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Universal Periodic Review of the People's Republic of China

I. Background

1. **Jubilee Campaign** is a non-profit non-governmental organization which holds consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2003 and whose work focuses on promoting the rights of religious and ethnic minorities and raising the status of vulnerable women and children to protect them from bodily harm and exploitation. Jubilee Campaign submits this analysis of religious freedom and human rights in the People's Republic of China as a contribution to the Universal Periodic Review.
2. **ChinaAid** is an international, Christian non-profit human rights organization that inspires, informs and invites people to transformative action on behalf of persecuted people of all faiths in China.
3. **Human Rights Without Frontiers** is a non-profit association that seeks to shape European and international policy in ways that strengthen democracy, uphold the rule of law and protect human rights globally.
4. **Uyghur Human Rights Project** is an independent nonprofit advocacy organization that promotes the rights of the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim peoples in East Turkistan, referred to by the Chinese government as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, through research-based advocacy.
5. **Falun Dafa Association of Washington, D.C.** is a non-profit organization that introduces Falun Dafa (also known as Falun Gong) to the local community and raises awareness of the decades-long persecution against Falun Gong in communist China. Falun Dafa is based upon the core tenets of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance.

II. Violations of international human rights violations, considering applicable international human rights obligations.

A. Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

6. Article 251 of the 1979 Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China stipulates a maximum of two years' fixed-term imprisonment for state actors who "deprive[] a citizen of his or her freedom of religious belief or infringe[] upon the customs and habits of an ethnic group, if the circumstances are serious". However, later, in Article 300, citizens of faith who allegedly "form[] or use[] superstitious sects or secret societies or weird religious organizations or use[] superstition to undermine the implementation of the laws and administrative rules and regulations of the State" are subject to between three and seven years in prison.¹
7. Article 36 of the 1982 Constitution of the People's Republic of China guarantees the right of all citizens to freedom of religion or belief, including the right to not believe in any religion. Additionally, the article prohibits state actors from discriminating against citizens on the basis of religion as well as from coercing citizens to believe in a faith against their will.²

¹ International Labour Organization, [Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China](#).

² World Intellectual Property Organization, [The Constitution law of People's Republic of China](#).

8. The 1984 Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy - which establishes a system by which certain regions can exercise self-governance - requires all autonomous areas to guarantee its residents the right to "freedom of religious belief".³
9. Despite the outline of Chinese citizens' rights to freedom of religion or belief in domestic legislation such as the constitution, criminal law, and regional law, China has historically viewed religion - as well as its growing fellowship among citizens - as a threat to the government's power.
10. The 2017 Revised Regulations on Religious Affairs were the first extremely restrictive legislation that formally codified persecutory practices. The regulations' earlier chapters and articles appear to grant citizens the rights to religious freedom as well as the rights to worship, teach, and manifest according to their faiths. However, the majority of the remaining articles delineate a myriad of controls that local branches of the government's administrative entity on religion maintain over faith groups, including: approving requests for religious activities; reviewing and approving clergy and theological instructors' credentials and curricula; periodically inspecting religious sites; approving all religious publications to be distributed among faith communities; overseeing religious communities' online activities; shutting down 'illegally operating' or unauthorized religious sites; and more.⁴
11. In more recent years China has ratified, implemented, or introduced - subject to review before enactment - numerous other legislations which grant more power to state actors and entities' to control all aspects of religion. Such laws comprise the 2020 Administrative Measures for Religious Groups⁵, (Draft) 2020 Detailed Implementation Measures on the Administration of Foreigners' Group Religious Activities in the Mainland Territory of the P.R.C.⁶; 2021 Measures on the Management of Religious Personnel⁷; 2021 Measures on the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services⁸; and the (Draft) 2021 Measures for the Administration of Religious Schools.⁹ These laws grant government entities control over the following functions of religious groups: confirmation of clerical appointments; oversight of fundraising; insertion of socialist and pro-CCP (Chinese Communist Party) narratives into religious curricula; governance of holy sites; and management of asset acquisition and transfer.
12. China officially recognizes only five religions - Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism - but these faith groups are strictly managed by corresponding CCP-sanctioned supervisory entities: the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (Protestantism), the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Islamic Association of China, the Buddhist Association of China, and the Chinese Taoist Association. These bureaus periodically release plans for "sinicizing/sinifying" the faiths which require faith groups to promote

³ [China] Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, [*Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy \(2001 Amendment\) \[Effective\]*](#), CLI.I.34941, 28 February 2001.

⁴ China Law Translate, [*Religious Affairs Regulations 2017*](#), 7 September 2017.

⁵ China Law Translate, [*Measures for the Administration of Religious Groups*](#), 1 February 2020.

⁶ China Law Translate, [*Detailed Implementation Measures on the Administration of Foreigners' Group Religious Activities in the Mainland Territory of the P.R.C. \(Draft Revisions for the Solicitation of Comments\)*](#), 18 November 2020.

⁷ [China] State Administration of Religious Affairs, [*State Administration of Religious Affairs Order No. 15: Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel*](#), 18 January 2021.

⁸ China Law Translate, [*Measures on the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services*](#), 20 December 2021.

