

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

<b>Bilagsnr.:</b>	<b>231</b>
Land:	Kina
Kilde:	U.S. Department of State
Titel:	2009 Report on International Religious Freedom - China
Udgivet:	26. oktober 2009
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	23. november 2009

<b>Title</b>	2009 Report on International Religious Freedom - China (includes Tibet)
<b>Publisher</b>	United States Department of State
<b>Country</b>	China
<b>Publication Date</b>	26 October 2009
<b>Cite as</b>	United States Department of State, <i>2009 Report on International Religious Freedom - China (includes Tibet)</i> , 26 October 2009, available at: <a href="http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ae8614e71.html">http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ae8614e71.html</a> [accessed 23 November 2009]

## 2009 Report on International Religious Freedom - China (includes Tibet)

*[Covers the period from July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009]*

The Constitution states that Chinese citizens "enjoy freedom of religious belief." It also bans the state, public organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion. The Constitution and laws protect only "normal religious activities" that are overseen by the five (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant) state-sanctioned "patriotic religious associations" (PRAs). Officials have wide latitude to interpret the phrase "normal religious activities." By law only the PRAs may register religious groups and places of worship. The Government permits proselytism in registered places of worship and in private settings, but does not permit it in public, in unregistered places of worship, or by foreigners. The Constitution states that religious bodies and affairs are not "subject to any foreign domination" and affirms the leading role of the officially atheist Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The Government took rhetorical steps to promote religious activity within the framework of the PRAs. The Government's repression of religious freedom also remained severe in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and other Tibetan areas as well as in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) during the reporting period. In its new National Human Rights Action Plan, the Government reinforced comments President Hu Jintao made on religion in his 2007 speech to the 17th CCP National People's Congress (NPC). The plan stated that the Government would "encourage and support religious circles in launching social welfare programs [and] exploring methods and channels for religions to better serve society and promote the people's well-being." The Government did not indicate whether these statements would apply to unregistered religious groups that were not affiliated with the PRAs.

Government officials allowed increased space for some unregistered religious groups it viewed as non-threatening. A branch of the State Council also held an unprecedented meeting with a delegation of "house church" leaders. The house church leaders requested that the Government allow registration independent of the PRAs. Several Chinese academics supported the request. The ability of unregistered religious groups to operate varied greatly depending on their location. Officials in some areas detained Protestant and Catholic believers who attended unregistered groups, while those in other areas did little to interfere with the worship or social service activities of such groups. Unregistered Protestant religious groups in Beijing also reported that the Government closely monitored their activities during the period surrounding the 2008 Summer Olympic Games and sensitive anniversaries, such as the twentieth anniversary of the June 4, 1989, Tiananmen Square crackdown on democracy protests. Some unregistered house churches in Beijing reported that they were asked to stop meeting during the Olympics.

The Government repressed the religious activities of "underground" Roman Catholic clergy 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 also continued to restrict severely the activities of groups it designated as "evil religions," including several Christian groups and Falun Gong.

The Government took cautious measures to promote Buddhism, Taoism, and some folk religions within the framework of the PRAs. For example, in March 2009 the Buddhist Association of China co-organized the Second World Buddhist Forum in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province. During such conferences the Government promoted its religious policies by including speakers such as CCP United Front Work Department (UFWD) head Du Qinglin and Bainqen Erdini Qoigyijabu (born Gyaltzen Norbu), whom the Government recognizes as the 11th Panchen Lama.

In contrast, religious adherents in the XUAR, TAR and other Tibetan areas continued to suffer severe restrictions on religious activity, as a consequence of the Government's tendency to conflate concerns about separatism and religious extremism with peaceful expressions of religious beliefs and political views. In the XUAR, the Government's concerns also included terrorism. Ethnic Tibetans and Uighurs had difficulty obtaining passports from the Government, which limited their ability to travel abroad for religious purposes.

Followers of Tibetan Buddhism, including those in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region and most Tibetan autonomous areas, faced more restrictions on their religious practice and ability to organize than did Buddhists in other parts of the country. Restrictions on religious practices remained tight in the TAR and other Tibetan areas following the outbreak of widespread unrest in March 2008. The Government continued "patriotic education" campaigns that included requiring monks and nuns to sign statements personally denouncing the Dalai Lama. Other restrictions on religious freedom also continued. (See separate appendix for additional reporting).

Both Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns reported they faced increased societal discrimination around sensitive periods like the August 2008 Olympic Games, including from Beijing hotelkeepers who denied them lodging.

The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Wuhan made concerted efforts to encourage greater religious freedom in the country. U.S. officials condemned abuses while supporting positive trends within the country and urged the Government to expand the scope of religious freedom for both registered and unregistered religious groups according to citizens' constitutional and internationally recognized rights. U.S. officials protested the imprisonment of, asked to attend the trials of, and requested further information about numerous individual religious prisoners. U.S. officials encouraged the Government to address policies that restricted Tibetan Buddhist religious practices and that contributed to tensions. During the August 2008 Olympic Games, President Bush raised religious freedom issues in meetings with Chinese leaders and attended services at a registered Protestant church in Beijing. In February 2009, Secretary of State Clinton also visited a Protestant church in Beijing and discussed religious freedom with Chinese leaders. In May 2009, Speaker of the House of Representatives Pelosi raised religious freedom concerns and attended Mass at a registered Catholic church in Shanghai. Since 1999, the Secretary of State has assigned the "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) designation to the country under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

### **Section I. Religious Demography**

The country has an area of 3.5 million square miles and a population of 1.3 billion. A February 2007 survey, conducted by researchers in Shanghai and reported in state-run media, concluded that 31.4 percent of Chinese citizens ages 16 and over, totaling 300 million persons, are religious believers.

According to a Government white paper published in 1997, there are reportedly more than 100,000 officially recognized sites for religious activities, 300,000 officially recognized clergy, and more than 3,000 officially recognized religious organizations. China's government has not issued detailed statistics on religious faith since the 1997 white paper.

The Government officially recognizes five main religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. The Russian Orthodox Church operates in some regions, particularly those with large populations of Russian expatriates or with close links to Russia. Foreign residents in the country who belonged to religious faiths not officially recognized by the Government were generally permitted to practice their religions, although Chinese citizens were often banned from participating in religious activity organized by foreign residents.

It is difficult to estimate the number of Buddhists and Taoists, because they do not have congregational memberships and many practice exclusively at home. However, a Chinese public opinion polling firm found in 2007 that 11 to 16 percent of Chinese adults are Buddhists but that fewer than one percent of Chinese adults identify themselves as Taoists. The state-approved Xinhua news agency estimates there are 100 million Buddhists in China. There are no official statistics confirming or contradicting the number of Taoists in China.

According to official figures, there are as many as 20 million Muslims. Independent estimates range as high as 50 million or more. There are more than 40,000 Islamic places of worship (more than half of which are in the XUAR), 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 more than 10 million. The Hui are centered in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, but there are significant concentrations of Hui throughout the country. Hui Muslims slightly outnumber Uighur Muslims, who live primarily in the XUAR. According to an official 2005 report, the XUAR had 23,900 mosques and 27,000 clerics at the end of 2004, but fewer than half of the mosques were authorized to hold Friday prayer and holiday services. In Beijing, there are 200,000 Hui Muslims and 160 mosques. The Government supports the building of mosques, pays the salaries of imams, and supports halal stores and hospitals.

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 there are more than 50,000 registered TSPM churches and 18 TSPM theological schools. The World Christian Database estimates there are more than 300 unofficial house church networks. The Pew Research Center estimates 50 million to 70 million Christians practice without state sanction. One Chinese scholar estimated in a public lecture at Renmin University that the number of Christians in China, including those in TSPM churches and unregistered churches, is near 90 million. By contrast, the Chinese Communist Party is estimated to have 60 million members, 10 million of whom are believed to participate regularly in religious services. Currents of Calvinism or Reformed theology gained influence among house churches and Christian intellectuals. Pentecostal Christianity was also popular among house churches.

Although the Government authorized funding to build new places of worship for registered venues, the number of temples, churches, and mosques has not kept pace with growth in the number of worshippers. For example, in Beijing, a city of 17.4 million, there are only 13 registered Protestant churches. Some registered churches faced difficulty registering new church venues. The shortage of space in registered churches is one factor driving the proliferation of unregistered churches and groups.

The Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) reports that 5.3 million persons worship in its churches, and it is estimated that there are an additional 12 million or more persons who worship in unregistered Catholic churches that do not affiliate with the CPA.

According to official sources, the Government-sanctioned CPA has more than 70 bishops, nearly 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. Of the 97 dioceses in the country, 40 reportedly did not have an acting bishop in 2007, and more than 30 bishops were over 80 years of age.

Falun Gong is a self-described spiritual discipline that is Buddhist in nature. Falun Gong combines the meditation techniques and physical exercises of qigong (a traditional Chinese exercise discipline) with the teachings of its founder Li Hongzhi. Prior to the Government's 1999 ban on Falun Gong, it estimated that there were 70 million adherents; the Government subsequently adjusted the number of adherents to approximately 2 million. Falun Gong sources estimate that tens of millions continue to practice privately.

## Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution protects "normal religious activities." However, citizens do not have the ability to bring legal action based on the Constitution's guarantees of religious freedom. Religious groups are vulnerable to coercive action by local officials who often regulate through classified or informal administrative orders. The Government restricted legal religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations, registered religious groups, and registered places of worship and sought to control the growth and scope of the activity of both registered and unregistered religious groups. The Government strongly opposed the profession of loyalty to religious leadership outside the country, most notably the Pope and the Dalai Lama. The treatment of religious groups varied significantly. Membership in many faiths continued to grow rapidly.

The 2005 Regulations on Religious Affairs (RRA) give registered religious groups limited legal protections that unregistered groups do not enjoy (i.e., they may possess property, publish literature, train and approve clergy, and collect donations). The five PRAs are the only national organizations that have been allowed to register as religious organizations under the Regulations on Social Organizations (RSO), administered by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Religious groups outside the five PRAs not only have great difficulty obtaining legal status, they are also vulnerable to coercive and punitive action by Public Security Bureau (PSB) and Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) officials who monitor their facilities, check to see that religious activities do not disrupt public order, and take measures directed against groups designated as evil religions.

PRA leaders sometime serve in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, an advisory forum under CCP leadership that consults with social groups outside the CCP or the NPC. The State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) under the State Council and the UFWD 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 UFWD are primarily Communist Party members who according to Party doctrine must be atheists.

While the activities of unregistered religious groups remained outside the scope of the RRA's legal protection, these groups and their activities continued to expand. Unregistered Christian "house churches" and Buddhist "private temples" are common throughout the country. Most Christian groups, the majority of which are not members of the PRAs, no longer operated in strict secrecy. Instead, they carried out their activities openly, including convening seminars, publishing materials, renting space for offices and events, and disseminating information on the Internet.

SARA has stated that according to the RSO, a religious group must affiliate with one of the five PRAs in order to register. Nearly all local RAB officials require registered Protestant congregations and clergy to affiliate with the TSPM/CCC. Unregistered Catholic groups are also required to affiliate with the CPA. The RAB told some

unregistered house churches that attempted to register that their clergy did not have the requisite TSPM/CCC credentials. Other groups reported authorities denied their applications without cause or detained group members when they attempted to register.

The Government contended these refusals were the result of these groups' lack of adequate facilities or failure to meet other legal requirements. In some areas, local governments have legalized certain religions and practices, including Orthodox Christianity (in Heilongjiang) and the worship of folk deities such as Mazu (in Fujian) and Huangdaxian in southern Zhejiang and Guangdong. Some ethnic minorities have retained or reclaimed traditional religions, such as Dongba among the Naxi people in Yunnan and Buluotuo among the Zhuang in Guangxi.

Some unregistered Protestant groups refuse to register or affiliate with the TSPM/CCC because they believe the TSPM/CCC accepts rules imposed by the Government that conflict with their religious convictions. In particular, some house churches have objected to the TSPM's restrictions on evangelism, baptism, and receiving religious materials from abroad. Moreover, 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. Others did not seek registration independently or with one of the PRAs due to fear of adverse consequences if they revealed, as required, the names and addresses of church leaders or members. Unregistered groups also frequently did not affiliate with one of the PRAs for fear that doing so would allow government authorities to regulate sermon content and speakers.

A growing number of unregistered religious groups have chosen to affiliate with a registered venue of the TSPM. These groups are now able to meet legally with the supervision of the registered venue's leaders. Some Chinese observers have noted that affiliated groups are limited in their ability to conduct Christian sacraments, such as baptism and communion, and that TSPM leaders must approve speakers for worship services.

In the XUAR, the Government banned a number of religious activities. According to a document on the website of the regional government of Chinggil (Qinghe) County, Altay District, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, 23 kinds of "illegal religious activities" were banned, including opening private schools to study religious texts, conducting marriage ceremonies in traditional manner, encouraging students to attend religious services, collecting religious taxes or fees, printing and distributing religious "propaganda," and arbitrarily growing a religious following. Parents were prohibited from allowing minors to engage in religious activities according to Article 14 of the Xinjiang Implementing Measures of the Law on the Protection of Minors. According to the RRA, only the Islamic Associations of China (IAC) may operate Hajj tours to Mecca.

Beginning in the 1980s, the Government banned groups it determined to be "evil religions" – the Guan Yin (also known as Guanyin Famin, or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy), Zhong Gong (a qigong exercise discipline), and Falun Gong. There are reports that dedicated government offices were responsible for coordinating operations against Falun Gong. The Government also considers several Protestant Christian groups to be evil religions, 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, Family of Love, and South China Church.

According to Article 300 of the Criminal Law, religious groups engaging in activities such as "gathering people to besiege government organizations, holding assemblies to incite members to disrupt social order or publishing false materials" could be in violation of the law against evil religions. Violations carried penalties of up to seven years in prison.

According to Article 251 of the Criminal Law, officials who deny citizens their right to religious belief can be sentenced to up to two years in prison.

The work of faith-based nonprofit organizations continued to expand rapidly, and the Government increased its rhetorical support for these efforts, especially in the aftermath of the May 2008 Sichuan earthquake. RRA Article 35 permits registered religious groups to accept donations from organizations and individuals both inside and outside the country. House church groups and other unregistered religious groups are ineligible to receive tax-free status since they do not have legal standing. Unregistered religious groups frequently sought opportunities to provide social services, including in the zone affected by the earthquake. Registered groups that contributed resources to disaster relief faced limits on their ability to provide services due to legal restrictions placed on them.

According to reports, some religious adherents opposed the state's family planning policy for reasons of religious belief and practice. 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. Some Muslims oppose abortion on grounds that children are a gift from Allah. In some areas of the country, government population control agencies required women to use contraception, be sterilized, and have abortions if their pregnancies violated government population control regulations.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

During the period covered by this report, the Government's repression of religious freedom remained severe in Tibetan areas and in the XUAR. While several of Beijing's estimated 2,000 house churches reported that authorities told them not to meet during the 2008 Summer Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, these groups held services throughout the duration of the Olympics and the reporting period.

Following the March 14, 2008, outbreak of violence in Lhasa, government officials and state media increased their vilification of the Dalai Lama, including public accusations that the Dalai Lama incited Tibetans to riot. In March 2009, the 50th anniversary of the failed Tibetan uprising, official criticism of the Dalai Lama again increased. Employers forced some Tibetans to celebrate the Tibetan New Year holiday on February 25 and a new Serf Emancipation Day holiday March 28. Most Tibetans had planned not to celebrate the Tibetan New Year, in commemoration of the Tibetans who died during the unrest and violence that occurred across the Tibetan plateau in the spring of 2008.

The Government repressed Protestant house church networks and cross-congregational affiliations, which it perceived as presenting a potential challenge to the authority of the Government or the Party. For example, on November 28, 2008, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued a decision abolishing the 250,000-member Chinese House Church Alliance (CHCA), which claims to have members in several provinces, stating that the CHCA was not registered and was engaging in activities in the name of a social organization without authorization.

On February 10, 2009, six Chinese police officers and officials from SARA visited Cui Quan, chief pastor of the 1,200-member Wanbang Missionary Church of Shanghai, and ordered him to cancel the Fourth Seminar of Chinese Urban House Church Pastors Fellowship. Cui Quan refused to do so. Two days later, after moving the conference to another location, he discovered police had ordered the landlord of Wanbang Church to terminate his rental agreement within 30 days.

Local regulations, provincial work reports, and other government and party documents continued to exhort officials to enforce government policy regarding unregistered churches and illegal religious activities, although the extent to which officials interfered with the activities of unregistered churches varied and depended largely on local conditions. Urban house churches in some areas limited the size of their meetings to a few dozen individuals. In nonurban areas, some house churches were able to hold meetings that hundreds of individuals attended with which local authorities did not interfere. Some unregistered religious groups had significant membership, properties, financial resources, and networks. House churches faced more risks when their memberships grew, they arranged for regular use of facilities for religious activities, or

forged links with other unregistered groups or coreligionists overseas.

In some areas, government authorities pressured house churches to affiliate with one of the PRAs and to register with religious affairs authorities by organizing registration campaigns and by detaining and interrogating leaders who refused to register. In other parts of the country unregistered groups grew rapidly and the authorities did not pressure them to register.

Although SARA does not officially acknowledge the existence of house churches, its website states that family and friends holding meetings at home (as distinct from formal worship services in public venues) need not register with the Government (the "Family and Friend Worship Policy"). Police and officials of local RABs in some areas disrupted home worship meetings, claiming that participants disturbed neighbors or social order, or belonged to an "evil religion." Police sometimes detained for hours or days worshippers attending such services and prevented further worship activities. Police interrogated church leaders and lay persons about their worship activities at locations including meeting sites, hotel rooms, and detention centers. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) reported that church leaders faced harsher treatment than members, including greater frequency and length of detention, formal arrest, and reeducation-through-labor or imprisonment. According to NGO and media reports, in some cases local officials also confiscated and destroyed the property of unregistered religious groups.

