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China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)

International Religious Freedom Report 2007

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Reports on [Hong Kong](#), [Macau](#), and [Tibetan](#) areas of China are appended at the end of this report.

The Constitution states that citizens enjoy freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe in any religion. The Constitution limits protection of the exercise of religious belief to activities which it defines as "normal." The Constitution states that religious bodies and affairs are not to be "subject to any foreign domination." The law also prohibits proselytism.

The Government restricted religious practice largely to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and controlled growth and scope of activities of both registered and unregistered religious groups, including "house churches." The Government tried to control and regulate the growth of religious groups that could constitute sources of authority outside of the control of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Nonetheless, membership in many religious groups was growing rapidly.

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for freedom of religion remained poor, especially for religious groups and spiritual movements that are not registered with the Government. The Government expelled several foreign citizens on charges of conducting "illegal religious activities" by proselytizing in the spring of 2007. According to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), religious organizations, and house church groups, over one hundred were expelled. The Government also questioned house church leaders about connections with foreigners and plans to disrupt the Olympics. Some of these groups alleged that these incidents were part of a coordinated government campaign to repress religious expression. The Government also continued to emphasize the role of religion in building a "Harmonious Society," which was a positive development with regard to the Government's respect for religious freedom.

Members of many unregistered religious groups of various faiths reported that the Government subjected them to restrictions, including intimidation, harassment, and detention. Some unregistered religious groups were pressured to register as "meeting points" of government-sanctioned "patriotic" religious associations (PRAs) linked to the five main religions--Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. The treatment of unregistered groups varied significantly from region to region.

Religious worship in officially sanctioned and unregistered places of worship continued to grow throughout the country. The extent of religious freedom varied widely within the country. For example, officials in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) tightly controlled religious activity, while elsewhere in the country Muslims enjoyed greater religious freedom. Despite Government statements that minors are free to receive religious training that does not interfere with their secular education, authorities in some areas of Xinjiang failed to enforce these protections and reportedly prevented minors from receiving religious education outside the home. Followers of Tibetan Buddhism, including in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region and Tibetan areas of the country (see separate appendix), also faced more restrictions on their religious practice and ability to organize than Buddhists in other parts of the country.

There were many reports of repression of unregistered Protestant church networks and house churches during the reporting period. The national religious affairs ministry, known as State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), stated that friends and family holding prayer meetings at home need not register with the Government, but the regulations on religious affairs (RRA) state that formal worship should take place only in government-approved venues. There were many reports that police and officials of local Religious Affairs Bureaus (RABs) interfered with house church meetings, sometimes accusing the house church of disturbing neighbors or disrupting social order. Police sometimes detained worshippers attending such services for hours or days and prevented further house worship in the venues. Police interrogated both laypeople and their leaders about their activities at the meeting sites, in hotel rooms, and in detention centers. Leaders sometimes faced harsher treatment, including detention, formal arrest and sentencing to reeducation or imprisonment. Treatment of unregistered groups varied regionally. For example, local officials in Henan Province mistreated unregistered Protestants, and local officials in Hebei Province tightly controlled Roman Catholics loyal to the Vatican.

Some "underground" Catholic bishops also faced repression, in large part due to their avowed loyalty to the Vatican, which the Government accused of interfering in the country's internal affairs.

The Government continued its repression of groups that it designated as "cults," which included several Christian groups and the Falun Gong. The Government has never publicly defined the criteria which it uses for designating a religious group a "cult." Falun Gong practitioners continued to face arrest, detention, and imprisonment, and there were credible reports of deaths due to torture and abuse. Practitioners who refuse to recant their beliefs are sometimes subjected to harsh treatment in prisons, reeducation through labor camps, and extra-judicial "legal education" centers. Some practitioners who recanted their beliefs returned from detention. Reports of abuse were difficult to confirm within the country and the group engaged in almost no public activity. There were continuing reports that the Government's "610 office," a state security agency implicated in many alleged abuses of Falun Gong practitioners, continued to use extra-legal methods of repression.

There were some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice. Religious and ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetans and Uighurs, experienced societal discrimination not only because of their religious beliefs but also because of their status as ethnic minorities with languages and cultures different from the typically wealthier Han Chinese.

The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the consulates general in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang made concerted efforts to encourage greater religious freedom in the country. U.S. officials condemned abuses while supporting positive trends within the country. In Washington and in Beijing, U.S. officials positively noted the Government's engagement of religious citizens in building a "Harmonious Society," the state's campaign to alleviate social tensions, and encouraged the Government to engage unregistered religious groups as well as registered religious groups in providing voluntary aid to meet the country's social and economic needs. U.S. officials continued to urge the Government to show greater respect for citizens' constitutional and internationally recognized rights to exercise their religious beliefs. U.S. officials protested the imprisonment of and asked for further information about numerous individual religious prisoners.

Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated China a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 3.5 million square miles and a population of approximately 1.3 billion. According to an April 2005 government White Paper, there are "more than 100 million religious adherents," representing a great variety of beliefs and practices. There are reportedly more than 100,000 sites for religious activities, 300,000 clergy, and more than 3,000 religious organizations. A February 2007 survey conducted by researchers in Shanghai and reported in Chinese state-run media concluded that 31.4 percent of Chinese citizens ages 16 and over, or 300 million persons, are religious. This is approximately three times the official figure reported by the Government in April 2005. According to the February 2007 poll, approximately 40 million citizens identify themselves as Christians and 200 million identify themselves as Buddhist, Taoist, or worshippers of "legendary figures."

The Government officially recognizes five main religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. There are five state-sanctioned PRAs that manage the activities of adherents of the five officially-recognized faiths. The Russian Orthodox Church operates in some regions, and expatriates practiced other religions.

According to the Government's 1997 report on Religious Freedom and 2005 White Paper on religion, there are more than 100 million Buddhists. It is difficult to estimate accurately the number of Buddhists because they do not have congregational memberships and often do not participate in public ceremonies. The Government estimated that there are 16,000 Buddhist temples and monasteries, 200,000 Buddhist monks and nuns, more than 1,700 "reincarnate lamas," and 32 Buddhist schools. Most believers, including most ethnic Han Buddhists, practice Mahayana Buddhism. Most Tibetans and ethnic Mongolians practice Tibetan Buddhism, a Mahayana adaptation. Some ethnic minorities in southwest Yunnan Province practice Theravada Buddhism, the dominant tradition in parts of neighboring Southeast Asia. According to the government-sanctioned Taoist Association, there are more than 25,000 Taoist priests and nuns, more than 1,500 Taoist temples, and two Taoist schools. Traditional folk religions (worship of local gods, heroes, and ancestors) are practiced by hundreds of millions of citizens and are often affiliated with Taoism, Buddhism, or ethnic minority cultural practices.

According to government figures, there were as many as 20 million Muslims, more than 40,000 Islamic places of worship (more than half of which are in Xinjiang), more than 45,000 imams nationwide, and 10 Islamic schools. The country has 10 predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, the largest of which is the Hui, estimated to number nearly 10 million. Hui are centered in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, but there are significant concentrations of Hui throughout the country, including in Gansu, Henan, Qinghai, Yunnan, Hebei, and Xinjiang Provinces. Hui slightly outnumber Uighur Muslims, who live primarily in Xinjiang. According to an official 2005 report, the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region had 23,900 mosques and 27,000 clerics at the end of 2004, but observers noted that fewer than half of the mosques were authorized to hold Friday prayer and holiday services. The country also has more than 1 million Kazakh Muslims and thousands of Dongxiang, Kyrgyz, Salar, Tajik, Uzbek, Baoan, and Tatar Muslims.

There are 5.3 million persons registered with the official Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA), and it is estimated that there are an equal or greater number who worship in unregistered Catholic churches affiliated with the Vatican.

According to official sources, the government-sanctioned Catholic Patriotic Association has more than 70 bishops, almost 3,000 priests and nuns, 6,000 churches and meeting places, and 12 seminaries. There are thought to be approximately 40 bishops operating "underground," some of whom are in prison or under house arrest. A Vatican representative estimated that there are 8 to 18 million Catholics in the country.

Officials from the Three-Self Patriotic Movement/China Christian Council (TSPM/CCC), the state-approved Protestant religious organization, estimated that at least 20 million citizens worship in official churches. Government officials stated that there are more than 50,000 registered TSPM churches and 18 TSPM theological schools. According to NGO reports, SARA Director Ye Xiaowen reported to audiences at Beijing University and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences that the number of Christians had reached 130 million by the end of 2006, including about 20 million Catholics.

The Falun Gong is a self-described spiritual movement that blends aspects of Taoism, Buddhism, and the meditation techniques and physical exercises of qigong (a traditional Chinese exercise discipline) with the teachings of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi. There are estimated to have been at least 2.1 million adherents of Falun Gong before the Government's harsh crackdown on the group beginning in 1999. There are reliable estimates that hundreds of thousands of citizens still practice Falun Gong privately.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Constitution limits protection of religious belief to activities which it defines as "normal." The Constitution also states that religious bodies and affairs are not to be "subject to any foreign domination." The Government restricts lawful religious practice largely to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and attempts to control the growth and scope of activities of both registered and unregistered religious groups. The Government tries to prevent the rise of religious groups that could constitute sources of authority outside of the control of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party. Nonetheless, membership in many faiths is growing rapidly.

The Government registers religious organizations, and determines the legality of religious activities. Registered religious groups enjoy legal protections of their religious practices that unregistered religious groups do not receive. The five state-sanctioned PRAs are registered with the Government as religious organizations. SARA monitors and judges whether religious activities are "normal" and therefore lawful. SARA and the CCP United Front Work Department (UFD) provide policy "guidance and supervision" on the implementation of regulations regarding religious activity, including the role of foreigners in religious activity. Employees of SARA and the UFD are rarely religious adherents and often are Communist Party members. Communist Party members are directed by Party doctrine to be atheists, and their family members are discouraged from public participation in religious ceremonies.

Public security bureau officials monitor religious behavior that violates law or regulation. These officials monitor unregistered facilities, check to see that religious activities do not disrupt public order, and combat groups designated as cults.

The 2005 RRA protect the rights of registered religious groups to possess property, publish literature, train and approve clergy, and collect donations. Comprehensive implementing regulations had not been issued by the end of the period covered by this report, and there was little evidence that the new regulations have expanded religious freedom, because unregistered religious organizations have not been able to register under the RRA. Therefore, the activities of unregistered religious groups remained outside the scope of the RRA's legal protection.

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement/Chinese Christian Council (TSPM/CCC) states that registration does not require a congregation to join either the TSPM or the CCC. However, nearly all local RAB officials require registered Protestant congregations and clergy to affiliate with the TSPM/CCC. Credentialing procedures effectively required clergy to affiliate with the TSPM/CCC, a practice that appeared unchanged since adoption of the new regulations. Before the passage of the RRA, a few Protestant groups reportedly registered independently of the TSPM/CCC. These included the Local Assemblies Protestant churches in Zhejiang Province (where no significant TSPM/CCC community exists) and the (Korean) Chaoyang Church in Jilin Province. It was not clear whether these religious groups registered as meeting points of pre-existing religious organizations or as religious organizations themselves. The (Russian) Orthodox Church has been able to operate without affiliating with a PRA in a few parts of the country.

Many unregistered evangelical Protestant groups refused to register or affiliate with the TSPM/CCC because they have theological differences with the TSPM/CCC. Others did not seek registration independently or with one of the PRAs due to fear of adverse consequences if they reveal, as required, the names and addresses of church leaders or members. Others state that TSPM theology places submission to the state's authority above submission to Christ's authority and refuse to join on these grounds. Some groups disagreed with the TSPM/CCC teachings that differences in the tenets of different Protestant creeds can be reconciled or accommodated under one "post denominational" religious umbrella organization. Many evangelical house church groups also disagreed with the TSPM's admonitions against proselytism, which they consider a central teaching of Christianity.

