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# 2013 Report on International Religious Freedom - China

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## Executive Summary

The constitution states citizens enjoy "freedom of religious belief" but limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities." The government applies this term in a manner that is not consistent with China's international human rights commitments with regard to freedom of religion. In practice, the government restricted religious freedom. The constitution also proclaims the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned "patriotic religious associations" (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant), however, are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services. The government's respect for religious freedom overall remained low during the year. In Tibetan areas and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) there were particularly serious violations of religious freedom.

The government exercised state control over religion and restricted the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents when these were perceived, even potentially, to threaten state or Chinese Communist Party (CCP) interests, including social stability. The government harassed, assaulted, detained, arrested, or sentenced to prison a number of religious adherents for activities reported to be related to their religious beliefs and practices. There were also reports of physical abuse and torture in detention.

Local authorities often pressured unaffiliated religious believers to affiliate with patriotic associations and used a variety of means, including administrative detention, to punish members of unregistered religious or spiritual groups. In some parts of the country, however, local authorities tacitly approved of or did not interfere with the activities of unregistered groups.

There was societal and employment discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists experienced severe societal discrimination, especially around sensitive periods.

U.S. officials at all levels repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns and pressed for the expansion of religious freedom. U.S. officials consistently urged the government to adhere to internationally recognized rights of religious freedom, protested violations of religious freedom, acknowledged positive trends, and met with members of religious communities, including those being persecuted for their beliefs. The embassy protested the imprisonment of individuals on charges related to their religious practices and other abuses of religious freedom. The Ambassador hosted functions for various religious groups and highlighted the importance of religious freedom during visits to XUAR and

the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). The Department of State also brought religious leaders and scholars to the United States to deepen their understanding of the role of religion in American society. Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated the country as a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

## Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 1.35 billion (July 2013 estimate). In its report to the United Nations Human Rights Council during its Universal Periodic Review in October, the government stated there were more than 100 million religious believers, 360,000 clergy, 140,000 places of worship, and 5,500 religious groups. Estimates of the numbers of religious believers vary widely. For example, a 2007 survey conducted by East China Normal University states that 31.4 percent of citizens aged 16 and over, or 300 million people, are religious believers. The same survey estimates that there are 200 million Buddhists, Taoists, or worshippers of folk gods, although accurate estimates are difficult to make because many adherents practice exclusively at home.

According to the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), there are more than 21 million Muslims in the country; unofficial estimates range as high as 50 million. Hui Muslims are concentrated primarily in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. Uighur Muslims live primarily in Xinjiang. According to Xinjiang Statistics Bureau data from 2010, there are approximately 10 million Uighurs in Xinjiang.

Prior to the government's 1999 ban on Falun Gong, a self-described spiritual discipline, it was estimated that there were 70 million adherents.

The 2011 Blue Book of Religions, produced by the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a research institution directly under the State Council, reports the number of Protestants to be between 23 and 40 million. A June 2010 SARA report estimates there are 16 million Protestants affiliated with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the state-sanctioned umbrella organization for all officially recognized Protestant churches. According to 2012 Pew Research Center estimates, there are 68 million Protestant Christians, of whom 23 million are affiliated with the TSPM.

According to SARA, more than six million Catholics worship in sites registered by the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA). The Pew Center estimates there are nine million Catholics on the mainland, 5.7 million of whom are affiliated with the CPA.

In addition to the five nationally recognized religions, local governments have legalized certain religious communities and practices, such as Orthodox Christianity in Xinjiang, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, and Guangdong provinces. Some ethnic minorities retain traditional religions, such as Dongba among the Naxi people in Yunnan and Buluo-tuo among the Zhuang in Guangxi. Worship of the folk deity Mazu has been reclassified as "cultural heritage" rather than religious practice.