⁹ China Law Translate, [*Measures for the Administration of Religious Schools \(Draft for Comment\)*](#), 9 February 2021.

socialism and dedicate their causes to the advancement of the CCP.¹⁰

13. Freedom House, which annually rates every country in the world in terms of their protection of political rights and civil liberties, currently scores China at 9/100 total freedom points, labeling it as “not free.” For the indicator “Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?”, Freedom House in its 2023 report awards China 0 out of 4 points.¹¹
14. ChinaAid reports that in 2022, authorities have either raided or issued closure orders for the following churches and faith-based associations: Ahnsahng Hong Church, Hokou County Jiaxiang Church, Aideyuan Fellowship, Christian Professionals Fellowship, Xi'an Church of Abundance, Berea Church, Sunshine Reformed Church, and Canaan Theological Seminary. Meanwhile, China continues to live up to its condemnable reputation of being among the nations with the most religious-based arbitrary detentions, and regrettably many Christian leaders have joined Pastor Wang Yi and others in the list of unjustly imprisoned faithfuls. These include Elder Zhang Chunlei of Ren-ai Reformed Church, who was clandestinely tried and sentenced in November on subversion charges; Pastor Hao Zhiwei of Egangqiao Church, who was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for fraud after she refused to join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM); Pastor Geng Zejun of Church of the Rock, who was imprisoned for “organizing illegal gatherings” and who previously had been detained for 15 days alongside his wife; and Evangelist Pastor Chen Lijun, who was convicted for fraud for purchasing 100 Christian books on the internet.¹²
15. Since 2017, China has engaged in a campaign to predictively police and arbitrarily detain upwards of one million Uyghur Muslims in internment camps located throughout the Uyghur region on account of their ethnic and religious background. Uyghurs who are found engaging in behaviors perceived as potentially ‘extremist’ – but in reality are just manifestations of their religion and culture (i.e., growing beards, wearing hijabs, reading the Qur'an, and attending worship at mosques) – are rounded up and interned in what China claims are “vocational training centers” where they supposedly receive education and job training.¹³ In reality, Uyghurs experience “prison-like conditions”, physical and sexual abuse, 24/7 surveillance, sleep deprivation, forced abortion and sterilization.¹⁴
16. Numerous countries have formally labelled China's systemic persecution of the Uyghurs a genocide, including: Canada in October 2020¹⁵, the United States of America in January 2021¹⁶, the Netherlands in February 2021¹⁷, the United Kingdom in April 2021¹⁸,

¹⁰ China Law Translate, [Five-Year Planning Outline for Advancing the Sinification of Christianity \(2018-2022\)](#), 18 June 2019. ; China Law Translate, [Five-Year Work Plan for Advancing Adherence to the Direction of Sinification of Catholicism in our Nation \(2018-2022\)](#), 8 August 2019. ; China Law Translate, [Five-Year Planning Outline for Persisting in the Sinification of Islam \(2018-2022\)](#), 31 May 2019. ; Buddhist Association of China, [Adhere to the Five-Year Work Plan Outline \[for\] the Sinicization of Buddhism \(2019-2023\)](#), 14 November 2019.

¹¹ Freedom House, [Countries and Territories](#). ; Freedom House, [China: Freedom in the World 2023](#).

¹² ChinaAid, [Annual Persecution Report 2022](#), 13 February 2023.

¹³ Isobel Cockerell, [“China's oppression of Xinjiang's Uyghurs: a visual history”](#), Coda, 11 March 2020.

¹⁴ Lindsay Maizland, [“China's Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang”](#), Council on Foreign Relations, 30 June 2020.

¹⁵ Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, [Statement by the Subcommittee on International Human Rights Concerning the Human Rights Situation of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang, China](#), Canada House of Commons, 21 October 2020.

¹⁶ Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State, [“Determination of the Secretary of State on Atrocities in Xinjiang”](#), United States Department of State, 19 January 2021.

¹⁷ Reuters, [“Dutch parliament: China's treatment of Uyghurs is genocide”](#), 25 February 2021.

¹⁸ BBC, [“Uyghurs: MPs state genocide is taking place in China”](#), 23 April 2021.