Unregistered groups also frequently did not affiliate with one of the PRAs for fear that doing so would allow government authorities to control sermon content.

During the reporting period, the Government rejected attempts by several unregistered religious groups to register. Some groups reported that authorities denied their applications without cause or detained group members who met with officials when they attempted to register. The Government contended that these refusals were the result of these groups' lack of adequate facilities or failure to meet other legal requirements. A few unregistered religious groups were able to register as "meeting points" of one of the PRAs.

In order to register a "site for religious activity" or a "meeting point" under the RRA a religious group must also register as a social organization under the "Regulations on the Management of Registration of Social Organizations" (RSO), which are administered by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA). Unregistered religious groups stated that it was difficult to obtain the "sponsorship" of a "qualified supervisory unit" without the support of one of the PRAs. The five PRAs are the only religious organizations known to be registered under the RSO. Religious groups that are not registered under the RSO do not enjoy legal protection and cannot register their own meeting points under the RRA.

The RRA has five requirements for the registration of meeting points or sites for religious activities: First, establishment of the site must be consistent with the overall purpose of the RRA and must not be used to "disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system of the state" and must not be "subject to any foreign domination." Second, local religious citizens must have a need to carry out collective religious activities frequently. Third, there must be religious personnel qualified to preside over the activities. Fourth, the site must have "necessary funds." Fifth, the site must be "rationally located" so as not to interfere with normal production and neighboring residents. Under the RRA, clergy must report to the Government after being selected pursuant to the rules of the relevant religious association.

SARA considers unregistered churches as existing outside the legal framework of the RRA, although prayer meetings and Bible study groups held among friends and family in homes are legal and do not require registration. SARA has not publicly defined the terms "family and friends." House churches report that local authorities frequently disrupted meetings of friends and family in private homes and arrested participants on the grounds that they were participating in illegal gatherings.

In order to receive tax-free charitable donations, a religious group must register as a charity with MOCA at the national or local level. House church groups and other unregistered religious groups are ineligible to receive tax-free status since they do not have legal status. The only religious group that has registered as a charity at the national level is the Amity Foundation, a state-approved Protestant group. Caritas, the social services branch of the Roman Catholic Church, operates in a few dioceses under the supervision of the CPA.

In 1999 the Government began banning groups that it determined to be "cults," without publicly defining the term. The Government banned the Falun Gong, the Guan Yin (also known as Guanyin Famin, or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy), and Zhong Gong (a qigong exercise discipline). The Government also considers several Protestant Christian groups to be cults, including the "Shouters" (founded in the United States in 1962), Eastern Lightning, Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), Full Scope Church, Spirit Sect, New Testament Church, Three Grades of Servants (also known as San Ba Pu Ren), Association of Disciples, Lord God Sect, Established King Church, Unification Church, the Family of Love, and South China Church.

Under article 300 of the criminal law, "cult" members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications may be sentenced to 3 to 7 years in prison, while "cult" leaders and recruiters may be sentenced to 7 years or more in prison.

During the period covered by this report, local officials damaged or destroyed several unregistered places of worship. There continues to be a significant shortage of temples, churches, and mosques and many of those that existed were overcrowded and in poor condition.

The criminal law states that government officials who deprive citizens of religious freedom may, in serious cases, be sentenced to up to 2 years in prison; however, there were no known cases of persons being punished under this statute.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for religious freedom remained poor, especially for members of unregistered religious groups and groups the Government designated as "cults." The Government tends to perceive unregulated religious gatherings or groups as a potential challenge to its authority, and it attempts to control and regulate religious groups to prevent the rise of sources of authority outside the control of the Government and the CCP. In some regions government supervision of religious activity was minimal, and registered and unregistered churches existed openly side-by-side and were treated similarly by the authorities. In other regions local officials supervised religion strictly, and authorities placed pressure on unregistered churches and their members. Local regulations, provincial work reports, and other government and party documents continued to exhort officials to

enforce vigorously government policy regarding unregistered churches.

Officials in many locations pressured unregistered religious groups, including house churches, to affiliate with one of the PRAs and register with government religious affairs authorities. Officials in some areas organized registration campaigns collecting the names, addresses, and sometimes the fingerprints of church leaders and worshippers. Some local authorities continued to harass religious groups that did not register by arresting and interrogating unregistered church leaders. In other regions government supervision of religious activity was less stringent and registered and unregistered churches coexisted openly. Despite the efforts at control in some areas, official sources, religious professionals, and members of both officially sanctioned and unregistered places of worship reported that the number of religious adherents in the country continued to grow.

Police sometimes closed unregistered places of worship, including Catholic churches and Protestant house churches with significant memberships, properties, financial resources, and networks. The Government closed churches in Zhejiang, Jilin, and Fujian Provinces during the reporting period. In some cases local officials destroyed the properties of unregistered religious groups. SARA considers unregistered churches to be illegal, although SARA has stated that prayer meetings and Bible study groups held among friends and family in private homes are legal and do not require registration. In some areas unregistered house churches with hundreds of members met openly with the knowledge of local authorities. In other areas house church meetings of more than a handful of family members and friends were proscribed. House churches could encounter greater difficulties when their membership grew, when they arranged for the regular use of facilities for the specific purpose of conducting religious activities, or when they forged links with other unregistered groups or with coreligionists overseas. Urban house churches were generally limited to meetings of a few dozen members or less, while meetings of unregistered Protestants in small cities and rural areas could number in the hundreds. It was also difficult for registered groups to register new places of worship, such as churches and mosques, even in areas with growing religious populations.

The Government authorized funding to build new places of worship for congregations affiliated with PRAs.

The Government continued to repress harshly religious groups which it designates cults, including the Falun Gong. As in past years, local authorities took steps to repress unregistered religious groups that grew quickly or publicly rejected the Government's authority. Official tolerance for groups associated with Buddhism and Taoism has been greater than that for groups associated with other religions. Membership in the Falun Gong, the Xiang Gong, Guo Gong, and Zhong Gong qigong groups was still considered illegal. The Government also labeled folk religions as "feudal superstition," and in the past there were reports that followers sometimes were subject to harassment and repression.

Xinjiang authorities continued to use combating terrorism to justify placing restrictions on peaceful religious practices of Uighur Muslims, according to human rights NGOs. Because the Xinjiang authorities often did not distinguish carefully among those involved in peaceful activities in support of independence, "illegal" religious activities, and violent terrorism, it was often difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted those seeking to worship, those peacefully seeking political goals, or those engaged in violence. As a result, Xinjiang authorities sometimes erroneously charged religious believers with committing the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism, and extremism. While often targeted at Muslims, this tight control of religion in Xinjiang affected followers of other religions as well. During the reporting period, Xinjiang provincial-level Communist Party and government officials called for stronger management of religious affairs. In some areas of Xinjiang, officials restricted the building of mosques and the training of clergy and interfered with the teaching of Islam to children outside the home. Muslim teachers, professors, and university students in Xinjiang were not allowed to practice religion openly while on campus. Female university students and professors were discouraged from wearing headscarves. Some ethnic Tajiks in Xinjiang could not attend mosque until over age 30.

The law does not prohibit religious believers from holding public office; however, Communist Party membership is required for almost all high-level positions in Government, state-owned businesses, and many official organizations. Communist Party officials reiterated during the period covered by this report that party membership and religious belief are incompatible. The CCP reportedly has stated that party members who belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion. The "Routine Service Regulations" of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) state explicitly that servicemen "may not take part in religious or superstitious activities." Muslims allegedly have been fired from government posts for praying during working hours. The Government required students to study the principles of Chinese Communism, an atheistic ideology.

Some Communist Party officials engage in religious activity, most commonly Buddhism or a folk religion. Leaders of government-approved religious groups, which are included in national and local government organizations usually to represent their constituency on cultural and educational matters, may be members of the CCP. The PRAs are represented in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), an advisory forum that is led by the CCP and consults with social groups outside the Party. The National People's Congress (NPC) included several leaders of registered religious groups. Fu Tieshan, a bishop and vice-chairman of the CPA, was one of the vice chairmen of the NPC Standing Committee until his death in April 2007.

The Government does not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See and generally does not allow the CPA and its clergy to recognize the authority of the pope to make clerical appointments. This remained a significant reason for the persistence of a large unregistered Catholic church that remains unaffiliated with the Government and CPA. Pressure

by the CPA on unregistered Catholic bishops to join the official Church continued, and some unregistered priests and bishops were detained. Despite some efforts toward rapprochement between the Government and the Vatican, the Vatican's diplomatic recognition of Taiwan and differences over selection of bishops remained the primary obstacles to improved relations. In January 2007 the Vatican issued an invitation to the Government to enter a dialogue on restoring diplomatic relations and announced that it would set up a permanent commission to handle relations with China. In June 2007 Pope Benedict issued an open letter to Chinese Catholics inviting them to resolve differences and calling on China to engage in "respectful and constructive dialogue" with the Vatican to normalize relations. An MFA spokesperson said that China advocates improvement in Sino-Vatican relations. A leader of the CPA said he hoped the Pope's letter would be of help in establishing China-Vatican ties.

In official Catholic churches, clerics lead prayers for the pope and pictures of the pope are displayed. An estimated 90 percent of official Catholic bishops have reconciled with the Vatican.

In January 2007 the Vatican approved the ordination of a mainland-selected Catholic priest to become bishop of Guangzhou Diocese, the first such backing given by the Holy See after bilateral ties were strained with the appointments in April and May 2006 of Bishops Ma Yingling of Kunming, Yunnan Province, and Liu Xinhong of Wuhu, Anhui Province, without Vatican approval. The Vatican criticized these ordinations as illicit. The CPA and SARA responded that the bishops had been democratically elected by priests of their dioceses, the Vatican was interfering in the country's internal affairs, and the appointments were required to fill vacancies. The disagreement over the appointments of Bishops Ma and Liu disrupted a period during which several bishops were appointed with both Government and Vatican approval. Many priests and bishops publicly acknowledged that the Vatican had approved their appointment. They suffered no punishment for this public stance, although the Government denied that the Vatican played any role in approving the country's clergy.

In fact, the large majority of bishops recognized by the Patriotic Association have been recognized by the Vatican either before or after their appointment by the Government. In a few cases, the bishop named by the state-sanctioned church conflicted directly with a bishop recognized by the Vatican, a situation that contributed significantly to tension between the Patriotic Association and the unregistered Catholic Church and to tension between the Vatican and the Government. The CPA said that 40 of China's nearly 100 dioceses have no bishop in place.

Unregistered groups are not legally permitted to offer theological training. Registered religious groups may sponsor individual students for study at one of the at least 76 government-recognized training institutions for clergy. Students who attend these institutes must demonstrate "political reliability," and all graduates must pass an examination on their theological and political knowledge to qualify for the clergy. Clergy from the PRAs go abroad for studies but sometimes have difficulty obtaining approval to study abroad. In most cases, foreign organizations provide funding for such training programs. Prospective clergy must obtain the sponsorship of a PRA to gain admittance to formal theological schools.

Institutions for religious leaders other than the officially recognized ones exist but cannot register as legal institutions. The quality of education at unregistered institutions varies. Such institutions risk being closed when they come to the attention of local authorities. Officials sometimes refuse to issue passports to religious leaders, especially those from unregistered groups. There is a severe shortage of trained clergy for both the registered and unregistered religious groups.

Senior government officials claimed that the country has no restrictions against minors practicing religious beliefs. Some Xinjiang officials told foreign observers that children under 18 were not permitted to attend religious services in mosques in Xinjiang. Local officials in Xinjiang prevented children from attending worship services in mosques or churches. However, during the reporting period, children were observed attending prayer services at mosques and Sunday schools at TSPM churches in Xinjiang.

