the end of the reporting period, he was still awaiting trial on charges of "hindering the administration of credit cards."

While many Christian groups were able to provide aid to survivors of the May 2008 earthquake in Sichuan Province, some unregistered Christian groups also reported that government officials interfered with their relief efforts.

In December 2009 Uighur Christian house church leader Alimjan Imit was convicted of "illegally providing state secrets or intelligence to foreign entities" by the Kashgar Prefecture Intermediate People's Court and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. The People's High Court of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region denied his appeal on March 16, 2010. In September 2008 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found his detention arbitrary and in violation of international standards of due process.

On November 18, 2009, authorities released Uighur Christian Wusiman Yiming, arrested in 2007 and sentenced to two years of RTL for "assisting foreigners with illegal religious activities." He was involved with the local house church.

At the end of the reporting period, Pastor Zhang Rongliang, head of the Fangcheng Church and the China for Christ house church network, continued to serve a prison sentence of seven and a half years. In 2006 authorities convicted Zhang of "obtaining a fraudulent passport and illegally crossing the border." Zhang frequently traveled overseas to speak at Christian gatherings. He is approximately 60 years old and reportedly suffers from severe diabetes.

Shi Weiham continued to serve a three year sentence for printing and distributing Bibles and Christian books without government permission. In June 2009 Beijing authorities sentenced him to imprisonment on charges of illegal business activities.

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

There was no new information about unregistered Bishop Su Zhimin, who remained unaccounted for since his reported detention in 1997.

Auxiliary Bishop of Xiwanzi diocese, Hebei Province, Yao Liang, remained in detention during the reporting period. Father Li Huisheng, whom police reportedly tortured in August 2006, remained in custody serving a seven-year term for "inciting the masses against the government."

At the end of the reporting period, 75-year old Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding, Hebei, continued to be imprisoned. Authorities arrested him in March 2009 on the first day of a Vatican-sponsored meeting on the Catholic Church in the country. Bishop Jia

reportedly resisted pressure to join the CPA but worked towards reconciliation between the Vatican and the CPA.

During the reporting period, XUAR authorities detained Uighur Muslims for their religious beliefs and activities.

In July 2009 according to an international media report, authorities in Yining (Ghulja) County, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, detained Zulpiye and three of her relatives in connection to their religious activities, which included religious instruction to neighborhood women, reading religious books, and wearing religious dress. Authorities reportedly accused them of undermining state-appointed religious leaders.

In July 2009 at another village in the same township, authorities detained Setiwaldi Hashim, his wife Helime, and three other family members. Relatives reported Hashim was accused of unauthorized religious instruction and held in custody for 40 days.

In June 2009 authorities detained 32 women in a Qur'an study group in Bachu (Maralbéshi) County, Kashgar District, according to international media reports, on charges of engaging in "illegal religious activities."

In March 2009 authorities in Hotan City closed at least seven Islamic schools and conducted house-to-house searches. At least 39 persons were arrested, and officials claimed to have seized books, propaganda material, and weapons.

There have been credible reports that the government pressured other governments to forcibly return Uighur Muslims from other countries, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria; some had protested against limits on religious freedom and others who engaged in religious activities deemed illegal by the government.

For information on North Korean refugees, please see the U.S. State Department's 2009 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in China and the 2010 International Religious Freedom Report on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Forced Religious Conversion

Falun Gong organizations reported that detained practitioners were subjected to various methods of physical and psychological coercion in attempts to force them to deny their belief in Falun Gong.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

During the reporting period, official Chinese media sources published a number of articles discussing religious topics, including specific house churches, such as the Shouwang Church in Beijing. In November 2009 the Global Times English edition published a special investigation into house churches, and in December 2009 the China Daily published an article on the rule of law and "freedom of faith."

Academic discussions on the subject of house churches took place at certain universities. During these discussions some scholars recommended that religious registration regulations be revised to permit more churches to register.

Some foreign faith-based aid groups were allowed to provide social services in the country. Hong Kong-based NGO Christian Action operated a home for children and rehabilitation center to care for orphans in Qinghai Province. Taiwan-based Buddhist NGO, Tzu Chi, continued earthquake relief efforts in Sichuan Province, including rebuilding 13 schools.

Foreigners were invited to preach at services in registered religious venues. In March 2010, Luis Palau and Reverend James Meeks preached to more than 14,000 persons at the Hangzhou Chong-yi Christian Church. In October 2009 Reverend Franklin Graham preached to a reported crowd of 10,000 at Baoding Christian Church in Hebei Province.

In May 2010, on the eve of the Shanghai World Expo, Shanghai authorities permitted the Ohel Rachel Synagogue to reopen and receive visitors for the duration of the Expo which

was scheduled to end on October 31, 2010. The Synagogue was part of the Shanghai Education Commission compound.

In April 2010 a Catholic diocese in Inner Mongolia ordained a new bishop, filling a position that had been vacant for five years. Bishop Paul Meng Qinglu became the seventh bishop of Hohhot, the capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Bishop Meng was the first bishop ordained in the country since December 2007. He received both a papal mandate and the approval of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China for his ordination.

In June 2010 Monsignor Joseph Han Yingjin was ordained as the new bishop of Sanyuan (Shaanxi). His ordination was approved by the Holy See and took place in the church of the Sacred Heart in Yuanmenxiang.

A Catholic expatriate group in Beijing reported that Chinese citizens were permitted to attend their religious gathering during the reporting period.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Religion and ethnicity are often linked in the country. It is therefore difficult to categorize many incidents solely as examples of ethnic or religious intolerance. Religious and ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims, experienced discrimination because of both their religious beliefs and their status as ethnic minorities with distinct languages and cultures. In the XUAR, tension between Han Chinese and Uighur Muslims continued during the reporting period. Tensions also continued among ethnic and religious groups in Tibetan areas, including Han, Hui, Tibetan Buddhists, and Tibetan Muslims.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The Department of State, the U.S. embassy in Beijing, and the U.S. consulates general in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Wuhan regularly urged government officials at the central and local levels to implement stronger protections of religious freedom. The U.S. ambassador met with members of religious groups and religious freedom defenders, and highlighted religious freedom in public speeches and private diplomacy with senior officials. The Department of State, the embassy, and the consulates general regularly called upon the government to release prisoners of conscience.

U.S. officials in both the country and the United States met regularly with academics, NGOs, members of both registered and unregistered religious groups, and family members of religious prisoners. The Department of State nominated a number of Chinese religious leaders and scholars to participate in the International Visitor Leadership Programs related to the role of religion in American society. The Department of State also introduced government officials to officials from U.S. government agencies who engaged with American religious communities and to members of those communities.

Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated the country as a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The most recent redesignation as a CPC was on January 16, 2009. Economic measures in effect against the country under the IRFA related to restriction of exports of crime control and detection instruments and equipment (Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, P.L. 101-246).

TIBET

The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and Tibetan autonomous prefectures (TAPs) and counties in other provinces as part of the People's Republic of China. The Department of State follows these designations in its reporting. The United States continues to be concerned for the preservation and development of the Tibetan people's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage and the protection of their fundamental human rights.

The constitution of the country provides for freedom of religion but limits protection of the exercise of religious belief to activities the government defines as "normal." The government's 2005 White Paper on Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities states, "Organs of self-government in autonomous areas, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and relevant laws, respect and guarantee the freedom of religious belief of ethnic minorities and safeguard all legal and normal religious activities of people of ethnic minorities." Organs of self-government include governments of autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties.

During the reporting period, the level of religious repression in the TAR and other Tibetan areas remained high, especially around major religious holidays and sensitive anniversaries. The government remained wary of Tibetan Buddhism and the central role traditionally played by the Dalai Lama and other prominent Tibetan Buddhist leaders. The heads of the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism--including the Karmapa, Sakya Trizin, Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche, and Gyalwa Menri Trizin--all reside in exile and maintain close ties with the Dalai Lama. Chinese authorities often associated Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with pro-independence activism.

Government control over religious practice and the day-to-day management of monasteries and other religious institutions continued to be extraordinarily tight since the spring 2008 outbreak of widespread protests and unrest in Tibetan regions. Monks and nuns reported that government restrictions continued to interfere with their ability to carry out the teaching and practice of Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions. These restrictions included forcing monks and nuns to undergo extensive "patriotic education" in monasteries and nunneries that included significant amounts of "legal education" which detracted from religious studies. In patriotic education sessions, authorities often forced monks and nuns to denounce the Dalai Lama and to study materials praising the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the socialist system. Monks and nuns fled from their monasteries and nunneries because they faced expulsion for refusing to comply with the education sessions. Overall numbers of monks and nuns in monasteries and nunneries remained at significantly lower levels than pre-March 2008.

The government continued to blame the Dalai Lama publicly for instigating the March 2008 unrest and repeatedly stated that his successor would have to be approved by the government. The newly appointed TAR governor described the Dalai Lama as "the most important cause of instability in Tibet."

Monks and nuns, as well as lay Tibetans, continued to report difficulties obtaining passports from their local public security bureaus. According to reports, many Tibetans sought to travel to Dharamsala, India, for an audience with the Dalai Lama, which is an important religious rite for Tibetan Buddhists. Likewise, many of the monks and nuns that attempt to travel to Dharamsala, or the other Tibetan communities in India, did so to join religious communities and escape the increased controls over their religious practice at monasteries and nunneries in Tibetan areas. Some attributed the passport restrictions to an official effort to hinder travel for those purposes.

On the Tibet-Nepal border, the government also increased its border forces to prevent Tibetans from crossing the frontier without permission and exerted pressure on the government of Nepal to forcibly return Tibetan refugees. During the reporting period, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) documented the forcible return of three Tibetan asylum seekers, including one monk in June 2010. There were persistent and credible reports among Tibetans, based on information from cross-border guides, of asylum seekers being forcibly returned to the country. There were also reports that the government restricted prayer gatherings by monks in the wake of a major earthquake in the Yushu TAP in April 2010.

During the reporting period, Tibetans continued to face societal discrimination, including being denied rooms at hotels. Such discriminatory treatment was particularly severe in large cities--including Beijing, Shanghai, and Chengdu--on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the country (October 1, 2009) and during the 2010 Shanghai World Expo (April 30, 2010 to October 31, 2010).

The U.S. government encouraged the government and local authorities to respect religious freedom and allow Tibetans to preserve and develop their religious traditions.

U.S. diplomatic personnel visited the TAR five times during the reporting period. TAR officials often restricted U.S. diplomatic personnel's ability to talk openly with persons in Tibetan areas. The U.S. government protested religious persecution and discrimination, discussed individual cases with the authorities, and requested further information about specific incidents. The U.S. government continued to urge government leaders to engage in constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives and to address policies in Tibetan areas that have created tensions due to their effect on Tibetan religion, culture, and livelihoods, as well as the environment.

Section I. Religious Demography

Tibetan areas total 871,649 square miles, nearly one quarter of the territory of the country. According to recent official estimates, the Tibetan population within the TAR was approximately 2.4 million of a total permanently registered population of 2.8 million, or slightly less than half the total ethnic Tibetan population of the country, which is approximately 5.4 million. Well over 500,000 non-Tibetans live in the TAR, including other minorities and large numbers of migrant workers who live in the TAR for several years but are not counted in the permanent population. According to official statistics, the ethnic Tibetan population in the Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan Provinces was 2.9 million. Most ethnic Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority practice Bon, the related traditional Tibetan religion, and a very small minority practice Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Many Tibetan government officials and CCP members are religious believers, despite government and CCP prohibitions against cadres practicing religion.

Other residents of traditionally Tibetan areas include ethnic Han Chinese, many of whom practice Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and traditional folk religions; Hui Muslims; ethnic Tibetan Muslims; and Christians. Approximately 4,000 to 5,000 Muslims worship at mosques in the TAR; there is also a 560-member Catholic church located in the traditionally Catholic community of Yanjing in the eastern TAR. Tsodruk, in Dechen TAP, Yunnan Province, is also home to a large Tibetan Catholic congregation. The TAR is home to a small number of Falun Gong adherents, as well as some unregistered Protestant churches.

According to the June 21, 2009 People's Daily, there are 3,000 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with 120,000 monks and nuns in the TAR and Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. In the TAR there are 1,789 religious venues with 46,000 monks and nuns. According to statistics collected by the China Tibetology Research Center, a CCP - affiliated research institution, there are 1,535 monasteries in Tibetan areas outside the TAR.

The number of monks and nuns in monasteries and nunneries continued to fluctuate significantly, due in part to the patriotic education campaigns and other political campaigns. The widespread practice of monasteries accepting unregistered novices and other monks compounds the difficulty in estimating the true number of practicing Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns. Authorities in the TAR and other Tibetan areas tightened enforcement of longstanding regulations that forbid monasteries and nunneries from accepting individuals under the age of 18, hindering the traditional practice of sending young boys and girls to monasteries and nunneries for religious training. However, there were monks as young as eight years of age at some monasteries. Many monks studied and worshiped within their monasteries and nunneries without being "registered" or obtaining an official monastic identification card issued by religious affairs authorities. Hence, two population figures exist for many monasteries and nunneries, the official number reflecting the number of monks allowed by the government, and the actual figure, which may be twice the official number or even higher and which includes both registered and unregistered monks. The number of resident monks was less than the official figure in some monasteries which were placed under greater political pressure that included intensified patriotic education campaigns in 2008-9. Some monks fled their monasteries to avoid denouncing the Dalai Lama.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution of the country provides for freedom of religious belief, but limits protection of the exercise of religious belief to activities the government defines as "normal." The constitution states that religious bodies and affairs are not to be "subject to any foreign control."

