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2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: China (Includes Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Macau) - China

Executive Summary

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

The constitution, which cites the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, states that citizens have freedom of religious belief but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities” and does not define “normal.” Despite Chairman Xi Jinping’s decree that all members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) must be “unyielding Marxist atheists,” the government continued to exercise control over religion and restrict the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents that it perceived as threatening state or CCP interests, according to religious groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international media reports. The government recognizes five official religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Only religious groups belonging to the five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” representing these religions are permitted to register with the government and officially permitted to hold worship services. There continued to be reports of deaths in custody and that the government tortured, physically abused, arrested, detained, sentenced to prison, subjected to forced indoctrination in CCP ideology, or harassed adherents of both registered and unregistered religious groups for activities related to their religious beliefs and practices. There were several reports of individuals committing suicide in detention, or, according to sources, as a result of being threatened and surveilled. In December Pastor Wang Yi was tried in secret and sentenced to nine years in prison by a court in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in connection to his peaceful advocacy for religious freedom. There was one self-immolation by a former Tibetan Buddhist monk reported during the year. According to The Church of Almighty God, a Christian group established in the country in 1991 and which the government considers an “evil cult,” authorities in Shandong Province arrested more than 6,000 members during the year as part of a nationwide crackdown. Media sources reported local officials in Tibetan areas explicitly stated supporters of the Dalai Lama could be arrested under the government’s nationwide anti-organized crime program. According to *Minghui*, a Falun Gong publication, police arrested more than 6,000 Falun Gong practitioners during the year. *Bitter Winter*, an online publication that tracks religious liberty and human rights abuses in the country, reported instances of individuals being held for

extended periods of time in psychiatric hospitals for practicing their religious beliefs, beaten, and forced to take medication. The government continued a campaign begun in 2016 to evict thousands of monks and nuns from Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes. Authorities in many provinces targeted religious groups with overseas ties, particularly Christian groups. The government offered financial incentives to law enforcement to arrest religious practitioners and to citizens who reported “illegal religious activity.” The government continued a campaign of religious Sinicization to bring all religious doctrine and practice in line with CCP doctrine, adopting a formal five-year plan on January 7. Officials across the country shut down religious venues, including some that were affiliated with the authorized patriotic religious associations, and placed surveillance cameras in houses of worship as a condition of allowing these venues to continue operating. There were numerous reports that authorities closed or destroyed Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, Taoist, Jewish, and other houses of worship and destroyed public displays of religious symbols throughout the country, including the last remaining crosses in Xiayi County, Henan Province, and all Jewish symbols identifying the site of the former Kaifeng Synagogue, also in Henan Province. Nationwide, the government prohibited individuals under aged 18 from participating in most religious activities. The Holy See maintained its 2018 provisional agreement with the government that reportedly addressed a decades-long dispute concerning the authority to appoint bishops. Officials routinely made public statements denigrating the Dalai Lama.

The government continued to cite what it called the “three evils” of “ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism” as its justification to enact and enforce restrictions on religious practices of Muslims in Xinjiang. The U.S. government estimates that since April 2017, the PRC government arbitrarily detained more than one million Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and members of other Muslim groups, as well as Uighur Christians, in specially built or converted internment camps in Xinjiang and subjected them to forced disappearance, political indoctrination, torture, physical and psychological abuse, including forced sterilization and sexual abuse, forced labor, and prolonged detention without trial because of their religion and ethnicity. There were reports of individuals dying as a result of injuries sustained during interrogations. In November *The New York Times* and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) reported on leaked internal government documents that included descriptions of the government’s mass internment program in Xinjiang and a manual for operating internment camps with instructions on how to prevent escapes, how to maintain total secrecy about the camp’s existence, and methods of forced indoctrination. A third document, the “Karakax List,” originally leaked in November and later made public, presented evidence the government initially interned or extended the internment of individuals on religious grounds in four reeducation centers in Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture. Authorities in Xinjiang restricted access to mosques and barred youths from participating in religious activities, including fasting during Ramadan. According to human rights groups and international media, authorities maintained extensive and invasive security and surveillance, in part to gain information regarding individuals’ religious adherence and practices. This surveillance included forcing Uighurs and other ethnic and religious minorities to install spyware on their mobile phones and accept government officials and CCP members living in their homes. Satellite imagery and other sources indicated the government destroyed mosques, cemeteries, and other religious sites. Nearly 40 percent of all elementary and middle

school students – approximately half a million children – lived in boarding schools where they studied Han culture, Mandarin, and CCP ideology. The government sought the forcible repatriation of Uighur and other Muslims from foreign countries and detained some of those who returned.

Christians, Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and Falun Gong practitioners reported severe societal discrimination in employment, housing, and business opportunities. In Xinjiang, tension between Uighur Muslims and Han Chinese continued in parallel with the authorities’ suppression of Uighur language, culture, and religion and the promotion of the Han majority in political, economic, and cultural life. Anti-Muslim speech in social media remained widespread

The President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Ambassador, and other U.S. embassy and consulates general representatives repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns about abuses of religious freedom throughout the country. At the second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in July, the United States and other nations issued a statement calling on the government to cease its crackdown on religious groups. In a September 23 speech at the UN General Assembly, the Vice President said, “The Communist Party in China has arrested Christian pastors, banned the sale of Bibles, demolished churches, and imprisoned more than one million Muslim Uighurs.” On September 24 the United States co-sponsored a panel discussion on the human rights crisis in Xinjiang during the United Nations General Assembly session, hosted by the Deputy Secretary of State. During a press conference on November 26, the Secretary of State said, “We call on the Chinese government to immediately release all those who are arbitrarily detained and to end its draconian policies that have terrorized its own citizens in Xinjiang.” The Ambassador and other embassy and consulate general officials met with a range of Chinese officials to advocate for greater religious freedom and tolerance and the release of individuals imprisoned for religious reasons. The Ambassador and other embassy and consulate general officials met with members of registered and unregistered religious groups, family members of religious prisoners, NGOs, and others to reinforce U.S. support for religious freedom. The embassy continued to amplify Department of State religious freedom initiatives directly to Chinese citizens through outreach programs and social media.

In October the U.S. government added 28 PRC entities to the Department of Commerce’s Entity List and imposed visa restrictions on PRC government and CCP officials for their responsibility for, or complicity in, human rights abuses in Xinjiang. When announcing these measures, the Secretary of State said, “The Chinese government has instituted a highly repressive campaign against Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other members of Muslim minority groups in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region that includes mass detentions in internment camps; pervasive, high-tech surveillance; draconian controls of expressions of cultural and religious identities; and coercion of individuals to return from abroad to an often perilous fate in China.”

Since 1999, China has been designated as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. On December 18, the Secretary of

State redesignated China as a CPC and identified the following sanction that accompanied the designation: the existing ongoing restriction on exports to China of crime control and detection instruments and equipment, under the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1990 and 1991 (Public Law 101-246), pursuant to section 402(c)(5) of the Act.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 1.4 billion (midyear 2019 estimate). According to the State Council Information Office (SCIO) report “Seeking Happiness for People: 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China,” published in September, there are more than 200 million religious adherents in the country. The SCIO April 2018 white paper on religion in China states there are approximately 5,500 religious groups.

Local and regional figures for the number of religious followers, including those belonging to the four officially recognized religions, are unclear. Local governments do not release these statistics, and even official religious organizations do not have accurate numbers. The Pew Research Center and other observers say the numbers of adherents of many religious groups often are underreported. The U.S. government estimated in 2010 that Buddhists comprise 18.2 percent of the population, Christians 5.1 percent, Muslims 1.8 percent, and followers of folk religions 21.9 percent. According to a February 2017 estimate by the U.S.-based NGO Freedom House, there are more than 350 million religious adherents in the country, including 185-250 million Chinese Buddhists, 60-80 million Protestants, 21-23 million Muslims, 7-20 million Falun Gong practitioners, 12 million Catholics, 6-8 million Tibetan Buddhists, and hundreds of millions who follow various folk traditions. According to the Christian advocacy NGO Open Doors USA's 2019 World Watch List, there are 97.2 million Christians. According to 2017 data from the Jewish Virtual Library, the country's Jewish population is 2,700.

The SCIO April white paper found the number of Protestants to be 38 million. Among these, there are 20 million Protestants affiliated with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the state-sanctioned umbrella organization for all officially recognized Protestant churches, according to information on TSPM's website in March 2017. The SCIO report states there are six million Catholics, although media and international NGO estimates suggest there are 10-12 million Catholics, approximately half of whom practice in churches not affiliated with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), the state-sanctioned organization for all officially recognized Catholic churches. Accurate estimates on the numbers of Catholics and Protestants as well as other faiths are difficult to calculate because many adherents practice exclusively at home or in churches that are not state sanctioned.

According to the SCIO report, there are 10 ethnic minority groups totaling more than 20 million persons in which Islam is the majority religion. Other sources indicate almost all Muslims are Sunni. The two largest Muslim ethnic minorities are Hui and Uighur, with Hui Muslims concentrated primarily in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and in

Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan Provinces. The State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) estimates the Muslim Hui population at 10.6 million. Most Uighur Muslims are concentrated in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

While there is no reliable government breakdown of the Buddhist population by branch, the vast majority of Buddhists are adherents of Mahayana Buddhism, according to the Pew Research Center.

Prior to the government’s 1999 ban on Falun Gong, the government estimated there were 70 million adherents. Falun Gong sources estimate tens of millions continue to practice privately, and Freedom House estimates seven to 20 million practitioners.

Some ethnic minorities retain traditional religions, such as Dongba among the Naxi people in Yunnan Province and Buluotuo among the Zhuang in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Media sources report Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, is growing in popularity among the Han Chinese population. The central government classifies worship of Mazu, a folk deity with Taoist roots, as “cultural heritage” rather than religious practice.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution, which cites the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, states citizens have “freedom of religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities.” The constitution does not define “normal.” It says religion may not be used to disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system. The constitution provides for the right to hold or not to hold a religious belief. It says state organs, public organizations, and individuals may not discriminate against citizens “who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion.” The constitution states “Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.”

The law does not allow legal action to be taken against the government based on the religious freedom protections afforded by the constitution. Criminal law allows the state to sentence government officials to up to two years in prison if they violate a citizen’s religious freedom.

The CCP is responsible for creating religious regulations. The CCP manages the United Front Work Department (UFW), which in turn manages SARA’s functions and responsibilities. SARA is responsible for implementing the CCP’s religious regulations. SARA administers the provincial and local bureaus of religious affairs.

CCP members and members of the armed forces are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. Members found to belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion, although these rules are not universally

enforced. The vast majority of public office holders are CCP members, and membership is widely considered a prerequisite for success in a government career. These restrictions on religious belief and practice also apply to retired CCP party members.

The law bans certain religious or spiritual groups. Criminal law defines banned groups as “cult organizations” and provides for criminal prosecution of individuals belonging to such groups and punishment of up to life in prison. There are no published criteria for determining, or procedures for challenging, such a designation. A national security law also explicitly bans “cult organizations.”