Citizens are not permitted to attend religious services conducted by foreigners unless the services take place in an authorized venue under the supervision of a registered religious group. Citizens were not allowed to attend expatriate worship services, but foreigners were occasionally invited to preach at worship services at registered religious venues. On April 12, 2009, American Catholic Bishop Ignatius Wang celebrated Easter Mass for an estimated 2,000 attendees at Xujiahui Cathedral, Shanghai's largest registered Catholic church.

The Regulations on the Religious Activities of Foreigners forbid proselytizing but do not prohibit foreigners from attending worship services at registered religious venues. Many expatriate Christian groups throughout the country have developed close ties with local officials. In some cases they are allowed to provide social services such as operating schools and homes for the care of the elderly.

Official tolerance for groups associated with Buddhism and Taoism has been greater than that for groups associated with other religions. The China Religious Culture Communication Association, in cooperation with SARA, organized the first and second World Buddhist Forums in 2006 and March 2009, respectively, and the International Dao De Jing (the sacred text of Taoism) Forum in 2007. The Government also labeled some folk religions as "feudal superstitions," and in the past there were reports that followers sometimes were subject to harassment and repression.

The Government's official policy was that only religious leaders affiliated with the PRAs were to receive religious instruction. There was a severe shortage of trained clergy for both registered and unregistered religious groups. PRA-affiliated organizations administered local religious schools, seminaries, and institutes to train priests, ministers, imams, Islamic scholars, and Buddhist monks. The Government required students to demonstrate "political reliability," and all graduates had to pass an examination on their political, as well as theological, knowledge to qualify for the clergy.

The shortage of training opportunities in the country has resulted in the creation of informal "field seminaries," lay leadership training programs, and online training resources for Christians. Some critics of the Government's policies on religion saw a lack of educational opportunities for mainstream clergy and the lack of access to religious texts and supplementary readings as factors that led some religious groups to develop unorthodox, or what the Government characterizes as "evil religion," beliefs. Academics also reported that the Government's "patriotic education campaigns," which included



compulsory political education in Tibetan monasteries, sometimes interfered with normal religious studies. The Government also strengthened political education for imams in the XUAR.

The Government continued to allow Dallas Theological Seminary to host online courses for clergy through the TSPM-run Yanjing Theological Seminary. Bible Study Fellowship also provided materials used to train clergy affiliated with registered and unregistered religious groups. The Government also allowed an increasing number of PRA-approved Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and some Buddhist monks to travel abroad for additional religious study. In practice, some had difficulty obtaining passports or approval to study abroad.

In 2005, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the country had no national regulations preventing children from receiving religious instruction. Even so, officials sometimes disrupted religious classes for children.

Concerns about separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism fueled repressive security measures by the Government of the XUAR, some of which restricted peaceful expressions of religious belief by Uighur Muslims. In contrast to the close supervision of the practice of Islam in the XUAR, Muslims in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan Provinces engaged in religious practice with little interference by the Government.

Authorities often failed to distinguish among those involved in peaceful activities in support of independence, "illegal" religious activities, and violent terrorism. Therefore, it was often difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted those who were peacefully seeking political goals or the right to worship, or those engaged in violence.

In the XUAR, the Government pledged to root out religious activities it deemed illegal, including religious education independent of the IAC, Hajj travel independent of the IAC, and use of religious texts deemed illegal. According to websites and public announcements of local governments in the XUAR, officials began collecting signatures of citizens who agreed to resist "illegal religious activities" and promised to hold open trials of individuals accused of "illegal religious activities" to demonstrate its consequences to the public. The Government instructed imams to increase their efforts to gather information on worshippers and warned that they would be held responsible if their students took part in illegal religious activities. Tabligh (sharing one's faith with others) was deemed an "outstanding problem."

Compared to other provinces and autonomous regions, the XUAR government maintained the most severe legal restrictions on a child's right to practice religion, and XUAR authorities in a few areas prohibited women, children, CCP members, and government workers from entering mosques. Tight controls on religion in the XUAR reportedly affected followers of other religions as well. NGOs reported restrictions on public expressions of faith by teachers, professors, and university students, including during Ramadan.

The Government attempted to enforce the RRA by limiting Hajj trips independent of the IAC. Some Uighur Muslims sought passage to Mecca from points outside the country for a variety of reasons, including to save money, to avoid cumbersome restrictions and procedural requirements, or to avoid tests of "patriotism" by the Government.

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. The CCP has stated that party members who belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion. The "Routine Service Regulations" of the People's Liberation Army states explicitly that servicemen "may not take part in religious or superstitious activities."

Nonetheless, some Communist Party officials engage in religious activity, most commonly Buddhism or a folk religion, and a growing number of Communist Party

members have become Christians. Leaders of the PRAs, which are included in national and local government organizations to represent their constituencies on cultural and educational matters, may be members of the CCP. An analysis by the Pew Forum of a 2005 survey conducted by InterMedia, an international research and consulting organization, found that 33 percent of Communist Party officials and government employees are very or somewhat interested in having media access to information on the topic of religion. This makes them the most interested occupational group among the dozen or so groups reported.

The Government interfered with the employment of some individuals due to their religious or spiritual beliefs or activities. There were widespread reports that employers, both Chinese and foreign, were discouraged from hiring members of Falun Gong. There were also several reports from Protestant Christians that they were terminated by their employers due to their religious activities. In April 2009, Liu Aixin, a professor at Yang-En University, reported that the university terminated his employment because of his Christian activities.

Under the RRA, registered religious organizations may compile and print materials for their internal use. However, if they plan to distribute their materials publicly, they must follow national printing regulations, which restrict the publication and distribution of literature with religious content. The 1994 Provisions Regarding the Administration of Contracts to Print Bible Texts named the Nanjing Amity Printing Company (Amity Press) as the sole printer for domestic Bibles. A few CPA dioceses that have their own presses reportedly print the Catholic Bible. Bibles so produced could be purchased only at TSPM or CPA churches.

Amity has printed more than 50 million Bibles for the Chinese readership and distributes them through a network of 70 urban distribution points and a mobile distribution network that travels to rural areas. In April 2009, 20 Australian members of the Bible Society, which works with Amity Printing Company, distributed 10,000 Bibles throughout the country. The Government authorized publishers (other than Amity Press) to publish at least 1,000 Christian titles. Even so, increasing interest in Christianity produced a corresponding increase in demand for Bibles and other Christian literature, and members of unregistered churches reported that the supply and distribution of Bibles was inadequate in some rural locations. Individuals could not order Bibles directly from publishing houses, and distributors were sometimes wary of unfavorable attention that orders for purchases of large volumes of Bibles might attract.

Under the RRA and regulations on publishing, religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles and Qur'ans, may be confiscated and unauthorized publishing houses closed. Religious adherents are subject to arrest and imprisonment for illegal publishing. Authorities often confiscated Bibles in raids on house churches. Customs officials continued to monitor the importation of Bibles and other religious materials. In the XUAR, government authorities also at times restricted the sales of the Qur'an.

The Government and the Holy See have not established diplomatic relations, and there was no Vatican representative in the country. The role of the Pope in selecting bishops, the status of underground Catholic clerics, and Vatican recognition of Taiwan remained obstacles to improved relations. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson stated that the Government advocated improvement in relations.

The CPA does not recognize the authority of the Holy See to appoint bishops; however, it allowed the Vatican's discreet input in selecting some bishops. An estimated 90 percent of official Catholic bishops have reconciled with the Vatican. Likewise, the majority of Catholic bishops appointed by the Government have received official approval from the Vatican through "apostolic mandates."

The distinction between the official Catholic Church, which the Government controls politically, and the unregistered Catholic Church has become less clear over time. In some official Catholic churches, clerics led prayers for the Pope, and pictures of the

Pope were displayed.

### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

During the period covered by this report, officials continued to scrutinize, and in some cases harass, registered and unregistered religious and spiritual groups. In some areas government officials abused the rights of members of unregistered Protestant and Catholic groups, Uighur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and members of groups the Government designated "evil religions," especially Falun Gong. Reports of abuse of religious freedom in the XUAR, Tibetan areas, and Beijing continued during the reporting period.

The Government detained, arrested, or sentenced to prison terms many religious leaders and adherents for activities related to their religious practice; however, the Government denied detaining or arresting anyone solely because of his or her religion. Local authorities often used an administrative process, through which citizens may be sentenced by a non-judicial panel of police and local authorities to up to three years in reeducation through labor (RTL) camps, to punish members of unregistered religious groups. During the reporting period, the Government reportedly held religious adherents and members of spiritual movements in RTL camps because of their religious beliefs. In 2009, the Government reported that there a total of 190,000 individuals were being held in 320 RTL camps throughout the country. The Laogai Research Foundation has estimated that there may be 500,000 to 2 million individuals in RTL camps. In some areas security authorities used threats, demolition of unregistered property, extortion, interrogation, detention, physical attacks, and torture to harass leaders of unauthorized groups and their followers.