During the Fifth Tibet Work Forum in January 2010, President Hu Jintao stressed that all state guidelines, laws and regulations on religious affairs should be implemented so that Tibetan Buddhism and socialist society will adapt to each other. At the conference Du Qinglin, the Vice Chairman of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), who is also the Director of the Central United Work Front Department, stated that management of monasteries by Democratic Management Committees (DMCs) is essential to the adaptation of Tibetan Buddhism and socialist society to each other. He called upon Tibetan Buddhists to fight separatism. Approximately 150 representatives from Beijing, the TAR, and other Tibetan areas in Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu and Qinghai provinces attended the conference.

At the national level, the CCP organization--The United Front Work Department (UFW)--and the government unit--the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA)--with support from the various officially recognized Buddhist, Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant "patriotic religious associations" were responsible for developing religious management policies. Local branches of UFW, SARA, and the Buddhist Association of China coordinated implementation of religion policies by DMCs in monasteries. Regulations restricted leadership of DMCs to "politically reliable, patriotic, and devoted monks, nuns and government officials." At some monasteries the government established police stations in the monasteries. The government also supported the development of the "3+1" education model in some monasteries. Under this system, local village committees, family members, and DMCs ensure that monks and nuns cooperate with regular political education. In May 2009 President Hu Jintao personally presented an award to Nyemo County of the TAR for innovating the "3+1" system.

Officials from the UFW and envoys of the Dalai Lama held talks from January 26 to 31, 2010 in Beijing. This was the ninth round of dialogue since 2002, but the first since November 2008.

In 2007 approximately 615 Tibetan religious figures held positions in local National People's Congresses and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in the TAR. The CPPCC is a political advisory body that nominally serves to allow non-CCP delegates to participate in the administration of state affairs. Although CCP officials are not permitted to practice religion, Tibetan religious figures who hold government positions (for example on the local NPC or CPPCC) are permitted to practice Buddhism. In February 2010 the government-recognized 11th Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, was appointed the vice president of the Buddhist Association of China and, in March 2010, he also became a member of the CPPCC.

Rules and regulations provided a legal basis for government control over Tibetan religious traditions. The Management Measures on Reincarnation (MMR), issued by SARA, codified government control over the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including reincarnate lamas. The regulations stipulate that city governments and higher political levels can deny the required recognition for a lama to be reincarnated. Without official recognition the lama may not function as a reincarnation in a community. Provincial-level or higher governments must approve reincarnations, while the State Council reserves the right to deny the reincarnation of Living Buddhas of "especially great influence." The regulations state that no foreign organization or individual can interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas, and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within the country. A registry of officially recognized reincarnated lamas was established by the atheistic government.

The TAR Implementation of the Religious Affairs Regulations (the Implementing Regulations), also issued by SARA, continued to assert state control over all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious groups, venues, and personnel. The TAR government also has the right under the Implementing Regulations to deny any individual's application to take up religious orders. The Implementing Regulations codified the practice of controlling the movement of nuns and monks, also requiring

them to seek permission from county-level religious affairs officials to travel to another prefecture or county-level city within the TAR to study or teach.

While the form, content, and frequency of "patriotic" education at monasteries varied widely, the conduct of such training was a routine part of monastic management. Increasingly "legal education" was a major theme of the training, as well as abandoning any allegiance to the Dalai Lama, acknowledging the leadership of the CCP, supporting the socialist system, and affirming that Tibet has been an inalienable part of the country since ancient times. Authorities also pressured monks and nuns to express allegiance to the government-recognized 11th Panchen Lama. Government-selected monks had primary responsibility for conducting patriotic education at each monastery. In some cases the government established "official working groups" at monasteries, and religious affairs and public security officials personally led the patriotic education.

In Tibetan Buddhism visiting different monasteries and religious sites both in the region and abroad for specialized training by experts in their particular theological tradition is a key component of religious education. When monks traveled across county or provincial lines for religious teaching or study, permission was required from the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) of both the sending and receiving counties. In addition these restrictions sometimes apply even to monks visiting other monasteries within the same county for short-term study or teaching. Since the unrest in March 2008, monks in several Tibetan areas reported they were unable to leave their home monasteries. These restrictions had a negative impact upon the access of monks to opportunities for advanced religious education. These restrictions, along with regulations on the transfer of religious resources between monasteries, also weakened the strong traditional ties between large monasteries in the TAR and affiliated monasteries in other Tibetan areas. An international non-governmental organization (NGO) reported that monks and nuns who went to India claimed that among their main reasons for choosing to leave Tibet were that they wanted to continue their studies and to obtain a blessing from the Dalai Lama and other key religious leaders.

The Implementing Regulations also gave the government formal control over the building and management of religious structures and over large-scale religious gatherings. Official permission was required for all monastic construction. Likewise, monasteries must request permission to hold large or important religious events. The TAR government also controlled the use of Tibetan Buddhist religious relics tightly, maintaining that the relics, along with religious institutions themselves, are state property.

Some government officials maintained there was no law against possessing or displaying pictures of the Dalai Lama, but rather that most Tibetans chose not to display his picture. The government also continued to ban pictures of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama and the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize as the 11th Panchen Lama. The Implementing Regulations state that "religious personnel and religious citizens may not distribute books, pictures, or other materials that harm the unity of the nationalities or endanger state security." Some officials deemed photos of and books by or about the Dalai Lama and Gendun Choekyi Nyima as materials that violated the Implementing Regulations.

Nevertheless, many Tibetans displayed photos of the Dalai Lama and Gendun Choekyi Nyima in their homes, in lockets, and on cellular telephones. The ability of Tibetans to display the Dalai Lama's picture varied regionally and with the political climate. In major monasteries, especially those that attract large numbers of tourists, pictures of the Dalai Lama were not openly displayed. His picture also could not be purchased openly in the TAR or other Tibetan areas of China. Merchants who ignored the restrictions and sold Dalai Lama related images and audiovisual material reported that authorities frequently imposed fines. In Tibetan areas outside the TAR, visitors to several monasteries saw pictures of the Dalai Lama prominently displayed, although monks reported that they would temporarily remove such photos during inspections by officials from the local RAB or other agencies. Authorities appeared to view possession of such photos or material as evidence of separatist sentiment.