Increasing interest in Christianity has resulted in a corresponding increase in the demand for Bibles and other Christian literature. The Government controls publication of all texts, including religious texts. Bibles and sacred texts of other religions may be purchased at bookstores and most officially recognized churches. Nevertheless, members of unregistered churches stated that the supply and distribution of Bibles in some places, particularly rural locations, was inadequate to meet the growing demand. Individuals cannot order Bibles directly from publishing houses, and purchases of large numbers of Bibles could bring unfavorable attention to the purchaser. Customs officials continued to monitor for the "smuggling" of Bibles and other religious materials into the country. Religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles and Qur'ans, may be confiscated and the unauthorized publishing houses closed. Religious adherents are subject to arrest and imprisonment for illegal publishing. Authorities sometimes confiscate Bibles in raids on house churches.

At the 2005 NPC, President Hu Jintao announced a nation-wide campaign to build a "Harmonious Society." During an October 2006 meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, Jia Qinglin, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top advisory body said: "China has engaged itself in building a harmonious society in which religion can play an important role." Jia called upon leaders of the PRAs to encourage their members to increase social services to the country's neediest citizens.

The Roman Catholic Church forbids abortions and the use of artificial contraception. Many Protestant leaders also teach that abortion violates the Biblical commandment not to kill. In many parts of the country, government population control agencies require women to use contraception and to have an abortion if the pregnancy violates government population control regulations. In some provinces, government population control agencies may also forcibly sterilize men and women after they have had their first child. Many Chinese Catholics and Protestants consider the Government's birth limitation laws and policies a violation of their religious beliefs. In Guangxi Province a Protestant pastor protested when his wife was forced to have an abortion at 7 months. In Shandong Province a Christian woman who was six months' pregnant protested against the attempts of family planning officials to force her to have an abortion.

The Government permits Muslims to go on the Hajj to Mecca via the Muslim patriotic religious association, the Islamic Association of China (IAC). The IAC is the only organization that is legally authorized to conduct official Hajj tours. Muslims must apply to the IAC to secure a place on an official tour. Some Uighur Muslims have sought passage to Mecca from points outside the country for a variety of reasons, including to save costs and to avoid cumbersome restrictions and tests of political loyalty by the Government.

According to official reports, approximately 9,700 Chinese Muslims made the Hajj during the 2006-07 pilgrimage. The IAC said this was the highest number of Chinese pilgrims ever to participate in the Hajj. This number did not include participants on "independent hajj tours" for whom there were no official estimates but numbered in the thousands in previous years. In southern Xinjiang the Government reportedly published banners and slogans discouraging Hajj pilgrimages outside those organized by the IAC.

Citizens are not permitted to attend religious services conducted by foreigners. The Government continued to tolerate religious worship by foreigners as long as no citizens were present. The Government has stated it was willing to consider approving new religious organizations outside the five main faiths but had not done so at the end of the reporting period.

Foreigners are forbidden from proselytizing but may attend worship services at meetings points of registered religious groups. Many foreign registered Christian groups throughout the country have developed close ties with local officials, in some cases operating schools and homes for the care of the aged. Some foreign church organizations came under pressure to register with government authorities.

The Government sometimes made political demands on the leadership of registered groups. For example, authorities required clergy to publicly endorse government policies or denounce Falun Gong. In other areas, including Xinjiang and the TAR, authorities required clergy to participate in patriotic education.

In April 2007 Taoist organizations in China organized an international forum on the "Tao Te Ching" in Xian.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, officials continued to scrutinize, and in some cases, harass unregistered religious and spiritual groups. In some areas government officials abused the rights of members of unregistered Protestant and Catholic groups, Muslim Uighurs, Tibetan Buddhists, and members of groups that the Government determined to be "cults," especially the Falun Gong spiritual movement.

Religious adherents and members of spiritual movements have been beaten, and some have died in police custody after being detained in connection with their religious belief or practice.

The Government detained, arrested, or sentenced to prison terms many religious leaders and adherents. The religious adherents claimed that the activities they were arrested for related to their religious practice. However, the Government denied jailing anyone solely because of his or her religion. Local authorities used an administrative process to punish members of unregistered religious groups. Citizens may be sentenced by a nonjudicial panel of police and local authorities to up to 3 years in reeducation-through-labor camps. The Government held many religious adherents and members of spiritual movements in such facilities during the period covered by this report. In some areas security authorities used threats, demolition of unregistered property, extortion, interrogation, detention, and at times beatings and torture to harass leaders of unauthorized groups and their followers. Unregistered religious groups that preached beliefs outside the bounds of officially approved doctrine (such as the imminent coming of the Apocalypse or groups that have charismatic leaders) often were singled out for particularly severe harassment. Observers attributed the unorthodox beliefs of some religious groups to the lack of educational opportunities for clergy and the lack of access to sacred religious texts and supplementary readings.

Offenses related to membership in unregistered religious groups are often classified as crimes of disturbing the social order. According to the *Law Yearbook of China*, 8,224 cases of disturbing the social order or cheating by the use of superstition were filed in 2004, of which 8,116 resulted in formal charges, criminal or administrative punishment. However, religious leaders and worshippers faced criminal and administrative punishment on a wide range of charges, including those related to the Government's refusal to allow members of unregistered groups to assemble, travel, and

publish freely or in connection with its ban on proselytizing.

According to reports from foreigners living in the country, religious organizations, and NGOs, including the China Aid Association, a religious freedom advocacy group, the Government expelled as many as 100 foreign Christians from the United States, Australia, Canada, Israel, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, and South Korea in the spring of 2007. As detailed in a July 9, 2007 report by the China Aid Association, the campaign, reportedly called "Typhoon Number Five," was intended to combat infiltration by foreign religious groups and to tighten restrictions on unregistered religious groups. Police interrogated the members and leaders of several house churches in the spring of 2007 about connections with foreigners and potential plans to disrupt the 2008 Olympic Games.

Some Protestant Christians who worshipped outside of government-approved venues, including in their homes, continued to face detention and abuse, especially for attempting to meet in large groups, traveling within and outside of the country for religious meetings, and otherwise holding peaceful religious assemblies in unregistered venues. Police and other security officials sometimes disrupted Protestant religious meetings.

In the spring of 2007, members of the China House Church Alliance (CHCA), a network of house church groups that reportedly has 300,000 members, were reportedly detained and interrogated, particularly about their connections to foreigners and alleged plans to disrupt the 2008 Olympic Games. The detentions and interrogations took place in Beijing, Jilin, Anhui, and Hunan.

On June 29, 2007, the Shandong government sentenced Zhang Geming and Sun Qingwen, two house church leaders to 1 year of reeducation through labor each for participation "using an evil cult to obstruct the law." Four other house church leaders who were arrested with them were fined \$132 each.

In June 2007 Beijing house church activist Hua Huaiqi was sentenced in a closed trial to 6 months in prison for obstruction of justice. Police reportedly beat him in jail and poured cold water over him in frigid weather. In April 2007 the Beijing Intermediate People's Court rejected the appeal of Shuang Shuying, the 76-year-old mother of Beijing house church activist Hua Huaiqi. Shuang was sentenced to 2 years in jail for destruction of public and private property. She claimed that she was defending herself from being struck by an oncoming police car when her cane struck the headlights of the car. Shuang was placed in a medical center under police surveillance after being sentenced because she suffered from heart problems and diabetes.

In May 2007 police in Aksu City, Xinjiang, arrested approximately 30 house church leaders who met with Christians from the United States. Four American Christians were interrogated in connection with the meeting and later expelled from China. Six of the house church leaders were accused of involvement in "evil cult activities." Eyewitnesses reported that two of the arrested leaders had been physically abused during interrogation.

In April 2007 police in Liaoning Province sentenced Gu Changrong and Gu Zhaohong, brother and sister members of the Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), to 1 year terms of reeducation through labor for allegedly telling Liu Changhai, a local Communist Party member, about Christianity. Liu reportedly called the Communist Party Secretary in Qidaohe and complained that the two tried to persuade him to quit the Party and join the Society of Disciples. Police confiscated several Bibles from the home of Gu Zhaohong. A family member alleged that police may have compelled Gu Changrong, who is illiterate, into signing documents admitting guilt. Police did not notify family members of the arrests or sentences.

In March 2007 police in Henan province arrested and detained CHCA Vice President and Pastor Dong Quanyu and his wife, Li Huage, for 10 days for "disturbing public order." Public security bureau officers reportedly beat Li Huage severely. Police also confiscated property from their home.

In March 2007 public security personnel in Zhangshi Village in Henan Province reportedly attacked members of a house church group as they left an Easter service. Members of the group reported that they were forced into police cars, that police detained them without producing arrest warrants and interrogated them for up to 24 hours. Police interrogated three leaders of the group, 71-year-old Ma Wenqing, Zhang Jinzhi, and Zhang Liang, and reportedly stripped two women of their clothing. The detained Christians alleged that police tortured them into confessing that they were members of an evil cult.

In February 2007 police and local RAB officials reportedly raided a prayer meeting held in a private home in Shuanghuang Township, Jiangsu Province. The police photographed those in attendance and took down their names. When some of the individuals refused to give their names, police reportedly beat them. Police forced the owner of the home, Tan Jianwei, to sign a statement agreeing not to hold religious activities in his home.

In February 2007 officials released Liu Fenggang from prison 6 months before his sentence was set to expire. Liu, Xu Yonghai, and Zhang Shengqi were imprisoned for allegedly "providing national intelligence to overseas organizations" by reporting a house church destruction case to overseas Christian organizations. During his imprisonment, Liu was hospitalized five times for serious heart disease and diabetes.

In January 2007 police in Anhui province arrested Pastor Chen Jiaxi of Chencun Village for distributing Bibles and Christian literature without charge. Police tried Chen on the charge of "illegal business management."

In November 2006 the Government executed leaders of the Three Grades of Servants Church, which it designated a cult. The leaders, Xu Shuangfu, Zhang Min, Zhu Lixing, and Ben Zhonghai were sentenced to death for alleged murders of members of Eastern Lightning, a religious group that the Government had also designated a cult. Eleven other church members were sentenced to jail terms of 3 to 15 years. Even before the verdict in Xu's case had been announced, Xu's conviction was reportedly introduced as evidence in the trials of other group members, according to reliable reports. Many detained or charged with membership in the cult did not use the name Three Grades of Servants Church but instead asserted they were members of their own unaffiliated house church.

In July 2006 officials demolished a large house church that was under construction in Xiaoshan County, Zhejiang Province. Police reportedly beat hundreds of house church members who arrived to protest the demolition. Officials reportedly had denied repeated requests for permission to build the church. The Government claimed to have offered the church alternative sites on which to build the church. However, the religious group said that the suggested properties were not suitable for building a church.

In June 2006 Henan Province house Christian pastor Zhang Rongliang was sentenced to 7 years and 6 months in prison on charges of obtaining a passport through fraud and illegal border crossing.

In June 2006 police in Langzhong City, Szechuan Province, detained eight house church Christians who were members of a CHCA church. Four leaders of the church, Li Ming, Jin Jinrong, Wang Yuan, and Li Mingbo, were arrested when they went to visit the members of their congregation at the public security office. Three other members of the church were also detained by public security officials when they inquired about members of the church. House church members claimed they were beaten by police. One of the men in the church was reportedly beaten unconscious and then detained for 7 days for "assaulting a policeman." Another church member, Li Ming, was reportedly beaten and kicked by police and suffered head injuries and internal injuries. The four leaders of the group were sentenced to 2 years of reeducation through labor.

In May 2006 police in Langzhong, Szechuan also arrested 30 leaders of another house church and detained 14 of them for an unknown period of time.

In May 2006 several house church activists were detained in Henan Province's Fugou County.