Offenses related to membership in unregistered religious groups were often classified as crimes of disturbing the social order. Religious leaders and worshippers, however, faced criminal and administrative punishment for a wide variety of activities, including those related to the Government's refusal to allow members of unregistered groups to assemble, travel, and publish, or in connection with its ban on public proselytizing. Some members of unregistered groups were charged with conducting illegal business operations in relation to their publishing activities.

In February 2009, several prominent religious leaders were harassed, placed under surveillance, restricted to their homes, or forced to leave Beijing during the visit of Secretary of State Clinton. These leaders included Pastor Zhang Mingxuan, president of the CHCA, and Christian writer Yu Jie. Authorities also reportedly ordered several Christian leaders to leave Beijing during the Olympic Games.

Prominent religious leaders and religious freedom activists and their family members continued to serve time in prison. On February 4, 2009, a dozen police officers forcibly took Christian attorney Gao Zhisheng from his hometown in Shaanxi. Gao had defended house church Christians and Falun Gong members. The Ministry of Justice rated him one of the country's top ten lawyers in 2001. After his arrest, NGOs published a letter he reputedly wrote detailing more than 50 days of brutal torture at the hands of police during a detention in 2007. Gao claimed he was tortured in retribution for writing an open letter to President Bush and the U.S. Congress describing the Government's human rights abuses, including religious freedom abuses against Falun Gong and house churches. He also questioned the choice of Beijing as host of the 2008 Olympic Games. Gao's current whereabouts were unknown at the end of the reporting period. Gao's wife and children, who resettled in the United States during the reporting period, stated that security officials kept them under constant surveillance at home and school while they lived in Beijing. During sensitive periods, they were forcibly relocated to other parts of the country.

In October 2008, on the eve of the third anniversary of the CHCA, Beijing authorities severely beat the two sons of Pastor Zhang Mingxuan, Zhang Jian and Zhang Chuang. Authorities also forcibly relocated Zhang and detained his wife and sister-in-law at approximately the same time. Authorities pressed Zhang to sign a document agreeing to

abolish the CHCA, and when Zhang refused and attempted to file an administrative statement of complaint, the court refused to accept his case.

In September 2007, an overseas NGO reported that Christian pastor Zhang Rongliang's health continued to deteriorate in prison. He was sentenced in June 2006 to seven years and six months in prison on charges of obtaining a fraudulent passport and illegally crossing the border. At the end of the reporting period, Zhang continued to serve out his sentence.

On February 8, 2009, 79-year-old Shuang Shuying was released from prison after serving a two-year prison sentence. Shuang had been sentenced in April 2007, reportedly in an effort to pressure her son, house church pastor Hua Huiqi, into providing information to the Government about individuals who visited him. Hua was detained during the Beijing Olympic Games en route to a worship service at Kuanjie Church at which President Bush was present.

Ablikim and Alim Kadeer, sons of Rebiya Kadeer, a human rights and religious freedom advocate for Uighur Muslims, continued to serve nine- and seven-year prison terms, respectively, on charges related to state security and economic crimes. They were arrested days after Kadeer was elected president of a Uighur human rights organization in 2006.

In January 2009, officials from the TSPM, RAB, and PSB seized the house of Christian preacher and evangelist, Chang Fengying, after years of reported persecution. Chang, her husband, and their son had hosted a house church meeting in their home with more than 200 members.

On December 14, 2008, more than 50 officers from the SARA and the PSB raided Liangren Church in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, during a Sunday service. Officers issued a "Notice of Administrative Penalty" charging the members of the house church with organizing an "illegal gathering" and demanded that they stop their gatherings. Liangren Church's members are mostly college students. They claimed the PSB started watching them after they sent members to assist with earthquake relief efforts in Sichuan.

On December 3, 2008, in Henan Province, officials from the Taikang County Domestic Defense Protection Squad reportedly broke into a home and arrested more than 50 house church Christians, seizing 22 copies of the textbook "Training in Ministering the Gospel to Children" along with other information about proselytizing. Twenty Christians were sentenced to 15 days of administrative detention and a US\$146 (1,000 RMB) fine. Three members each received a one-year sentence of RTL for "illegal proselytizing" and attending an "illegal gathering."

On November 2, 2008, police simultaneously raided nine house churches associated with the "Local Church" network in Hangzhou city, Zhejiang Province. Each of the nine house church meetings had approximately 25 to 30 persons present. Police handcuffed the nine leaders and took them to the local PSB office. More than 30 other church members were also arrested. College students present were required to write a confession paper and a statement guaranteeing that they would not go to other gatherings. A day after the incident, family members were notified that the nine leaders would be detained for two weeks. Five were released after being detained eight to 15 days under administrative detention. Four of the leaders were given sentences of 12 to 18 months of RTL and accused of "preaching to students."

On October 12, 2008, police raided a house church in Nanyang city, Henan Province. Four individuals were sentenced to five days each of administrative detention. Their pastor, Zhu Baoguo, was charged with being a member of an "evil religion" and sentenced to one year of RTL. Zhu was released in December 2008 for medical reasons.

On September 27, 2008, police in Yanqing County, near Beijing, interrogated more than 110 house church Christians and detained two in administrative detention. The members

of the house church, all college students and other young adults, were detained, questioned and photographed. Authorities also contacted the universities of the students. Two individuals received administrative detention: Shi Lei was held for 10 days, and Chen Xianchuang was held 13 days on charges of "using an evil religion to engage in illegal gathering."

Uighur Christians reported tightening controls on house church worship.

On March 6, 2009, in XUAR, Pastor Lou Yuanqi received a verdict of insufficient evidence on charges of "utilizing superstition to undermine the law." The prosecutor sent his case back to the PSB. Despite this ruling, Lou continued to be imprisoned at the end of the reporting period. Lou was originally arrested in May 2008.

On January 2, 2009, PSB officers raided a house church in Urumqi, XUAR. Fifty-one Christians were detained for questioning, with 48 released later that day. Two church leaders, Zhu Jinfeng and Yang Miaofa, were released after paying a fine. One leader, Zhou Li, was sentenced to 10 days' administrative detention.

Two Uighur Christians, both of whom were arrested in 2007 reportedly because of their work at expatriate Christian firms, remained in custody.

On March 31, 2009, Uyghur Christian Alimujiang Yimiti was reportedly seen at Nongsanshi Hospital in Kashgar. He was under police escort with his hands bound. Yimiti was arrested in January 2008 on charges of "engaging in illegal religious activities in the name of business" and preaching Christianity to ethnic Uighurs, according to an NGO. The Government later charged him with "subversion of the national government and endangering national security." Although in May 2008 his case was returned to prosecutors for "insufficient evidence," he remained in jail.

Wusiman Yiming, who was arrested in November 2007 and accused of "assisting foreigners with illegal religious activities," continued to serve his sentence of two years' reeducation through labor in Kashi detention center, Hetian, XUAR. His wife said after visiting him that he was suffering from malnutrition and an injury to his hand.

On December 25, 2008, a house church in Bozho, Anhui Province, was raided while holding Christmas services. The Government arrested two leaders.

On the same day, during a Christmas service in Qitai County, XUAR, seven house church leaders were arrested by the PSB officials. The two Bozho church leaders and the seven Qitai church leaders were in prison at the end of the reporting period.

On December 24, 2008, in Yucheng County, Henan Province, nine Christian women were arrested while reenacting the nativity on the street. Five of the women were forced to pay fines of up to 3,500 RMB (USD 515) before being released. The rest were detained for two weeks.

On December 16, 2008, in Nanyang, Henan Province, more than 40 pastors and house church leaders were detained at a Christian leaders' gathering. Each was required to pay a USD \$146 to \$292 (1,000 to 2,000 RMB) fine. Sixteen Christians were additionally sentenced to 10 to 15 days' administrative detention for engaging in an "illegal religious gathering."

In November 2008, in four separate incidents in Hubei, four Christians were seen being forcibly taken away by PSB officials. None of the four were seen again. The missing people are Yi Peng, Zhu Yongping, Wang Ke, and one other unnamed man.

In July 2008, four Christians in Inner Mongolia were arrested and their houses searched. On July 6 the Municipal PSB detained Yu Yongqing, a house church missionary. The PSB also arrested Christians Li Li, Li Shusen, and Wang Shuang, whom police reportedly tortured. The charges against them were "utilizing an evil religion to undermine the

implementation of state law." Li Li was reportedly also accused of "associating with overseas reactionaries."

On July 4, 2008, Pastor Zhang Zhongxin was sentenced by the reeducation-through-labor committee of Jining City, Shandong Province, to two years of RTL. Authorities accused him of participating in an "evil religion" for his role in organizing Sunday school training courses and for preaching in Tibet.

On December 31, 2008, Yuan Shenlun, a coal miner, was arrested and accused of "using an evil religious organization to obstruct justice." He had received a call from a stranger asking him to pick up religious pamphlets, but when he went to meet the stranger, he was instead arrested by PSB officers. Yuan was previously arrested in 1983; he was accused of being part of the Christian "Shouter" sect (which the Government has designated an "evil religion") and served 14 years in prison.