Authorities prohibited the registration of names for children that included one or more of the names of the Dalai Lama or certain names included on a list of blessed names approved by the Dalai Lama. As a result, many Tibetans have a name they use in daily

life and a different, government-approved name for interactions with government officials.

There were no national religious holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Although authorities permitted many traditional religious ceremonies and practices as well as public manifestations of belief during the reporting period, they rigorously confined most religious activities to officially designated places of worship and maintained tight control over religious leaders and religious gatherings of laypeople. The government forcibly suppressed religious activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent or advocacy of Tibetan independence.

The government stated there were no limits on the number of monks in major monasteries and that each monastery's DMC could decide independently how many monks the monastery could support. In practice, however, the government imposed strict limits on the number of monks in major monasteries, particularly in the TAR and Sichuan's Ganzi (Kardze) TAP. One method used by local authorities to restrict the growth of the number of monks was to impose restrictions on the construction of new housing in the monastery, forcing each dwelling to bear an address plate issued by the local government. Local RABs also frequently refused to issue official clergy permits or monk permits. A February 2009 Ministry of State Security Social Order Working Guidelines made removing unauthorized and underage monks a priority.

In the TAR and in Tibetan areas of Sichuan Province, the government reportedly removed hundreds of monks under the age of 18, unregistered monks and nuns, and monks and nuns from outside of the TAR and Ganzi (Kardze) Prefecture from monasteries. Furthermore, they also removed hundreds of schoolchildren from schools attached to monasteries. Some of the children were placed in public schools to receive compulsory education, but many others were provided with no alternative arrangements. During the reporting period, local authorities frequently pressured parents, especially those who were CCP members or government employees, to withdraw their children from monasteries in their hometowns, private schools attached to monasteries, and Tibetan schools in India. In some cases local authorities confiscated identity documents of parents whose children were studying at Tibetan schools in India as a means of forcing the parents to make their children return home. Without documents the parents were vulnerable to losing their jobs.

Authorities closely supervised the education of lamas approved by the government. For example, according to an article in Tibet Daily, the UFWD started a training session in Lhasa on November 5, 2009, for 25 Living Buddhas. Authorities held a similar training session in Chengdu, Sichuan province for Living Buddhas and tutors of Living Buddhas. The purpose of the training was to ensure that the Living Buddhas followed the example of the government-recognized "11th Panchen Lama" by being patriotic and rejecting separatism. The education of the current Reting Rinpoche, who was born on October 3, 1997, differed significantly from that of his predecessors. Historically, the Reting Rinpoche occasionally acted as the regent and had a role in the recognition of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. Government officials, rather than religious leaders, managed the selection of his religious and lay tutors.

The quality and availability of high-level religious teachers in the TAR and other Tibetan areas remained inadequate. Many teachers were in exile in India and elsewhere, older teachers were not replaced, and those who remained in Tibetan areas outside the TAR had difficulty securing permission to teach in other parts of China, abroad, or even within the TAR. After March 2008 many monks originally from other Tibetan areas were expelled from monasteries in Lhasa, even if they had lived in the monasteries for as long as 20 years. Many leaders of the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism reside abroad. For example, the Karmapa, leader of Tibetan Buddhism's Karma Kagyu school and one of its most influential religious figures, remained in exile after departing the TAR in 1999. The Karmapa said he left because of government controls over his movements and its refusal to allow him to go to India to be trained by his spiritual mentors or to allow his teachers to come to him.

In recent years DMCs at several large monasteries began to use funds from the sale of entrance tickets or pilgrims donations--and, in some cases, DMC-run hotels, shops, and restaurants--for purposes other than the support of monks engaged in full-time religious study under the government policy of monastery self-sufficiency. Although local government officials' attempts to attract tourists to religious sites provided some monasteries with extra income, such activities also deflected time and energy from religious instruction.

In 2004 authorities rescinded the 16-year ban on Geshe Lharampa examinations (the highest religious examination in the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism), but restrictions on religious travel, religious education, and the requirements for political qualification still made it difficult to receive the necessary level of instruction. On March 21, 2010, eight monks from the Tashi Lhunpo, Ganden, Sera, and Chamdo Champa Ling monasteries passed the Geshe doctoral examination. In 2010 approximately 180 monks conducted the Great Prayer Festival (Monlam Chenmo), which is closely related to the Geshe exam at the Jokhang Temple, despite the ban that has remained in place since 1990. Traditionally hundreds of thousands of Tibetans gathered in Lhasa during the Monlam Chenmo.

During the March 2010 anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising and the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile, numerous monasteries experienced regular police checks and disruptions in cellular telephone, text messaging, Internet, and other communication services. In March 2010 a public notice in Droje Trak and Lhamotse monasteries stated that monks venturing outside of the monasteries must obey an 8 p.m. curfew.

Many Tibetans-- including laypersons, monks, and nuns--in Ganzi (Kardze) and Aba (Ngaba) Prefectures in Sichuan were unable to obtain passports during the reporting period. Tibetans in Qinghai and Gansu also experienced arbitrary denials of passport applications. The application process was not transparent, and Tibetans reported obstacles ranged from bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption to denials based on the applicant's political activities or religious beliefs. There were instances in which authorities confiscated previously issued passports. In some cases high-ranking religious figures were able to obtain a passport only after promising not to travel to India. In other cases Tibetans were only able to obtain passports after paying substantial bribes to local officials. Many other passport applications were simply denied. Monks and nuns have experienced greater difficulty obtaining passports since the March 2008 unrest.

The difficulty of obtaining a passport limited the ability of Tibetans to travel to India for religious purposes. Passport and border controls became tighter following the unrest that began in March 2008, making legal foreign travel more difficult and illegal border crossings nearly impossible. Nevertheless, during the reporting period, hundreds of Tibetans, including monks and nuns, traveled to India via third countries, and most of them sought refugee status in India.

The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 838 Tibetans arrived at the Tibet Reception Center in Nepal in 2009, an increase from 2008, but still significantly below historical levels.

Travel restrictions for foreign travelers to and within the TAR and other Tibetan areas continued during the reporting period, and the government tightly controlled visits by foreign officials to religious sites in the TAR. Foreign media were completely barred from the TAR, with the exception of a small number of closely monitored government organized trips. Foreign visitors were often denied entry at police roadblocks or denied bus tickets in Tibetan areas outside the TAR, ostensibly for safety reasons, while Chinese tourists passed unhindered. Local government officials were often reluctant to say whether confidential travel bans were in effect. Foreign visitors are required by regulation to obtain official permission letters issued by the government before entering the TAR.