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

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The constitution and other laws and policies generally restrict religious freedom. The constitution states Chinese citizens have "freedom of religious belief," but limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities," a term applied in a manner that falls well short of China's international human rights commitments with regard to freedom of religion. The constitution does not define "normal." The constitution provides for the right to hold or not hold a religious belief and states that state organs, public organizations, and individuals may not discriminate against citizens "who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion." It is not possible to take legal action against the government on the basis of the religious freedom protections afforded by

the constitution. Criminal law allows the state to sentence government officials to up to two years in prison if they violate religious freedom. There were no reported cases of such prosecutions during the year.

The government has signed, but not ratified, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides all individuals the right to "adopt a religion or belief" of choice and manifest belief through "worship, observance, and practice."

CCP members are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. Members who belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion, although these rules are not universally enforced. The vast majority of public office holders are CCP members.

Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned "patriotic religious associations" are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services. Other religious groups, such as Protestant groups unaffiliated with the official patriotic religious association or Catholics professing loyalty to the Vatican, are not permitted to register as legal entities. Proselytizing in public or meeting in unregistered places of worship is not permitted. Tibetan Buddhists in China are not free to venerate the Dalai Lama and encounter severe government interference in religious practice (see Tibet section). Religious groups independent of the five official government patriotic religious associations have difficulty obtaining any other legal status and are vulnerable to coercive and punitive action by SARA, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), and other party or government security organs.

Certain religious or spiritual groups are banned by law. The criminal law defines banned groups as "evil cults" and those belonging to them can be sentenced to prison. A 1999 judicial explanation states this term refers to: "those illegal groups that have been found using religions, *qigong* [a traditional Chinese exercise discipline], or other things as a camouflage, deifying their leading members, recruiting and controlling their members, and deceiving people by molding and spreading superstitious ideas, and endangering society." There are no public criteria for determining, or procedures for challenging, such a designation. The government maintains a ban on the Guanyin Method Sect (Guanyin Famen or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy), Zhong Gong (a *qigong* exercise discipline), and Falun Gong. The government also considers several Christian groups to be "evil cults," including the "Shouters," Eastern Lightning, Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), Full Scope Church, Spirit Sect, New Testament Church, Three Grades of Servants (or San Ban Pu Ren), Association of Disciples, Lord God Sect, Established King Church, Unification Church, Family of Love, and South China Church.

The CCP maintains a Leading Small Group for Preventing and Dealing with the Problem of Heretical Cults and its implementing "610" offices (named for the date of its creation on June 10, 1999) to eliminate the Falun Gong movement and to address "evil cults."

The religious and social regulations permit official patriotic religious associations to engage in activities such as building places of worship, training religious leaders, publishing literature, and providing social services to local communities. The CCP's United Front Work Department, SARA, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs provide policy guidance and supervision on the implementation of these regulations, which are often enforced in an arbitrary and capricious manner. Most leaders of official government religious organizations serve in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a CCP-led body that provides advice to the central government from business leaders, academics, and other segments of society.

Since 2005, SARA has acknowledged through a policy posted on its website that family and friends have the right to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study, without registering with the government. Authorities still regularly harass and detain small groups, however, that meet for religious purposes in homes and other locations. Some house church members say they have more freedom than in the past to conduct religious services, as long as they gather only in private.

The law permits domestic nongovernmental institutions (NGOs), including religious organizations, to receive donations in foreign currency. The law requires documented approval by SARA of donations from foreign sources to domestic religious groups of over one million renminbi (RMB) (\$165,180).

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

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

The government and the Holy See have not established diplomatic relations, and the Vatican has no representative in the country. The CPA does not recognize the authority of the Holy See to appoint bishops; approximately 40 Catholic bishops remain independent of the CPA and operate unofficially. In April the CPA announced the Regulation on the Election and Consecration of Bishops, requiring candidate bishops to publicly pledge support for the CCP. The CPA allows the Vatican discreet input into selecting some bishops, and an estimated 90 percent of CPA bishops have reconciled with the Vatican. Nevertheless, in some locations local authorities reportedly pressure unregistered Catholic priests and believers to renounce all ordinations approved by the Holy See. Most of the Catholic bishops previously appointed by the government as CPA bishops later were elevated by the Vatican through apostolic mandates.