Lithuania in May 2021¹⁹, Czechia in June 2021²⁰, and France in January 2022.²¹

17. Some other countries publicly acknowledge that China is engaging in human rights violations against Uyghurs but decline to classify it as genocide due to possible repercussions on their relationship with China either economically or politically. In May 2021, the New Zealand parliament passed a motion condemning China's "severe human rights abuses" after the motion's original determination of genocide was vetoed by the leading Labour Party.²² In June 2021, the Belgian parliament publicly acknowledged that China is engaging in "crimes against humanity" and poses a "serious risk of genocide" against Uyghurs.²³
18. Prior to the Winter Olympics being presented in Beijing in 2022, numerous countries undertook initiatives to diplomatically boycott China's hosting of the international athletic variety event, as the prestige of such a position would be unconscionable due to China's atrocities against Uyghurs. Nations leading the dissent against Beijing's hosting of the Olympics included Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, India, Italy, Kosovo, Lithuania, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.²⁴
19. In February 2018, the Tibetan Autonomous Public Security Bureau (PSB) published its Notice of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Public Security Department on Reporting Leads on Crimes and Violations by Underworld Forces, in which any of the following were classified as acts of "organized crime": "participating in separatist activities" such as criticizing or protesting China's aggressive policies in Tibet; advocacy regarding "protecting the 'mother tongue'"; "illegally soliciting donations"; "using religion...to interfere in grassroots-level administrative affairs or...education"; the involvement of religion or traditional religious leaders in resolving disputes; and speaking on behalf of the Tibetan Buddhist community.²⁵
20. In 2019, the Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting from Prisoners of Conscience in China (China Tribunal) confirmed "beyond doubt" that detained practitioners of the Falun Gong religious/spiritual movement are the primary source of harvested organs in China.²⁶ For years, the international human rights community observed that the rate of organ transplants and supply of readily available organs in China was suspiciously high, that one may need to wait only hours or days to receive an organ, and that the voluntary organ donation system was established well after the rise in organ transplant rates in China. The China Tribunal considered these observations as well as testimonies of Falun Gong survivors who were subjected to blood tests and medical examinations.²⁷

¹⁹ Radio Free Asia, "[Lithuanian Parliament Passes Motion Condemning Uyghur Genocide](#)", 20 May 2021.

²⁰ Roseanne Gerin, "[Belgium, Czech Republic Legislatures Pass Uyghur Genocide Declarations](#)", *Radio Free Asia*, 15 June 2021.

²¹ France 24, "[French lawmakers officially recognise China's treatment of Uyghurs as 'genocide'](#)", 20 January 2022.

²² Deutsche Welle News, "[New Zealand slams China's treatment of Uyghurs](#)", 5 May 2021.

²³ Roseanne Gerin, "[Belgium, Czech Republic Legislatures Pass Uyghur Genocide Declarations](#)", *Radio Free Asia*, 15 June 2021.

²⁴ Roseanne Gerin, "[Belgium, Czech Republic Legislatures Pass Uyghur Genocide Declarations](#)", *Radio Free Asia*, 15 June 2021. ; Yacob Reyes, "[Beijing Olympics: These countries have announced diplomatic boycotts](#)", *Axios*, 8 December 2021. ; Asian News International, "[Lithuania confirms diplomatic boycott of Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics](#)", 3 December 2021. Liberty Times Taiwan, "[北京冬奧我代表團不出席開閉幕式 黨政人士：將由教育部宣布](#)", 26 January 2022. ; Gerry Shih, "[India joins diplomatic boycott of Beijing Olympics over role of Chinese soldier from border clash](#)", *The Washington Post*, 3 February 2022. Alsat, "[Kosovo bojkoton Lojrat Olimpikë në Pekin](#)", 12 August 2021. BBC, "[Beijing Winter Olympics boycott: Why are the Games so controversial?](#)", 4 February 2022.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch, "[Illegal Organizations': China's Crackdown on Tibetan Social Groups](#)", 2018.

²⁶ Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting from Prisoners of Conscience in China, *Final Judgement & Summary – 2019*, 2019.

²⁷ Benedict Rogers, "[The Nightmare of Human Organ Harvesting in China](#)", *The Wall Street Journal*, 5 February 2019. ; Olivia Goldhill, "[China is accused of harvesting tens of thousands of organs to serve a thriving global market](#)", *Quartz*, 27 September 2019.

21. Provincial and municipal authorities throughout the nation have enacted policies on behalf of the Chinese government which target children of faith in an effort to stymie the development of religious and spiritual beliefs and identities - and imbue them with atheist and socialist values - while they are young and their minds are still externally impressionable.
22. Children of faith communities are punished - or threatened with punishment - for their involvement in religious activities.

Authorities repeatedly raid Christian church gatherings and house worship services - such as in Sichuan and Shaanxi provinces in 2021 and 2022, respectively - and temporarily detain participating children and interrogate them about their faith and their family members' faith.²⁸ In April 2019, Chinese authorities ambushed a gathering at an unregistered Catholic church in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) and confiscated church documents listing the names of children who had received their First Communion; they visited the homes of the children and confiscated religious material.²⁹ In August 2020, government officials conducted a raid on Great Praise Church in Gushi County, Xinyang City, Henan province. Two officials entered the church abruptly and began to take down the names and personal information of nine young Christians; one witness stated that "the children worried that the police would harass them in their schools."³⁰ Also in August 2020, authorities raided two separate gatherings, of 40 Christian youth members of Xunsiding Church in Fujian, and 60 Christian youth members of Life Church in Henan, dissolving the events and summoning parents of the participating children for questioning.³¹

In mid-October 2016, the CCP published a set of religious regulations specifically for the Uyghur region which would present criminal charges for parents and guardians that "organise, lure or force minors into attending religious activities" or "abet, coerce, attract, or tolerate minors' participation in terrorism, extremism, and underground scripture studies."³² Prohibited acts for Uyghur children include wearing religious clothing - such as headscarves - and participating in fasting for Ramadan.³³ One Aksu government official has informed Radio Free Asia's (RFA) Uyghur service that if a minor under the age of 18 years prays, takes part in fasting, practices or studies religion, or visits underground houses of worship, they may be charged with committing a crime.