In April 2006 the Government reportedly sentenced Li Huimin to reeducation in Henan Province for holding house church meetings at his home.

In March 2006 police reportedly broke the ribs of disabled pastor Li Gongshe during a raid on his church in Wen County, Henan Province.

In February 2006 security officials detained documentary filmmaker and U.S. legal permanent resident Wu Hao after Wu filmed house church services in Beijing and arranged an interview with Christian human rights attorney Gao Zhisheng, who was placed under house arrest in August 2006. Wu was released in July 2006.

In February 2006 Lou Yuanqi was reportedly detained for holding unauthorized church services in Xinjiang.

In December 2006 Gao Zhisheng was convicted of "inciting subversion." Gao received a 3 year sentence, suspended for 5 years, and 1 year deprivation of political rights. After suspending his sentence, the Government placed Gao under house arrest in Beijing. His wife and two children continued to be harassed and detained by authorities. In December 2005 Gao sent an open letter to President Hu Jintao highlighting abuses of Falun Gong practitioners. The letter described torture of Falun Gong practitioners and the extra-legal activities of the "610 office."

In 2006 house church pastors Liu Yuhua and Wang Zaiqing were sentenced to imprisonment for publishing Christian literature. They were charged with "involvement in illegal business practices."

On Christmas Day 2005 police reportedly raided an unregistered church in Manasu County, Xinjiang, destroying property, and detained several worshippers. More than 200 were reportedly detained, including Pastor Guo Xianyao.

In November 2005 the Government sentenced Beijing-based house church Pastor Cai Zhuohua to 3 years in jail for operating an illegal business based on his work publishing Christian literature. Two of Cai's relatives received shorter terms of imprisonment on the same charges.

In September 2005 government agents reportedly broke bones of Christian businessman Tong Qimiao at a police station in Kashgar, Xinjiang, while he was being interrogated about the activities of local house churches.

In August 2005 police reportedly raided a training class in Jiangxi Province for Sunday school teachers.

In July 2005 the Government reportedly detained one hundred Sunday school students in Hebei Province.

In July 2005 six members of the group Way of the Goddess of Mercy (Guanyin Famen), which the Government considers a "cult," were sentenced to 2 to 4 years in prison for producing material for circulation involving a cult organization.

In April 2007, family planning officials in Baise, Guangxi Province, forced Wei Linrong, the wife of house church pastor Liang Yage to have an abortion against her will. Ten officials took Ms. Wei, who was 7 months' pregnant, from her home to a hospital where doctors induced delivery. According to media reports, Liang and his wife explicitly objected to the forced abortion because it forced them to violate their religious beliefs.

In some locations local authorities reportedly forced unregistered Catholic priests and believers to renounce ordinations approved by the Holy See, join the official church, or face a variety of punishments including fines, job loss, detentions, and having their children barred from school. Some Catholic officials were forced into hiding. Ongoing harassment of unregistered bishops and priests was reported in recent years, including government surveillance and repeated short detentions.

Numerous detentions of unofficial Catholic clergy were reported, in particular in Hebei Province, traditionally home to many unregistered Catholics.

There was no new information about unregistered Bishop Su Zhimin, who has been unaccounted for since his reported detention in 1997. The Government had not responded to requests to clarify his status by the end of the reporting period.

There was no information about the whereabouts of Bishop Zhao Zhendong, the bishop of Xuanhua, Hebei, who was arrested in December 2004.

There was no information about the whereabouts of Bishop Shi Enxiang, who was arrested in April 2001.

In June 2007 police arrested 73-year-old Bishop Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding, Hubei, for the tenth time since 2004. Security officials held him at an unknown location until his release on June 22, 2007.

In March 2007 police in Shaanxi province detained Bishop Wu Qinjing, the bishop of Zhouzhi. His whereabouts were unknown. According to a government document released on March 9, 2007, Bishop "Wu Qinjing should not run any church affairs as a bishop and should not interfere with the Zhouzhi diocese management." The document told Catholics to "draw a line of demarcation" around the bishop and stated that the Government had been reeducating Bishop Wu since May 2006.

In December 2006 security officials arrested nine unregistered priests near Baoding, Hebei.

In September 2006 authorities detained Bishop Wu Qinjing, who was ordained in October 2005 with the approval of the Holy See but without government permission, for 5 days. He was forced to sign a document stating that his ordination was illegal.

In September 2006 unregistered priests Shao Zhoumin and Jiang Sunian were detained in Shenzhen upon their return from Europe. Shao and Jiang reportedly falsified documents to facilitate travel to Rome and were sentenced to 9-and 11-month prison sentences. In prison Father Shao reportedly lost his hearing. Both priests were denied visitors in prison.

In August 2006 Hebei authorities released Bishop An Shuxin, Bishop Su's auxiliary bishop, but reportedly arrested Father Li Huisheng and approximately 90 Catholic worshippers.

In Hebei, the region with the highest number of Catholics, the Government reportedly pressured an unofficial church to join the CPA. In August 2006 police in Xiwanzi arrested and tortured Father Li Huisheng and then released him. Ninety members of Father Li's church protested his arrest outside police headquarters. Police beat the protestors and forced them to disperse. Later that evening, approximately 500 police launched a raid to rearrest Father Li and the church members. The whereabouts of 20 persons were unknown. Father Li was sentenced to 7 years of imprisonment for "inciting the masses against the Government." Another priest from Xiwanzi, Father Wang Zhong, disappeared. In July 2006 Xiwanzi authorities also arrested and detained 82-year-old Bishop Yao Liang. Xiwanzi authorities also forbade Catholics from making an annual traditional pilgrimage to Mount Muozhi in Inner Mongolia.

In April 2007, Ablikim Kadeer, a son of Uighur Muslim activist, Rebiya Kadeer, was sentenced to 9 years in prison and

3 years deprivation of political rights, reportedly after confessing to charges of "instigating and engaging in secessionist activities." In November 2006 Alim Kadeer, another son of Rebiya Kadeer, was sentenced to 7 years in prison and fined \$62,500. Qahar Abdurehim, a third son of Rebiya Kadeer, was fined \$12,500 for tax evasion but not jailed. Authorities reportedly beat and tortured Alim and Ablikim. In June 2006 Xinjiang officials charged Alim, Ablikim, and Qahar with state security and economic crimes just days after Rebiya Kadeer was elected president of the Uighur American Association, an NGO that advocates for the human rights, including religious freedom, of the Uighur people.

In August 2006 the Government sentenced Huseyin Celil to life imprisonment for "separatist activities." Celil was a popular Uighur Muslim imam in Kashgar before emigrating to Canada in 2001. Celil reportedly spoke about religious freedom and nonviolent struggle against human rights violations during his sermons and used a megaphone to amplify his call to prayers from the mosque, which attracted government scrutiny. Celil left China in 1995 and continued to preach at a local mosque in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Celil then emigrated to Canada in 2001. In May 2006 Celil was arrested by Uzbek authorities while visiting Tashkent and deported to China. Chinese authorities claimed that he was involved in the assassination of a Uighur leader in Kyrgyzstan, despite Celil's denials that he was Guler Dilaver, a suspect in the assassination. Celil's family claims he was being punished for his political and religious activism. NGOs claimed that the Government also committed numerous other violations of Celil's right to due process.

The Government tightly monitored the publication of Islamic religious materials. In July 2005 several Uighur Muslims were reportedly detained for possession of an illegal religious book called the Mishkat-ul Misabih and other illegal religious activities in Xinjiang.

Uighur Muslim Aminan Momixi was detained in August 2005 after teaching the Qur'an to more than 30 students in her home. Provincial officials stated that she was released after a period of education and training, but did not respond to requests to clarify her whereabouts.

Between July and September 2006, an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 Uighur Muslims traveled to Islamabad, Pakistan, seeking Hajj visas from the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Islamabad. However, applicants were denied visas, reportedly due to an agreement between the Saudi Government and the Chinese Government restricting individuals from applying for Hajj visas in a third country. After applicants held extended protests at the Saudi Embassy, the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan reportedly told them to return to Xinjiang to wait and join government-sponsored Hajj tours the following year. The Ambassador reportedly also threatened applicants with loss of employment and pension, fines, or retribution against their family members if they did not comply. Most of the group returned to Xinjiang, although approximately 1,000 applicants reportedly received visas in Pakistan. Some expressed concern that the price of the government-sponsored Hajj tours was inflated and preferred to travel on their own in an attempt to reduce costs. Others stated that they did not want to go on government-sponsored Hajj tours because of a requirement that they profess loyalty to the CCP.

There were credible reports of torture and deaths in custody of Falun Gong practitioners in past years, and overseas Falun Gong groups claimed that such incidents continued. According to Falun Gong practitioners in the United States, since 1999 more than 100,000 practitioners have been detained for engaging in Falun Gong practices, admitting that they adhere to the teachings of Falun Gong, or refusing to criticize the organization or its founder. The organization reported that its members have been subject to excessive force, abuse, rape, detention, and torture, and that some of its members, including children, have died in custody.

Some foreign observers estimated that at least half of the 250,000 officially recorded inmates in the country's reeducation-through-labor camps are Falun Gong adherents. Falun Gong sources overseas placed the number even higher. Hundreds of Falun Gong adherents were also incarcerated in legal education centers, a form of administrative detention, upon completion of their reeducation-through-labor sentences. Government officials denied the existence of such "legal education" centers. According to the Falun Gong, hundreds of its practitioners have been confined to psychiatric institutions and forced to take medications or undergo electric shock treatment against their will. In March 2006 U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture Manfred Nowak reported that Falun Gong practitioners accounted for 66 percent of victims of alleged torture while in government custody.

In May 2007 the Russian Government repatriated Falun Gong practitioner Dr. Gao Chunman back to China. Gao was a professor at Qinghua University and had refugee status from the United Nations. According to Gao's wife (a Russian citizen), Gao was kidnapped, and she feared that he would be severely punished by the Chinese Government. The Russian Government also deported Falun Gong practitioner Ma Hui to China in the spring of 2007.

In May 2006 Yuan Yuju and Liang Jinhui, relatives of a Hong Kong journalist who works for a television station supportive of the Falun Gong, were sentenced to reeducation-through-labor "for using an illegal cult to organize and obstruct justice," relating to their distribution of Falun Gong materials.

In April 2006 and thereafter, overseas Falun Gong groups claimed that a hospital in Sujiatun, Shenyang, was the site of a "concentration camp" and of mass organ harvesting, including from live prisoners. In response to the allegations, the Government opened the facility in question to diplomatic observers and foreign journalists. Observers found nothing inconsistent with the operation of a normal hospital.

Zheng Ruihuan and Liu Yinglan were reportedly detained in Shandong Province in July 2005 for practicing Falun Gong.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government continued to emphasize the role of religion in promoting a "Harmonious Society," allowed the PRAs to expand their cooperation with religious groups in other countries, and funded the building of new places for worship by registered religious groups. For example, in spring 2007 the Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) began offering on-line, graduate-level theological training courses to Chinese clergy and students via the TSPM's Yanjing Union Theological Seminary outside of Beijing. DTS, with input from RAB officials and the CCC, developed coursework that may lead to a Certificate in Graduate Studies for Chinese students. Several faculty members at Yanjing completed courses offered through the DTS program.

Chinese citizens who worshipped outside the PRAs continued to assert their right to religious freedom under the law. Lawsuits in multiple provinces were reportedly effective in deterring harassment by local authorities. In May 2007 police in Shandong Province settled a lawsuit brought against them by a house church plaintiff, Tian Yinghua. Tian held a regular church service in her living room. Police raided the service, detained the 31 members of the house church, and ordered Tian to serve 10 days in jail. As part of the settlement, the police issued a formal apology, promised not to bother the church again, and paid Tian damages of 13 cents. Police reportedly honored the terms of the settlement, including the promise not to harass the church.