Faith-based charities, like all other charitable groups, are required to register with the government. According to several unregistered religious groups, an additional prerequisite is obtaining official co-sponsorship of the registration application by the local official religious affairs bureau. These groups often are required to affiliate with one of the five patriotic religious associations. The government does not permit unregistered charity groups of any sort to raise funds openly, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property.

The government has allowed some registered religious organizations to engage in disaster relief and social service activities. Overseas donations received by religious organizations receive favorable tax treatment if the funds are used for charitable activities.

Under the regulations, if a religious structure is to be demolished or relocated because of city planning or construction of key projects, the party responsible for demolishing the structure should consult with the religious affairs bureau and the religious group using the structure. If all parties agree to the demolition, the party conducting the demolition should agree to rebuild the structure or provide compensation equal to its appraised market value. In some cases officials do not hold developers accountable to these regulations or collude with them in their demolition plans.

Registered religious organizations are allowed to compile and print religious materials for internal use. To distribute religious materials publicly, an organization must follow national printing regulations, which restrict the publication and distribution of literature with religious content. The government limits distribution of Bibles to TSPM/Chinese Christian Council entities such as churches, church bookshops, and seminaries. Individuals cannot order Bibles directly from publishing houses. Members of unregistered churches report the supply and distribution of Bibles are inadequate, particularly in rural locations. There are approximately 600 Christian titles legally in circulation. According to a foreign Christian source, in the last 10 years an estimated 200 Christian bookstores and nine domestic Christian publishers have opened in the country.

Under the law religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles and Qurans, may be confiscated and unauthorized publishing houses closed. Parents are permitted to instruct children under the age of 18 in religious beliefs and children may

participate in religious activities. Officials in the XUAR, however, require minors to complete nine years of compulsory education before they can receive religious education. According to media reports, authorities in the Xinjiang town of Yining bar minors under the age of 18 from entering the city's mosques. The law imposes penalties on adults who "force" minors to participate in religious activities. The teaching of atheism in schools is allowed.

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

Strict birth limitation policies remain despite relaxations proposed during the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Communist Party of China Central Committee in November. Some religious adherents oppose the state's family planning policy for reasons of religious belief and practice.

Foreign residents who belong to religious groups not officially recognized by the government report being permitted to practice their religions, although, according to the rules, foreigners may not proselytize, conduct religious activities at unregistered venues, or conduct religious activities with local citizens at religious venues. The constitution states official government religious bodies are not "subject to any foreign domination." A CCP directive to universities provides guidance on how to prevent proselytizing among university students by foreigners.

The government allows some foreign educational institutions to provide religious materials in Chinese, which are used by both registered and unregistered religious groups.

According to the law inmates have the right to believe in a religion and maintain their religious beliefs while in custody. In practice, some prisoners and detainees of faith have been told to recant their beliefs, particularly Falun Gong practitioners, who reportedly endure "thought reform," or are not provided adequate access to religious materials, facilities, or clergy.

Some critics state amendments to the mental health law still do not provide meaningful legal protections for Falun Gong practitioners, members of unregistered religious organizations, and others sent to psychiatric facilities for political reasons.

### *Government Practices*

The government's respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom fell well short of its international human rights commitments. The government's repression of religious freedom remained severe in the XUAR and in Tibetan areas, particularly during "sensitive periods," such as Ramadan, significant anniversaries, or before important political events.

Religious affairs officials and security organs scrutinized and restricted the religious activities of registered and unregistered religious and spiritual groups. The government harassed, detained, arrested, or sentenced to prison a number of religious adherents for activities reported to be related to their religious beliefs and practices. These activities included assembling for religious worship, expressing religious beliefs in public and in private, and publishing religious texts. There were also reports of physical abuse and torture in detention.