The CCP maintains an extralegal, party-run security apparatus to eliminate the Falun Gong movement and other such organizations. The government continues to ban Falun Gong, the Guanyin Method religious group (Guanyin Famen or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy), and Zhong Gong (a *qigong* exercise discipline). The government also considers several Christian groups to be “evil cults,” including the Shouters, The Church of Almighty God (also known as Eastern Lightning), Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), Full Scope Church (Quan Fanwei Jiaohui), Spirit Sect, New Testament Church, Three Grades of Servants (San Ban Puren), Association of Disciples, Lord God religious group, Established King Church, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church), Family of Love, and South China Church.

The Counterterrorism Law describes “religious extremism” as the ideological basis of terrorism that uses “distorted religious teachings or other means to incite hatred, or discrimination, or advocate violence.”

The government recognizes five official religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Regulations require religious organizations to register with the government. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations are permitted to do so and only these organizations may legally hold worship services. These five associations operate under the direction of the CCP UFWD. The five associations are the Buddhist Association of China (BAC), the Chinese Taoist Association, the Islamic Association of China (IAC), the TSPM, and the CCPA. Other religious groups such as Protestant groups unaffiliated with the official TSPM or Catholics professing loyalty to the Holy See are not permitted to register as legal entities. The country’s laws and policies do not provide a mechanism for religious groups independent of the five official patriotic religious associations to obtain legal status.

According to regulations, religious organizations must submit information about the organization’s historical background, members, doctrines, key publications, minimum funding requirements, and government sponsor, which must be one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations.

The 2018 Regulations on Religious Affairs state that registered religious organizations may possess property, publish approved materials, train staff, and collect donations. Religious and other regulations permit official patriotic religious associations to engage in activities such as building places of worship, training religious leaders, publishing

literature, and providing social services to local communities. The CCP’s UFWD, including SARA, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs provide policy guidance and supervision on the implementation of these regulations.

The SCIO April 2018 white paper states there are approximately 144,000 places of worship registered for religious activities in the country, among which 33,500 are Buddhist temples (including 28,000 Han Buddhist temples, 3,800 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, and 1,700 Theravada Buddhist temples), 9,000 Taoist temples, 35,000 Islamic mosques, 6,000 Catholic churches and places of assembly spread across 98 dioceses, and 60,000 Protestant churches and places of assembly.

Government policy allows religious groups to engage in charitable work, but regulations specifically prohibit faith-based organizations from proselytizing while conducting charitable activities. Authorities require faith-based charities, like all other charitable groups, to register with the government. Once registered as an official charity, authorities allow them to raise funds publicly and to receive tax benefits. The government does not permit unregistered charitable groups to raise funds openly, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property. According to several unregistered religious groups, the government requires faith-based charities to obtain official cosponsorship of the registration application by the local official religious affairs bureau. Authorities often require these groups to affiliate with one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations.

The law requires members of religious groups to seek approval to travel abroad.

The regulations specify all religious structures, including clergy housing, may not be transferred, mortgaged, or utilized as investments. In December SARA issued regulations that place restrictions on religious groups conducting business or making investments by stipulating the property and income of religious groups, schools, and venues must not be distributed and should be used for activities and charity befitting their purposes; any individual or organization that donates funds to build religious venues is prohibited from owning the venues.

The regulations impose a limit on foreign donations to religious groups, stating any such donations must be used for activities that authorities deem appropriate for the group and the site. Regulations ban donations from foreign groups and individuals if the donations come with any attached conditions and state any donations exceeding RMB 100,000 (\$14,400) must be submitted to the local government for review and approval. Religious groups, religious schools, and “religious activity sites” must not accept donations from foreign sources with conditions attached. If authorities find a group has illegally accepted a donation, they may confiscate the donation and fine the recipient group between one to three times the value of the unlawful donations or, if the amount cannot be determined, a fine of RMB 50,000 (\$7,200).

The Regulations on Religious Affairs require that religious activity “must not harm national security.” This includes support for “religious extremism.” The regulations do not define “extremism.” Penalties for “harm to national security” may include suspending groups and canceling clergy credentials.

National laws allow each provincial administration to issue its own regulations concerning religious affairs, including penalties for violations; many provinces updated their regulations after the national 2018 regulations came into effect. In addition to the five officially recognized religions, local governments, at their discretion, permit followers of certain unregistered religions to carry out religious practices. In Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, and Guangdong Provinces, for example, local governments allow members of Orthodox Christian communities to participate in unregistered religious activities.

SARA states, through a policy posted on its website, that family and friends have the right to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study, without registering with the government. A provision states, however, that religious organizations should report the establishment of a religious site to the government for approval.

According to the law, inmates have the right to believe in a religion and maintain their religious beliefs while in custody.

The law does not define what constitutes proselytizing. The constitution states “Any state units, social organizations and individuals must not force a citizen to believe or not believe in a religion.” Offenders are subject to administrative and criminal penalties.

An amendment to the criminal law and a judicial interpretation by the national Supreme People’s Procuratorate and the Supreme People’s Court published in 2016 law criminalize the act of forcing others to wear “extremist” garments or symbols; doing so is punishable by up to three years’ imprisonment, short-term detention or controlled release, and a concurrent fine. Neither the amendment nor the judicial interpretation defines what garments or symbols the law considers “extremist.”

Regulations restrict the publication and distribution of literature with religious content to guidelines determined by the State Publishing Administration. The regulations limit the online activities (“online religious information services”) of religious groups by requiring prior approval from the provincial religious affairs bureau. Religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles, Qurans, and Buddhist and Taoist texts, may be confiscated, and unauthorized publishing houses closed.

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

To establish places of worship, religious organizations must receive approval from the religious affairs department of the local government when the facility is proposed and again before services are first held at that location. Religious organizations must submit dozens of documents to register during these approval processes, including detailed management plans of their religious activities, exhaustive financial records, and personal information on all staff members. Religious communities not going through the formal registration process may not legally have a set facility or worship meeting space. Therefore, every time such groups want to reserve a space for worship, such as by renting a hotel or an apartment, they must seek a separate approval from government authorities for each service. Worshipping in a space without prior approval,

gained either through the formal registration process or by seeking an approval for each service, is considered an illegal religious activity, which may be criminally or administratively punished.

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

The Regulations on Religious Affairs include registration requirements for schools that allow only the five state-sanctioned religious associations or their affiliates to form religious schools. Children under the age of 18 are prohibited from participating in religious activities and receiving religious education, even in schools run by religious organizations. One regulation states that no individual may use religion to hinder the national education system and that no religious activities may be held in schools.

The law mandates the teaching of atheism in schools, and a CCP directive provides guidance to universities on how to prevent foreign proselytizing of university students.

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

The country is not a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). With respect to Macau, the central government notified the UN secretary general, in part, that residents of Macau shall not be restricted in the rights and freedoms they are entitled to, unless otherwise provided for by law, and in case of restrictions, the restrictions shall not contravene the ICCPR. With respect to Hong Kong, the central government notified the secretary general, in part, that the ICCPR would also apply to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Government Practices

Police continued to arrest and otherwise detain leaders and members of religious groups, often those connected with groups not registered with the state-sanctioned religious associations. There were reports police used violence and beatings during arrest and detention. Reportedly, authorities used vague or insubstantial charges, sometimes in connection with religious activity, to convict and sentence leaders and members of religious groups to years in prison.

There were reports of deaths in custody and forced disappearances, and organ harvesting in prison of individuals whom, according to sources, authorities targeted based on their religious beliefs or affiliation. There were reports that authorities tortured detainees, including by depriving them of food, water, and sleep. NGOs reported some previously detained individuals were released but still denied freedom of movement.

The Political Prisoner Database (PPDB) maintained by human rights NGO Dui Hua Foundation contained the following number of imprisoned religious practitioners at year's end: 121 “non-cult” Protestants, 487 “cult” Protestants, including members of The Church of Almighty God, 114 Muslims, 22 Buddhists, and four Catholics, compared with 119 “non-cult” Protestants, 316 “cult” Protestants, 136 Muslims, 22 Buddhists, and nine Catholics at the end of 2018. According to Dui Hua, these numbers were based on Dui Hua's classification system for inclusion in the PPDB and were not the total number of religious prisoners. The number of Muslim prisoners did not include Uighur and ethnic Kazakh prisoners, which Dui Hua classified as “ethnic prisoners.” According to Dui Hua, these figures did not account for Muslims in detention centers, which the government referred to as “vocational skill education training centers.” The PPDB listed 2,979 Falun Gong practitioners imprisoned at year's end, compared with 3,486 at the end of 2018. Dui Hua defined imprisoned religious practitioners as “people persecuted for holding religious beliefs that are not officially sanctioned.”

According to a report released by The Church of Almighty God, during the year at least 32,815 Church members were directly persecuted by authorities, compared with 23,567 in 2018. The report stated that authorities harassed at least 26,683 church members (at least 12,456 in 2018), arrested 6,132 (11,111 in 2018), detained 4,161 (6,757 in 2018), tortured 3,824 (685 in 2018), sentenced 1,355 (392 in 2018), and seized at least RMB 390 million (\$56 million) in Church and personal assets. At least 19 Church members died as a result of abuse (20 in 2018). These 19 included two who died as a result of undergoing physical abuse and forced labor, three who committed suicide as a result of authorities surveilling and pressuring them to renounce their faith, and 11 who died of medical complications during or following their detention.

According to the annual report of The Church of Almighty God, in January Ren Cuifang of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region died 12 days after being arrested. The report stated that on her remains there was bruising around her eyes and the left side of her chest. There was a burn scar on her thigh and lacerations with blood marks on her wrists and heels. The report also stated that on May 30, police arrested a couple in Xinmi City, Henan Province. During questioning, police struck the husband repeatedly across the face, kicked him in the lower back, clubbed his toes with an iron bar, and forced him to take off his clothes and kneel on an iron rod. He suffered two broken ribs on his left side. They stomped on the wife's toes and instep, struck her in the face with a ruler, and handcuffed her behind her back with one arm twisted up over her shoulder and one arm twisted from below. In August Liu Jun of Jiangxi Province, who suffered from kidney disease, died in custody of uremia after authorities delayed his treatment. In July Cheng Dongzhu of Hubei Province, under the pressure of constant surveillance by authorities, drowned herself in a lake. The NGO Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Religious Freedom said that in May police attempted to arrest Li Sulian, a member of The Church of Almighty God, in her apartment, but before they entered she died from a fall in an attempt to escape out the window using a bed sheet. On November 22, *Bitter Winter* described the arrests, detentions, and seizure of assets of The Church of Almighty God members as part of the government's nationwide campaign to “clean up gang crime and eliminate evil.”

According to *Bitter Winter*, local authorities throughout Shandong Province arrested more than 50 members of The Church of Almighty God. According to the family of one of the individuals arrested in Dezhou City on April 17, eight police officers suddenly broke into his home and, without presenting any credentials, searched the dwelling, seizing RMB 6,000 (\$860), two computers, and other items. The man's wife was later taken away as well and held in detention. In another instance, according to *Bitter Winter*, police knocked on the door under the false pretense of checking the home's electricity circuit. When the owner opened her door, more than one dozen police officers entered, searched the house, and seized spiritual books and other faith-related items and two computers. Police arrested her and took her away in handcuffs with a hood over her head.