The Shanghai Government allowed an American company to open a TSPM church for its employees on company premises. Both Chinese and foreign employees of the company attended the services.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

In some parts of the country, there was a tense relationship between registered and unregistered Christian churches and, according to press reports, between some members of unregistered church groups. There were reports of divisions within both the official Protestant church and the house church movement over issues of doctrine; in both the registered and unregistered Protestant churches, there are conservative and more liberal groups. In other areas the two groups coexisted without problems. In some provinces, including Hebei, unregistered and official Catholic communities sometimes had a tense relationship.

In the past Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists complained about the presence of Christian missionaries in their communities. Christian officials reported some friction in rural areas between adherents of folk religions and Christians who object to some folk religion practices. Religious and ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetans and Uighurs, experienced societal discrimination not only because of their religious beliefs but also because of their status as ethnic minorities with languages and cultures different from the typically wealthier Han Chinese. There was also occasional tension between the Han and Hui Muslims.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

President Bush raised religious freedom issues during meetings with President Hu Jintao in St. Petersburg in July 2006, and Hanoi in November 2006. Senior U.S. officials called on the Government to halt the abusive treatment of religious adherents and to respect religious freedom. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte raised concerns about religious freedom during multiple meetings with senior Chinese officials. Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes spoke at a state-sanctioned Chinese church service during her January 2007 visit to Beijing.

The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the consulates general in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang made concerted efforts to encourage greater religious freedom in the country. U.S. officials condemned abuses while supporting positive trends within the country. In exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, U.S. officials consistently urged both central and local authorities to respect citizens' rights to religious freedom and release all those serving prison sentences for religious activities. U.S. officials protested vigorously whenever there were credible reports of religious harassment or discrimination in violation of international laws and standards, and they requested information in cases of alleged mistreatment in which the facts were incomplete or contradictory. On numerous occasions the Department of State, the Embassy, and the consulates protested government actions to curb freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, including the arrests of Falun Gong followers, Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, and Catholic and Protestant clergy and believers. The Embassy routinely raised reported cases of detention and abuse of religious practitioners with relevant Chinese government officials.

At the same time, U.S. officials argued to the country's leaders that freedom of religion would strengthen, not harm, the country. U.S. officials encouraged the Government to engage the growth of faith-based aid by both registered and unregistered religious groups. In April 2007, the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom hosted Madame Cao Shengjie, head of the China Christian Council, on a visit to the White House Office of Faith-Based Initiatives. U.S. officials also encouraged the Government to allow greater freedom to its religious citizens to engage in peaceful activities as a means of countering the appeal of religious extremists.

The Embassy and consulates also collected information about abuses and maintained contacts with a wide spectrum of religious leaders within religious communities, including bishops, priests, and ministers of the official Christian and Catholic churches, as well as Taoist, Muslim, and Buddhist leaders. U.S. officials also met with leaders and members of the unofficial Christian churches. The Department of State's nongovernmental contacts included experts on religion in the country, human rights organizations, and religious groups in the United States.

The Department of State brought a number of religious leaders and scholars to the United States on international visitor programs to see firsthand the role that religion plays in U.S. society.

During the period covered by this report, U.S. Ambassador Clark T. Randt, Jr., highlighted problems of religious freedom and cases of individual religious prisoners of conscience in his public speeches and in his private diplomacy with senior officials. Officials from the Embassy and the four consulates met with government officials responsible for religion and with clergy or practitioners in official and unofficial religious groups. Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom John V. Hanford III met with several religious freedom activists in Washington, D.C.

Since 1999 the Secretary of State has designated the country as a CPC under the IRFA for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. Economic measures in effect against the country under the IRFA relate to restriction of exports of crime control and detection instruments and equipment (Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, P.L. 101-246).

HONG KONG

The Basic Law, or Constitution, provides for freedom of religion, and its Ordinance prohibits religious discrimination. The Government generally respected these provisions in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to support the generally free practice of religion.

There were a few reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious belief or practice. Six of the largest religious groups have long collaborated in a collegium on community affairs and make up a joint conference of religious leaders.

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

Section I. Religious Demography

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has an area of 422 square miles on more than 200 islands and the mainland and a population of 6.9 million. Approximately 43 percent of the population practice some form of religion. The two most prevalent religions are Buddhism and Taoism, which are often celebrated together in the same temple. The region is home to approximately 700 thousand Buddhists or Taoists, 320 thousand Protestant Christians, 240 thousand Roman Catholics, and 90 thousand Muslims. There are small numbers of Hindus, Sikhs, approximately 4,000 practicing Jews, and an estimated 4,600 Jehovah's Witnesses. Many persons also hold Confucian beliefs, although few practice it as a formal religion. Representatives of the spiritual movement Falun Gong stated that their practitioners numbers approximately 500; however, government officials claimed the number is lower.

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

There are approximately 600 Buddhist and Taoist temples, an estimated 800 Christian churches and chapels, 5 mosques, 4 synagogues, 1 Hindu temple, and 1 Sikh temple. Catholics are served by 1 cardinal (appointed in 2006), 1 bishop, 297 priests, 66 monks, and 516 nuns, all of whom maintain traditional links to the Vatican. The assistant secretary general of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference had his office in the region. Along with its apostolic work, the Catholic Church engages in a broad array of social service activities. It operates 313 schools and kindergartens that enrolled more than 264 thousand children. In addition it operates 6 hospitals, 15 clinics, 37 social centers, 18 hostels, 13 homes for the aged, and 19 rehabilitation centers.

Protestant churches are also deeply involved in education, health care, and social welfare. Protestant organizations operate three post-secondary institutions: Chung Chi College at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, and Lingnan University. As of November 2006, they also ran 160 secondary schools, 206 primary schools, 273 kindergartens, and 116 nurseries. In addition they operated more than 30 theological seminaries and Bible schools, 30 Christian publishing houses, 70 Christian bookshops, 7 hospitals, 18 clinics, 35 homes for the elderly, 47 centers for the disabled, and scores of youth and day care centers. Two ecumenical bodies in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Churches Union and the Hong Kong Christian Council, facilitate cooperative work among Protestant and other churches across the HKSAR. These bodies also have a number of affiliated organizations, such as the Hong Kong Christian Service, Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee, United Christian Medical Service, Christian Family Service Centre, and Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital.

Various Muslim organizations also offer medical care, education, and financial aid to the needy. Some religious leaders and communities maintained active contacts with their mainland and international counterparts. Catholic and Protestant clergy were invited to give seminars and teach classes on the mainland and to develop two-way student exchanges on an ongoing basis.

The number of Falun Gong practitioners was reported to have dropped from approximately 1,000 to an estimated 500 since the crackdown on the mainland began in mid-1999, although government officials claimed that the number was lower for both periods.

Numerous foreign missionary groups operate in and out of the region.

A wide range of faiths was represented in the Government, the judiciary, and the civil service. A large number of influential non-Christians were educated in Christian schools.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Basic Law provides for freedom of religion, and the Bill of Rights Ordinance prohibits religious discrimination by the HKSAR Government. The Government does not tolerate the abuse of religious freedom, either by governmental or private actors. Hong Kong has been a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) since July 1, 1997, but according to the Basic Law the HKSAR enjoys a high degree of autonomy in the area of religious freedom under the "one country, two systems" concept. The Government does not recognize a state religion.

Religious groups are not required to register with the Government and are exempted specifically from the Societies Ordinance, which requires the registration of nongovernmental organizations. Catholics recognize the pope as the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Home Affairs Bureau functions as a liaison between religious groups and the Government. Religious groups wishing to purchase a site to construct a school or hospital initiate their request with the Lands Department. Church-affiliated schools make their request to the Education and Manpower Bureau. Church-affiliated hospitals do so with the Health and Welfare Bureau. In February 2006 a Muslim group comprised primarily of residents of South Asian ethnicity complained that the Government had unfairly levied a \$1.3 million (HK\$10 million) land use fee on the construction of a new mosque. They argued that a similar-sized project by an ethnic Chinese charity was charged a fee of only \$130 (HK\$1,000). The Government denied that it had discriminated against the Muslim group on the basis of religion and contended that the two projects fell into different zoning categories.

Although not alleging religious discrimination, a Jewish group complained that the Government was insensitive to its attempts to find a location in the expensive central district to build a new synagogue.

The Election Committee Ordinance stipulates that the 6 largest religious groups in Hong Kong hold 40 seats on the 800-member Election Committee, which chooses the chief executive. The bodies that represent the largest religious groups are the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association, Hong Kong Christian Council, Hong Kong Taoist Association, The Confucian Academy, and The Hong Kong Buddhist Association. These 40 representatives are chosen by the leaders of the various religious groups.

The Government grants public holidays to mark special religious days on the traditional Chinese and Christian calendars, including Christmas and Buddha's Birthday.

Religious groups have a long history of cooperating with the Government on social welfare projects. For example, the Government often funds the operating costs of schools and hospitals built by religious groups. The law requires each school that receives government funding to establish a management board. Forty percent of the management board's members can be elected by teacher and parent groups. The sponsoring body can appoint the remaining 60 percent. In 2003 the Government passed the Education (Amendment) Ordinance which will affect 300 Catholic schools that enroll approximately 25 percent of the student population. Prior to the Education Ordinance, the management of each school

was responsible for selecting all of its members. The ordinance, however, stipulates that 40 percent of each school's management must be elected representatives of teachers, parents, alumni, or other members of the community. The ordinance, which becomes effective in 2010, mandates that every school (not just those which receive government funding) have its own incorporated management committee comprised of elected parents, teachers, and alumni. The diocese unsuccessfully sued to have the ordinance overturned in the Court of First Instance and may appeal the decision.

The Falun Gong is registered under the Societies Ordinance. Falun Gong is generally free to practice, organize, conduct nonviolent public demonstrations, and attract public attention through parades, pamphleteering, and manning booths to publicize its movement. During the period covered by this report, Falun Gong regularly conducted public protests against the repression of fellow practitioners in the PRC. Other spiritual exercise groups, including Xiang Gong and Yan Xin Qigong, were registered and practiced freely.

In February 2006 police authorized two marches by the Muslim community to protest the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in Europe. The cartoons sparked violence worldwide, but both marches were peaceful.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion. Under the Basic Law, the PRC Government does not have jurisdiction over religious practices in the HKSAR.

The Basic Law calls for ties between the region's religious organizations and their mainland counterparts to be based on "nonsubordination, noninterference, and mutual respect."

In March 2006 the Vatican appointed then Bishop Joseph Zen, the head of the Catholic Diocese, to the post of cardinal. The PRC Government responded by warning Cardinal Zen to refrain from commenting on the region's political matters. Despite this, Cardinal Zen remained an outspoken critic of both mainland and HKSAR policies and a strong advocate of religious freedom.

In March 2007 the Court of First Instance dismissed an application for judicial review brought by four Taiwanese Falun Gong practitioners and the Falun Dafa Association of Hong Kong and affirmed the city's power to regulate who enters the city. The practitioners and more than 80 other followers of Falun Gong were turned away when they arrived for a conference in February 2003. They alleged that they were stopped because of their beliefs and that the city was acting on behalf of mainland authorities, who have designated the group an illegal "evil cult." The Government argued that the four were denied entry for organizing disruptive activities that would threaten public order. As of June 2007, the Hong Kong Association of Falun Gong planned to request discovery in the case over why the members were denied entry. The court found that the practitioners were not aliens under the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance, which defines Taiwan as part of China. "Aliens, and those in the same position as aliens, can be refused permission without reasons given or a hearing," the ruling justice said. In April 2007 one of the plaintiffs charged that "China's dirty hand has interfered in Hong Kong, which used to have values of freedom," according to The Epoch Times. Several hundred Falun Gong practitioners were reportedly permitted to enter that weekend.