Human rights organizations asserted in some instances security forces shot at groups of Uighurs in their homes or during worship. Authorities typically characterized these operations as targeting "separatists" or "terrorists." The government reportedly sought the forcible return of ethnic Uighurs living outside the country, many of whom had sought asylum for religious persecution. In some cases third countries complied with Chinese requests for forcible refoulement of Uighur asylum-seekers. There were reports of imprisonment and torture of Uighurs who were returned. The government's control of information coming out of the XUAR, together with its increasingly tight security posture

there, made it difficult to verify the conflicting reports.

There was no new information on Su Zhimin, an unregistered Catholic bishop who disappeared after being taken into police custody in 1996.

In September Falun Gong practitioner Yu Jinfeng was reportedly arrested and then taken to a former reeducation-through-labor (RTL) facility. Her lawyer, Tang Jitian, was refused access to Ms. Yu and then detained for five days. Li Chang, a Falun Gong practitioner serving an 18-year sentence for reportedly holding a leadership position in Falun Gong and organizing a peaceful protest in 1999, remained in prison. Yu Changxin, a Falun Gong practitioner who was sentenced to 18 years in prison in 2000 on charges of using a heretical sect to obstruct justice, remained in prison.

According to *Legal Daily*, a newspaper published under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice, the MPS directly administered 24 high-security psychiatric hospitals for the criminally insane (also known as *ankang* facilities). Unregistered religious believers and Falun Gong adherents were among those reported to be held solely for their religious association in these institutions. Despite October 2012 legislation banning involuntary inpatient treatment (except in cases in which patients expressed an intent to harm themselves or others), critics stated the law did not provide meaningful legal protection for persons sent to psychiatric facilities. Patients in these hospitals reportedly were given medicine against their will and sometimes subjected to electric shock treatment.

International Falun Gong-affiliated NGOs and international media reported detentions of Falun Gong practitioners continued to increase around sensitive dates. Authorities reportedly instructed neighborhood communities to report Falun Gong members to officials and offered monetary rewards to citizens who informed on Falun Gong practitioners. Detained practitioners were reportedly subjected to various methods of physical and psychological coercion in attempts to force them to renounce their beliefs. It remained difficult to confirm some aspects of reported abuses of Falun Gong adherents. Reports from overseas Falun Gong-affiliated advocacy groups estimated thousands of adherents in the country had been sentenced to administrative sentences of up to three years in RTL camps. According to an April investigative article published in a mainland Chinese magazine, officials at Liaoning Province's Masanjia Labor Camp subjected prisoners to forced labor and abuses, including torture with electric batons, forced feeding, and prolonged solitary confinement. In November the international press reported the Masanjia Labor Camp had been closed, with its last group of detainees having been released in mid-September. Officials did not confirm these reports. Overseas Falun Gong advocacy groups stated the majority of prisoners at Masanjia were Falun Gong practitioners.

Individuals belonging to or supporting other banned groups were imprisoned or administratively sentenced to RTL on charges such as "distributing evil cult materials" or "using a heretical organization to subvert the law."

On numerous occasions since his detention in 2009, prison authorities tortured Wang Yonghang, a lawyer who openly advocated for religious freedom and defended Falun Gong practitioners. He was serving a seven-year sentence for "using a cult to undermine implementation of the law." In 2012, he was reportedly suffering from multiple ailments, including tuberculosis, internal fluid buildup, and paralysis below the waist. In early 2013, it was reported his health had deteriorated further and authorities refused to allow visits or provide his family with updates regarding his condition.

Although Zhu Yubiao, a lawyer who had represented Falun Gong and under arrest since August 2010, was scheduled to be released in August 2012, authorities instead transferred him to Sanshui Law School in Foshan, Guangdong Province, where Falun Gong practitioners are reportedly forced to attend mandatory study sessions. Family members said Zhu began a hunger strike August 20, 2012 to protest his ongoing detention. No new information was available by year's end.