The Church of Almighty God reported that in May 52 members were arrested in coordinated raids in Chongqing, Sichuan Province. Some detainees reported they were put in a “tiger chair,” a device used to create stress positions during interrogations, and others said authorities denied them medical treatment and prevented them from sleeping. During the raid police seized RMB 190,000 (\$27,000) of Church and personal property

According to *Minghui*, police arrested 6,109 and harassed 3,582 Falun Gong practitioners during the year for refusing to renounce their faith. At year's end, 3,400 practitioners remained in custody. The arrests occurred throughout the country. Eighteen provinces, including Shandong, Hubei, Sichuan, Jilin, and Liaoning, reported hundreds of cases of harassment and arrests. According to *Minghui*, those arrested included teachers, engineers, lawyers, journalists, and dancers. On April 17, more than 100 officers arrested 10 members of a family in Bozhou City, Anhui Province, including a mother, her five daughters, three sons-in-law, and a 12-year-old grandson. Four of the sisters stood trial on December 5 and were awaiting verdicts at year's end. Wang Shaoqing of Hubei Province and 12 other practitioners, including Zhou Xiuwu (aged 79) were arrested on March 7 for talking to others about Falun Gong in a park. According to her daughter, as of November, Wang was being held at the Wuhan City No. 1 Detention Center and denied access to her attorney.

Minghui reported that during the year, authorities were responsible for the deaths of 96 individuals on account of their beliefs or affiliations, 19 of them while being held in prisons, police stations, or detention. In the early morning on January 11, Guo Zhenxiang (aged 82) of Zhaoyuan City, Shandong Province, was arrested for passing out leaflets at a bus station. At approximately 10 AM authorities informed her family that she had died after becoming ill at the station and being taken to a local hospital. Yang Shengjun of Jiamusi City, Heilongjiang Province, was arrested on August 2 and died on August 11. Authorities told Yang's family that he had vomited blood at the detention center early that morning and been sent to Jiamusi Central Hospital for emergency treatment. According to the family, they were charged RMB 30,000 (\$4,300) for Yang's medical treatment. On December 7, Li Yanjie of Heilongjiang Province fell to her death while trying to escape out the window of her 6th floor apartment as police attempted to force open the front door.

During the year, two international academic studies examined the country's transplant system. These studies revealed new information about reports of the government's practice of forcibly extracting organs from prisoners, including religious adherents, and noted ethical lapses on the part of the government and scientific research papers examining the country's transplant system which the authors of the studies said left doubt about how voluntary the system actually was. On February 6 the peer-reviewed medical journal *BMJ Open* published the findings from an Australian-led academic study examining 445 scientific research papers that drew on Chinese transplant recipient data reported by the government and domestic hospitals. The academic study found 440 of the papers (99 percent) knowingly “failed to report whether organ donors had given consent for transplantation,” resulting in unethically published research. *The Guardian* reported the study found that some of the research papers stated organs were procured from volunteer deceased donors rather than from executed prisoners. The study concluded, however, that the government's voluntary deceased donor program, instituted in 2010, was not in place at the time the research for the scientific papers took place, suggesting the government and hospitals had manipulated and falsified the data. The study further concluded the only source for organs at the time was executed prisoners, including prisoners of conscience. In an op-ed published in *The Conversation* on February 6, the study's authors said, “[A] growing body of credible evidence suggests that organ harvesting is not limited to condemned prisoners, but also includes prisoners of conscience. It is possible therefore – though not verifiable in any particular case – that peer reviewed publications may contain data obtained from prisoners of conscience killed for the purpose of organ acquisition.”

In November a second Australian-led academic study reported in *BMC Medical Ethics* found the government and medical bureaucracy manipulated and falsified data on organ transplants. The study concluded that rather than the “untarnished voluntary system promised by officials,” a “voluntary system appears to operate alongside the continued use of nonvoluntary donors (most plausibly prisoners) who are misclassified as ‘voluntary.’” The study also said the goal of the manufactured data was “to create a misleading impression to the international transplantation community about the successes of China's voluntary organ donation reform, and to neutralize the criticism of activists who allege that crimes against humanity have been committed in the acquisition of organs for transplant.” The study noted the government formalized regulations on organ transplantation in 2006, shortly after witnesses alleged Falun Gong practitioners were being used as an organ source, which the government denied.

In June an independent tribunal established by the international NGO International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China issued its final judgment that “forced organ harvesting has been committed for years throughout China on a significant scale and that Falun Gong practitioners have been one – and probably the main – source of organ supply.” The tribunal presented its finding to the United Nations in September.

Minghui reported that He Lifang, a Falun Gong practitioner from Qingdao City, Shandong Province, was arrested in May and died in custody on July 2. According to *Minghui*, his family observed a sewn-up incision on his chest and an open incision on his back. The police first said the incisions were a result of an autopsy, but his family suspected his organs had been harvested either while he was alive or shortly after his

death. In November Wang Dechen of Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province, died after serving four years of a 10-year prison term. According to the family, prison authorities would not allow them to get close to Wang’s body and pressured them to consent to have his body cremated two days after his death. His family said they suspected he had been a victim of organ harvesting.

In December *Bitter Winter* published an article describing instances in which individuals were held against their will in psychiatric hospitals for extended periods of time for practicing their religion. One member of an unregistered Christian house church said he was held in a mental asylum twice for evangelizing, spending a total of 248 days there. A member of The Church of Almighty God from Hunan Province said she was held for 154 days because of her faith. Both individuals described being forced to take medication. The woman said beatings for disobedience were commonplace and that staff used sticks and electric batons to force inmates to take medication.

International religious media outlets and watchdog groups reported local authorities in several districts around the country implemented rules awarding compensation to police officers for arresting religious practitioners of certain affiliations or confiscating donation money. Local officials were allegedly disciplined if they did not meet a certain quota for arrests of religious practitioners each month. For example, media outlets reported in January that in Dalian, the second largest city in Liaoning Province, the National Security Bureau implemented a quota system in which police officers’ performances were evaluated based on the number of Christians they arrested. One Dalian police officer reportedly told the Gospel Herald magazine that senior officers risked losing their jobs if the quotas were not met. *Bitter Winter* reported the government of Qingdao, Shandong Province, launched a three-month operation in September and set quotas for the arrest of 100 to 200 adherents from various denominations and religious movements.

The whereabouts of Gao Zhisheng remained unknown, although media reported it was believed he remained in the custody of state security police. In September 2017, police detained Gao, a human rights lawyer who had defended members of Christian groups, Falun Gong practitioners, and other groups.

In June *Bitter Winter* reported that at least 45 of its correspondents and contributors in the country were detained, and some physically abused, as a result of the government’s retaliation against reporting on religious freedom.

Sources reported Pastor Yang Hua was detained several times throughout the year for his religious work. Yang was the pastor of the Livingstone Church, which was the largest unregistered church in Guizhou Province before the government shut it down in 2015.

In April *AsiaNews* reported national security agents took Father Paul Zhang Guangjun, a Catholic priest, into custody in Xuanhua, Hebei Province. Zhang had refused to join the government-run CCPA. According to *AsiaNews*, authorities stopped Zhang’s car, smashed the window, and beat him before taking him away. Another man in the car

was also beaten but not taken into custody. Fifteen days prior to this event, police raided a house in which Zhang was leading Mass. His whereabouts were unknown at year’s end.

On July 25, media reported authorities in Yunnan Province denied the appeal of Protestant pastor Cao “John” Sanqiang, a U.S. lawful permanent resident and Christian leader, who was serving a seven-year prison sentence for “organizing others to illegally cross the border.” In 2017 authorities arrested Cao and a fellow Christian teacher when they traveled by waterway from Burma to Yunnan Province. His lawyer was told of the hearing only days before it was scheduled and was denied contact with Cao before the appeal was heard.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on June 17, authorities arrested and interrogated a local pastor at a branch of the South Korea-based Sungrak Church (“Sacred Music Church”) in Liaoning Province. The police repeatedly asked the pastor whether the church accepted money from South Korean sources and pressured him for information about church members. Police released him after forcing him to write a statement promising not to hold gatherings anymore.

Minghui reported that in April authorities in separate cases sentenced 38 Falun Gong practitioners to prison terms ranging from six months to 10 years. Authorities also fined 16 of the 38 practitioners a total of RMB 249,000 (\$35,800). One man was convicted of “subverting state power” by mailing letters about the group. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison and fined RMB 100,000 (\$14,400). According to *Minghui*, authorities surveilled the man for several months before arresting him in August 2017. Authorities sentenced two Falun Gong practitioners in the town of Luodai in Sichuan Province to two years and eight months in prison for removing anti-Falun Gong posters from their neighborhood. *Minghui* reported one 76-year-old man from Ji’nan City, Shandong Province, was sentenced to three years and fined RMB 5,000 (\$720) for refusing to renounce his faith.

Minghui reported that on May 12, police arrested eight elderly practitioners in Zhuhai City, Guangdong Province, while studying Falun Gong books. The police recorded detailed information about each practitioner, including his or her children’s employment information and phone numbers, before taking them home and ransacking their residences.

Bitter Winter reported that on January 15, authorities arrested 150 pastors, elders, and leaders from Henan Province’s China Gospel Fellowship, a network of unregistered house churches. According to a source, the pastors, elders, and leaders had been under surveillance for an extended period of time. Authorities confiscated their mobile phones and recorded their personal information before transporting each individual to the police station in the municipality of his or her registered residence. Authorities forced each pastor to sign a “statement of repentance” prior to being released. One of the pastors said authorities placed a surveillance camera in front of her house and ordered her to report to the police station every day. According to sources, one pastor suffered a heart attack during the raid and was taken to the hospital.

According to the religious freedom advocacy NGO ChinaAid, most of the 100 members of the Early Rain Covenant Church – the church with the most members among Chengdu’s unregistered churches – who were arrested during a violent raid in December 2018, were released during the year. *AsiaNews* reported authorities released church elder Li Yingqiang in August. According to ChinaAid, authorities sentenced elder Qin Defu to four years in prison for “illegal business activity.” In December Pastor Wang Yi was tried in secret and sentenced to nine years in prison by a court in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in connection with his peaceful advocacy for religious freedom. According to a statement posted on the court’s website, the court also deprived Wang of his political rights for three years and confiscated RMB 50,000 (\$7,200) of his personal property. Prior to his conviction, on July 15, authorities informed Wang’s lawyer that Wang was charged with “inciting subversion of state power” and “illegal business activity,” which carry the possibility of a life sentence. ChinaAid reported that Wang’s lawyer was prevented from meeting his client, was subjected to surveillance, and had other difficulties representing his client.

According to the NGO International Christian Concern, a member of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Sichuan Province said he was forced to move houses several times during the year. He had been detained for two weeks in February and then evicted from his home in September. Police threatened to arrest the member and his wife and to send his child to an orphanage if he did not immediately leave his home. The man said this was the third time he had been forced to move due to his religious beliefs.

Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported that human rights attorney Jiang Tianyong, who had previously represented Falun Gong adherents and Tibetans, was released from prison in Henan Province in February at the end of his two-year prison term on charges of “inciting state subversion.” The U.S.-based NGO Human Rights in China said that, according to Jiang’s relatives, he was allowed to visit his parents’ home in Xinyang City, Henan Province, following his release. Jiang remained in his parents’ village throughout the year under house arrest, unable to see doctors for medical conditions that began when he was in prison, which included discoloration on his legs and swollen feet.

In its annual report, ChinaAid stated Jiang Rong, the wife of Early Rain Covenant Church Pastor Wang Yi, was released on bail in June after five months in detention, but authorities immediately placed her under house arrest and prohibited contact with all but family members. According to ChinaAid, while in detention authorities tortured Jiang, prohibited her from brushing her teeth for 50 days, and forced her to sit on a stool for long hours with her body bent at a 30 degree angle.

There continued to be reports of government officials, companies, and education authorities compelling members of house churches and other Christians to sign documents renouncing their Christian faith and church membership. ChinaAid, *Bitter Winter*, and other sources reported authorities pressured family members to encourage believers to renounce their faith, threatening to withdraw employment and educational opportunities from them and their family members, and to withhold social welfare benefits. According to ChinaAid, on January 31, Early Rain Covenant Church member Pan Fei was fired from his job at Yonghui Supermarket in Chengdu because he refused to stop attending church and renounce his faith.

The Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Religious Freedom reported that in April a long-time CCP member named Ms. Zhang committed suicide after the Sichuan Province CCP pressured her to renounce her faith and made multiple threats against her family. Zhang joined the TSPM True Jesus Church in 2011. The report stated that during the year, Zhang was subjected to a criticism session in front of 100 party officials, home visits from party leaders, and threats to remove social benefits from her children.

There continued to be no uniform procedures for registering religious adherents. The government continued to recognize as “lawful” only those religious activities it sanctioned and controlled through the state-sanctioned religious associations. Only government-accredited religious personnel could conduct such activities and only in government-approved places of religious activity.

UCA News reported that on December 30, the government approved the Administrative Measures for Religious Groups, scheduled to take effect on February 1, 2020. These measures comprise six chapters and 41 articles dealing with the organization, function, offices, supervision, projects, and economic administration of communities and groups at the national and local levels. The measures emphasize that only registered groups could operate legally and stipulate that religious organizations must adhere to the leadership of the CCP and implement the values of socialism. According to *UCA News*, if enforced, article 34, which governs money and finances, “will halt the activities of house churches, dissident Catholic communities, and other unregistered religious bodies.”

SARA continued to maintain statistics on registered religious groups. According to a 2014 SARA statistic, more than 5.7 million Catholics worshipped in sites registered by the CCPA. According to a SCIO report on religious policies and practice released in September 2017, there were 21 officially recognized Protestant seminaries, 57,000 clerical personnel, and 60,000 churches and other meeting places. This report stated there were 91 religious schools in the country approved by SARA, including nine Catholic schools, although students under 18 were barred from receiving religious instruction. This report also stated there were six national-level religious colleges. Although there were two CCPA seminaries in Beijing, civil society sources said they regarded one of these institutions to be primarily used as the CCPA’s propaganda for international visitors. The SCIO report also estimated there were 35,000 mosques, 57,000 imams, and 10 Quran institutes (religious seminaries under the auspices of the state-sanctioned IAC) in the country.

The government did not recognize religious groups not affiliated with the state-sanctioned religious associations, including unregistered Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and other groups, and continued to close down or hinder their activities. At times, authorities said the closures were because the group or its activities were unregistered and other times because the place of worship lacked necessary permits. Some local governments continued to restrict the growth of unregistered Protestant church networks and cross-congregational affiliations. Authorities allowed some unregistered groups to operate, but did not recognize them legally. In some cases, authorities required unregistered religious groups to disband, leaving congregants from these groups with the sole option of attending services under a state-sanctioned religious leader.

ChinaAid reported in June that authorities in Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province, shut down Dao'en Church, stating the Church had not registered with the government. Authorities had previously closed three of the Church's five branches and pressured landlords to not renew leases for the Church. ChinaAid earlier reported authorities had fined the pastor and another minister of Dao'en Church RMB 10,000 (\$1,400) and threatened to confiscate the Church's offerings.

The government kept Zion Church closed, one of Beijing's largest unregistered Protestant churches, led by Pastor Jin “Ezra” Mingzhi, saying it had broken rules by organizing mass gatherings without registering with authorities.

International media and NGOs reported the government continued a nationwide campaign to “Sinicize religion” across all faith traditions. On January 7, the government announced a formal five-year plan for this campaign.

From June 24 to 29, the Guangdong UFDW and Guangdong Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission jointly hosted a training session in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, on religious Sinicization. More than 70 individuals above the vice president level from provincial religious groups from the five officially recognized faiths attended. In his opening remarks, Deputy Director General of Guangdong Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission Huang Zhongxing said religious Sinicization taught socialist core values to religious professionals and believers. He urged participants to study in depth and implement “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” the eponymous 30-year doctrine developed by Chairman Xi and the CCP in their religious work.

Gospel Times reported that on July 8, the Sichuan Provincial Party Committee held training to promote the “Sinicization of Christianity” for 178 church leaders. Lecture topics included how to implement Chairman Xi's goal of guiding religious adherents to adapt to socialist society and the importance of church leaders keeping church members “politically reliable.” Similar events were held in other provinces.

Bitter Winter reported that in mid-July Liaoning provincial authorities launched a training course for TSPM church pastors at Shenyang Seminary. The director of the provincial religious affairs bureau was one of the instructors. A pastor who attended the mandatory training said the course focused on the Sinicization of Christianity. The pastor said authorities strongly emphasized the importance of wearing traditional Chinese clothing while delivering sermons; replacing European style church buildings with Chinese style buildings; and incorporating CCP policies and ideology into sermons. Training sessions on the Bible or Christian theology were not offered. Additionally, authorities reportedly told pastors their religious qualifications and preaching certificates would immediately be revoked if they preached that biblical teachings carried greater authority than CCP policies and ideology. One pastor told *Bitter Winter* that in Liaoyang City a police chief told a group of Christians at a local church, “We must regard the Party as God, just like God.”

According to international media and the state-run news agency Xinhua, on November 26 in Beijing at a symposium of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, officials reaffirmed efforts to update religious texts to conform to “the core values of socialism.” Xinhua reported participants stressed the need to gradually form a religious ideological system with Chinese characteristics. According to Xinhua, “Participants suggested conducting a systematic study of the thoughts of various religions, and making accurate and authoritative interpretations of classical doctrines to keep pace with the times, so as to effectively resist the erosion of extreme thoughts and heresy.”

State media reported that in August Guangzhou’s Guangxiao Buddhist Temple and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a government research institute and academic organization organized under the State Council, jointly established the “Buddhist Sinicization Research Base” in Guangzhou. At its inaugural meeting, multiple speakers said Buddhist philosophy and practice must be based on political identity and adapt to society and culture.

Media reported that in cities throughout Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in north-central China, home to a majority of Hui Muslims, as well as in Henan Province, Inner Mongolia, and elsewhere, authorities replaced Islamic structures and symbols with traditional Chinese iconography as part of the nationwide “Sinicization” campaign. In the Ningxia Region authorities took down structures with “Arabic domes,” destroying minarets in the process, and replaced them with curving Chinese roofs. Sources told media that authorities prevented public calls to prayer and banned sales of the Quran. Authorities also prohibited news broadcasts from showing images of pedestrians walking about wearing skull caps or veils.

The five-year plan to promote the Sinicization of Christianity called for “incorporating the Chinese elements into church worship services, hymns and songs, clergy attire, and the architectural style of church buildings,” and proposed to “retranslate the Bible or rewrite biblical commentaries.” During the year, authorities reportedly pressured churches to display banners with messages of political ideology, recite the national anthem before singing Christian hymns, and engage in other acts demonstrating one’s loyalty to the CCP over the church.

Bitter Winter reported that at a church in Shenyang during the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC on October 1, authorities hung national flags throughout the church, covering religious paintings and images. Authorities forced congregants to sing patriotic songs such as “Without the Communist Party, There Would Be No New China.” During the event there were a total of 11 performances, most of which were secular programs promoting the CCP.

Bitter Winter and the website Aboluowang reported that on October 1, Buddhist monks at the Wanshan Temple in Lushan, Jiangxi Province, raised the national flag while fellow monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists waived small national flags and sang the national anthem. A Buddhist master led the group in shouting patriotic slogans such as “Long Live the motherland, Amitabha” and singing patriotic songs. One monk sang “My Chinese Heart,” and 16 nuns danced to the song “The Chinese Flag.” According to *Bitter*

Winter, on September 26, the Jinxiang Temple in the Yindu District of Anyang, Henan Province, organized a National Day commemoration. An adherent asked to be allowed to sing a Buddhist song, but government officials told him “all Buddhist songs are forbidden, only songs advocating the Party are allowed.”

In October the website for the state-sponsored China Taoist Association reported its Sinicization efforts continued, promoting Taoism’s “advancing with the times” and “developing on the basis of maintaining its own Chinese characteristics.” Taoist ideology would, according to the website, use “new thinking, new ideas, and new theories to answer contemporary social life issues of social concern, public concern, and believers’ concerns, so that Taoism can better adapt to new society, serve the new era, and help push new developments.”

In October *Bitter Winter* reported the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau in Xiaoshan District in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, issued a “Scoring Form for the Standardized Management and Assessment of Buddhist and Taoist Activity Venues in Xiaoshan District.” Religious organizations could lose points for not promoting “core socialist values,” as well as for having religious publications that were not published by state-designated publishing houses. Groups could also lose points if they failed to raise the national flag, when video surveillance equipment inside the church did not work properly, or if clergy failed to give “Sinicized” sermons. According to *Bitter Winter*, a similar scoring plan went into effect in March in Henan Province. Under that plan, in addition to losing points, places of worship could gain points for “proactively reporting illegal religious activities” and “foreign infiltration.”

In September National Public Radio reported Hui residents of Tongxin said local officials offered rewards between \$700 and \$2,820 to those who reported suspicious religious behavior, such as proselytizing Islam or secretly teaching Islamic texts.

In August the pro-CCP media outlet *Global Times* stated 11,000 Uighur and other Muslims were expected to take part in the Hajj during the year, compared with 11,500 in 2018, although official statistics confirming this number was accurate were unavailable at year’s end.

Bitter Winter reported in early February authorities in Suiyang District, Shangqiu City, Henan Province, convened a meeting at which government personnel were ordered to collect the times and locations of house church gatherings and record that information in a newly established database operating 24 hours a day. According to *Bitter Winter*, officials said government informants would be rewarded for passing on information.