According to Falun Gong's local spokesperson, more than 140 practitioners seeking to enter from Taiwan, including one of the four denied entry in February 2003, were turned away from the HKSAR in the days leading up to the 10th anniversary of its retrocession to the mainland. The spokesperson reportedly alleged that airport police subjected some practitioners to brutal treatment when they refused to board planes back to Taiwan. At least two Falun Gong members from Taiwan, including a professor from Taiwan Normal University and an official from the Mainland Affairs Council, were denied entry into Hong Kong during the reporting period.

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

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were a few reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious belief or practice.

In February 2006 four men used sledgehammers to break into the Hong Kong office of the Falun Gong-owned newspaper The Epoch Times and destroyed an expensive piece of machinery in the paper's print shop. Police investigated the incident but, as of the end of this reporting period, had made no arrests. Falun Gong claimed the attack was part of a worldwide campaign against the group by the Chinese Communist Party. The Hong Kong Journalists Association, the International Federation of Journalists, and several legislators condemned the break-in.

Falun Gong had opened the print shop only two weeks prior to the break-in after experiencing difficulties in finding a local company willing to print its paper. Following the February 2006 break-in, which disabled the print shop, Falun Gong was able to hire a printing company to continue publication of its paper, although orders again had to be placed on a day-to-day basis.

While Falun Gong practitioners freely and openly practiced their beliefs, they were occasionally subjected to more subtle forms of discrimination from private businesses. There were reports of discrimination in the business community against Falun Gong in 2004 and 2005, including refusal to book conference venues.

According to several reports and verbatim statements published by The Epoch Times in February 2007, Dr. Wang Lian, a Falun Gong practitioner who is a resident of Macau but worked in the Epoch Times' Hong Kong office, was detained and interrogated by Public Security Bureau (PSB) officials on the mainland in mid-September 2006. At the time of his detention, Dr. Lian was also an assistant professor of information technology at the Macau University of Science and Technology and a technical network advisor in the Hong Kong office of The Epoch Times. Dr. Lian claimed the PSB officials directed him to spy on his colleagues and facilitate the disruption of operations--including hacking into the computer networks--at The Epoch Times' office. He reportedly turned over some files and documents to the PSB, which he claimed were of limited use, and fled to seek asylum in Australia in early February 2007.

Two ecumenical bodies facilitate cooperative work among Protestant churches and encourage local Christians to play an active part in society. The largest religious groups have long collaborated in a collegium on community affairs and make up the joint conference of religious leaders.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Consulate General officers have made clear U.S. Government interest in the full protection and maintenance of freedom of religion. Consulate General officers at all levels, including the Consul General, meet regularly with religious leaders and community representatives.

MACAU

The Basic Law, which is the constitution of the Macau Special Administrative Region (Macau SAR), and the Religious Freedom Ordinance provide for freedom of religion and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religious practice, and the Macau SAR Government generally respected these rights in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of societal abuses based on religious belief or practice and only a few reports of religious discrimination.

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

Section I. Religious Demography

The region has a total area of 13 square miles, and according to Macau Government Information Bureau statistics in 2006, a population of 500 thousand. Buddhism is the largest religion, with 79.3% of Macau's population professing the religion; over 5% are Roman Catholic and more than 1% Protestants, along with a mix of Muslims, Baha'i and other professed faith groups. There are an estimated 200 Falun Gong practitioners active in the region. There are approximately 400 Muslims. The region SAR has an estimated 50 Buddhist and Taoist temples, 60 Christian churches (of which 18 are Catholic), and 1 mosque.

Missionaries are active and represent a wide range of faiths. The Catholic Diocese has been providing social welfare services to the community for 5 decades. The diocese receives considerable funds from the Government, and Catholic philanthropists in the region, Hong Kong, and around the world subsidize the establishment of Catholic schools, child care centers, clinics, homes for the elderly, rehabilitation homes, and vocational training centers. Statistics published by the Government of Macau show that in 2004-2005 the Diocese managed and maintained 31 educational institutions with 36 thousand students. The Catholic Church also operates 24 social service agencies, including 8 child-care centers, 6 convalescent homes for the elderly and sick, 5 rehabilitation homes for the mentally handicapped and disabled, and 5 hostels for single-parent family and problem students. More than 2,000 people, including nonresidents, benefited from the wide range of services.

Many Protestant denominations are represented in the region, including Baptist, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches. Other evangelical denominations are represented and independent local

churches also operate. Other evangelical denominations are also represented in Macau. Independent local churches also operate in Macau. Reformed Theological Seminary is also present.

As of December 2006, an estimated 70 Protestant churches with 6,000 members conduct services in Chinese, which are attended by approximately 4,000 worshippers every Sunday. Approximately 300 Protestants attend services conducted in foreign languages. Protestant organizations operate four secondary schools with affiliated primary schools and kindergartens. In addition, there are four primary schools with affiliated kindergartens, a special needs school, and an adult education center. These have a total of about ten thousand students. There are also Bible study institutes, some training centers and two Christian bookshops.

As of December 2006, there were approximately 2,500 Baha'is. The Baha'is in 1988 established a 250-student institution that encompasses a kindergarten, primary school, and secondary school.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Basic Law or constitution, provides for freedom of conscience, freedom of religious belief, freedom to preach, and freedom to conduct and participate in religious activities. The Religious Freedom Ordinance, which remained in effect after the 1999 handover of sovereignty to the People's Republic of China (PRC), provides for freedom of religion, privacy of religious belief, freedom of religious assembly, freedom to hold religious processions, and freedom of religious education. The Government generally respected these rights in practice.

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

The region protects the freedom of religion, worship, and belief in general through the Freedom of Religion and Worship Law (Law No. 5/98/M). This law stipulates that: "Freedom of religion and worship are recognized and protected."

The Religious Freedom Ordinance requires religious organizations to register with the Identification Services Office.

Missionaries were free to conduct missionary activities. Religious entities can apply to use electronic media to preach, and such applications are generally approved.

The Religious Freedom Ordinance stipulates that religious groups may develop and maintain relations with religious groups abroad. The Catholic Church recognizes the pope as the head of the church. In 2003 the Holy See appointed the current coadjutor bishop for the region's diocese. In December 2006 the Macau Inter-University Institute, which is affiliated with the Catholic University in Portugal, was reportedly planning to offer a Christian studies course beginning in September 2007. The course would serve Catholic seminary students from the mainland. More than 20 openings would be available in the first year.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion. Under the Basic Law, the PRC Government does not govern religious practices in the region.

Religious groups are not required to register with the Government and are exempt specifically from the Societies Ordinance, which requires the registration of all other nongovernmental organizations. The Falun Gong, which considers itself a spiritual movement and not a religion, is not registered under the Societies Ordinance. Falun Gong is also not registered with the Identification Services Bureau, which is responsible for receiving and processing registrations required under the law. The Bureau has not issued instructions regarding the Falun Gong. Senior Government officials have stated that, despite this lack of registration under the Religious Freedom Ordinance, Falun Gong practitioners may continue their legal activities.

Falun Gong practitioners continued their daily exercises in public parks, where the police observed them once or twice a month and checked identification, according to Falun Gong followers. However, Falun Gong representatives claimed that they were denied entry into the region, especially during sensitive political periods. Falun Gong members also expressed concern and filed complaints with the police about being denied the right to display photographs for public viewing. As of the end of the reporting period, the matter had not been resolved.

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

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal abuses and only a few reports of discrimination based on religious belief or practice. Relations among the various religious communities were good. Citizens generally were tolerant of other's religious views and practices. Public ceremonies and dedications often included prayers by both Christian and Buddhist groups.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

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

TIBET

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

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief, although it limits protection of the exercise of religious belief to activities which the Government defines as "normal." The Government's 2005 White Paper on "Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities in China" states, "Organs of self-government in autonomous areas, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and relevant laws, respect and guarantee the freedom of religious belief of ethnic minorities, and safeguard all legal and normal religious activities of people of ethnic minorities." However, the Government maintained tight controls on religious practices and places of worship. Although the authorities permitted many traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, they promptly and forcibly suppressed activities they viewed as vehicles for political dissent or advocacy of Tibetan independence, such as religious activities venerating the Dalai Lama (which the Government described as "splittist").

Overall, during the period of the report the level of repression remained high, and the Government's record of respect for religious freedom remained poor; however, the atmosphere for religious freedom varied from region to region. Conditions were generally more relaxed in Tibetan autonomous areas outside the region, with the exception of parts of Sichuan's Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. A sixth round of discussions between envoys of the Dalai Lama and Chinese Government officials began June 29. The Dalai Lama's envoys made previous visits to China for discussions in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2006 and in 2005 met with Government officials in Switzerland. Although the Government has refused to engage in direct discussions with the Dalai Lama, it continued to assert that the door to dialogue and negotiation was open, provided that the Dalai Lama publicly affirmed that Tibet and Taiwan were inseparable parts of China.

Although in the past there were reports of the deaths of monks and nuns due to maltreatment in prison, there were no known reports of deaths due to maltreatment in prison during the period covered by this report. Buddhist nun Kelsang Namtso was shot and killed at the Nangpa La pass on September 30, 2006, by Chinese border guards as she and a group of 70 Tibetans attempted to cross into Nepal. Buddhist leaders such as Gendun Choekyi Nyima and Tenzin Delek remained in detention or prison, and central figures in Tibetan Buddhism such as the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa Lama remained in exile. Dozens of monks and nuns continued to serve prison terms for their resistance to "patriotic" or political education. The Government refused free access to Tibetan areas for international observers, tightly controlled observers who were granted access, and tightly controlled publication of information about conditions in the region. These restrictions made it impossible to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations.

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

Diplomats and nongovernmental organizations NGOs advocated for international access to Gendun Choekyi Nyima, whom the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists continued to recognize as the Panchen Lama, and urged the Chinese Government to pursue dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives.

The U.S. Government continued to encourage greater religious freedom by urging the Government and local authorities to respect religious freedom and preserve religious traditions. The U.S. Government protested credible reports of religious persecution and discrimination, discussed specific cases with the authorities, and requested further information about specific incidents.

Section I. Religious Demography

The Tibetan areas of China have an area of 871,649 square miles. According to the 2000 census, the Tibetan population of those areas was 5.4 million; the Tibetan population within the TAR was 2.4 million, while in autonomous prefectures and counties outside the TAR the Tibetan population was 2.9 million. Most practiced Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority also practiced traditional Bon religion. This held true for many Tibetan government officials and Communist Party members. Other residents of Tibetan areas who were religious believers included Han Chinese, who practiced Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and traditional folk religions; Hui Muslims; Tibetan Muslims; and Christians. There are four mosques in the TAR with approximately 4,000 to 5,000 Muslim adherents, as well as a Catholic church with 560 parishioners, which is located in the traditionally Catholic community of Yanjing in the eastern TAR. There were a small number of Falun Gong adherents in the TAR.

The number of monks and nuns in the TAR fluctuated significantly in the late 1990s due to continuing enforcement of the "patriotic education campaign" and expulsion from monasteries and nunneries of many monks and nuns who refused to denounce the Dalai Lama or who were found to be "politically unqualified." Since 1996, the Government has reported that there are 46,000 monks and nuns and 1,700 religious sites in the TAR, but this figure has likely varied over time due to continued politically motivated detentions as well as monastic secularization and commercialization caused by tourism. The Government figure of 46,000 monks and nuns represented only the TAR, where the number of monks and nuns was very strictly controlled. According to statistics collected by the China Center for Tibetan Studies, a government research institution, there were 1,535 monasteries in Tibetan areas outside the TAR. Informed observers estimated that a total of 60,000 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns lived in Tibetan areas outside the TAR.

There are some unregistered Protestant churches or "house churches" in the TAR.