In November 2012, Beijing police arrested Zhang Fengying during a grocery shopping

trip after she spoke to local residents about the benefits of practicing Falun Gong, according to her daughter. A court later charged Zhang with "using an evil cult" to undermine law enforcement. On January 22, authorities transferred her to the Tiantanghe Women's RTL Camp in Beijing for two years of forced labor.

In parts of the country, local authorities tacitly approved of or did not interfere with the activities of some unregistered groups. Guangdong officials, for example, increasingly allowed unregistered places of worship to hold services provided they remained small in scale and did not disrupt "social stability." In other areas local officials punished the same activities by restricting events and meetings, confiscating and destroying property, physically assaulting and injuring participants, or imprisoning leaders and worshippers. In some parts of the country, authorities charged religious believers not affiliated with a patriotic religious association with various crimes, including "illegal religious activities" or "disrupting social stability." Local authorities pressured religious believers to affiliate with patriotic associations and used administrative detention, including confinement and abuse at RTL camps, to punish members of unregistered religious or spiritual groups. While the National People's Congress Standing Committee passed legislation in December to abolish RTL camps and state media announced inmates would be released, state media later issued a clarification that all pre-abolition penalties would be considered legitimate. Advocacy groups reported some camps had simply been re-labeled.

Official tolerance for groups associated with Buddhism, except for Tibetan Buddhism, and Taoism was greater than for groups associated with other religions. The government continued to restrict the growth of unregistered Protestant church networks and cross-congregational affiliations.

Unregistered house churches fell outside of the TSPM structure. The government did not recognize house churches and maintained they did not exist. At the same time, the government asserted individuals had a right to participate in family worship in their homes in small numbers. In April seven house church Christians were sentenced in Ye County, Henan Province, to prison terms ranging from three to seven and a half years on charges of "using a cult to undermine law enforcement," reportedly for recording and copying sermons. Their July and August appeal hearings were delayed due to judicial irregularities and to allow for gathering of new evidence. They remained in custody during these delays; a new appeal date had not been announced by year's end.

In November authorities in Henan Province detained Zhang Shaojie, president of Nanle County's Christian TSPM Committee, and over 20 members of his Nanle County Christian Church. Many of the detainees had reportedly traveled to Beijing to petition authorities about a land dispute between the church and the Nanle County government. During the Christmas holiday and afterward, authorities harassed other members of the church, lawyers attempting to assist the detainees, and Christian practitioners who traveled to Nanle County to show solidarity. Zhang Shaojie and several members of his church remained in detention at the end of the year.

On December 9, authorities in Shanxi Province reportedly arrested Pastors Feng Tiandong and Jiang Mao from the unregistered Zhenzihou Church. Their families were later notified the two pastors were detained on a charge of "organizing and using an evil cult to obstruct the law." At year's end, they remained in detention.

In June a baptism ceremony for more than 500 participants in Zhengnan County, Guizhou Province was reportedly canceled due to pressure from local Religious Authorities Bureau (RAB) and United Front Work Department officials.

Thaddeus Ma Daqin, who is recognized by the Vatican as the successor to Aloysius Jin Luxian as Bishop of Shanghai, was rarely seen in public since Ma announced his resignation from the CPA during his July 2012 Vatican-sanctioned consecration ceremony. According to the Shanghai Religious Affairs Bureau, the Chinese Catholic Church suspended Ma's right to conduct religious services for two years due to "improper consecration." He reportedly spent most of his time in seclusion at the



Sheshan Catholic Seminary outside Shanghai, although he occasionally posted on social media and his blog. The Shanghai diocese did not have a leader after Jin Luxian's death in April and was being managed by a five-priest caretaker council.

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

In August media reported public security officers from Qiadong District, Hebei Province, detained and took to an unknown location Song Wanjun, an underground priest of Hebei's Xiwanzi diocese. At year's end his whereabouts remained unknown.