Spiritual leaders reportedly encountered difficulty reestablishing historical monasteries in rural areas, due to a lack of funding and government denials of permission to build and operate religious institutions. Officials in some areas contended that these religious venues drained local resources and served as a conduit for political infiltration by the

Tibetan exile community. However, in some areas, the government restored monasteries to promote tourism and boost revenue.

At Drephung Monastery and other religious sites, security forces continue to limit the number of times per week Tibetans could enter the monastery to worship. Such restrictions, however, were less prevalent than in the immediate period following the March 2008 unrest.

After the outbreak of violence in March 2008, security forces blocked access to and from important monasteries including those in the Lhasa area. Nighttime police raids removed many monks from important monasteries in Lhasa in the first few months after the crackdown. A heavy police presence in the monasteries restricted the movement of monks and prevented "unauthorized" visits, including those by foreign journalists. Similar restrictions were in place in March 2009 and 2010, when foreign journalists were prevented from entering most Tibetan areas. In 2009 reporters from six news organizations were detained in Tibetan areas outside the TAR although these areas were open to foreign journalists.

After an earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale struck the Yushu TAP in Qinghai Province on April 14, 2010, Tibetan monks and nuns played a crucial role in the rescue and relief efforts. Local authorities allowed monks to conduct a mass cremation ceremony. However, in the weeks following the quake, authorities restricted the ability of monks outside Yushu to assist in relief efforts, often insisting that monks return to their home monasteries. Some monks also reported restrictions on large prayer gatherings in and around Jiegu (Kyegu), the main population center of the Yushu TAP. According to official information, 87 monasteries were damaged in the earthquake. According to another official report, 84 monks from Thrangu, Kyegu, and Rangnyang monasteries were killed, and 100 injured.

Some overseas Tibetan Buddhist leaders were refused permission to visit the earthquake zone. On April 17, 2010, the Dalai Lama made a press statement in which he requested permission to visit the earthquake area to provide spiritual healing for Tibetans, following a request by the Tibetans of Yushu for the visit. Chinese authorities did not respond to the request. Gyaltsen Norbu, the government-approved Panchen Lama, led hundreds of local monks in a prayer service for the dead, according to the Xinhua official press agency. According to numerous Tibetan monks in China, UFWD and RAB officials frequently pressure monks to attend sessions presided over by the government-recognized Panchen Lama.

The prohibition against celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6 continued during the reporting period. Authorities in many Tibetan areas confiscated or defaced his photographs in monasteries and private residences.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In March 2008 monks and nuns from a number of monasteries in Lhasa and other Tibetan communities mounted peaceful protests, asking for religious freedom and return of the Dalai Lama. After four days the protests and security response devolved into rioting by Tibetans and a violent police crackdown in Lhasa. Some protesters resorted to violence, in some cases deadly violence against Han and Hui residents. The ensuing police actions resulted in an unknown number of deaths, injuries, arrests, and human rights abuses. Over the next few months, there were a number of protests across the Tibetan plateau involving both monks and nuns and laypeople, the vast majority peaceful. In the weeks following the unrest, there were reports of mass detentions of monks and of police and military personnel sealing off monasteries. Cellular phone and Internet access was routinely blocked as "patriotic education" campaigns intensified.

Following the March 2008 protests, the government further tightened its already strict control over access to and information about Tibetan areas, particularly the TAR, making it difficult to determine the scope of religious freedom violations. These controls remained in place during the reporting period. Respect for religious freedom in the TAR and other Tibetan areas deteriorated in the months following the violent unrest and remained poor throughout the reporting period. Authorities curtailed or tightly controlled numerous religious festivals and celebrations because they feared that these

events would become venues for antigovernment protests. During 2009 and 2010, many relatively small-scale protests took place in the TAR and in Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai provinces.

The number of monks and nuns at several monasteries decreased after the protests of spring 2008. Information about the locations of many who had been arrested was difficult to confirm and, according to many sources, the monks and nuns released from prisons must live in their home villages and cannot return back to their monasteries or nunneries. Released monks and nuns, according to some reports, require permission from village or county-level authorities to leave their homes to seek medical treatment.

Because of the increased limits on religious practice, particularly in monasteries and nunneries; a desire to study with Tibetan Buddhist religious teachers in India; or to receive a blessing from the Dalai Lama, many Tibetans traveled to Nepal en route to India. There were continued reports that the government detained Tibetans seeking to cross the border from Tibet to Nepal. Such detentions reportedly lasted as long as several months and sometimes took place without formal charges. Chinese police sought to prevent Tibetans from crossing the Tibet-Nepal border and reportedly crossed into Nepal to pressure government officials to forcibly return Tibetans. Three Tibetan Buddhists, including one monk, were forcibly returned to China from Nepal in June 2010.

As of September 1, 2010, the Congressional Executive Commission on China's Political Prisoner Database contained records of 824 Tibetan political or religious prisoners believed to be currently detained or imprisoned. Of those 824 Tibetans, 479 (approximately 58 percent) are Tibetan Buddhist "religious professionals" (monks, nuns, and tulkus).

At the end of the reporting period, many monks and nuns remained in detention because of their involvement in the March 2008 protests. Several monks also reportedly committed suicide as a result of the harsh conditions and religious restrictions in monasteries that were imposed after March 2008. According to numerous sources, many of those detained were subjected to extrajudicial punishments, such as beatings and deprivation of food, water, and sleep for long periods. In some cases detainees reportedly suffered broken bones and other serious injuries at the hands of People's Armed Police (PAP) and Public Security Bureau (PSB) officers. According to sources who claimed to be eyewitnesses, the bodies of some persons, including monks and nuns, who were killed during the violence or who died during interrogation were disposed of secretly rather than being returned to their families. More than 80 nuns reportedly were detained in Sichuan Province after March 2008 and their whereabouts were still unknown.

Limited access to information about prisoners and prisons made it difficult to ascertain the number of Tibetan prisoners of religious conscience or to assess the extent and severity of abuses.

In May 2010 Tibetan monk Jigme Guri (also commonly known as Golog Jime or Jigme Gyatso) from Labrang Monastery was released from prison. He alleged that prison authorities beat him repeatedly during two months of detention beginning in March 2008. According to Jigme the beatings left him unconscious for six days, and he required two hospitalizations.

In May 2010 a monk from Aba (Ngaba) Gomang Monastery in Sichuan Province named Dokru Tsultrim was rearrested. In March 2009 he was arrested for writing articles in support of the Dalai Lama. Family members have reportedly been barred from visiting him.

In the winter of 2010, there were two protests calling for the release of prominent Buddhist figure Tenzin Delek Rinpoche who remained in a Sichuan prison on firearms charges. According to Tibetan sources, the firearms were left at his temple by a group who had renounced hunting.