In early March 2021, authorities detained three Tibetan teenagers - Dadul, Sangye Tso, and Kanshi - for failing to register a WeChat group they had created to coincide with Tibetan Buddhist New Year, called Losar; the group had amassed 240 members before the three teens' arrests. One of the detained, Dadul, had both of his legs broken by police during interrogation, and residents of his

²⁸ Anugrah Kumar, "[China: Police arrest 10 kids, 18 adults in raid on worship gathering](#)", *The Christian Post*, 26 August 2021. ; ChinaAid, *Annual Persecution Report 2022*, 13 February 2023.

²⁹ Li Guang, "[Minors Intimidated to Stay Away from Religion](#)", *Bitter Winter*, 3 November 2020.

³⁰ Li Xiao, "[House Churches Suppressed Across China](#)", *Bitter Winter*, 31 October 2020.

³¹ ChinaAid, "[CCP fines hotel for allowing Christians to hold religious activities](#)", 25 October 2020.

³² Kavitha Surana, "[China Tells Citizens to Inform on Parents Who 'Lure' Kids into Religion](#)", *Foreign Policy*, 12 October 2016.

³³ South China Morning Post, "[China's new rules for Xinjiang ban parents from encouraging or forcing children into religion](#)", 12 October 2016.

hometown have raised funds to pay for his hospital bills.³⁴ In October 2021, authorities arrested three teenage Tibetan students – 16-year-old Palsang, 15-year-old Sermo, and 15-year-old Yangkyi – for “showing displeasure at the lack of Tibetan language classes”. By March 2022, there was still no public information regarding their location, though it is widely suspected that they are currently at a ‘reformation education center’.³⁵

Falun Dafa Minghui routinely publishes reports on the persecution of Falun Gong,, including the injustices child practitioners - and children of practitioners - are subjected to as a result of their own and/or their parents’ spiritual practice. In January 2020, a practitioner child of unspecified age was arrested with his mother for sharing Falun Gong information and was severely beaten with an electric baton.³⁶ In January 2021, a 12-year-old epileptic girl was detained with her Falun Gong practitioner parents and was released a few hours later to live with her elderly grandmother; following the incident the girl suffered from trauma-induced seizures.³⁷ In September 2021, the two-year-old grandson of one Falun Gong practitioner was questioned about his grandmother’s activities despite his extremely young age.³⁸ In July 2022, the nine-year-old granddaughter of practitioner Ms. Fan Jinqing was woken up by authorities who entered her home at 11:00 P.M., after which she was filmed, interrogated about her grandmother’s activities, and threatened with school expulsion if she herself practiced Falun Gong.³⁹ In September 2022, police detained and interrogated a 13-year-old boy – who lived with a learning disability – about his Falun Gong-practicing mother’s activities, without an adult guardian present during the questioning.⁴⁰

23. Children are prohibited and discouraged from participating in religious activities.

Since 2017, numerous reports have exposed notices and signage posted on church doors’ restricting children from entering and attending church services and religious events such as Christian summer camps. Similar incidents have occurred throughout Henan, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and the Uyghur region. In Fujian, one notice stated “it is forbidden to force or tempt juveniles to believe in any religion and it is also forbidden to conduct religious activities in non-registered religious venues without approval.”⁴¹

In May 2017, Jebumgang Primary School in Lhasa, Tibet, issued a notice to students’ parents in which they requested that parents disallow their children to take part in “superstitious or religious activity.” A year later in May 2018, a kindergarten in Chambdo, Tibet, released a notice to parents stating that “if your children miss any days of school, and are later found to have been secretly taken to a monastery or religious festival, your family will be reported directly to the

³⁴ Tenzin Dickyi & Richard Finney, [“Three Tibetan Teens Arrested, One Put in Hospital, Over Failure to Register Chat Group”](#), *Radio Free Asia*, 3 March 2021.

³⁵ Tibet Watch, [“Three Children Arrested After New Language Restriction Announced”](#), 21 March 2022.

³⁶ Falun Dafa Minghui, [Brutality Against Falun Gong in 2020 amidst Ongoing Persecution by Communist Regime](#), 9 January 2021.

³⁷ Falun Dafa Minghui, [“Beijing Couple Indicted for Their Faith, 12-Year-Old Daughter with Epilepsy Left Behind with Grandma”](#), 16 November 2021.

³⁸ Falun Dafa Minghui, [“Two-year-old Boy Interrogated for Grandmother’s Spiritual Belief”](#), 17 July 2022.

³⁹ Falun Dafa Minghui, [“9-year-old Girl Witnesses Police Raid and Interrogated Following Grandmother’s Arrest”](#), 12 August 2022.

⁴⁰ Falun Dafa Minghui, [“Police Interrogate 13-Year-Old With a Learning Disability in Attempt to Frame His Stepmother”](#), 29 November 2022.

⁴¹ World Watch Monitor, [“China bans children- and their teachers- from churches”](#), 8 September 2017.

city education bureau.” Similar notices and regulations have been issued by myriad schools throughout Tibet.⁴²

24. Children of faith practitioners and leaders are separated from their parents and/or guardians due to prolonged arrest.