Overseas media reported Shenzhen house church preacher Cao Nan sued the Futian District police in February for illegal detention. On December 8, 2012, police seized Cao and 10 others while he was preaching in Shenzhen's Lizhi Park during new Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's visit to the city. On December 15, 2012, police again detained Cao for 13 days under the charge of "disrupting social order under a false Christian identity" after he returned to the park to preach, according to Western media reports. Results of the lawsuit were not released.

Alimujiang Yimiti, the Uighur leader of an unregistered Christian church, continued to serve a 15-year sentence for "illegally providing state secrets or intelligence to foreign entities." An advocacy organization reported he was being kept under harsh conditions and visits with family had been reduced. Yimiti was sentenced in December 2009 by the Kashgar Prefecture Intermediate People's Court; his appeal was denied in March 2010.

On August 16 local officials in Hainan Province's Lincheng County attacked a group of Christian church members who were trying to prevent the seizure of land on which they planned to build a new church, according to online reports. Local authorities allegedly sold the same parcel of land to both church members and developers but then failed to inform the public of their decision. Several church members, including children and elderly persons, were reportedly injured during the attack.

Following his 2010 release after 11 years in prison on spurious economic charges, Buddhist Zen Master Wu Zeheng continued to face harassment, close monitoring, and restrictions on his movement by authorities in Guangdong Province's Zhuhai City, according to overseas media and religious groups.

Security officials frequently interrupted outdoor services of the unregistered Shouwang Church in Beijing and detained people attending those services for several hours without charge. In August officials detained 37 Shouwang Church members. Authorities restricted the freedom of movement of Shouwang's head pastor and his family and several other leaders. Authorities continued to deny the church access to a property it had purchased for the purpose of holding religious services. At various times the church's website was blocked. In July authorities beat and then held in detention without medical treatment a member of the Shouwang Church when he attempted to attend Sunday services.

The government did not renew the professional licenses of a number of attorneys who advocated on behalf of religious freedom and it imprisoned other religious freedom activists or otherwise impeded their work on behalf of religious clients. Authorities also harassed or detained the family members, including children, of religious leaders and religious freedom activists.

Officials continued to hold "anti-cult" education sessions and propaganda campaigns.

Some officials required families to sign statements guaranteeing they would not take part in house churches and "evil cult" activities involving Falun Gong as a prerequisite for registering their children for school. Media reported government employees in Xinjiang were being forced to sign guarantees they would refrain from religious or political expression. The penalty for not signing could be barring their children from

entering university or being subject to administrative investigation.

Individuals and groups affiliated with religious communities reported the government took their land without adequate compensation in accordance with religious affairs regulations. In April there were reports a church property which at one time had been the Seventh-day Adventist Beimenli Church in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, was demolished after the Three-Self Patriotic Church took over the property and sold it to real estate developers.

Authorities also applied indirect pressure on house churches by using utility companies and CCP neighborhood committees to cut off electricity and evict Christians from their homes.

Pressure from authorities on unregistered churches in Guangdong Province continued. According to online reports, the 1,000-member Guangfu house church in Guangzhou, which rented a new location in August, had its lease suddenly canceled in September under pressure from local authorities. Police in 2012 had cut off the electricity and water supply to the church's recently-purchased Baiyun District facility because "it was being used for illegal gatherings." Government officials also banned the church's Christmas services in December 2012 and made cuts to the power and water supply at the church's meeting place in January.

In Guangdong Province's Dongguan municipality, police and the local RAB continued their harassment of house churches after having shut down churches in the city's Tangxia and Gaobu townships in 2012. According to online reports, the Tangxia and Gaobu house churches' pastors requested a dialogue with the directors of the local RAB about the proper legal procedures to shut down a church. After the authorities refused to review the cases and retract the shut-down notices, the two churches filed an appeal in August 2012 with the Dongguan municipal government to overturn the local officials' decisions. After losing the initial appeal in December 2012, the minister of the house church in Gaobu submitted a second petition to the Dongguan Intermediate Court in January. There was no further information during the year, and the churches remained closed.