Bitter Winter reported that on May 12 in Gulou District in Fuzhou City, the capital of Fujian Province, more than 30 government personnel stood guard outside a meeting venue for the Fuzhou Reformed House Church. More than 20 police officers disrupted the meeting and ordered all individuals in attendance to leave. Police confiscated more than 200 books, including Bibles and hymnals. The police took the church’s elders into custody and threatened to arrest congregants who did not leave. According to one

source, an official from the Religious Affairs Bureau told the congregants, “You should change your boss [referring to God] and join the Communist Party.” Police later posted a sign on the entrance stating the church had been shut down.

According to the *South China Morning Post*, Guangzhou officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau in March announced a new policy offering financial rewards to people who reported “illegal religious activities,” in an ongoing crackdown on underground gatherings. The new policy would also allow members of the public to earn up to RMB 10,000 (\$1,400) for providing information leading to the arrest of a non-Chinese religious leader. Other payment incentives included RMB 3,000 to 5,000 (\$430-\$720) for tips about locally organized gatherings and their leaders. Some examples of “illegal religious activities” included building unauthorized temples and monasteries, organizing unauthorized pilgrimages, worshipping at unauthorized churches, and printing unauthorized religious publications. According to the solicitation, cash rewards for “whistleblowers” helped limit foreign infiltration through religion.

In July ChinaAid reported that in Guiyang City, the capital of Guizhou Province, officials announced cash awards for information related to illegal religious activity, missionary work, and foreign interference in religious affairs. Authorities placed posters advertising the program throughout the city, especially near Livingstone Church meeting locations. The program offered cash rewards of \$1,000.

Bitter Winter reported that according to a foreign Jehovah’s Witness missionary, Church members in Shandong Province worshipped in secret, holding gatherings in small groups at constantly changing venues. One of their meeting venues was in a residential building. They placed a surveillance camera at the entrance to watch for government authorities. The missionary said they drew the curtains and sang hymns quietly to avoid being heard, and spoke in code when making plans over the phone for meetings, among other measures taken to ensure secrecy.

Bitter Winter reported that in March the UFWD in multiple counties in Jiangxi Province issued documents calling for a sweeping crackdown on private Christian venues. The documents stated that high-level government officials would conduct random inspections and that low-level government officials who did not shut down enough venues would be held accountable. On May 19, the Religious Affairs Bureau shut down Xunsiding Church in Siming District, Xiamen City, Fujian Province, and fined the priest, Yang Xibo, RMB 25,000 (\$3,600). According to *Bitter Winter*, authorities also shut down government approved TSPM venues, closing at least 14 in Yuangzhou District, Yichun City, Jiangxi Province, in March and April.

Members of the Early Rain Covenant Church said they experienced routine harassment and arbitrary detention in the wake of a violent raid conducted by police in December 2018. ChinaAid reported 15 members of the Chengdu-based house church were arrested while gathering at a home in January. Among those detained were three children aged two to seven. One church member detained in the house raid was allowed to return home to her children when authorities realized they had already detained her the week before. The woman, who had been arrested six times in 2018, said she was severely beaten by police during the December 2018 raid.

Bitter Winter reported that on February 24, local government officials closed a house church in the Xincheng Sub-district of Suiyang District, Henan Province. Officials told church members gatherings of three people or more were not permitted and that holding meetings in their home was against the law. According to sources, during the raid one official said, “What’s more, several children are present. Allowing minors to believe in God is also against the law.” An officer from the local security services told the preacher, “If we find people coming to your home again to worship God, you will be treated as a criminal.” Authorities registered the names and addresses of attendees and photographed them. The report also stated security officials destroyed all religious symbols in the home and confiscated Bibles, hymnals, and other religious texts. Officials additionally forced the house’s landlord to terminate the rental agreement with the pastor.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on March 6, the local Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Affairs in Zhengzhou City’s Erqi District accused the Panshi Church of setting up a meeting place in violation of the law and shut down the church. During their raid, officials confiscated church items valued at RMB 70,000 (\$10,100) and sealed off the venue with barricade tape. Government officials warned the landlord she would be fined RMB 200,000 (\$28,700) if she allowed the group to hold additional meetings there.

According to RFA, on March 23, Beijing authorities banned the Shouwang Church (one of the largest Beijing churches by number of congregants), stating the church’s unregistered activities had violated the Regulations of Religious Affairs and the Regulations of Registration Management of Social Groups. According to one announcement from the church after the government ban, more than 30 police, along with officers and staff from the district-level civil affairs bureau and the Religious Affairs Bureau, interrupted Bible study class and other church activities at two sites in Beijing’s Haidian District. RFA reported the church members at the two sites were taken to a school and instructed to sign a document promising to no longer participate in Shouwang Church activities, but refused to do so. Police released them after several hours. Local authorities also replaced the locks at the two church venues.

According to RFA, on May 12, officers from provincial religious affairs bureaus interrupted religious services in at least eight house churches across six jurisdictions (Xiamen, Fujian Province; Chengdu, Sichuan Province; Guiyang, Guizhou Province; Xiangtan, Hunan Province; Nanchang, Jiangxi Province; and Shanghai) and accused those present of gathering illegally. In Guiyang, police raided a meeting of the Guiyang Reform Church taking place in a hotel room, removed the cross from the room and confiscated computers for further investigation.

According to *Sound of Hope*, a radio station operated by Falun Gong practitioners in the United States, Xiamen authorities shut down more than 40 house churches in the city in a May-June campaign.

Bitter Winter reported that on May 12, 30 to 40 enforcement officers from the Guangzhou Religious Affairs Bureau and the Public Security Bureau entered the Enzhu Church during a service, and registered the identity of the pastor and 70 worshipers. On

the same day, more than 10 law enforcement officers raided a house church in Foshan and confiscated more than RMB 600 (\$86) from the church’s donation box, claiming the money was “illegally raised.”

In May *Bitter Winter* reported that the government of Liaoning Province launched a campaign to intensify its crackdown on foreign religious activities as part of the national campaign to implement the “Work Plan for the Investigation and Handling of Special Actions and Activities of Overseas Christian Churches.” The plan, issued by UFWD and the Ministry of Public Security, specifically identified some Christian churches in the United States and South Korea, including the Young Disciples of Jesus, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cru, the Bo’ai Church, the Loving Heart Church, and the Canaan Church. It also called for the further suppression of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and some Korean Christian churches that authorities had previously targeted. The document stated the purposes of the plan included: “resolutely cracking down on foreign religious believers; resolutely destroying the religious activities of foreign religious groups in the local area; and resolutely preventing organizations from attending trainings in neighboring countries and regions.” The plan also required supervision of foreign-related missions on the Internet, including social media apps QQ and WeChat. According to *Bitter Winter*, the plan called for cultivating foreigners and local individuals to act as informants.

Bitter Winter reported in August that provincial, city, and county officials in Jilin Province engaged in similar crackdowns on foreign churches and organizations. A confidential plan issued by Jilin government officials called for setting up an “Office for Resisting Infiltration by Foreign Christian Forces” to shut down meeting venues and underground seminaries founded by foreign religious groups, collect and analyze intelligence on foreign-related religious activities, surveil and control public opinion online, and monitor foreign-related religious activities at universities. A document issued by the UFWD called for launching a “Joint Alliance on Religious Work,” under which more than 20 government institutions would coordinate long-term control over religion, especially foreign-related religious activities. In addition to security services, the joint alliance would include government bodies such as the Civil Affairs Bureau, Women’s Federation, Bureau of Commerce, Hygiene and Health Committee, and customs enforcement.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in February authorities in the Huaiyin District of Huai’an, Jiangsu Province, reported they had installed surveillance equipment in 155 of the district’s 170 TSPM churches. Authorities said in the official report they had connected some of the cameras to the government’s public security system network. The cameras covered the gates, main entrance, worship halls, podium, and even the toilets of the churches. One of the church directors told *Bitter Winter*, “They can see every move in the church. If we didn’t follow their demands, the church would have to be shut down.”

According to religious community representatives, authorities continued to unofficially tolerate some members of foreign groups meeting for private religious celebrations. Churches attended by foreigners continued to receive heavy scrutiny, as authorities forced them to require passport checks and registration for members to prevent Chinese citizens from attending “foreigner” services.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in September the government in a city in Liaoning Province told the person in charge of a local TSPM church to stop allowing 80 African international students to participate in gatherings at the church as part of efforts at “preventing foreign infiltration through religion.”

The Catholic News Agency reported that in July and August authorities shut down at least five Catholic churches in Yujiang Diocese because of their refusal to join the state-approved CCPA. There were reports the government placed informants in CCPA churches to monitor the content of sermons and other Church activities.

According to *The Independent*, Hui Muslims feared the high levels of government surveillance and oppression in Xinjiang, primarily targeting Uighur and other Muslims – including some Hui Muslims living there – could spread to other parts of the country, including their own communities.

Bitter Winter reported that in February the Urban Management Bureau of Lushi County in Sanmenxia, Henan Province, issued a document entitled “Statement of Commitment for Consciously Resisting Illegal Religious Activities.” The document prohibited organizing celebrations with religious overtones in public places, including posting, hanging, or selling goods (such as couplets [paired banners with poetry], calligraphy, ceramic tiles, and murals) with religious themes. Authorities seized calendars with Christian symbols on them from churches and vendors. One vendor said authorities conducted rigorous inspections and shut down vendors who were caught selling items with religious content, and as a result, “In the entire market, no one dares to sell them.”

Bitter Winter reported during the Spring Festival some local governments required churches and private homes to replace Christian couplets with couplets advising citizens to “love the Party.” The fine for posting a Christian couplet was RMB 2,000 (\$290). The pastor of a TSPM church in Yongcheng City, Henan Province, said, “It is against our faith to post Spring Festival couplets that praise the Communist Party. But if we don’t post them, the CCP might use this as an excuse to seal off the church.” Authorities gave residents in Kaifeng City’s Weishi County couplets stating “love the Party” and wall calendars with portraits of Xi Jinping. Some officials personally posted the “love the Party” couplets in religious adherents’ homes.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on January 13, the leader of Enhui Church in Yanji town, Yongcheng City, Henan Province, attempted to distribute a calendar that included the image of a cross. Police demanded the church recover each of the 1,000 calendars it had distributed or the church would be shut down. The leader of Enhui Church and one of its clergy were detained by police and required to “study the policies of the CCP for one week.” The government reportedly also fined the church RMB 28,000 (\$4,000).

According to the NGO Tibet Watch, on May 13, local authorities informed leaders of the Anfu Buddhist Temple in Guangxi Province that the temple’s main hall “violated Han Buddhist principles” and needed to be “rectified.” The monastery is a pilgrimage site for Buddhists from neighboring provinces. Authorities threatened legal action if the temple did not remove its Tibetan-style prayer wheels and stupa within a week, and banned

prayer flags, bells, and other traditional Tibetan Buddhist religious items. On May 23, the Weibin District Buddhist Association issued similar restrictions for monasteries in Shaanxi Province.