In August 2021, couple Chang Yuchun and Li Chenhui were convicted of “illegal business operations” and sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment by a Xi’an municipal court in Shaanxi province for operating a Christian bookstore. Their prison terms will end in September 2027, and their four children between the ages of four and 22 years have had to move in with their grandparents.⁴³

In September 2022, videos circulated on video-sharing app Douyin depicted Uyghur children - who have been left unaccompanied following their parents’/guardians’ arrests - climbing over the walls of their properties [due to authorities’ shuttering of Uyghur residences’ doors] and into their neighbors’ homes in search of food and care. In one video, a teenage girl was seen crying for her mother who had been detained while experiencing a medical emergency.⁴⁴ Campaign for Uyghurs (CFU) estimates that there are upwards of 500,000 children in state-run orphanages in the Uyghur region as a result of their parents’ imprisonment.⁴⁵ The city of Bole is one of the major destinations for Uyghur orphan children between the ages of seven and seventeen years who have lost multiple family members as they are transported to detention centers as punishment for their ethnic and religious identity. One source reported of these orphanages:

“There are a lot more kids like these, but the welfare institution doesn’t have room for them. They can’t take any more in. The children are suffering from emotional instability, and some are displaying disturbing tendencies, like trying to swallow fish bones or drink laundry detergent to kill themselves. Some children have asked if the welfare system was a prison.”⁴⁶

Similarly, many children of Falun Gong practitioners find themselves orphaned and separated from their detained parents and relatives. In April 2020, a 12-year-old girl witnessed her mother’s arrest and pleaded with authorities: “my mom didn’t do anything wrong, nor has she harmed anyone. I wouldn’t take it if you sentence my mom.”⁴⁷ In November 2020, a 13-year-old boy in Suizhong County, Liaoning Province became an orphan after his mother died; his father was killed in custody in 2008 and his maternal grandparents had also passed.⁴⁸ In February 2022, a teenage girl in Chongqing was rendered unaccompanied and has since had to fend for herself after her practitioner father was arrested and sentenced to four years’ imprisonment for his beliefs; the girl’s mother had died

⁴² Human Rights Watch, [“China: Tibetan Children Banned from Classes”](#), 30 January 2019.

⁴³ ChinaAid, [Annual Persecution Report 2021](#), 1 March 2022.

⁴⁴ Serwi Huseyin, [“Uyghurs in East Turkestan Face Forced Starvation”](#), *Muslim Matters*, 23 September 2022.

⁴⁵ Campaign for Uyghurs, [China’s Genocide in East Turkestan: The Genocide of Uyghurs by Definition of the United Nations Convention on Genocide Prevention](#), July 2020.

⁴⁶ Bitter Winter, [“Uyghur Children ‘Orphaned’ After Their Parents Were Sent to Camps”](#), 7 July 2018.

⁴⁷ Falun Dafa Minghui, [“Jiangsu Woman Faces Trial for Her Faith, Terminally Ill Father-in-Law Dies One Month After Witnessing Home Raid”](#), 24 August 2020.

⁴⁸ Falun Dafa Information Center, [“13-year-old Boy Orphaned by the Persecution of Falun Gong”](#), 5 January 2021.

five years prior.⁴⁹ In late 2022, a 68-year-old female practitioner was imprisoned in Jilin, leaving her husband the primary caregiver of their 12-year-old granddaughter who is severely mentally and physically handicapped; the grandfather has since passed away and it is unknown who is currently the girl's primary caretaker.⁵⁰ In April 2023, a 43-year-old practitioner in Guangzhou was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for distributing Falun Gong flyers. He leaves behind his 15-year-old intellectually disabled son, and it is unclear whether the boy's mother is in his life to care for him.⁵¹ In Heilongjiang that same month, a six-year-old girl named Lily (alias) was orphaned after her father Wang Yudong died from his health impairments caused by the torture he faced in prison; the girl's mother had died in July 2022.⁵²

25. Children of faith communities are prohibited from receiving religious education, and are indoctrinated with atheist, socialist, and pro-CCP ideals through state-approved curriculum.

One district in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, received a notice from the government stating that “receiving religious education and formation too early in churches would seriously affect the normal implementation of the education system.”⁵³ Parents in Wenzhou also received pledges from their children's schools which they were required to sign ensuring that their children would not be attending “religious venues for scripture study classes or other theological training.”⁵⁴ They were also forced to promise that the entire family will “never join any Falun Gong [or] other heretic organization[]” in an “exemplary observance of the Party discipline and the country's laws and regulations.”⁵⁵ In February 2019, at an elementary school in Lunan District, Hebei province, students were required to recite the Core Socialist Values, and student leaders were required to give speeches in which they condemn religion and illustrate propaganda posters condemning xie jiao and religion.⁵⁶ Months later in Zhejiang province's Fuyang District, school teachers received instructions to “promote atheist ideology during the morning reading class” and “some local students reported that their teacher showed them images related to Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism during their morning self-study class and told them not to believe in any religion.”⁵⁷ In June 2021, a teacher in Shandong province received a notice of investigation from authorities stating “please remove from your children's reading list religious books...that are not officially released by the government-run] Xinhua Bookstore”.⁵⁸ In a similar crackdown on faith-based school curriculum, in bordering Jiangsu province in October 2021, authorities arrested five representatives of US-based Christian homeschooling program Abeka

⁴⁹ Falun Dafa Minghui, [“Single Father Sentenced to Four Years in Prison, Wife Died Seven Years Ago, Both Persecuted for Their Faith in Falun Gong”](#), 1 March 2022.