The Government detained a number of individuals on charges relating to illegal publication of religious materials. On April 9, 2009, bookstore owner Shi Weihuan stood trial for printing and distributing Bibles and Christian books without government permission. Shi was initially detained in November 2007, but authorities released him in January 2008 due to insufficient evidence. He was taken into custody again in March 2008. In June 2009, a Beijing court sentenced Shi to three years in prison.

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. Ongoing harassment of unregistered bishops and priests was reported, 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.

On March 30, 2009, underground Catholic bishop Jia Zhiguo was again detained in Hebei province. This was his 13th confrontation with police since 2004.

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

On March 24, 2009, Catholic priest Ma Shengbao was arrested. At the end of the reporting period, he had not been seen again. The whereabouts of Zhouzhi Bishop Wu Qinjing remained unknown. Auxiliary Bishop of Xiwanzi diocese, Hebei Province, Yao Liang, remained in detention during the reporting period. Father Li Huisheng, whom police reportedly tortured in August 2006, remained in custody serving a seven-year term for "inciting the masses against the Government."

In March 2009, authorities in Hotan City, XUAR, closed at least seven religious schools and conducted house-to-house searches. At least 39 persons were arrested, and officials claimed to have seized books, propaganda material, and weapons. The Government also prosecuted individuals for taking part in "underground scripture readings."

The Government sought the forcible return from other countries of several Uighur Muslims, some of whom had reportedly protested limits on the Hajj and encouraged prayer and fasting by fellow Muslims. According to NGO reports in July 2007, Pakistan reportedly arrested and forcibly returned to the country Osman Alihan, a Uighur Muslim businessman who participated in protests against Hajj restrictions. That same month the Government of Saudi Arabia also reportedly arrested and forcibly returned Habibulla Ali, a Uighur Muslim who discussed the Hajj restrictions with other Uighur Muslims in Saudi Arabia, according to NGO reports.

According to Falun Gong practitioners abroad, since 1999 several hundreds of thousands of 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 its members have been subject to excessive force, abuse, rape, detention, forcible psychiatric commitment and treatment (including involuntary medication and electric shock treatment), and torture, and that some members, including children, have died in custody. Practitioners who refused to recant their beliefs were sometimes subjected to extrajudicial "legal education" centers after the expiration of their criminal sentences. According to former RTL camp detainees, Falun Gong practitioners make up a significant percentage of the RTL camps' population.

Overseas Falun Gong organizations alleged a surge in arrests and deaths of Falun Gong practitioners carried out to prevent disturbances during the Olympic Games. They claimed that authorities arrested thousands of adherents and imprisoned hundreds, and that 100 practitioners died in 2008 as a result of persecution. Reports of abuse were difficult to confirm because the Government prevented Falun Gong members from meeting with foreign reporters and government officials. These organizations also reported that the Government harassed their members in other countries, including the United States, through threatening phone calls and physical harassment. The Government frequently used harsh rhetoric against Falun Gong. In May 2009, several attorneys who had represented Falun Gong practitioners did not have their licenses renewed by the Lawyers Associations in their localities.

In April 2009, Zhang Xingwu, a retired physics professor from Shandong Province, was sentenced to seven years in prison after police found Falun Gong literature in his apartment.

In November 2009, a Shanghai court sentenced Liu Jin to three and a half years in prison for downloading from the Internet and distributing to others information about Falun Gong.

In December 2009, Bu Dongwei left the country after serving two and a half years at a re-education through labor facility; he maintained that he was tortured because of his Falun Gong activities. Before his arrest, he worked for The Asia Foundation, a U.S.-based organization.

On August 8, 2008, Falun Gong practitioner Cao Changling disappeared while riding his bicycle. Two days later, his family was summoned to the Tenth Wuhan City Hospital, where they found him unconscious, with broken bones and bruises. Cao died on August 15 without regaining consciousness; his family maintained that the circumstances of the death were suspicious.

On January 26, 2008, Beijing police stopped musician Yu Zhou and his wife, poet Xu Na, for speeding. Police found Falun Gong materials in their car and detained the couple. Yu died in custody 11 days later. He was reportedly tortured; police refused to allow an autopsy. His wife was sentenced to three years in prison.

The Government designated North Korean citizens in the country "economic migrants" rather than refugees and forcibly returned them to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. According to reports from NGOs, refugees, defectors, and missionaries, individuals who were forcibly returned and found to have contacted foreigners, including Christian missionaries, were arrested and subjected to harsh punishment.

For a more detailed discussion, see the U.S. State Department's 2008 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in China and the 2009 International Religious Freedom Report on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion*

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

There were no other reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or who had not been allowed 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." It allowed the PRAs to expand their cooperation with religious groups in other countries and funded the building of some new places for worship by registered religious groups. The Government granted approval for an increasing number of religious books to be published by officially approved publishers.

The Government stated in its new National Human Rights Action Plan that it would "encourage ... and support ... religious circles in launching social welfare programs [and] exploring methods and channels for religions to better serve society and promote the people's well-being."

In November 2008, the Development Research Committee of the State Council (which advises the CCP Central Committee and the State Council) held an unprecedented meeting with a delegation of house church leaders. The house church leaders requested registration independent of the PRAs. Chinese academics also urged the Government to allow independent registration. Observers in the country considered this an important first step in establishing relations between the Government and house churches.

The number of Christian websites on the Internet increased. The Government also allowed Wang Xiaochao, a philosopher at a Beijing university, to translate two major works of St. Augustine, *The Confessions* and *The City of God*, into Chinese directly from Latin. Other well-known Christian authors whose works are available in Chinese bookstores included C.S. Lewis, Francis Schaeffer, and Rick Warren.

Following the May 2008 Sichuan earthquake, the Government allowed several registered religious organizations to provide disaster relief. Amity Foundation, a state-approved Protestant-affiliated group registered as a national charity (and entitled to receive tax-free charitable donations), helped to build homes and classrooms, grain storage facilities, and water supply lines. Amity also built a new Protestant church to replace one the earthquake destroyed. They reported that the congregation's membership was up from 180 to nearly 1,000 people. Amity's Catholic counterpart, Beifang Jinde Social Services Center in Hebei Province, which works in conjunction with Caritas, was also active in the quake zone, sending Catholic nuns with medical training to assist the survivors.

Sichuan-area officials also permitted many unregistered religious groups, including "house churches," to, as President Hu had earlier directed, "play an active role in promoting economic and social development" following the earthquake. Several unregistered groups, although lacking legal status, were nonetheless permitted to provide a broad range of social services to persons affected by the earthquake. However, some unregistered groups also reported that government officials prevented them from providing aid to earthquake survivors.

Several international religious organizations that cooperated with state-sanctioned organizations were permitted to provide aid to survivors. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) and Samaritan's Purse, both U.S.-based religious charities, sent a cargo jet loaded with supplies to the region immediately after the quake. In April 2009, BGEA shipped 65,000 "shoe box gifts" to Chengdu for distribution to children affected by the earthquake. The Tzu Chi Foundation, a Taiwan-based Buddhist organization that was officially recognized and registered as a charitable body in March 2008, sent medical aid, volunteers, and supplies to the afflicted area.

### **Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination**



Religious and ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims, experienced societal discrimination because of their religious beliefs and their status as ethnic minorities with distinct languages and cultures. Conflicts among ethnic groups in Tibetan areas, including Han, Hui, Tibetan Buddhists, and Tibetan Muslims, escalated during the reporting period. Because ethnicity and religion are often inextricably linked, it is difficult to categorize many incidents specifically as ethnic or religious intolerance.

#### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton attended services at a registered church during her visit to Beijing in February 2009. Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi raised religious freedom concerns during her May 2009 visit to Shanghai. President George W. Bush raised religious freedom with the Government during his visit to Beijing in August 2008 and also attended worship at a registered church. In July 2008 President Bush met with Uighur Muslim activist Rebiya Kadeer and house church activist Bob Fu.

U.S. officials regularly raise religious freedom issues with government officials, including calling for the release of religious prisoners, reform of restrictive registration laws, and freedom for minority and banned religious groups to practice their faiths.

The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Wuhan regularly urge the Government to implement greater religious freedom in the country. U.S. officials condemned abuses and supported positive trends. In exchanges with the Government, including religious affairs officials, U.S. representatives 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 when 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 general protested government actions to curb freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, including the arrests of Falun Gong followers, Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims, and Catholic and Protestant clergy and lay persons. The Embassy routinely raised cases of detention and abuse of religious practitioners with appropriate government officials.

U.S. officials underscored to the Government that freedom of religion would strengthen, not harm, Chinese society. U.S. officials encouraged the Government to support the growth of faith-based aid by both legally registered and unregistered religious groups and to loosen government controls on religious practice.

The Embassy and consulates general also collected information about abuses and maintained contacts with a wide spectrum of leaders within religious communities. The Department of State's nongovernmental contacts included Chinese academic experts on religion, 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 Leadership Programs to see firsthand the role religion plays in U.S. society.