On August 16, the police prohibited Guangzhou activist Tang Jingling and his wife Wang Yanfang from attending the funeral of well-known Guangzhou house church Pastor Samuel Lamb. Other pastors were also put under house arrest to prevent them from attending the funeral, according to online reports.

On May 26, religious and local government officials from Hainan Province's Sanya municipality reportedly disrupted a house church's worship service and ordered participants to stop all illegal gatherings, warning they must instead go to the city's registered religious meeting sites. Officials forced the church's landlord to stop renting to the church. They also banned the church's leader from attending a conference in Hong Kong, allegedly to avoid "jeopardizing national security and national interests." Eight other house churches in Sanya, several churches in Hainan's Haikou municipality, and one in Hainan's Baoting county either faced similar harassment by local officials or were ordered shut down, according to online reports.

In the XUAR, the government cited concerns over "separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism" as a pretext to enact and enforce repressive restrictions on religious practices of Uighur Muslims. Authorities often failed to distinguish between peaceful religious practice and criminal or terrorist activities. It remained difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted those seeking political goals, the right to worship, or criminal acts. There was increased pressure in official campaigns to dissuade women from wearing religious clothing and men from wearing beards. Officials singled out lawyers and their families in these campaigns. The Xinjiang judicial affairs department website posted a statement saying, "Lawyers must commit to guaranteeing that family members and relatives do not wear burqas, veils, or participate in illegal religious activities, and that young men do not grow long beards." Authorities in Bulaqsui reportedly kept "stability maintenance" registers that included

information such as whether female Muslims wore a veil. Uighur sources also reported recipients of public welfare stipends were asked to sign a pledge not to cover their faces for religious reasons. Uighurs in Kashgar and Turpan reported officials interfered with fasting during Ramadan. Hui Muslims in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces engaged in religious practice with less government interference than did Uighurs.

Media reported Muslims could apply online or through local official Islamic associations to participate in the Hajj. According to media reports in the country, approximately 11,800 Muslim citizens participated in the Hajj in the fall including 2,223 individuals from Ningxia; 2,228 from Gansu Province; 1,310 from Yunnan Province; and 236 from the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. These figures included Islamic association and security officials sent to monitor Muslim citizens and prevent unauthorized pilgrimages. Figures were not available for pilgrims from the XUAR. According to reports, Hajj pilgrims paid RMB 42,000 (\$6,938) to participate, which included roundtrip flights, meals, and accommodations. Uighur Muslims reported difficulties taking part in state-sanctioned Hajj travel due to the inability to obtain travel documents in a timely manner and difficulties in meeting criteria required for participation in the official Hajj program run by the Islamic Association of China. The government limited the ability of Uighur Muslims to make private Hajj pilgrimages outside of the government-organized program.

Authorities continued their "patriotic education" campaign, which in part focused on preventing illegal religious activities in XUAR.

Authorities in the XUAR imposed strict controls on religious practices during Ramadan. The government barred teachers, professors, civil servants, and CCP members from fasting and attending religious services at mosques. Local authorities reportedly fined individuals for studying the Quran in unauthorized sessions, detained people for "illegal" religious activities or carrying "illegal" religious materials, and stationed security personnel in and around mosques to restrict attendance to local residents. Authorities reportedly hung Chinese flags on mosque walls in the direction of Mecca so prayers would be directed toward them.

There were widespread reports of prohibitions on children participating in religious activities in various localities throughout the XUAR, but observers also reported seeing children in mosques and at Friday prayers in some areas of the region.

Islamic schools in Yunnan Province were reluctant to accept ethnic Uighur students out of concerns they would bring unwanted attention from government authorities and negatively affect school operations. Kunming Islamic College, a government-affiliated seminary, posted an official announcement stating it was open only to students from Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou provinces or from Chongqing municipality.

In various areas throughout the country, religious groups reported authorities rejected their applications for registration because the groups had not affiliated with an official patriotic religious association. In some cases, local officials disrupted religious meetings in private homes, detained participants, and confiscated materials and equipment.