⁵⁰ Falun Dafa Minghui, [“Older Woman Sentenced to Prison for Her Faith, Husband Dies Four Months After Her Arrest”](#), 12 November 2022.

⁵¹ Falun Dafa Minghui, [“One Falun Gong Flyer Leads to a Three-year Prison Sentence”](#), 25 April 2023.

⁵² Falun Dafa Information Center, [“Three Fathers, Persecuted by the Chinese Regime”](#), 18 June 2023.

⁵³ UCAnews, [“Chinese authorities ban children going to churches”](#), 30 August 2017.

⁵⁴ Tang Wanming, [“State Ensures that Children Stay off Religion on Holidays”](#), *Bitter Winter*, 25 August 2019.

⁵⁵ Sun Cheng, [“温州龙湾：幼儿园家长和幼儿收到‘不信教承诺书’”](#), *Radio Free Asia Mandarin*, 16 March 2023. Gao Zhensai, [“Kindergarten parents must pledge not to hold religious beliefs”](#), *ChinaAid*, 20 March 2023. ; He Yuyan, [“Wenzhou, Parents Asked to Sign a ‘Kindergarten Family Commitment Not to Believe in Religion’”](#), *Bitter Winter*, 24 March 2023. ; Falun Dafa Information Center, [“Wenzhou City Kindergartens Enforce on Parents Pledge Prohibiting Falun Gong Activity”](#), 31 March 2023.

⁵⁶ Shen Xinran, [“China Continues to Spread Communism Across College Campuses”](#), *Bitter Winter*, 25 March 2019.

⁵⁷ Li Guang, [“Obedient ‘Red Successors’ Cultivated from Young Age”](#), *Bitter Winter*, 10 October 2019.

⁵⁸ ChinaAid, [Annual Persecution Report 2021](#), 1 March 2022.

Academy, and ten children at a nearby Christian school were temporarily detained.⁵⁹

Uyghur children that are separated from their parents and transferred to state-run boarding schools are often subjected to coerced re-indoctrination, poor living conditions, and mental health issues as a result of separation and isolation.⁶⁰ Students are forced to abandon their cultural heritage and language and learn Mandarin as well as patriotic ideals; and religious worship is strictly prohibited. German anthropologist and expert on the persecution of Uyghurs, Dr. Adrian Zenz, analyzed leaked state records in which the Chinese government attempts to justify their forced indoctrination of Uyghur children on the grounds that they had been inculcated with “extremist thoughts” from their parents and that their attendance at state-run boarding schools was necessary for “inoculating them against extremist thinking”.⁶¹ In early 2022, a National Public Radio (NPR) correspondent was able to conduct interviews with one 8-year-old Uyghur boy and his 10-year-old sister who spent a year and half in a state-run boarding school four years earlier, at the ages of 4 and 6. The children reported that “the class monitors hit us if we cried or made us stand still facing the wall” and that when the children did not heed instructions or showed difficulty in learning or understanding what they were being taught, they were occasionally put into stress positions.⁶²

In 2016, the Lhasa Ministry of Education branch confirmed that Chinese was being used as the primary language of instruction in the majority of elementary schools in the counties of Lhasa, including rural communities.⁶³ For Tibetan Buddhists, religious and cultural freedom is in many ways dependent on the Chinese government’s obligation to protect their right to use and teach their language to younger members of the community group. One individual by the name of Zorgyi reveals that the Tibetan language is “the key to our communication, our religion and our national identity”, and that it is the backbone of the many literary and religious tenets of Tibetan Buddhism.⁶⁴ Amidst the government’s recently-expanded campaign to remove educational options for children - “monastery day schools, other privately-run schools, or education in exile in India” - Tibetan parents are forced to enroll their children in mainland boarding schools. Tibetan Buddhist children and adolescents boarding in Chanba No. 1 Middle School in Xi’an are required to regularly watch patriotic Chinese films.⁶⁵ In May 2021, Tibetan parents in Sog County were informed that they were prohibited from bringing with them rosaries and prayer wheels when visiting their children in boarding schools; they were additionally restricted from participating in religious chants or mantras while on school property.⁶⁶

26. The Chinese Communist Party has repeatedly arrested and imprisoned multiple human rights advocates, lawyers, religious minorities, scholars, and journalists for their activism,

⁵⁹ Release International, “[China: Attacks on Christian Education Escalate](#)”, 20 October 2021.

⁶⁰ Adrian Zenz, [Break Their Roots: Evidence for China’s Parent-Child Separation Campaign in Xinjiang](#), Journal of Political Risk, Vol. 7, No. 7, July 2019, supra note 33.