During the reporting period, the U.S. Ambassador 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 consulates general met with government officials responsible for religion and with clergy or practitioners in official and unofficial religious groups.

Since 1999 the Secretary of State has designated the country as a "Country of Particular

Concern" (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The most recent re-designation as a CPC was on January 16, 2009. 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).

## TIBET

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

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

During the reporting period, the level of religious repression in the TAR and other Tibetan areas remained high, especially around major religious holidays and sensitive anniversaries. Government control over religious practice and the day-to-day management of monasteries and other religious institutions continued to be extraordinarily tight due to continued fallout from the March 2008 outbreak of widespread unrest in Tibetan regions.

The Government continued to conduct "patriotic education" campaigns in monasteries, requiring monks and nuns to sign statements personally denouncing the Dalai Lama and to study communist political texts and propaganda praising the Chinese government's management of religious affairs. Noncompliant monks and nuns faced expulsion from their monasteries. Many monks and some abbots fled their monasteries to avoid complying.

The patriotic education campaigns and other restrictions on religious freedom were major factors leading monks and nuns from a number of monasteries to mount initially peaceful protests in Lhasa on March 10, 2008. On March 14 and 15, the protests and security response devolved into rioting by Tibetans and a violent police crackdown in Lhasa. Official state media reported the detentions of 4,434 persons in Tibetan areas (1,315 in Lhasa) between March and April 2008, although some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) placed the number at more than 6,500. Many of these individuals were monks or nuns. The overall number of monks and nuns in the monasteries declined in the weeks and months following the protests and remained at lower levels than pre-March 2008. The government continued to criticize the Dalai Lama harshly in public, including through news outlets.

During the reporting period, Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns experienced difficulty traveling and hotels frequently denied them registration. They were also subject to extraordinary police checks and arbitrary searches. Such discriminatory treatment was particularly severe in large cities, including Beijing and Chengdu, before and during the 2008 Olympic Games. Buddhist monks and nuns, as well as lay Tibetans, continued to report difficulties obtaining passports from their local public security bureaus, a situation some have attributed in part to an official effort to hinder travel to Dharamsala, India, where the Dalai Lama resides. The Government increased personnel on the Tibet-Nepal border after the protests, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that fewer Tibetans arrived at the Tibet Reception Center in Nepal during the reporting period than in prior years.

The U.S. government encouraged the PRC Government and local authorities to respect religious freedom and preserve religious traditions. U.S. diplomatic personnel visited the TAR twice during the reporting period. TAR officials repeatedly denied U.S. diplomatic personnel's requests to visit Tibetan regions, limiting the ability of U.S. diplomatic personnel to travel freely and talk openly with persons in Tibetan areas. The U.S. government protested credible reports of religious persecution and discrimination, discussed individual cases with the authorities, and requested further information about specific incidents. The U.S. government continued to urge the PRC Government to engage in constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives and to address policies in Tibetan areas that have created tensions due to their impact on Tibetan religion, culture, and livelihoods.

### Section I. Religious Demography

Tibetan areas total 871,649 square miles. According to recent official estimates, the Tibetan population within the TAR was approximately 2.4 million of a total permanently registered population of 2.8 million. These figures undercount non-Tibetans who have migrated to the TAR to pursue job and business opportunities. According to official statistics, the ethnic Tibetan population in the Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan Provinces was 2.9 million. Most ethnic Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority also practices Bon, the related traditional Tibetan religion, and a smaller minority practices Islam. Many Tibetan government officials and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members are religious believers, despite government and CCP prohibitions against cadres practicing religion.

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

The number of monks and nuns in monasteries continued to fluctuate significantly, due in part to the "patriotic education" campaigns, which sometimes resulted in the expulsion from monasteries and nunneries of monks and nuns found "politically unqualified" or who refused to denounce the Dalai Lama. Other monks and nuns reportedly left their monasteries to take refuge from the authorities. According to the June 21, 2009 *People's Daily*, there are 3,000 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with 120,000 monks and nuns in the TAR and Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces. In the TAR, there are 1,789 religious venues with 46,000 monks and nuns. According to statistics collected by the China Center for Tibetan Studies, a government research institution, there are 1,535 monasteries in Tibetan areas outside the TAR. Informed observers estimate 60,000 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns live in Tibetan areas outside the TAR. The figures have varied over time for a number of reasons, including government policy, politically motivated detentions, monastic secularization, and commercialization due to tourism. The widespread practice of monasteries accepting unregistered novices and other monks compounds the difficulty in estimating the true number of practicing Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns. Authorities in the TAR and other Tibetan areas tightened enforcement of longstanding regulations that forbid monasteries from accepting individuals under the age of 18, hindering the traditional practice of sending young boys to monasteries for religious training. However, there were monks as young as eight years of age at some monasteries. Many monks studied and worshiped within their monasteries without being "registered" or obtaining an official monastic identification card issued by religious affairs authorities. Hence, two population figures exist for many monasteries, the official number reflecting the number of monks allowed by the government, and the actual figure, which may be twice the official number or even higher, and which includes both registered and unregistered monks.

### Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The PRC Constitution and laws provide for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe, although the Constitution protects only religious activities defined as "normal." The Constitution states that religious bodies and affairs are not to be "subject to any foreign control." The Government sought to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered religious groups and places of worship, as well as to control the growth and scope of the activity of registered and unregistered religious groups. The Government remained wary of Tibetan Buddhism and its links to the Dalai Lama, and tightly controlled religious practices and places of worship in Tibetan areas.

Officials from the CCP's United Front Work Department, which oversees the implementation of Beijing's Tibet policies, and envoys of the Dalai Lama continued to conduct talks during the reporting period, meeting in July and November 2008 in Beijing. Prior rounds of formal talks between the Dalai Lama's envoys and government officials occurred annually from 2002 to 2007.

Patriotic education campaigns intensified dramatically following the March 2008 unrest and remained frequent throughout the reporting period. Increasing "legal education" at monasteries and nunneries was a major theme of political education campaigns and reflected the Government's desire to influence monks and nuns not to engage in "illegal" protests and gatherings. As part of these campaigns, monks and nuns were required to affirm that Tibet is an inalienable part of the PRC, in many cases to denounce the Dalai Lama, and to express allegiance to the government-appointed Panchen Lama. The primary responsibility for conducting monastic political education remained with monks selected by the Government at each monastery. In some cases, religious affairs officials directed the content of monks' and nuns' religious teachings and forced them to include positive remarks about Chinese leaders and Communist Party religious policies. While the form, content, and frequency of patriotic training at monasteries varied widely, the conduct of such training remained a requirement and was a routine part of monastic management.

For instance, in March 2009, a public notice posted in Kumbum (Ta'er) Monastery in Qinghai Province said monks must be "patriotic" and warned that they would face expulsion if they "damage[d] the image of the monastery" or broke any laws. Several media sources reported frustration with such campaigns among Tibetan Buddhists was an ongoing source of unrest in Tibetan areas both inside and outside the TAR. Government Order No. 2 of June 2008 authorizes the detention of monks and nuns for re-education and allows authorities to expel insubordinate religious leaders from their monasteries. Officials in Ganzi (Kardze), Sichuan Province, issued the order. Monasteries that do not cooperate can be "removed from the list of registered religious institutions and closed down." These new measures provide a legal basis for activities the Government was already undertaking in the TAR and the TAPs.

Rules and regulations that provide a legal basis for government control over Tibetan religious traditions continued to be enforced. These included the Management Measures on Reincarnation (MMR) issued by the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), which codified government assertion of control over the selection of Tibetan religious leaders and reincarnate lamas. The regulations stipulate that local governments at the city level and above have the power to deny permission for a Tibetan Buddhist lama to be reincarnated. At least provincial-level governments must approve reincarnations, while the State Council reserves the right to deny the reincarnation of living Buddhas of "especially great influence." The regulations state no foreign organization or individual can interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas, and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within the PRC.

The TAR Implementation of the PRC Religious Affairs Regulations (the Implementing Regulations) issued by SARA continued to assert state control over all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious groups, venues, and personnel. The TAR government has the right under the Implementing Regulations to disapprove any individual's application

to take up religious orders. The Implementing Regulations codified the practice of controlling the movement of nuns and monks, also requiring them to seek permission from county-level religious affairs officials to travel to another prefecture or county-level city within the TAR to study or teach.

In Tibetan Buddhism, visiting different monasteries and religious sites for specialized training by experts in their particular theological tradition is a key component of religious education. The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) reported that monks and nuns who went to India claimed their main reasons for choosing to leave Tibet were to continue their studies, which they believed they were unable to do inside Tibet, and to obtain a blessing from the Dalai Lama. Travel restrictions are partly to blame for the continuing decline in the quality of monastic education in Tibetan areas of China.