On December 23, 2009, Tulku Phurbu Tsering Rinpoche was sentenced to eight years and six months in prison. In April 2009 he went on trial for weapons charges related to protests that took place in 2008 in Ganzi (Kardze) County, Sichuan. Police charged they

found weapons in his home; the monk and his Beijing-based lawyer insisted the weapons were planted and that he confessed only after being tortured.

On April 11, 2009, PSB officers in Nagchu County reportedly detained Khensur Thupten Thapkhay, a former abbot of Shapten Monastery, and scripture master Geshe Tsultrim Gyaltzen. They allegedly also detained a third monk, Tsundue, of Shapten Monastery's Democratic Management Committee.

On March 25, 2009, according to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), PSB personnel beat to death Phuntsok, a monk from the Drango Monastery in Ganzi (Kardze), after he passed out leaflets calling upon local Tibetans to forego crop cultivation as a gesture of mourning for monks who were tortured and imprisoned after the March 2008 unrest.

According to an NGO report, two nuns from Dragkar Nunnery in Ganzi (Kardze), Sichuan Province, named Yangkyi Dolma and Sonam Yangchen were detained and beaten for staging a protest at the Ganzi (Kardze) County market square on March 24, 2009. Yangkyi Dolma allegedly distributed a handful of handwritten pamphlets, and both nuns shouted pro-Tibet slogans before PAP officers beat them and took them away. Yangkyi Dolma died in a Chengdu hospital from unknown causes in December 2009.

On March 21, 2009, nearly 100 monks from the Ragya Monastery rioted in the Guoluo (Golog) TAP of Qinghai Province. International media reported the riot started after a local monk who was questioned for advocating Tibetan independence ran away from the police station and jumped into the Yellow River to commit suicide.

No information was available on the fate of monks who protested in front of a group of foreign journalists at Lhasa's Jokhang Temple on March 27, 2008. Monks involved in a similar protest in front of foreign journalists at the Labrang Monastery in Gansu Province on April 9, 2008, were reportedly arrested. Five of the Labrang monks later escaped to India.

In March 2009 four nuns from the Puru-na Nunnery in Ganzi (Kardze), Sichuan Province, were sentenced to prison for their role in a 50-person protest at county headquarters on May 14, 2008. Tashi Lhamo, Youghal Khando, and Serka were each sentenced to two years in prison. Rinzin Choetso received a three-year sentence. The whereabouts of seven other nuns involved in the protest remained unknown.

In February 2009 nine monks from the Samye Monastery were sentenced to prison terms varying from two to 15 years for their participation in the March 2008 protests at the government administrative headquarters in Dranang County. A tenth monk was reported to have committed suicide.

On January 24, 2009, seven monks, including chant leader Nima Tsering, were arrested in connection with a demonstration of an estimated 300 monks at the Den Choekhor Monastery in Jomda County. The monks were protesting the planned participation of a local Tibetan dance troupe in the Serf Emancipation Day celebrations organized by the government.

On January 15, 2009, three nuns were each sentenced to two and a half years in prison for staging a protest in Ganzi (Kardze) County, Sichuan Province on June 18, 2008. The three nuns, Poewang, Lhamo, and Yangzom, were being held in a prison in Chengdu. Sources reported that at least 44 other nuns were being held in the prison.

On January 2, 2009, Yangkyi, a nun at Dragkar Nunnery in Ganzi (Kardze), Sichuan Province, was sentenced to one year and nine months in prison for her role in a May 12, 2008 protest.

In October 2008 two monks from the Ratoe Monastery in Chushul County were sentenced to prison for their role in the March 15 riot at the Chushul County government headquarters. According to the Xinhua news agency, Lobsang Tsephel was sentenced to nine years and Tsenam to five years.

In June 2008 the Intermediate Court in Lhoka, TAR, sentenced nine monks to prison for two to 15 years in connection with protests at a government building in Dranang County, Lhoka, on March 18, 2008. Those sentenced included Tenzin Bhuchung of Langthang Monastery and Gyaltsen, of Samye Monastery, who each received 15-year sentences. Tenzin Zoepa of Jowo Monastery was given a 13-year sentence. Nima Tashi and Phuntsok, also of Samye Monastery, were each sentenced to 13 years in prison.

No new information was available on Rongye Adak, who was arrested on August 1, 2008 in Ganzi (Kardze), TAP, Sichuan Province, after calling for the Dalai Lama's return. He was convicted of inciting separatism and sentenced to eight years in prison.

The whereabouts of Gendun Choekyi Nyima remained unknown. The government refused requests by international observers to visit Nyima, who turned 21 years old on April 25, 2010. In October 2009, government officials in Tibet told a visiting foreign delegation that Nyima was "growing up very well, loves Chinese culture, and is enjoying his life." The officials asserted that his identification as the 11th Panchen Lama was "illegal." The government continued to insist that Gyaltsen Norbu, whom it selected in 1995, is the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation. The government did not provide any information on Lama Chadrel Rinpoche, who reportedly remained under house arrest for leaking information about the selection of the Panchen Lama.

The government also severely restricted contact between several important reincarnate lamas and the outside world. For example, the 11th Pawo Rinpoche, whom the 17th Karmapa recognized in 1994, remained under official supervision at Nenang Monastery. Foreign delegations have repeatedly been refused permission to visit him.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were widespread reports from Tibetan monks, nuns, and laypersons that Government authorities pressured them to denounce the Dalai Lama as their spiritual leader and to affirm their faith in the CCP and socialism.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

According to several reports, authorities in the Yushu TAP, Qinghai Province, often tolerated the display of the Dalai Lama's photo in temporary shelters and in shrines erected to mourn the dead following the earthquake.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Since ethnicity and religion are often interlinked in many parts of the country, it is difficult to categorize many incidents solely as ethnic or religious intolerance. Tensions among ethnic groups in Tibetan areas, including the Han, the Muslim Hui, and others remained high during the reporting period. Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns reported they were frequently denied registration at hotels, particularly during sensitive times, including the period around the Beijing Olympics, the 60th anniversary of the country on October 1, 2009, and the Shanghai World Expo in 2010. Tensions between individuals of different religious beliefs, such as between Tibetans and Hui in the TAR and TAPs, also were related to economic competition. Many ethnic Han Buddhists were interested in Tibetan Buddhism and donated money to Tibetan monasteries and nunneries. Tibetan monks frequently visited inland Chinese cities to provide religious instruction to Han Buddhists. In addition a growing number of ethnic Han Buddhists visited Tibetan monasteries in the summer, although the central government imposed restrictions that made it difficult for ethnic Han Buddhists to do long-term study at monasteries in ethnic Tibetan areas.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The Department of State, the U.S. embassy in Beijing, and the U.S. consulate general in Chengdu made a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibetan areas, using focused pressure in cases of abuse. Embassy and consulate general officials protested and sought further information on cases whenever there were credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination. U.S. diplomatic personnel in the country maintained contacts with a wide range of religious leaders and practitioners in Tibetan