⁶¹ Ruth Ingram, “[‘The state is a better parent’ - China’s coercive assimilation of indigenous children](#)”, *The Tablet*, 17 August 2022.

⁶² NPR, “[Two Uyghur Children Describe What Life Was Like In A Chinese Boarding School](#)”, 3 February 2022.

⁶³ Human Rights Watch, [China’s “Bilingual Education” Policy in Tibet](#), March 2020.

⁶⁴ Zorgyi, [International Campaign for Tibet](#).

⁶⁵ Yuan Wei, “[Tibetan Youth ‘Sinicized’ Through Education](#)”, *Bitter Winter*, 15 September 2020.

⁶⁶ Lhuboom, Tenzin Dickyi, & Richard Finney, “[No Religion in Tibetan Schools, China Tells Parents](#)”, *Radio Free Asia*, 10 May 2021.

and has charged these individuals with crimes such as ‘inciting subversion of state power.’ In July 2015, Chinese authorities embarked on a major suppression campaign, known as “709 Crackdown”, in which they conducted mass arrests of over 200 civil rights and human rights defenders and attorneys, many of whom remain imprisoned or disappeared to this day.

Gao Zhisheng is one of the most widely respected human rights lawyers in China, notably for his work defending religious minorities and victims of state persecution, highlighting the torture of Falun Gong practitioners, and defending political activists and critics of the CCP. In 2005, Gao was essentially placed under house arrest, confined to his own home, while tens of police officers conducted 24-hour surveillance and monitored his activities. In the summer of 2006, Gao Zhisheng was arbitrarily detained and disappeared, and in December of the same year, he was charged with ‘inciting to undermine the state’. Gao experienced this torture and arbitrary detention for six weeks, and in November 2007 he was officially placed under house arrest, during which he was revoked access to his bank account, denied from receiving family visits, and his family members reported being monitored and pestered by authorities. Gao disappeared again in April 2010, and no news was released regarding his status and whereabouts until December 2011 when it was announced that he was re-arrested with a three-year imprisonment sentence for allegedly violating his probation terms. After his release from prison in August 2014, Gao still languished under house arrest for three years until he escaped on April 13, 2017 and lived without restraint for three weeks before once again vanishing into police custody without formal charges.⁶⁷

Li Heping is a prominent human rights lawyer who is “well known for defending the disenfranchised, including Christian house churches, victims of forced evictions and free speech advocates.” Li was detained during the ‘709 Crackdown’, and he was targeted for his legal work as well as for using foreign media outlets and social media platforms to publicly criticize China’s corrupt legal system. He was tried in a clandestine trial and convicted of “subversion of state power.”⁶⁸ After two years in detention, he was released in 2017 and returned to his family looking “emaciated” and “unrecognisable”, further corroborating his claims of suffering torture while in custody.⁶⁹ In May 2023, Li Heping’s landlord gathered a group of at least ten civilians to pelt stones at and smash the window of Li’s Beijing apartment where he lives with his wife Wang Qiaolong. Wang reported that the landlord had told the couple that they would be killed, likely as revenge for the lawyer’s activism for victims of religious persecution. She also believes that the landlord had been pressured by Chinese authorities to take action, as state officials have in a similar case turned off the utilities of the home of another human rights and religious freedom attorney, Wang Quanzhang, who explains that “a lot of Christian families across the country have been evicted and persecuted. It is very hard to live a stable life”.⁷⁰

27. In 2018, soon-to-be-imprisoned pastor Wang Yi of the heavily persecuted Early Rain

⁶⁷ Teng Biao, [“‘The Bravest Lawyer in China’ - Gao Zhisheng”](#), *Amnesty International*, 13 August 2019. ; [Gao Zhisheng](#), Lawyers for Lawyers. ; Benedict Rogers, [“Where is Gao Zhisheng?”](#), *UCA News*, 30 April 2019.

⁶⁸ Benjamin Haas, [“China convicts rights lawyer Li Heping of ‘subversion of state power’”](#), *The Guardian*, 28 April 2017.

⁶⁹ Tom Phillips, [“‘Emaciated, unrecognisable’: China releases human rights lawyer from custody”](#), *The Guardian*, 10 May 2017.

⁷⁰ Gao Feng, Luisetta Mudie, & Malcolm Foster, [“Smashing window and sending death threats, landlord tries to evict Beijing lawyer”](#), *Radio Free Asia*, 15 May 2023. ; Gao Feng, Luisetta Mudie, & Malcolm Foster, [“Chinese police target prominent rights lawyers with harassment, travel bans”](#), *Radio Free Asia*, 14 June 2023.