Missionaries were present.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government sought to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups. The Government remained wary of Tibetan Buddhism in general and its links to the Dalai Lama, and it maintained tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibetan areas. Although authorities permitted many traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, they promptly and forcibly suppressed any activities which they viewed as vehicles for political dissent. This included religious activities that officials perceived as supporting the Dalai Lama or Tibetan independence.

According to Chinese news reports, Zhang Qingli, the Secretary of the Communist Party in the TAR, announced his intention to intensify strict political control over Buddhist practice at a meeting of Communist party officials in mid 2006. According to the reports, Zhang referred to a life or death struggle against the Dalai Lama and his "clique," and referred to them as the "biggest obstacle hindering Tibetan Buddhism from establishing normal order."

TAR officials in September 2006 released the "Implementation Regulations on the Religious Affairs Regulations." The 56-article regulation took effect on January 1, 2007. The new regulations cover management of religious groups, religious venues, and religious personnel. According to Chinese media reports, the regulation will play an important role in resisting the "Dalai Clique's separatist activities." The 2007 Regulations supersede the 1991 regulations on religion in the TAR. The 2007 Regulations increase the Government's control over the movement of nuns and monks by requiring that they seek permission from county level officials to travel to another county. The previous regulations only required monks and nuns to seek travel permission if they were visiting another province.

According to the educational practices of Tibetan Buddhism, monks and nuns must travel to receive specialized training from teachers who are considered experts in their particular theological traditions. The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) has reported that monks and nuns who reach India claim that their main reason for choosing to leave Tibet, even temporarily, is to continue their studies, which they are unable to do inside Tibet, and to obtain a blessing from the Dalai Lama. According to Article 13 of the new regulations, religious organizations must petition the Government's religious affairs department in order to build religious structures. If individuals build a religious structure without authorization, the religious affairs department may demolish the structure.

In April 2007 the official website of the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture reported that during Kardze's Tenth Five-Year Plan the prefecture government will make proposal and approval procedures for new building, relocation, or expansion of religious venues more strict. According to the website, monastic construction carried out without official approval will be stopped. The prefecture government will further strengthen management of monks and nuns exiting and entering the prefecture. In addition, the Government will further strengthen "antiseparatist work in religious

circles."

The Government had the right to disapprove any individual's application to take up religious orders. In practice many monks study and worship within their monasteries without being "registered" or obtaining an official monastic identification card issued by religious affairs authorities. Authorities curtailed the traditional practice of sending young boys to monasteries for religious training by means of regulations that forbade monasteries from accepting individuals under the age of 18. Nevertheless, some monasteries continued to admit younger boys, often delaying their formal registration until the age of 18. In two different monasteries outside the TAR, the number of unregistered young monks rose into the thousands.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government officials closely associated Buddhist monasteries with proindependence activism in Tibetan areas of China. Spiritual leaders encountered difficulty reestablishing historical monasteries due to lack of funds, general limitations on monastic education, and denials of government permission to build and operate religious institutions, which officials in some areas contended were a drain on local resources and a conduit for political infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. While some monasteries destroyed during the Cultural Revolution have been rebuilt or repaired, many have not and others remained only partially repaired. The Government stated that funding restoration efforts was done to support the practice of religion, but it also was done in part to promote the development of tourism in Tibetan areas. Most recent restoration efforts were funded privately, although a few religious sites also were receiving government support for reconstruction projects at the end of the period covered by this report.

The Government stated that there were no limits on the number of monks in major monasteries and that each monastery's Democratic Management Committee (DMC) decided independently how many monks the monastery could support. Many of these committees were government-controlled, and in practice the Government imposed strict limits on the number of monks in major monasteries, particularly in the TAR.

The Government continued to oversee the daily operations of major monasteries. The Government, which did not contribute to the monasteries' operating funds, retained management control of monasteries through the DMCs and local religious affairs bureaus. Regulations restricted leadership of many DMCs to "patriotic and devoted" monks and nuns and specified that the Government must approve all members of the committees. At some monasteries, government officials were members of the committees.

The quality and availability of high-level religious teachers in the TAR and other Tibetan areas remained inadequate; many teachers were in exile, older teachers were not being replaced, and those remaining in Tibetan areas outside the TAR had difficulty securing permission to teach in the TAR. In recent years, DMCs at several large monasteries began to use funds generated by the sales of entrance tickets or donated by pilgrims for purposes other than the support of monks engaged in full-time religious study. As a result, some "scholar monks" who had formerly been fully supported had to engage in income-generating activities. Some experts were concerned that, as a result, fewer monks would be qualified to serve as teachers in the future. While local government officials' attempts to attract tourists to religious sites provided some monasteries with extra income, they also deflected time and energy from religious instruction. In July 2004 authorities permitted resumption of the Geshe Lharampa examinations, the highest religious examination in the Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism, at Lhasa's Jokhang Temple for the first time in 16 years. The exam has new political content that is unrelated to the test's historical religious content. According to officials in the TAR, seven monks in the TAR passed the Geshe Lharampa exam in 2006. The Great Prayer Festival, or Monlam Chenmo, traditionally closely associated with the Geshe exam process, has been banned each year since 1988. Foreign academics reported that some monasteries still forbid monks from taking the Geshe Lharampa exams. Practically, it is also difficult for monks to receive the level of instruction necessary to even take the Geshe Lharampa exam. Monks who wished to sit the exam traditionally traveled to the TAR to study at monasteries such as Sera and Drepung monasteries. However, movement of monks from one monastery to another for study is now extremely difficult, especially for monks from outside the TAR who wish to study at monasteries inside the TAR.

Official Chinese-language press reports emphasized the importance and strengthening of monastic patriotic education. Reports also stated political education was necessary for the whole society to be vigilant towards combating "splittism" and the influence of the "Dalai Clique." The primary responsibility for conducting monastic political education remained with monastery leaders, and the form, content, and frequency of training at each monastery appeared to vary widely; however, conducting such training remained a requirement and is a routine part of monastic management. In some monasteries outside the TAR, political education sessions were held infrequently.

The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 2,405 Tibetans arrived at the Tibet Reception Center (TRC) in Nepal in 2006, compared with 3,395 in 2005. During the year departures were higher than arrivals, with 2,946 Tibetans departing the TRC for India. This was due to a backlog of Tibetans being able to depart for India at the end of 2005.

Many Tibetans, particularly those from rural areas both inside and outside the TAR, continued to report difficulties obtaining passports. The application process was not transparent, and residents of different Tibetan areas reported obstacles ranging from bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption to denials based on the applicant's political activities or

religious beliefs. Due in part to the difficulties faced by many Tibetans in obtaining passports, and in part to the difficulty many Chinese citizens of Tibetan ethnicity encountered obtaining entry visas for India, it was difficult for Tibetans to travel to India for religious purposes. Nevertheless, thousands of Tibetans, including monks and nuns, visited India via third countries. The number of Tibetans who returned to China after temporary stays in India is unknown.

The Government placed restrictions on the movement of Tibetans during sensitive anniversaries and events and increased controls over border areas at these times. In December 2006 the TAR Government announced a stepped-up "anti-illegal border crossing campaign" targeting Tibetans seeking to go to India through Nepal. There were reports that Tibetans trying to cross the border illegally were detained for several months, although in most cases no formal charges were brought. There were also reports of the torture of persons, particularly monks, returning from Nepal and India and reports that government officials asked family members for bribes in exchange for the release of returnees. In September 2006 a 17 year-old nun was fatally shot by Chinese border guards while she was attempting to cross into Nepal with an estimated 70 other Tibetans at the Nangpa La Pass. Approximately half of the group, which included a number of children, was taken into custody, while at least 43 made it to Nepal. The Government reported the release of those taken into custody a few months later. Returned exiles reported that authorities pressured them not to discuss issues that the Government characterized as politically sensitive, such as the Dalai Lama.

The Karmapa, leader of Tibetan Buddhism's Karma Kagyu sect and one of the most influential religious figures in Tibetan Buddhism, remained in exile following his 1999 flight to India. The Karmapa stated that he fled because of the Government's controls on his movements and its refusal either to allow him to go to India to be trained by his spiritual mentors or to allow his teachers to come to him. Visitors to Tsurphu Monastery, the seat of the Karmapa, noted that the population of monks remained small and the atmosphere was subdued.

The Government routinely asserted control over the process of identifying and educating reincarnated lamas. For example, the Government authorities closely supervised the current Reting Rinpoche, who is eight years old, and his education differed significantly from that of his predecessors.

The Government also strictly restricted contacts between reincarnate lamas and the outside world. For example, young incarnate lama Pawo Rinpoche, who was recognized by the Karmapa in 1994, lived under government supervision at Nenang Monastery. Foreign delegations have been refused permission to visit him.

Government officials maintained that possessing or displaying pictures of the Dalai Lama was not illegal and that most TAR residents chose not to display his picture. Nevertheless, authorities appeared to view possession of such photos as evidence of separatist sentiment when detaining individuals on political charges. Article 34 of the 2007 "TAR Measures for Implementation of the 'Regulations for Religious Affairs'" states that "religious personnel and religious citizens may not distribute books, pictures, or other materials which harm the unity of the nationalities or endanger state security." Photos or books of the Dalai Lama fall into this category. Pictures of the Dalai Lama were not openly displayed in major monasteries and could not be purchased openly in the TAR. In Tibetan areas outside the TAR, visitors to several monasteries saw pictures of the Dalai Lama openly displayed. Amnesty International reports that a former monk, Sonam Gyalpo, was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment in mid-2006 for "endangering state security" after videos of the Dalai Lama were found in his house.

The Government continued to ban pictures of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the man recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama. Photos of the "official" Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, were not publicly displayed in most places, most likely because most Tibetans refuse to recognize him as the Panchen Lama.

Many Tibetan Buddhist religious figures held positions in local People's Congresses and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, which do not require Communist Party membership. Some religious figures accepted political positions in order to protect their monasteries, and some Tibetan officials openly practiced Buddhism. The Government continued to insist, however, that Communist Party members and senior employees adhere to the Party's code of atheism, and routine political training for cadres continued to denigrate religious belief and promote atheism. Government officials confirmed that some Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) officers were members of the Communist Party and that religious belief was incompatible with Party membership.

Security was intensified during the Dalai Lama's birthday, sensitive anniversaries, and festival days in the TAR and in some other Tibetan areas. The prohibition on celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6 continued. In December 2006 the government banned participation of government cadres, workers and students in the Garden Ngamcho festival. In March 2007 authorities in Lhasa heightened security in major monasteries in order to control gatherings celebrating the long life of the Dalai Lama. The Government reportedly altered traditional dates of Tibetan festivals such as the Drepunb Shodon Festival. Some government employees were told that they would lose their jobs or have their wages reduced if they disobeyed this order. According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Lhasa City school children were prohibited from participating in religious activities during the holy month of Saka Dawa, which takes place in the fourth month of the Lunar calendar.

Travel restrictions for foreign visitors to and within the TAR were reported during the period covered by this report and the Government tightly controlled visits by foreign officials to religious sites in the TAR.

Some foreign religious workers were expelled from the TAR during the reporting period.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government strictly controlled access to and information about Tibetan areas, particularly the TAR, and it was difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations. There were reports that the atmosphere for lay religious practice in Tibetan areas was more restrictive than in the recent past. The Government's record of respect for religious freedom remained poor during the period covered by this report.

The Panchen Lama is Tibetan Buddhism's second most prominent figure, after the Dalai Lama. The Government continued to refuse to allow access to Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the man recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama in 1995 (when he was six years old). Government officials claimed he was under government supervision, at an undisclosed location, for his own protection and attends classes as a "normal schoolboy." All requests from the international community for access to him to confirm his well-being have been refused. Nyima turned 18 on April 25, 2007. The Government continued to insist that Gyaltzen Norbu, seventeen, the boy it selected in 1995, was the Panchen Lama's eleventh reincarnation.