The Implementing Regulations also gave the Government formal control over the building and management of religious structures and over large-scale religious gatherings. Official permission is required for all monastic construction and "reconstructing, extending, or repairing religious venues." Likewise, monasteries must request permission to hold large or important religious events. During the reporting period, the TAR government continued to control Tibetan Buddhist religious relics tightly, maintaining that the relics, along with religious institutions themselves, were state property.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government officials often associated Buddhist monasteries with pro-independence activism in Tibetan areas. In practice, the Government regulated the operations of major monasteries through Democratic Management Committees (DMCs) composed of monastic leaders who generally complied with directions from local religious affairs bureaus (RABs). In most cases, the Government did not contribute to the monasteries' operating funds. Regulations restricted leadership of 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 among the members of the committees. Although authorities permitted many traditional religious ceremonies and practices and public manifestations of belief during the reporting period, they rigorously confined most religious activities to officially designated places of worship and maintained tight control over religious leaders and religious gatherings of laypeople. The Government forcibly suppressed activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent or advocacy of Tibetan independence.

The Government stated that there were no limits on the number of monks in major monasteries and that each monastery's DMC could decide independently how many monks the monastery could support. In practice, however, the Government imposed strict limits on the number of monks in major monasteries, particularly in the TAR and Sichuan's Ganzi (Kardze) TAP.

In the TAR and in Tibetan areas of Sichuan Province, as part of "patriotic education" campaigns, the Government reportedly removed hundreds of young monks from monasteries and hundreds of schoolchildren from schools attached to monasteries. Such children were placed in public schools to receive officially mandated compulsory education. During the reporting period, local authorities frequently pressured parents, especially those who were CCP members or government employees, to withdraw their children from monasteries in their hometowns, private schools attached to monasteries, and Tibetan schools in India. In some cases, local authorities confiscated identity documents of parents whose children were studying at Tibetan schools in India as a means of forcing the parents to make their children return home.

Authorities closely supervised the education of lamas approved by the Government. For example, the education of the current Reting Rinpoche, who is 11 years old (born October 3, 1997), differed significantly from that of his predecessors. Government officials, rather than religious leaders, managed the selection of his religious and lay tutors.

The Government severely restricted contact between several important reincarnate lamas and the outside world. For example, the 11th Pawo Rinpoche, whom the 17th Karmapa recognized in 1994, remained under official supervision at Nenang Monastery. Foreign delegations have repeatedly been refused permission to visit him. The Government also refused requests by international observers to meet Buddhist figures such as Gendun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama and the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize as the Panchen Lama.

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

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

Spiritual leaders reportedly encountered difficulty reestablishing historical monasteries in rural areas due to lack of funding and government denials of permission to build and operate religious institutions. Officials in some areas contended these religious venues drained local resources and served as a conduit for political infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. However, in some areas, the Government restored monasteries as a means to promote tourism and boost revenue.

Tibetan residents in a community outside the TAR that had been the scene of major protests in March 2008 reported continued restrictions during the reporting period on their ability to access the local monastery, with security forces limiting the number of times per week they could enter the monastery to worship. In August 2008, an annual religious festival tens of thousands of persons normally attended at Labrang Monastery in Gansu Province was cancelled, reportedly due to official desire to prevent any incidents from taking place during the Olympic Games.

Authorities permitted resumption of the Geshe Lharampa examinations, the highest religious examination in the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, in July 2004 after a 16-year ban. On April 12, 2009, nine monks from Tashi Lhunpo, Gandan, and Magon Monasteries passed the Geshe exam. The ban on the Great Prayer Festival (Monlam Chenmo), which is closely associated with the Geshe exam process, remained in effect. Traditionally, hundreds of thousands of Tibetans gathered in Lhasa during the Monlam Chenmo; however, public celebration of the festival has been banned since 1990. Approximately 100 monks conducted the Monlam Chenmo at the Jokhang Temple in 2009. Restrictions on religious education made it difficult for monks to receive the level of instruction necessary to take or pass the Geshe Lharampa exam. Monks who wished to sit for the exam traditionally traveled to the TAR to study at such monasteries as Sera and Drepung; however, restrictions on the movement of monks from one monastery to another within the Tibetan areas of China made it difficult to receive advanced religious education. These restrictions, along with regulations on the transfer of religious relics between monasteries, weakened the strong traditional ties between large monasteries in the Lhasa area and affiliates throughout Tibetan areas.

Restrictions sometimes were applied even to monks visiting other monasteries within the same county for short-term study or teaching. Since the unrest in March 2008, monks in

several Tibetan areas reported that they were unable to leave their home monasteries. In March 2009 a public notice in Kumbum (Ta'er) Monastery required monks wishing to go on leave to obtain permission from superiors. During the period in March 2009 that coincided with the 50th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising and the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile, numerous monasteries experienced disruptions in cellular telephone, text messaging, Internet, and other communication services.

After the outbreak of violence on March 14, 2008, security forces blocked access to and from important monasteries, including those in the Lhasa area. Nighttime police raids removed many monks from important monasteries in Lhasa in the first few months after the March 2008 crackdown. A heavy police presence in the monasteries restricted the movement of monks and prevented "unauthorized" visits, including those by foreign journalists. Similar restrictions were in place in March 2009, when foreign journalists were prevented from entering most Tibetan areas. On March 9, the Foreign Correspondents Club of China issued a statement saying reporters from six news organizations had been detained in Tibetan areas of Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan provinces, even though, unlike the TAR, these areas were open to foreign journalists.

The Government increased security measures during sensitive anniversaries and festival days in the TAR and other Tibetan areas. After many Tibetans inside and outside China called for a cancellation of Tibetan New Year (Losar) celebrations out of respect for those who died as a result of the March 14, 2008 riots and subsequent protests, government officials in many Tibetan communities ordered monks to celebrate the holiday, which fell on February 25. In March 2009, authorities in Lhasa heightened security in major monasteries to control possible gatherings to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1959 unsuccessful Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule.

Some government officials maintained there was no law against possessing or displaying pictures of the Dalai Lama, but rather most Tibetans chose not to display his picture. However, the Implementing Regulations state that "religious personnel and religious citizens may not distribute books, pictures, or other materials that harm the unity of the nationalities or endanger state security." Some officials deemed photos of and books by or about the Dalai Lama as materials that violated the Implementing Regulations.

Nevertheless, many Tibetans displayed photos of the Dalai Lama and the Dalai Lama-recognized 11th Panchen Lama in their homes, in lockets, and on cellular telephones. The ability of Tibetans to display the Dalai Lama's picture varied regionally and with the political climate.

In major monasteries, especially those that attract large numbers of tourists, pictures of the Dalai Lama were not openly displayed. His picture also could not be purchased openly in the TAR or other Tibetan areas of China. Merchants who ignored the restrictions and sold Dalai Lama-related images and audiovisual material reported that authorities frequently imposed fines. In Tibetan areas outside the TAR, visitors to several monasteries saw pictures of the Dalai Lama prominently displayed, although monks reported that they would temporarily remove such photos during inspections by RAB and other officials. During an "anti-crime" crackdown in Lhasa in January 2009, police searched homes and businesses, in addition to personal cell phones and other electronic devices, for "illicit" images (including images of the Dalai Lama) and music. According to numerous reports, authorities in many Tibetan areas confiscated or defaced photographs of the Dalai Lama in monasteries and private residences following the March 2008 unrest. Furthermore, authorities appeared to view possession of such photos or material as evidence of separatist sentiment. The Government also continued to ban pictures of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the man widely recognized as the Panchen Lama.

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

The prohibition against celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6 continued during the reporting period.

Many Tibetan religious people in Ganzi and Aba Prefectures in Sichuan were unable to obtain a passport during the reporting period. The application process was not transparent, and reported obstacles ranged from bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption to denials based on the applicant's political activities or religious beliefs. There were instances in which authorities confiscated previously issued passports. In some cases, high-ranking monks and Living Buddhas were able to obtain a passport only after promising not to travel to India. Many other passport applications were simply denied. Monks and nuns have experienced greater difficulty obtaining passports since the March 2008 unrest.

Difficulty obtaining a passport continued to limit the ability of Tibetans to travel to India for religious purposes. Passport and border controls became tighter following the unrest that began in March 2008, making legal foreign travel more difficult and illegal border crossings nearly impossible. Nevertheless, during the reporting period, hundreds of Tibetans, including monks and nuns, traveled to India via third countries, and most of them sought refugee status in India. The number of Tibetans who returned to China after temporary stays in India was unknown but reportedly declined significantly from previous years. The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 596 Tibetans arrived at the Tibet Reception Center in Nepal in 2008, compared to 2,156 in 2007. There were continuing reports that the Government detained Tibetans seeking to cross the border from China to Nepal illegally to go to India. Such detentions reportedly lasted as long as several months and sometimes took place without formal charges.

In 2007, approximately 615 Tibetan religious figures held positions in local National Peoples Congresses and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The CPPCC is a political advisory body that nominally serves to allow non-Communist Party delegates to participate in the administration of state affairs. Some Tibetan religious figures accepted government positions and openly practiced Buddhism.