areas to monitor the status of religious freedom. After the outbreak of unrest in the TAR and other Tibetan areas in March 2008, U.S. government officials repeatedly requested diplomatic access to affected areas; the rate of approval of such requests increased over this reporting period in comparison to 2008-9, but many requests were still denied, and visits to the TAR were closely controlled and monitored. Unpublished restrictions on travel by foreigners into the TAR and other Tibetan areas imposed in March 2008 often resulted in U.S. diplomats and other foreigners being turned back at police roadblocks, ostensibly for their own safety, or being refused transportation on public buses to Tibetan areas outside the TAR that were officially open to foreign visitors.

HONG KONG

The Basic Law, which serves as the constitution of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There were allegations that the government denied entry to some travelers from overseas because of their affiliation with the Falun Gong, a spiritual group that is banned in mainland China, raising concerns about pressure from Beijing on Hong Kong's autonomy over immigration matters.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The territory has an area of 426 square miles on more than 200 islands and Kowloon and peninsular New Territories, and a population of seven million. Approximately 43 percent of the population practices some form of religion. The two most prevalent religions are Buddhism and Taoism, which are often observed together in the same temple. A local religious scholar in contact with major denominations estimates there are approximately 1.5 million Buddhists and Taoists; 550,000 Protestant Christians; over 400,000 Roman Catholics; approximately 20,000 Mormons; over 100,000 Muslims; over 40,000 Hindus; 2-3,000 Sikhs; and 3-4,000 Jews. Confucianism also is prevalent in the HKSAR. Although few believers practiced Confucianism as a formal religion, Confucian ideas and social tenets were often blended with Taoism and Buddhism. There are between 300 and 500 Falun Gong practitioners in Hong Kong.

There are approximately 600 Buddhist (including temples affiliated with Tibetan schools) and Taoist temples, 800 Christian churches and chapels, five mosques, four synagogues, one Hindu temple, and one Sikh temple.

There are 1,400 Protestant congregations, representing 50 denominations. The largest Protestant denomination is the Baptist Church, followed by the Lutheran Church. Other major denominations include Seventh-day Adventists, Anglicans, Christian and Missionary Alliance groups, the Church of Christ in China, Methodists, Pentecostals, and the Salvation Army. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) also is present.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Since sovereignty was transferred from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China (PRC) on July 1, 1997, the Basic Law has provided the legal framework for the HKSAR. It upholds the principle of political autonomy in the HKSAR, often referred to as "one country, two systems." The Basic Law states that residents will have freedom of conscience; freedom of religious belief; and freedom to preach, conduct, and participate in religious activities in public.

The Bill of Rights Ordinance incorporates the religious freedom protections of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These include the right to manifest religious belief individually or in community with others, in public or private and through worship, observance, practice, and teaching. The ordinance also protects the right of parents or legal guardians to "ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."

The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) functions as a liaison between religious groups and the government. The government has invited all interested groups, including affected organizations or individuals, to provide views on whether proposed measures discriminated on the basis of religion. Religious communities were among the stakeholders consulted in amendments to what became the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance in 2009, which expanded legal protections to same-sex cohabitant relationships.

The government observes Christmas and the birth of Buddha as public holidays. The Taoist community has requested that Lao-tse's birthday be made a public holiday, and the Imam of one of Hong Kong's major Muslim communities suggested in the media that Eid al-Fitr be made a public holiday as well.

The only direct government role in managing religious affairs is the Chinese Temples Committee, which the Secretary for Home Affairs leads. Its members are appointed by the Chief Executive. Since the 1960s newly established temples have not been required to register under the colonial-era Chinese Temples Ordinance, and the committee at this point oversees only an estimated 24 of the region's 600 temples. The committee oversees the management and use of donations by the 24 temples.

Religious groups were able to apply to the government to lease land at concessionary (less than market value) terms through sponsorship by the HAB. They still must "compete" with any other parties interested in the same land for the grant from the Lands Department. Religious organizations can apply to develop or use facilities in accordance with local legislation. Religious belief was not a barrier to public service and a wide range of faiths were represented in the government, judiciary, and civil service. In addition, the Election Committee Ordinance stipulates that the six largest religious groups in Hong Kong hold 40 seats on the 800-member Election Committee, which was tasked with nominating and voting for the region's chief executive. The groups represented were the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association, Hong Kong Christian Council (representing Protestant denominations), Hong Kong Taoist Association, the Confucian Academy, and the Hong Kong Buddhist Association.

Religious groups were exempted from the Societies Ordinance, which required that nongovernmental organizations register. Registration for religious groups remained voluntary and was needed only if the group wanted to seek government benefits or receive a grant to provide social services. Spiritual movements are not classified as religious groups, and must register under the Societies Ordinance if they wish to establish offices, collect dues from members, or have legal status.

During the reporting period, Falun Gong maintained 16 regular information displays in high-traffic areas and regularly conducted public protests against the repression of fellow practitioners. Other spiritual movements, including Xiang Gong and Yan Xin Qigong, were registered and practiced freely.

A large variety of faith-based aid groups, including Protestant, Muslim, and Catholic groups, provide education services. The government sometimes funded the operating costs of schools built by religious groups.

Schools that accepted government funds were governed by the 2004 Education (Amendment) Ordinance (the "Ordinance"), which mandated that the schools establish an "incorporated management committee." Teacher and parent groups elected 40 percent of the members of the committee, and the sponsoring religious community appointed 60 percent of the members. The Catholic Diocese challenged the incorporated management committee requirement on the grounds that it could adversely affect the religious distinctives – the ability of religious groups to offer a religious perspective in the

educational process – of their schools. Other groups, including the Sheng Kung Hui (Anglicans) and the Methodist Church expressed similar concerns. The Catholic Diocese sued the government on the basis that the ordinance violated a provision in the basic law, which states that religious organizations should be allowed to run educational institutions and other social services "according to their previous practice" prior to Hong Kong's return to the PRC. On February 4, 2010, the diocese lost its appeal in the case at the High Court (Court of Appeal). The diocese and other religious groups told the media they were considering further options to oppose the policy. Editorials across the political spectrum endorsed the ruling.

Catholic and Protestant clergy from the region were invited by the state-sanctioned patriotic religious associations on the mainland to teach at religious institutions. There were also student exchanges between state-sanctioned religious groups on the mainland and Hong Kong-based religious groups.