Reuters reported in July that as part of the government’s expanded efforts to Sincize the country’s Muslim population, authorities in Beijing ordered halal restaurants and food stalls to remove signs containing Arabic script and Islamic symbols such as the crescent moon. According to the manager of a local noodle shop, “They said this [the sign in Arabic over the shop reading ‘halal’] is foreign culture and you should use more Chinese culture.” Reuters reported several larger shops in Beijing had replaced Arabic signs with ones reading “*qing zhen*,” the Chinese term for halal.

Bitter Winter reported that in January local government officials in Hebei Province issued a document entitled, “Notice on Comprehensively Investigating and Regulating Arabic Symbols and Religious Elements in Public Places and the Issue of ‘Generalization of Halal.’” The document set forth a policy requiring central, provincial, and municipal governments to remove Arabic-language symbols and religious elements from public places. “Generalization of halal” practices such as the use of Arabic-language symbols at halal restaurants, in school canteens for Muslim students, on halal foods, and in Muslim households were also banned.

Bitter Winter reported that in January authorities demolished a large outdoor Buddha statue and 11 small Buddha statues located in the Xiantang Mountain Scenic Area of Xiangyuan County in Shanxi Province. Officials cited a prohibition on construction of large outdoor religious statues outside of temple and church grounds.

During the year, authorities destroyed several Buddhist statues in Zhejiang Province. *Bitter Winter* reported in January authorities in Taizhou, Zhejiang, destroyed a 92-foot statue of the Bodhisattva Guanyin inside a local temple. In March Taizhou authorities demolished a 59-foot Guanyin statue. In May authorities in Linhai dismantled a 48-foot tall Guanyin statue. Authorities told the local abbot in Linhai that “religious statues cannot be located outdoors.” In September authorities dismantled a 69-foot Guanyin statue at the Mingshan Temple in Wenzhou stating that the statue was too tall and would obstruct the view of airplane pilots. In Ningbo authorities ordered a Buddhist abbot to dismantle 500 statues embedded in a mountain behind his temple.

According to a February ChinaAid article, authorities in Yancheng, Jiangsu Province, removed the cross of Chengdong Christian Church, a large TSPM church with approximately 3,000 worshippers.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on January 4, the government of Xiayi County in Henan Province sent 100 security officials to remove three crosses from the roof of the Wangzhai Church in Wangzhai Village. According to a local official, the Wangzhai Church crosses were the last remaining crosses to be destroyed under the CCP’s years-long campaign to remove all public displays of crosses in the county. Eyewitnesses said authorities used a crane to remove the large cross atop the center of the roof. They also dismantled two small crosses on the left and right side of the church roof as well as 12

small crosses on the perimeter wall. They then used a bulldozer to tear down the church gate and sections of the perimeter wall. Officials also confiscated the church's donation box and pictures of the cross on display inside the church.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in April officials in Kaifeng City, Henan Province, entered the site of the Kaifeng Synagogue, the oldest Jewish cultural site in East Asia, now a Jewish learning center. They removed the name of the synagogue from the exterior door, and Stars of David and the Israeli flag from the windows. On the building's exterior, officials placed antireligious signs, including one that read, “Management of religious affairs should be in accordance with the principle of protecting the lawful and banning the unlawful, boycotting infiltration and fighting crime.” Authorities installed a surveillance camera at the entrance as part of what one neighborhood resident said were efforts to monitor and discourage foreign visitors. *Bitter Winter* reported that in the summer, the government rented a house next to the site, where personnel assigned by the government monitored the activities in the site and the movements of passersby. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Persian Jews emigrated to Kaifeng in the 12th century and a Jewish synagogue has existed in that location since 1163; the current structure dates from 1653. In February *The Jewish Post* reported the community had approximately 1,000 members.

Bitter Winter and the website Abolouwang reported in November that authorities forced Buddhist temples in Henan Province to fly the national flag during the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. The government maintained 2018 directives mandating that the national flag be raised at religious venues during national holidays and during each religion's important festivals and celebrations.

In its annual report, ChinaAid stated authorities limited Christians' ability to celebrate Christmas. ChinaAid reported that SARA ordered Christmas Eve services held by churches in large cities be reserved for adherents with admission tickets only. Sources said in some municipalities they were told not to hold Christmas celebrations in November and December. One local source said his congregation held its Christmas celebration in October. On December 17, a property management company in Yunnan's Kunming Economic Development Zone issued a notice to local businesses and merchants banning any celebration of Christmas as well as Christmas-related messages and decorations, citing a police restriction. In Guizhou Province, the Qianxi County Education Bureau and the Science and Technology Bureau issued a notice banning celebrations of Christmas, Christmas Eve, and any “foreign holidays” among school students. Students were strictly prohibited from playing “angels” in church shows, joining church choirs, and singing hymns. Schools were also required to keep the parents of students from attending Christmas-related events.

During the year, there were reports of foreign missionaries being extensively surveilled, detained, and deported. On July 12, the government of Huaiying District, Huai'An City, Jiangsu Province, published a notice on its website about the establishment of a group in Sanshu Town “to carry out the special action of investigating and punishing overseas Christian infiltration in accordance with the law.” The standing committee of Wenxi County, Yuncheng, Shanxi Province, published on its website information about action being taken to investigate and punish the infiltration of foreign Christianity. *Bitter Winter*

reported that in April a municipality in Jilin Province issued “The Plan for Jointly Investigating Religious Infiltration Activities.” According to *Bitter Winter*, on July 4, government officials in Dongfeng County of Liaoyuan, Jilin Province, held a meeting about the suppression of “foreign religious infiltration” from the United States and South Korea. More than 700 personnel – including officials from the local religious affairs bureau and the UFWD, as well as CCP secretaries from each township and village – attended the meeting “to coordinate the crackdown operation.”

According to *Bitter Winter*, in August authorities in Jiangxi Province raided an apartment where two Taiwanese church leaders were holding a church meeting. The authorities arrested the leaders and nearly 30 Chinese Christians. The two leaders were subsequently deported.

Bitter Winter reported that in May authorities in Qingdao, Shandong Province, arrested and deported a foreign Jehovah’s Witnesses elder. Also in May police in Jiangxi Province arrested a South Korean Jehovah’s Witnesses missionary. They confiscated the woman’s passport, religious books, and computer. Authorities then interrogated her and a local member of Jehovah’s Witnesses for seven hours before releasing them. The missionary was deported soon after. According to Jehovah’s Witnesses in the country, deported foreign missionaries may return after five years, but church elders are barred from the country for life.

Bitter Winter reported that in May two female Japanese Jehovah’s Witnesses missionaries returned to Harbin, Heilongjiang Province after a short trip abroad. The day after they returned, police arrested them at their residence. The police interrogated them for 10 hours and gave them statements to sign promising not to return to preach in the country. The women refused to sign because the statement said, “I regret coming to China to preach.” Authorities deported one of the missionaries that day, while the other was released and deported three days later.

Authorities continued to restrict the printing and distribution of the Bible, Quran, and other religious literature. The government continued to allow some foreign educational institutions to provide religious materials in Chinese, which were used by both registered and unregistered religious groups.

The government continued to allow only the national TSPM, China Christian Council (CCC), and CCPA to publish and sell Bibles legally. There were approximately 11 provincial TSPM Christian publishers. *Bitter Winter* reported, however, that according to local sources, between November 2018 and January 2019 authorities confiscated Bibles and other religious works at approximately 11 TSPM churches in multiple regions in northern Heilongjiang Province.

The government limited distribution of Bibles to CCPA and TSPM/Chinese Christian Council entities such as churches, church bookshops inside churches, and seminaries. Individuals could not order Bibles directly from publishing houses. Members of unregistered churches reported the supply and distribution of Bibles was inadequate, particularly in rural locations. According to reports, while there were no independent domestic Christian booksellers, publishers without a religious affiliation could publish

Christian books. Approximately 20 distribution centers and bookstores were linked to the national TSPM. In addition, authorities reportedly allowed churches with more than 2,000 members to sell books at their church facilities. Approximately 700 churches had such bookstores. During the year, authorities continued to limit the number of Christian titles that could be published annually, with draft manuscripts closely reviewed by the local religious affairs bureau.

Christian organizations seeking to use social media and smartphone apps to distribute Christian materials reported the government increased censorship of these materials. *World Magazine* reported in March online retailers such as Taobao and Jd.com stopped selling Bibles to the domestic market after authorities began enforcing the 2018 revisions to the Regulations on Religious Affairs. According to *World Magazine*, authorities restricted Christian channels on WeChat and other social networking apps and websites. In July government censors blocked domestic access to the Christian website WeDevote and scrubbed the WeDevote Bible app from most domestic app stores.

Bitter Winter reported Li Liang of the Anhui Provincial Church in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, remained under surveillance following his release from five years in prison for photocopying Bible chapters to distribute to individuals in his home. Li Wenqiang, librarian for the Seventh-day Adventist church in Shenzhen, also remained under surveillance. In 2017, authorities convicted Li of “conducting illegal business activities” when the library was found to have more than 200,000 copies of the Bible and other Christian books. Li was sentenced to three years in prison with a five-year suspension of the sentence, during which he was forbidden to leave the city.

Sources said the Nanping Culture and Tourism Administration in Fujian Province raided the library of the Nanping Christian Association in February and found the association had sold 253 copies of the Bible and gained a net profit of RMB 628 (\$90). On July 9, the administration confiscated the profits and fined the association RMB 10,000 (\$1,400) for selling publications without a license.

Bitter Winter reported that in April authorities fined the Fengyang Road Three-Self Great Church in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, RMB 10,000 (\$1,400) for having Bibles that were printed in South Korea. Authorities also prohibited the church from selling Bibles of any kind.

Media reported in August authorities investigated a printing house in Shenyang, for printing Buddhist materials. According to *Bitter Winter*, the printing house avoided government restrictions by bribing the officials.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in August authorities in Zhengzhou City, Henan Province, required the Fengzhuang Three-Self Church to display banners and panels promoting the campaign to “eradicate pornography and illegal publications” in the church. In Hubei Province, the Chongyang County government issued an open letter stating “dark forces” and “pornography and illegal publications” are associated with religious belief.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in some parts of the country, local authorities regularly reviewed sermons for TSPM pastors to ensure they were consistent with CCP ideology and praised government leaders. In March local authorities in Shangqiu City, Henan Province, withheld approval of a TSPM pastor’s sermon, indicating it was too religious and did not contain enough CCP ideology.

In March one pastor told *Bitter Winter*, “There is a lot of pressure on us when giving sermons now. If we don’t say the right thing, personnel from the State Security Bureau can say we’re anti-government[.] All sermon topics must be submitted to the Religious Affairs Bureau for review...Chinese culture must be incorporated into the sermon as per the government’s requirements. At Three-Self churches, this is how we have to talk about the Bible, because there are CCP spies in the churches. As soon as they discover that the sermon’s content is not in line with national requirements, we will be severely punished. We might have our pastoral duties revoked for life, so that we cannot serve as pastors at any church.”