Travel restrictions for foreign visitors to and within the TAR and to other Tibetan areas continued during the period covered by this report, and the Government tightly controlled visits by foreign officials to religious sites in the TAR. Foreign media were completely barred from the TAR, with the exception of a small number of closely monitored government-organized trips. Foreign visitors were often turned around at police roadblocks or denied bus tickets in Tibetan areas outside the TAR, ostensibly for safety reasons, while Chinese tourists passed unhindered. Local government officials were often reluctant to say whether confidential travel bans were in effect. In accordance with a 1989 regulation, any foreign visitor was required to obtain an official confirmation letter issued by the Government before entering the TAR. On April 5, 2009, the TAR formally reopened for foreign tourists who had obtained a TAR travel permit.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

On March 10, 2008, monks and nuns in Lhasa and Tibetan areas of Gansu, Sichuan, and Qinghai provinces held peaceful demonstrations to mark the 49th anniversary of the unsuccessful Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule and to protest government policies, including restrictions on religious freedom. Following the spread of reports that security forces arrested protestors in Lhasa, monks from Drepung, Sera, and Ganden monasteries, as well as nuns from the Chutsang nunnery, demonstrated against the arrests. After two days of protests, police began to use tear gas to disperse the monks and nuns and then surrounded major monasteries in Lhasa. According to reports, on March 14, when the People's Armed Police (PAP) confronted a group of monks from Ramoche Monastery protesting near the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, Tibetan onlookers began pulling up paving stones and throwing them at police. Police withdrew from the area, and Tibetan crowds began attacking Han and Hui civilians and their businesses. According to media reports, police forcibly regained control of Lhasa by the evening of March 15. The Government then closed monasteries and nunneries in Lhasa, imposed a



curfew, and prohibited foreign media from entering the TAR.

In the days and weeks following the violence in Lhasa, protests – nearly all of them peaceful – spread across Tibetan areas, including Qinghai, Sichuan, and Gansu provinces. The Government responded with increased police and military presence in these areas. By March 27, 2008, more than 42 county-level locations, as well as the cities of Chengdu, Lanzhou, and Beijing, reported protest activity. According to researchers at Columbia University, there were approximately 125 documented protest incidents between mid-March and early June 2008. A forceful security response interrupted many protests that began peacefully, although in a small number of cases, local authorities effectively defused escalating tension through negotiation and dialogue with local religious figures.

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

The number of monks and nuns at several monasteries decreased after the protests of spring 2008. Information about the locations of many who had been arrested was difficult to confirm. There were reports of ongoing mass detentions of monks and of monasteries being sealed off by police and military personnel, who routinely blocked cellular phone and Internet access, as "patriotic education" campaigns intensified. More than 80 nuns reportedly were detained in Sichuan Province after March 2008.

According to numerous sources, many of those detained were subjected to extrajudicial punishments, such as beatings and deprivation of food, water, and sleep for long periods. In some cases, detainees reportedly suffered broken bones and other serious injuries at the hands of PAP and Public Security Bureau (PSB) officers. According to sources who claimed to be eyewitnesses, the bodies of some people who were killed during the violence or who died during interrogation were disposed of secretly rather than being returned to their families.

In April 2009, Tulku Phurbu Tsering Rinpoche went on trial for weapons charges related to protests that took place in 2008 in Kardze County, Sichuan. Police charged they found weapons in his home; the monk and his Beijing-based lawyer insisted the weapons were planted and he confessed after being tortured. He faced up to 15 years' imprisonment if found guilty. On April 28, judgment on the case was postponed.

On March 25, 2009, according to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), PSB personnel beat to death Phuntsok, a monk from the Drango Monastery in Kardze, after he passed out leaflets on the property of PSB headquarters.

On March 24, 2009, two nuns, Yangkyi Dolma and Sonam Yangchen, of Dragkar Nunnery in Kardze, Sichuan Province, were reportedly detained and beaten for staging a protest at the Kardze County market square. Yangkyi Dolma allegedly distributed a handful of handwritten pamphlets, and both nuns shouted pro-Tibet slogans before PAP officers beat them and took them away.

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

According to a Xinhua report, on March 9, 2009, a monk named Sheldrup died after reportedly committing suicide due to "stress." In April 2008, Chinese authorities detained and severely beat Sheldrup following peaceful protests. After releasing him, authorities

published his name on "wanted" signs, which indicated they would detain him again. Sheldrup left his monastery and went into hiding until his death.

On March 6, 2009, according to the TCHRD, Lobsang Khandro, a nun from Gema Dra-wok Nunnery in Kardze, was arrested for staging a solo protest march. A few minutes into the march, police beat Khandro and took her into custody.

In November 2008, Jigme Guri, a monk at Labrang Monastery in Gansu Province, was rearrested after filming a video, later posted on YouTube, in which he detailed beatings by prison authorities during two months of detention beginning March 21, 2008. According to Jigme, the beatings left him unconscious for six days, and he required two hospitalizations. On November 4, 2008, authorities reportedly detained Jigme again for unknown reasons. Jigme was released in May 2009.

On March 14, 2008, Chinese authorities detained Tendar after he attempted to prevent police from beating a monk. Police reportedly tortured Tendar during his detention, causing serious bodily injuries that led to his death on June 19, 2008.

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's Political Prisoner Database, as of July 2009, there were 689 Tibetan prisoners of conscience, 439 of whom were monks or nuns.

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

In April 2009, Dokru Tsultrim, a monk from Ngaba Gomang Monastery in Ngaba County, Ngaba, TAP, Sichuan Province, was arrested for writing two articles critical of the Government. His current whereabouts are unknown.

In March 2009, Chinese authorities re-arrested Jigme Gyatso, who was previously arrested in March 2008 and then released in October 2008, for providing assistance to the makers of the documentary film "Leaving Fear Behind." Gyatso, also known as Golog Jigme, was a monk at Labrang Monastery in Gansu Province. Gyatso's whereabouts were unknown.

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

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

In February 2009, nine monks from the Samye Monastery were sentenced to prison terms varying from two to 15 years for their participation in the March 2008 protests at the Samye government administrative headquarters in Dranang County. A 10th monk was reported to have committed suicide.

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

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

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

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

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

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

On March 21, 2009, Tashi Sangpo, a monk at the Ragya Monastery in Qinghai, killed himself after being arrested on suspicion of promoting Tibetan independence.

After March 2008, several monks and nuns committed suicide as a means of protest against government restrictions, including restrictions on religious freedom in the TAR and other Tibetan regions.

On February 27, 2009, the monk Taby of Kirti Monastery in Ngaba (Aba) Prefecture, Sichuan Province, committed self-immolation.

According to the blog of Tibetan poet and human rights activist Woesser, the following monks and nuns committed suicide as a form of protest. On March 23, 2008, at the Ramoche Temple in Lhasa, the monk Thogme hanged himself.

On March 27, 2008, at the Garden Monastery in Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province, the monk Lobsang Jinpa hanged himself. At the Guomang Temple, a monk killed himself. On April 12, 2008, in Lhasa's Meltro Gongkar County, at the Choelung Nunnery, Lobsang Tsomo hanged herself. On April 16, 2008, in Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province at the Kirti Monastery, the blind monk Toisam killed himself.

No new information is available about the Nangpa La Pass incident of September 2006 when PRC border guards shot and killed Buddhist nun Kelsang Namtso. Border guards took into custody 25 individuals from a group of 70 Tibetans crossing the border.

Gendun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama and the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize as the Panchen Lama, and Tenzin Delek Rinpoche remained in detention or prison, as did dozens of monks and nuns who resisted patriotic education campaigns. Diplomats and NGOs advocated for international access to Nyima, who turned 20 years old on April 25, 2009. In July 2007, the Vice Chairman of the TAR told foreign journalists Nyima was a high school student in the TAR and had "asked not to be disturbed." The Government continued to insist that Bainqen Erdini Qoigyijabu (born Gyaltzen Norbu on February 13, 1990), whom it selected in 1995, is the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation.

The Government did not provide any information on Lama Chadrel Rinpoche, who reportedly remained under house arrest for leaking information about the selection of

the Panchen Lama.

#### *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. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

Since ethnicity and religion are often linked in many parts of China, it is difficult to categorize many incidents solely as ethnic or religious intolerance. Tensions among ethnic groups in Tibetan areas, including the Han, the Muslim Hui, and others, remained high during the reporting period. Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns reported that they were frequently denied registration at hotels particularly during sensitive times, including the period around the Beijing Olympics. Tensions between individuals of different religious beliefs in the TAR and TAPs were also related to economic competition.

### **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 pressure in cases of abuse. 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 General officials protested and sought further information on cases whenever there were credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination.

U.S. diplomatic personnel in the country maintained contacts with a wide range of religious leaders and practitioners in Tibetan areas to monitor the status of religious freedom. After the outbreak of unrest in the TAR and other Tibetan areas in March 2008, U.S. Government officials repeatedly requested diplomatic access to affected areas, but authorities denied most of these requests. Unpublished restrictions on travel by foreigners into the TAR and other Tibetan areas imposed in March 2008 resulted in U.S. diplomats and other foreigners being turned back, ostensibly for their own safety, at police roadblocks, or being refused transportation on public buses to Tibetan areas outside the TAR that were officially open to foreign visitors. These incidents continued in the reporting period, particularly in March 2009.

---