Hong Kong's Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant communities participated in a range of social services including welfare, elderly care, hospitals, and other charitable activities. They were eligible to receive government funding to provide primary and secondary education. While such schools cannot bar students based on religion, they were permitted to provide religious instruction as part of their curriculum.

The Hong Kong Diocese recognizes Pope Benedict XVI as the head of the Roman Catholic Church. A bishop as well as priests, monks, and nuns served Catholics and maintained links to the Vatican. Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun retired from his active role in the diocese in April 2009, but remains in Hong Kong and continued to speak publicly about religious freedom in the PRC and public policy in Hong Kong, including democratic development.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. Under the Basic Law, the HKSAR has autonomy in the management of religious affairs. The Basic Law calls for ties between the region's religious organizations and their mainland counterparts to be based on "nonsubordination, noninterference, and mutual respect."

Falun Gong representatives asserted that mainland authorities pressured the HKSAR to restrict their activities in the region. The PRC banned the Falun Gong under an "anti-cult" provision in the criminal law in 1999. Falun Gong members also reported checks on their identity documents by police, whom they reported were checking for practitioners from Taiwan. Falun Gong practitioners from outside Hong Kong, visiting as tourists, were generally allowed to enter the territory, but local groups alleged that some Taiwan practitioners who reported a Falun Gong-related purpose in applying for entry documents were refused for that reason. Practitioners also reported that relevant authorities consistently denied them access to public facilities they wished to rent for functions, usually because administrators reported the facilities to be previously booked.

The Epoch Group, a media organization with ties to Falun Gong, rented premises and sold out a several-day run of performances of the Shen Yun Performing Arts Show in January 2010. The show presents Chinese culture through music and dance and references the mainland government's treatment of the Falun Gong. The HKSAR denied visas to six technicians of the Shen Yun troupe. The Immigration Department stated that the visas were refused in accordance with laws protecting the employment of local workers, and that the troupe could hire competent staff locally. Epoch Group contended that local staff could not replace the specialized expertise of its staff. The government sustained its refusals, and the Epoch Group cancelled the show. Epoch Group is seeking judicial review of the refusals.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the special administrative region.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Senior government leaders often participate in large-scale events held by religious organizations.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Consulate general officers have made clear U.S. government interest in the full protection of freedom of religion. Consulate general officers at all levels, including the consul general, met regularly with religious leaders and community representatives through attendance at community functions and invitations to religious leaders to consulate functions. The mission supported the community service work of faith-based organizations, including the application of a local faith-based charity for U.S. government funding.

MACAU

The Basic Law, which serves as the Constitution of the Macau Special Administrative Region (Macau SAR), provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The region has an area of 11.3 square miles and, according to official statistics in 2008, a population of 549,200. Buddhism, which is practiced by nearly 80 percent of the population, is the predominant religion. Approximately 5.2 percent of the population is Roman Catholic and more than 1 percent is Protestant. Smaller religious groups include Baha'is (estimated at 2,500 persons); Muslims (estimated at 100 persons); and a small number of Falun Gong practitioners.

There are approximately 40 Buddhist temples, 30 Taoist temples, 18 Catholic, and approximately 70 Protestant churches, four Baha'i centers, and one mosque. Approximately 50 percent of primary and secondary students were enrolled in schools operated or funded by religious organizations. These schools may provide religious education, but the government does not maintain statistics on this subject.

Many Protestant denominations are represented, including Baptist, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches. Evangelical denominations and independent local churches also exist in the region. The Reformed Theological Seminary enrolled students in virtual seminary programs.

As of December 2008, an estimated 70 Protestant churches with 10,000 members conducted services in Chinese; approximately 5,000 worshippers attended every Sunday. An estimated 500 Protestants attended services conducted in foreign languages.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Article 34 of the Basic Law states that "Macau residents shall have freedom of religious belief, and freedom to preach and to conduct and participate in religious activities in public." Furthermore, Article 128 of the Basic Law stipulates, "the government, consistent with the principle of religious freedom, shall not interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations or in the efforts of religious organizations and their believers to maintain and develop relations with their counterparts outside Macau or restrict religious activities which do not contravene the laws of the Special Administrative Region."

The 1998 Freedom of Religion and Worship Law, which remained in effect after the 1999 transfer of sovereignty to the People's Republic of China (PRC), provides for freedom of religion, privacy of religious belief, freedom of religious assembly, freedom to hold religious processions, and freedom of religious education. The government generally respected these rights in practice.

The government observes Christmas, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and the birth of Buddha as public holidays.

The Freedom of Religion and Worship Law allows religious organizations to register directly with the Identification Bureau, which was required under the law to receive and process registrations. Applicants needed to supply their name, identification card number, contact information, organization name, and copy of the group's charter to register. Religious entities can apply to media organizations and companies to use mass media (television, radio, etc.) to preach, and such applications were generally approved. Registration was not required to conduct religious activities, and registration does not automatically confer tax-exempt status or other advantages.

The Freedom of Religion and Worship Law stipulates that religious groups may develop and maintain relations with religious groups abroad. The Catholic Church, which is in communion with the Vatican, recognized the Pope as the head of the Church. In 2005 the Holy See appointed the current Bishop for the diocese. Beginning in September 2007, the Macau Inter-University Institute (now re-named the University of Saint Joseph), affiliated with the Catholic University in Portugal, offered a Christian studies course that involved Catholic seminary students from the mainland.

Many religious groups, including Catholics, Buddhists, Protestants, and Baha'is, provided extensive social services to the community. The government provided financial support for the establishment of schools, childcare centers, clinics, homes for the elderly, rehabilitation centers, and vocational training centers run by religious organizations.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period. Under the Basic Law, the government of the Macau SAR (not the Government of the PRC) controls religious practices in the region. Religious organizations coordinate their relations with coreligionists in the PRC through the Central Government Liaison Office (CGLO), which is staffed by PRC officials. Religious communities report CGLO supported these activities and exchanges. CGLO also maintained dialogue with religious organizations in the SAR.

Falun Gong, which has approximately 15 active members, is not registered with the Identification Bureau. While the bureau has not issued instructions regarding Falun Gong, senior officials have stated that Falun Gong practitioners may continue their legal activities despite the lack of registration. Falun Gong members regularly set up their informational sites in public venues.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the region.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Relations among the various religious communities were good, and citizens generally were tolerant of the religious views and practices of others. Public ceremonies and dedications often included prayers by both Christian and Buddhist groups.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Officers from the U.S. consulate general in Hong Kong met regularly with leaders of all religious groups and spiritual organizations in the region.