Covenant Church met with Pastor Pan Yongguang, leader of the Mayflower Church, and explained his church's suffering at the hands of the Chinese government and warned Pastor Pan that he should "prepare himself to go to prison as well". Pastor Pan decided to seek relocation in another country for his church following repeated harassment, intimidation, and surveillance from Chinese authorities, stating "our church would educate our children about our religious beliefs, and the police would come along and force them to enroll in school so they could be brainwashed. They didn't want us to teach our children the Bible, and children are banned from attending church. This went against our faith and our consciences."⁷¹ In early April 2023, it was reported that, with the assistance and coordination of ChinaAid, Freedom Seekers International, the United States Department of State and Department of Homeland Security, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the entire 63-member congregation - including 32 children - of the heavily-persecuted Mayflower Church had resettled in Texas after their prolonged and perilous escape.⁷²

Noncompliance with UPR recommendations

28. China's persecutory practices against faith communities - namely Christians, Uyghurs, Tibetan Buddhists, and Falun Gong practitioners - exhibit the disregard and rejection of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group's 2018 recommendations⁷³, including:

- Shutting down internment camps in the Uyghur region (recommended by: France, 28.23; Switzerland, 28.35; United States of America, 28.177);
- Ceasing the arbitrary and unjust detention of Uyghurs (recommended by: Australia, 28.175; Belgium, 28.178; Canada, 28.179; Czechia, 28.191; Germany, 28.180; Iceland, 28.181; United States of America, 28.177);
- Ceasing the arbitrary arrest of human rights defenders (recommended by: Australia, 28.333; Iceland, 28.181);
- Ceasing the "interference in the selection and education of religious leaders" (recommended by: United States of America, 28.189);
- Respecting the right to freedom of religion or belief (recommended by: Australia, 28.182; Austria, 28.186; Canada, 28.190; Croatia, 28.322; Czechia, 28.191; Egypt, 28.193; Finland, 28.325; France, 28.194; Germany, 28.195; Haiti, 28.196; Indonesia, 28.197; New Zealand, 28.183; Peru, 28.184; Poland, 28.185; Sweden, 28.319; Turkmenistan, 28.188; United States of America, 28.189);
- Fully ensuring the rights of the child, particularly the right to health and education (recommended by: Bulgaria, 28.110; Chile, 28.303; Djibouti, 28.298; Gabon, 28.253; Indonesia, 28.254; Italy, 28.63; Mauritius, 28.64; Myanmar, 28.302; Nepal, 28.273; Portugal, 28.260; Slovenia, 28.264; Sri Lanka, 28.265; Tunisia, 28.297).

Recommendation(s)

⁷¹ Steve Warren, ["'Mayflower Church' Refugees from China Find Safe Haven in US After 3-Year Ordeal"](#), *CBN News*, 8 April 2023.

⁷² Anugrah Kumar, ["Chinese Mayflower Church members resettled in US after 3-year quest for asylum"](#), *Christian Post*, 8 April 2023.

⁷³ United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: China*, [A/HRC/40/6](#), 26 December 2018.

With consideration of the above violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, we propose that the following recommendations be raised to the People's Republic of China by the UN Universal Periodic Review Working Group:

1. Incorporate into domestic policy the protections of religious freedoms outlined in international conventions and accords to which China has acceded;
2. Remove vague language and discriminatory provisions in domestic legal framework which stigmatize faith communities and mischaracterize them as abnormal, extremist, separatist, and/or dangerous;
3. Extend legal recognition to other faith communities in China, including folk and indigenous religions, and spiritual practices;
4. Cease the practice of arbitrarily and violently raiding houses of worship and the arrest of faith leaders for their leadership of religious communities and their legitimate resistance to the Chinese government's encroachment upon the rights and liberties thereof;
5. Cease the practice of persecuting and arresting peaceful religious and spiritual adherents. In that same vein, release unconditionally and with immediate effect all religious prisoners of conscience;
6. Combat corruption in China's judiciary by allowing for independent and impartial judicial decisions; and provide equal opportunities for legal remedy to individuals whose rights have been violated;
7. Allow UN independent experts free and unfettered access to the the Uyghur region and other affected regions to investigate crimes against humanity;
8. Cease the barbaric and inhumane practice of organ harvesting of religious prisoners of conscience, namely Falun Gong practitioners;
9. Rescind and/or amend domestic legislation which interferes with the legitimate activities of faith communities. Along that same vein, return self-agency to such religious groups with regards to: management of houses of worship; selection and training of clergy; organization and regulation of religious worship and other faith-based activities; fundraising and asset management; and supervision of religious scholarship, theological curriculum, and educational facilities;
10. Abide by the 'best interests' of children by reuniting them with unjustly detained family members;
11. Work towards the return of children of faith to their home communities and families. Ensure that, in the cases in which faith minority children remain in state-run boarding schools and orphanages, that the full standards of cleanliness, functionality, and safety are met by the facilities and that the children's nutritional, physical and mental health needs are met; permit these children to be educated according to their faith and cultural/linguistic heritage.

III. Scope of international obligations and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and bodies.

29. China has ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
30. China has not ratified Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture; the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming to the abolition of the death penalty; the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
31. China has signed, but has not ratified, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
32. China has neglected to accept individual complaint procedures as regards its adherence/non-adherence to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Recommendation(s)

We propose that the following recommendations be raised to the People's Republic of China by the UN Universal Periodic Review Working Group:

33. Ratify the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture; the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming to the abolition of the death penalty; the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
34. Accept individual complaint procedures as regards its adherence/non-adherence to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.