The Government did not provide any information on Lama Chadrel Rinpoche, who was reportedly still under house arrest near Lhasa for leaking information about the selection of the Panchen Lama.

Officials did not provide any new information on Champa Chung, former assistant of Chadrel Rinpoche who was reportedly still held in custody since the expiration of his prison term in 1999.

Limited access to information about prisoners and prisons made it difficult to ascertain the number of Tibetan prisoners of conscience or to assess the extent and severity of abuses. According to the Congressional Executive Commission on China Political Prisoner Database (CECC PPD), as of April 2007 there were 99 Tibetan prisoners of conscience, 76 of whom were monks and nuns. The CECC reported that the number of prisoners of conscience declined to less than one-fifth the number 10 years ago.

Approximately 46 prisoners of conscience remained in prison in Lhasa, most serving sentences on the charge of "counterrevolution," which was dropped from the criminal law in 1997. Authorities have stated that acts previously prosecuted as counterrevolutionary crimes continue to be considered crimes under state security laws.

In January 2007 Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported the arrest of Penpa, a village leader from Dhangri County near Shigatse in the TAR. Chinese police were reported to have searched Penpa's home and found materials relating to the 2005 Kalachakra teachings of the Dalai Lama. In March 2007, the Tibet Information Network (TIN) reported that Penpa was sentenced in February to serve 3 years in Nyari Prison in Shigatse. The charges against Penpa were unknown.

In May 2007 the head of the large Dungkhyab Monastery in Qinghai was forced to step down after he refused to sign a document condemning the Dalai Lama. According to a Radio Free Asia report, Khenpo Tsonor would not sign a government document which stated that the Dalai Lama should be criticized and his "splittist" behavior condemned, even though Tsonor knew he might be killed or imprisoned.

Destruction of monastic residences and expulsion of monks and nuns continued at Yachen Monastery in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

In May 2007, the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) reported that a number of restrictions were imposed on religious observance of Saka Dawa, the birth of the Buddha, celebrated on April 15. TCHRD reported that the Lhasa City Committee ordered children not visit monasteries, circumambulate, or wear amulet thread during Saka Dawa. The Committee threatened the children with expulsion from school.

The Lhasa Governor's office and the Lhasa City Party Secretary prohibited Party members, civil servants and staff from participating in or even observing the activities of the Ganden Ngamcho anniversary. Party members were threatened with demotions and salary cuts if they did not comply with the order. Small farmers were also reportedly banned from selling incense and juniper leaves for religious purposes on religious days.

During Saka Dawa in April 2007, the Chinese People's Armed Police (PAP) destroyed a statue of Guru Padmasambhava (known as Guru Rinpoche) at Samye Monastery. The rubble from the statue was reportedly being transferred to an unknown location. After the destruction of the statue, the PAP reportedly surrounded the monastery. The statue was built with private donations of 800 thousand yuan from Chinese Buddhists. An official at the monastery referred to the new religious affairs regulations which state that a new religious structure cannot be built without official consent.

Chinese border guards shot and killed Buddhist nun Kelsang Namtso at the Nangpa La Pass between Tibet and Nepal

on September 30, 2006. She was with a group of 70 Tibetans who were attempting to cross into Nepal. The Government said that the Tibetans were illegal border crossers. Forty-three Tibetans from the group are known to have arrived safely in exile, however, at least 25 others, including a number of young children, were taken into custody by the PAP. A professional Romanian cameraman and climber who happened to be in the area at the time was able to film the incident which clearly showed the Tibetans were not armed and were fired on from the back.

In June 2006 authorities in Sichuan's Kardze Prefecture initiated a political reeducation campaign for children at the Kardze Tibetan Middle School following a call by the Dalai Lama for Tibetans to stop wearing animal skins in their traditional clothing. Soldiers in uniform entered the school and said that Tibetans were not permitted to wear animal skins. They reportedly asked students whether they supported the Dalai Lama. Those who said they did not were encouraged to trample a picture of the Dalai Lama. A 16-year old girl named Yiwang was detained and was still being held without charge as of April 2007.

In June 2006 RFA reported that authorities detained five Tibetans, including two Buddhist nuns from Kardze Prefecture, for allegedly handing out leaflets promoting Tibetan independence. In Lhasa, Yiga, a nun, and two other women, Sonam Choetso and Jampa Yangtso, were reportedly detained on the first day of the Saka Dawa religious period on May 28, 2006. Kayi Doega and Sonam Lhamo, a nun, were reportedly detained in Kardze Prefecture on June 1 and June 2, 2006 respectively, on suspicion of organizing the leafleting.

On August 15, 2006, police in Kardze County detained Lobsang Paldan, a 22-year-old monk from Kardze Monastery. He was sentenced to 4 years imprisonment. The charges were unknown. Seven other monks from Kardze Monastery whose names were unknown were also arrested in August 2006 and were still in prison at the end of the reporting period.

According to a report by Radio Free Asia (RFA), on August 23, 2006, security officials arrested Jinpa, a reincarnate lama and the abbot of Choktsang Taklung Monastery in Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Jinpa was reportedly arrested on suspicion of involvement in displaying proindependence posters at the monastery.

In late 2006 the Government released Nun Yonten Drolma, also known as Yonten Tsomo, from prison. She was detained with two other Tibetan nuns and two monks for distributing letters calling for Tibetan independence.

At the end of 2006, the Government also released monks Tashi Gyaltsen, Tsultrim Phelgyal, Tsesum Samten, and Lobsang Thargyal from Treltzong. They were from Dakar Treltzong Monastery in Qinghai Province and were arrested in 2005 for publishing politically sensitive poems. Jhamphel Gyatso, a monk who was arrested with them, is still detained and is serving a 4- to 5-year sentence. The charges are unknown.

Prison authorities continued to subject imprisoned monks and nuns to torture.

After her release to the United States in March 2006 on medical parole, Tibetan Buddhist nun Phuntsog Nyidrol reported that she was tortured by government authorities. Phuntsog Nyidrol also stated that religious prisoners are not allowed to meet with other religious prisoners, use their religious names in prison, or recite prayers in prison. Phuntsog Nyidrol also stated that prison administrators deny family visits to religious prisoners as punishment.

There was no new information on Gendun, a Tibetan monk and teacher of traditional monastic dance from Yulung Monastery in Qinghai. In April 2006 TIN reported that Gendun had been sentenced in January 2006 to 4 years in prison after he gave talks about Tibetan culture and history. The charges against him were unknown.

Lhasa orphanage owners Bangri Chogtrul Rinpoche (Jigme Tenzin Nyima) and Nyima Choedron were convicted in 2002 of "espionage and endangering state security." In March 2006 Bangri Chogtrul's life sentence was commuted to a fixed term of 19 years, due to be completed in 2021. Nyima Choedron was released early on February 26, 2006.

In early October 2005 Ngawang Jangchub, a 28-year-old Tibetan monk, was found dead in his room at the Drepung Monastery in Lhasa. According to reports, Ngawang Jangchub's death followed a heated dispute with the monastery's "work team" over his refusal to denounce the Dalai Lama. Government officials claimed Ngawang Jangchub's death was due to natural causes.

According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), authorities arrested five monks who refused to take part in patriotic education that began in October 2005 at the Drepung Monastery in Lhasa. The monks, who were identified as Ngawang Namdrol, Ngawang Nyingpo, Ngawang Thupten, Ngawang Phelgey, and Phuntsok Thupwang, reportedly refused to denounce the Dalai Lama and recognize Tibet as part of China. TAR officials said that the monks were not detained but rather expelled from the monastery. The officials acknowledged that hundreds of monks gathered to petition for their return.

A number of former political prisoners and other suspected activists were reportedly detained in the period prior to the 40th anniversary of the founding of the TAR on September 1, 2005. According to Human Rights Watch, Sonam, a monk from the Potala Palace, was detained by security forces in August 2005. In September 2005, another monk,

Sonam Gyalpo, was arrested on charges of separating the country and destroying national unity.

In mid-2005 Tibetan Buddhist monks Dzokar and Topden and layman Lobsang Tsering from Sichuan's Kardze Prefecture were released after serving a portion of a 3-year jail term for putting up proindependence posters.

In March 2005 the World Tibet Network News (WTN) reported that local authorities extended Tibetan Buddhist monk Jigme Gyatso's prison sentence for alleged "political activities" from 15 to 17 years.

In January 2005 the Government commuted the death sentence of Tenzin Delek to life in prison. In 2002 Tenzin Delek, a prominent lama from Kardze, was arrested for his alleged connection with a series of bombings in Sichuan Province. On January 26, 2003, Tenzin Delek and his associate, Lobsang Dondrub, were sentenced to death for their alleged role in the bombings. The Government executed Lobsang Dondrub the same day despite reportedly giving assurances to senior diplomatic officials that both accused would be afforded due process and that their sentences would be reviewed by the national-level Supreme People's Court. Tenzin Delek was being held in Tuandong Prison in Sichuan Province.

The status of Phutnsok Tsering in Magar Dhargyeling Monastery in the TAR, who was arrested in 2005, for possessing a portrait of the Dalai Lama and writings on Tibetan nationalism, remained unknown.

There was no new information on the whereabouts of the two Tibetan nuns and two Tibetan monks who were detained along with Yonten Drolma (who was released in late 2006). According to the London-based Free Tibet Campaign, authorities in Gansu Province arrested the group in May 2005 for distributing letters at a local monastery, market, and other areas calling for Tibetan independence. The Congressional Executive Commission on China Political Prisoner Database (CECC PPD) also listed monk Sherab as being detained as part of this group.

The whereabouts of monk Jigme Dasang from Kumbum Monastery in Qinghai who was detained in June 2005 were still unknown.

The Government did not provide any new information on the report that police in Qinghai's Golog Prefecture shot and killed Tibetan Buddhist religious leader Shetsul in October 2004 after he and other monks demanded police pay for medical treatment for injuries suffered while in custody.

The status of the following persons remained unconfirmed at the end of the reporting period: two monks from Sichuan's Kardze Prefecture who were arrested in 2004 for displaying the Tibetan national flag and Choeden Rinzen, who was arrested in 2004 for possessing a Tibetan national flag and a picture of the Dalai Lama.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism. While there was some friction between Tibetan Buddhists and the growing Muslim Hui population in cities of the Tibetan areas, it was attributable more to economic competition and cultural differences than to religious tensions.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the U.S. consulate general in Chengdu made a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibetan areas, using focused external pressure regarding abuses. In regular exchanges, including with religious affairs officials, U.S. diplomatic personnel consistently urged both the Government and local authorities to respect religious freedom in Tibetan areas.

Embassy and consulate officials protested and sought further information on cases whenever there were credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination. In 2006, officials asked for and were denied a meeting in Lhasa with Chadrel Rinpoche, reportedly under house arrest since 2002.

U.S. diplomatic personnel stationed in the country maintained contacts with a wide range of religious leaders and practitioners in the Tibetan areas, and they traveled regularly to the TAR and other Tibetan areas to monitor the status of religious freedom. The ability of U.S. diplomatic personnel to travel freely and talk to people at ease while in the area was extremely limited. Not all requests to travel to Tibetan areas were granted.

U.S. development and exchange programs aim to strengthen Tibetan communities in China and preserve their environmental and cultural heritage. Both are inextricably linked to Tibet's Buddhist religious tradition. In Tibetan Buddhism, there is a tradition of designating mountains, forests, and other physical spaces as being endowed with some spiritual significance. Monasteries have traditionally played a major role in managing the local habitat around them as a result. The Dalai Lama has also strongly encouraged Tibetans to be good stewards of the environment. The U.S. diplomatic mission in China has also promoted religious dialogue through its exchange visitor program, which financed the travel of several prominent scholars of traditional Tibetan culture and religion to the United States.

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