Bitter Winter reported destruction of religious structures and symbols was widespread throughout the country. According to the publication, in March authorities in Ji’an City, Jiangxi Province, initially sought to destroy a 16-meter (52 feet) wide 23-meter (75 feet) high statue of Lao-Tzu, the founder of Taoism, that was carved into the Wugong Mountain in the scenic area of Yangshimu in Anfu County. After local administrators objected that demolition would excessively damage the surroundings, authorities instead erected a large-scale plant-covered barrier in front of the sculpture to completely block it from view.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in April authorities in Dalian, Liaoning Province, sealed off a Taoist temple and forced the head of the temple to sign a statement saying he would not sell incense or hold Taoist ceremonies. In May authorities sealed off another Taoist temple in Dalian and destroyed the scriptures, calligraphy, and paintings inside.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on March 14, approximately 100 government officials and police officers in Henan Province, led by the secretary of Xianglushan Town, demolished a state-controlled TSPM church for allegedly violating building laws.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in June local officials dismantled and repurposed five churches as “cultural activity centers” in Xingyang County in Zhengzhou Prefecture, Henan Province. Local government officials threatened to demolish the churches if the congregation did not agree to let the government take possession of the property.

Bitter Winter reported that on March 1, local government officials demolished all but the main hall of Taoist Nainai Temple, located on Hou Mountain in Yi County, under the jurisdiction of Baoqing City, Hebei Province. Within 20 days, authorities also demolished 32 temples and at least 164 faith-related buildings in the surrounding area. Authorities hung signs along the path leading up to Hou Mountain, warning “illegal buildings will be demolished.”

According to *Bitter Winter*, in March authorities in Gaoyao, Jiangsu Province, destroyed nearly 6,000 Tudi temples dedicated to the local land god. Authorities from the Gaoyao Department of Land and Resources stated the temples were illegal buildings that occupied arable land or public spaces. In April authorities in Xianju, Zhejiang Province, destroyed 21 folk temples as part of a “rectification” campaign.

Bitter Winter reported that in August authorities in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, forcibly converted two Buddhist temples into elderly care activity centers. In one of the temples, which was 800 years old, authorities removed Bodhisattva statues and transformed rooms into areas to play chess, watch television, and read. In another temple, mahjong tables were placed in the prayer room that contained Bodhisattva statues.

The government continued limitations on religious education.

At the county level, religious affairs bureaus in provinces including Henan, Shandong, Guangxi, Hunan, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, and Guizhou released open letters during the year instructing parents not to take their children under 18 to religious activities or education. Media reported authorities increased pressure against churches to prevent children under 18 years old from studying the Bible.

Bitter Winter reported local UFWD and SARA officials in July raided a TSPM church in Weinan, Shaanxi Province, and found a notebook with Bible verses, including some transcribed by children. Authorities closed the church for 10 days for “rectification.” The city’s Education Bureau sent notices to primary schools and kindergartens stating that religion was dangerous for minors, and they were prohibited from participating in any religion-related activities “so as to help them establish a correct worldview, outlook on life, and system of values and form a healthy mind.” One Sunday school teacher in Shenyang City, Liaoning Province, said as a result of the government’s strict control over minors in places of worship, the school held sessions in secret and the number of children attending the Sunday school had dropped from more than 100 to just over 20.

UCA News reported local authorities continued to issue warnings to Catholic dioceses throughout the country prohibiting summer camps designed as faith-building activities for school-age children. One diocese member said the government would not allow churches to organize educational activities for children. *Bitter Winter* reported police raids on church-run summer camps in Jiyuan City in Henan Province and Foshan City in Guangdong Province.

Bitter Winter reported in July that some primary schools’ curricula taught kindergarten and primary school children to resist religion as heterodox teaching. In late April a primary school in Xinzheng City, Henan Province, held a meeting to instruct students to be atheists and never believe in the existence of deities. “If your mom goes to church and believes in God, she doesn’t want you as her child anymore,” the teacher reportedly said. Another primary school teacher in Xinzheng City showed students an animated antireligion propaganda film depicting religious adherents as black monsters. The teacher reportedly told students religious people might hex them and they should report to the police any “believers” they encounter.

According to *AsiaNews*, authorities expunged words such as “God,” “Bible,” and “Christ” from textbooks for elementary school children. These words and any other reference to religion were removed from a fifth-grade textbook containing stories by foreign writers and classical Chinese authors printed by the government-linked Publishers for the Education of People. For example, in the original story *The Little Match Girl*, a girl's dead grandmother appears to her in a vision and says, “When a star falls, a soul goes to be with God,” but in the textbook version the grandmother says, “When a star falls, a person leaves this world.”

Individuals seeking to enroll at an official seminary or other institution of religious learning continued to be required to obtain the support of the corresponding official state-sanctioned religious association. The government continued to require students to demonstrate “political reliability,” and political issues were included in examinations of graduates from religious schools. Both registered and unregistered religious groups reported a shortage of trained clergy due in part to government controls on admission to seminaries.

Religious groups reported state-sanctioned religious associations continued to be subject to CCP interference in matters of doctrine, theology, and religious practice. They also closely monitored and sometimes blocked the ability of religious leaders to meet freely with foreigners.

National Public Radio reported in September that sources said imams in Henan and Ningxia Provinces were required to attend monthly training sessions in which they learned Communist ideology and state ethnic policy and discussed Chairman Xi's speeches. According to sources, imams had to pass an exam testing their ideological knowledge in order to renew their license each year.

In September Bitter Winter reported that, according to an imam in Qinghai Province, the CCP frequently required imams to undergo mandatory political training. University professors covered topics such as CCP history, policy, regulations, and international relations. An imam from Sanmenxia, Henan Province, said authorities required him to study prominent CCP historical figures. He said there were surveillance cameras in mosques to ensure he and other imams promoted CCP ideology during sermons. An imam in Manzhouli, Inner Mongolia, said, “Every day, we have to say, ‘The Communist Party is good and great.’ Otherwise, we’ll get in trouble with the government!” According to a members of a congregation at a mosque in Xining, Qinghai Province, authorities closed the mosque because the community refused to accept a government-appointed imam, although authorities said the mosque was closed due to “inadequate fire-control measures.”

Approximately 50 religious workers, including monks, pastors, imams, and other clergy from the five officially recognized religions, attended a mandatory training program organized on April 16 by the Hainan United Front Work Department, the Hainan Academy of Social Sciences, and the Hainan Party School on April 16. Participants studied the principles of the 19th Communist Party Congress, Chairman Xi's April 13, 2018, speech commemorating the 30th anniversary of the creating of the Hainan Special Economic Zone, and the 2018 revised Regulations on Religious Affairs

Regulations. Deputy Director General Liu Geng of the Hainan UFWD in his opening remarks requested the religious professionals “make full use of religion to promote social harmony.”

A number of Catholic churches and bishops appointed by the pope remained unable or unwilling to register with the CCPA. The government and the Holy See remained without diplomatic relations, and the Holy See had no official representative in the country.

In March the *Catholic Herald* wrote that, in his blog, retired Archbishop of Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun continued his criticisms of the September 2018 two-year provisional agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Holy See that addressed a decades-long dispute concerning the authority to appoint bishops, stating it gave too much power to government and CCP authorities. Similar to the previous year, neither side provided details of the provisional agreement, such as how the Holy See and the government would make decisions regarding appointment of bishops. The existing government regulation on the election and consecration of PRC-appointed bishops required candidates to publicly pledge to support the CCP. To also be accepted by the Holy See, these bishops normally would later seek “reconciliation” with the pope. Under the provisional agreement, however, the Holy See agreed to recognize seven bishops who had been previously ordained by the PRC without papal recognition. The seven were granted this reconciliation and joint approval in the 2018 provisional agreement, an irregular occurrence within the Catholic Church.

In August the Holy See appointed its first two bishops in the country who were not among the seven individuals named in the 2018 provisional agreement. Monsignor Antonio Yao Shun took up his position in Ulanqab, Inner Mongolia, and Monsignor Stefano Xu Hongwei took up his position in Hanzhong, Shaanxi Province.

At year’s end, Bishop Vincenzo Guo Xijin, an underground bishop recognized by the Holy See, remained in a subordinate position under Bishop Zhan Silu, who was originally ordained without Holy See approval. The Holy See had previously excommunicated Zhan, a member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, but in December 2018 allowed him to replace Guo as bishop of the Mindong Diocese in Fujian Province. Zhan was one of the seven individuals whom the Holy See recognized as bishops under the 2018 provisional agreement. Police had detained Guo, who had been appointed by the Holy See, earlier in 2018 for his refusal to jointly lead Easter services with Zhan, who at the time was not recognized by the Holy See. Cardinal Zen criticized the Holy See for agreeing to compel Guo and one other bishop to step aside to make room for state-approved bishops.

According to *Bitter Winter*, the government-run CCPA attempted to force 57 underground Catholic priests from Mindong Diocese to join the organization. As of June, 25 complied, three resigned in protest, and one was driven out of the diocese. The local authorities continued to pressure the remaining 28 priests.

The government reportedly discriminated in employment against members of religious groups it identified as “cults” and prevented government employees from participating in religious activities.

Bitter Winter reported in March on a leaked notice from 2018 in which officials instructed a military unit in Shandong Province to investigate the religious status of all military personnel “to resist political infiltration, prevent political sabotage, and purify the political ecosystem.” The notice included strict instructions to check the religious status of each individual, including those omitted from previous investigations, such as new recruits, retirees, or those on vacation or hospitalized. All results of the probe were to be entered into the “military personnel religious status registration system.”

In March *Bitter Winter* reported teachers in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region who belonged to religious groups faced extra scrutiny from education authorities compared to nonreligious teachers. Party members were assigned to “assist” these teachers to ensure they taught in a way that conformed to CCP ideology. Authorities required teachers to fill out a document that read, in part, “[I must] align my thinking with Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism [with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era]...No person or organization is allowed to promote religious ideology on campus.”

In August *Bitter Winter* reported religious adherents faced official discrimination when receiving medical treatment. Residents in Hebei, Heilongjiang, Shandong, Henan, and other provinces reported being asked questions about religious beliefs before being admitted seeing a doctor. Hospital staff stated the government required them to ask about their patients’ religious status. Religious adherents were not allowed to pray with ill relatives who had been admitted to the hospital.

Multiple provincial governments included their work against religions and “cults” in their annual work reports. At a meeting of the 13th People’s Congress of Guizhou Province on January 27, leaders extolled the provincial government’s efforts to “strike down on illegal religious and cult activities” and to increase public safety through social control, supervision, and surveillance.

Media reported that on September 17, Chongqing authorities held a ceremony to mark the 20th year of the municipality’s “cult prevention propaganda” program. Senior party leaders spoke at the event, pointing to the program’s success at helping “the broad masses of cadres to recognize, prevent, and reject evil,” in addition to raising “awareness of conformity” for people in the city.

Media reported that on September 19, the Guangdong Political and Legal Affairs Commission and Guangdong Anti-Cult Association jointly hosted an anticult event in Foshan City, Guangdong Province. More than 700 residents, including students, attended. At the event, awards were given for top anticult propaganda posters.

Media reported the Political and Legal Affairs Commission, United Front Work Department, and Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau of Huidong County, Guangdong Province, hosted a program on April 13 at the Qingyun Temple to “strengthen management of religious venues and resist penetration by the occult.” Religious community representatives read aloud a “Letter of Advocacy on the Work of Anticult,” and more than 100 religious adherents signed a “Say No to Cult” declaration. More than 200 copies of anticult leaflets were distributed at the event.

There were reports that government-run hospitals in Xinyu, Jiangxi Province continued to post banners and notices characterizing religious beliefs as cults.

AsiaNews reported that from July 21-27, the Central Institute of Socialism in Fujian Province organized a course on the work of the Catholic Church in the province. Thirty-three priests, all members of the CCPA, and more than 20 religious affairs officials participated. The lessons and activities centered on the theme of “guiding the Catholic Church to follow a path conforming to socialist society.” *AsiaNews* noted the course seemed to focus almost entirely on political doctrine with very little mention of Christian teachings.

According to the Catholic News Agency, Catholics on the mainland faced increased harassment and abuse as a result of the role Catholics played in Hong Kong protests during the year, which reportedly raised concerns with mainland authorities that Catholics there would inspire similar protests in other parts of the country. Authorities reportedly banned some Catholics from traveling to Hong Kong.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because the government and individuals closely link religion, culture, and ethnicity, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on religious identity.

In December the *Journal of Comparative Economics* published the results of a study done in 2017, in which the researchers submitted over 4,000 resumes of fictitious male candidates to job advertisements for accounting and administrative positions posted by private firms, state-owned firms, and foreign firms. The results showed that a Muslim job seeker was more than 50 percent less likely to receive a callback than a non-Muslim Han job seeker, even when the Muslim applicant had higher academic credentials. The study found “state-owned enterprises are equally likely to discriminate against Muslim job seekers, despite their political mandate to increase diversity.”

Despite labor law provisions against discrimination in hiring based on religious belief, some employers continued to discriminate against religious believers. In April the Hong Kong-based NGO China Labor Bulletin wrote, “Ethnic and religious minorities routinely face discrimination in the service sector, especially in low-level retail and restaurant positions where employers prefer to hire staff who appear more ‘familiar’ and less ‘threatening’ to Han customers. Very often minorities are effectively restricted to working within their own communities or in ethnically-themed restaurants.” Religious minorities continued to report employers terminated their employment due to their current or prior religious activities. *Bitter Winter* reported in September that police pressured the employer of a woman identified as “Ms. Yu” to dismiss her from her job in the northern part of the country because 13 years prior she had participated in a gathering of The Church of Almighty God.

Anti-Muslim speech in social media remained widespread, despite the government’s announcement in September 2017 that it would censor some anti-Muslim expression on the internet. *Columbia Journalism Review* reported that following the March attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, anti-Muslim postings increased on Weibo and WeChat. Some users expressed support for the shooter. One user on WeChat likened Muslims to “cancer cells.” Many Weibo users, however, posted rebuttals, and some wrote articles decrying anti-Muslim sentiment.

In some instances, landlords discriminated against potential or current tenants based on their religious beliefs. Falun Gong practitioners reported having continued difficulty finding landlords who would rent them apartments.

In May a Hui Muslim said on social media she and her sister were not given jobs because of their religion. The post attracted commentators who defended employers for rejecting Hui job applicants. A job recruitment agency in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, expressly excluded ethnic minority jobseekers, including Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists, from applying, according to media reports.

There were reports that Uighur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and other religious minorities continued to face difficulty in finding accommodation when they traveled. *Wired Magazine* reported in May that it found 35 individual Airbnb listings throughout the country with clauses expressly barring religious minorities from renting rooms. One listing for a two-bedroom apartment in the city of Chongqing said, “We do not have the permission of the police [to host Uighurs] please do not book.” A listing for a condominium rental in Chengdu stated in English that Uighur and Tibetan guests were not allowed “[d]ue to local regulation.” Other listings also said Hui Muslims and ethnic Kazakhs should not apply.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Vice President, Secretary of State, Ambassador, and other embassy and consulate representatives repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns about abuses of religious freedom. The President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Deputy Secretary of State, and the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom met with survivors of religiously motivated persecution or their family members from the Uighur Muslim, Tibetan Buddhist, Protestant, and Falun Gong communities at the second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C., from July 16 to 18. Muslim, Buddhist, Protestant, and Falun Gong survivors of religious persecution gave presentations at the ministerial and some met the President during a visit to the White House. At the ministerial there was a general session with government officials from around the world on “Religious Freedom Challenges in China.” On July 18 at the ministerial, the Vice President said, “[T]he American people will always stand in solidarity with the people of all faiths in the People’s Republic of China.” In addressing the ministerial, the Secretary said the human rights crisis in Xinjiang “is truly the stain of the century.” At the ministerial, the United States and other countries issued a statement that read, in part: “As representatives of the international community, we are deeply concerned about China’s escalating, widespread, and undue restrictions on religious freedom, and call on

the Chinese government to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals. Many members of religious groups in China – including ethnic Uighur, Kazakh and other Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, and Falun Gong – face severe repression and discrimination because of their religious beliefs. These communities regularly report incidents in which authorities have tortured, physically abused, sexually abused, arbitrarily arrested, detained, and tried and sentenced without legal safeguards adherents of both registered and unregistered religious groups for activities related to their religious beliefs, affiliations, and peaceful practices.” In a September 23 speech at the UN General Assembly session, the Vice President said, “The Communist Party in China has arrested Christian pastors, banned the sale of Bibles, demolished churches, and imprisoned more than one million Muslim Uighurs.” On September 24 the United States co-sponsored a panel discussion on the human rights crisis in Xinjiang during the United Nations General Assembly session, hosted by the Deputy Secretary of State.

In March the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom gave remarks on religious freedom in China at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club in Hong Kong. He also met with local religious leaders, members of faith communities, and cultural and religious studies students and faculty to discuss efforts to advance religious freedom. He also visited Taiwan and delivered keynote remarks at the 2019 Regional Religious Freedom Forum: A Civil Society Dialogue on Securing Religious Freedom in the Indo-Pacific Region.

Embassy and consulate officials met regularly with a range of government officials managing religious affairs to obtain more information on government policies and to advocate for greater religious freedom and tolerance. Embassy and consulate officials, including the Ambassador and Consuls General, urged government officials at the central, provincial, and local levels, including those at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries, to implement stronger protections for religious freedom and release prisoners of conscience. The Ambassador highlighted religious freedom in meetings with senior officials. The Department of State, embassy, and consulates general regularly called upon the government to release prisoners of conscience, including individual cases of persons imprisoned for religious reasons.

The Ambassador, Consuls General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Wuhan, and other embassy and consulate general officials met with religious groups as well as academics, NGOs, members of registered and unregistered religious groups, and family members of religious prisoners to reinforce U.S. support for religious freedom. The Consul General in Chengdu met with Tibetan and Muslim leaders in Sichuan Province to emphasize support for freedom of religion or belief. Embassy and consulate general officials hosted events around religious holidays and conducted roundtable discussions with religious leaders to convey the importance of religious pluralism in society and learn about issues facing religious communities. Embassy officials met with visiting members of U.S. religious groups to discuss how these groups were engaging with local communities.

Throughout the year, the embassy and consulates general reached large local audiences with messages promoting respect, understanding, and tolerance for religious diversity. The Embassy and consulate generals organized a series of lectures by American academics and U.S. government officials to engage audiences on a number of religious freedom topics. In August the Consulate General in Shanghai hosted a public discussion on freedom of religion, including the U.S. government's efforts to promote religious freedom and tolerance. The embassy hosted multiple events at the Beijing American Center for the general public and target audiences of professors, students, and lawyers to highlight religious freedom in the United States. Through events that included legal analysis of the separation of religion and state, presentations on Jewish-American identity, discussions of citizen-responsive governance, and screening films containing religious themes, the embassy spurred dynamic conversations among the public about topics that were otherwise difficult to address.

The embassy continued to amplify Department of State religious freedom initiatives directly to local audiences through postings to the embassy website and to Weibo, WeChat, and Twitter accounts. Over the course of the year, the embassy published more than 100 messages promoting religious freedom, including videos, statements, images, and infographics. More than 100,000 citizens engaged with these social media posts, participating in online discussions with embassy officials – including the Ambassador – and with each other. For example, for International Religious Freedom Day on October 27, the Ambassador published on the embassy website a statement supporting respect for religious freedom, which the embassy then shared via Weibo and WeChat social media platforms, where the statement garnered 750,000 views and more than 5,000 engagements. In the week surrounding the second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in July, more than two million social media users viewed the embassy's dissemination of the Secretary of State's remarks, with 17,600 choosing to engage on the topic. The embassy also shared religious holiday greetings from the President, Secretary of State, and Ambassador. These included well wishes on the occasion of special religious days for Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Tibetan Buddhists. Millions of social media users viewed these messages, often sparking further comments and questions such as, “Respecting different religious beliefs is for the good of all mankind,” and “Is there a religious department in the United States that manages religion?” During the course of the year, the embassy and consulates general regularly addressed questions of religious tolerance raised by some of the millions of online followers, offering them uniquely U.S. perspectives on religious freedom and tolerance.

Authorities continually harassed and intimidated religious leaders to dissuade them from speaking with U.S. officials. Authorities prevented diplomats in Chengdu from meeting with state-authorized religious leaders, including the Abbot of Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute and the Catholic Bishop of Chengdu. Authorities regularly prevented members of religious communities from attending events at the embassy and consulates general, and security services questioned individuals who did attend.

On October 7, the Bureau of Industry and Security of the U.S. Department of Commerce announced it would add the Xinjiang Public Security Bureau, 18 of its subordinate public security bureaus and one other subordinate institute, and eight Chinese companies to the Entity List for engaging in or enabling activities contrary to U.S. foreign policy

interests. This action constricts the export of items subject to the Export Administration Regulations to entities that have been implicated in human rights violations and abuses in the country's campaign targeting Uighurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang.

On October 8, the Secretary of State imposed visa restrictions on PRC government and CCP officials who are believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, the detention or abuse of Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, or other members of Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang. Family members of such persons may also be subject to these restrictions. In making his announcement, the Secretary said, “The Chinese government has instituted a highly repressive campaign against Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other members of Muslim minority groups in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region that includes mass detentions in internment camps; pervasive, high-tech surveillance; draconian controls of expressions of cultural and religious identities; and coercion of individuals to return from abroad to an often perilous fate in China...The United States calls on the People’s Republic of China to immediately end its campaign of repression in Xinjiang, release all those arbitrarily detained, and cease efforts to coerce members of Chinese Muslim minority groups residing abroad to return to China to face an uncertain fate.”

Since 1999, China has been designated as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. On December 18, the Secretary of State redesignated China as a CPC and identified the following sanction that accompanied the designation: the existing ongoing restriction on exports to China of crime control and detection instruments and equipment, under the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1990 and 1991 (Public Law 101-246), pursuant to section 402(c)(5) of the Act.

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