Adherents of the Bimo shamanistic religion, practiced by many of the eight million ethnic Yi living in southwest China, continued to seek government approval to register Bimo as an officially sanctioned religion, but were unable to do so. This limited the Yi people's ability to preserve their religious heritage.

Authorities often confiscated Bibles in raids on house churches. In June a Shanxi court sentenced a bookstore owner and a fellow Christian to imprisonment of five and two years, respectively, on charges related to distribution of Christian books. In the XUAR government authorities at times restricted the sale of the Quran. In March authorities in Kashgar reportedly detained a Uighur Muslim without charge for 63 days for selling the Quran and study aids.

Patriotic religious association-approved Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and some Buddhist monks were allowed to travel abroad for additional religious

study. Religious workers not affiliated with a patriotic religious association faced difficulties in obtaining passports or official approval to study abroad.

Authorities periodically blocked the blogs of a number of religious groups and individuals during the year.

In some instances, foreign groups had to apply for special access to religious facilities.

There were reported incidents of government interference with Falun Gong activities abroad. According to NGO reports and several media outlets, Chinese government officials pressured venues and governments in a number of countries to limit the broadcast time of Falun Gong-associated radio stations and cancel or otherwise delay dance performances by Shen Yun Performing Arts Company, which is associated with Falun Gong.

Registered religious groups provided social services throughout the country, and authorities allowed certain overseas faith-based aid groups to deliver services in coordination with local authorities and domestic groups. Some unregistered religious groups reported local authorities placed limits on their ability to provide social services.

Although authorities required CCP members to be atheists and generally discouraged them from participating in religious activities, attendance by party members at official church services in Guangdong Province was reportedly growing, as authorities increasingly chose to turn a blind eye to their attendance.

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

There was societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Because religion, culture, and ethnicity are often tightly intertwined, it was difficult to categorize many incidents specifically as examples of ethnic or religious intolerance. Religious and ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims, experienced institutionalized discrimination throughout the country both because of their religious beliefs and their status as ethnic minorities with distinct languages and cultures. In the XUAR, tension between Uighur Muslims and ethnic Han continued, as officials strengthened their enforcement of policies banning men from growing long beards, women from wearing veils that cover their faces, and parents from providing their children with religious education. Many hospitals and businesses would not provide services to women wearing veils. In September a Uighur Muslim was reportedly beaten for praying on a bus and later detained by authorities. Tensions also continued among ethnic and religious groups in Tibetan areas, particularly between Han and Tibetans, and, in some areas, between Tibetans and Hui Muslims.

Despite the labor law's provisions against discrimination in hiring based on religious belief, some employers openly discriminated against religious believers. Protestants stated they were terminated by their employers due to their religious activities. Muslims in the XUAR faced discrimination in hiring, lost their positions, and were detained by authorities for praying in their workplaces.

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

U.S. officials regularly urged government officials at the central and local levels to implement stronger protection for religious freedom. The Ambassador met with members of religious groups and religious freedom defenders and highlighted religious freedom in public speeches and private diplomacy with senior officials. At the same time, government pressure led some religious leaders to decline requests for meetings with U.S. government officials. The Department of State, the embassy, and the consulates general regularly called upon the government to release prisoners of conscience, including religious prisoners. The U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue held in July in Kunming included a discussion of religious freedom and visits to a local mosque and Buddhist temple.

U.S. officials met regularly with academics, NGOs, members of both registered and unregistered religious groups, and family members of religious prisoners. The Ambassador hosted events for religious leaders and practitioners, including an iftar that had among its guests prominent imams from around the country. The Department of State nominated a number of religious leaders and scholars to participate in exchange programs related to the role of religion in American society. The Department of State also introduced government officials to members of U.S. religious communities and U.S. government agencies that engaged with those communities.

Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated China as a CPC under the IRFA for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. In August 2011, the Secretary redesignated the country as a CPC and extended existing sanctions under the IRFA related to restrictions on exports of crime control and detection instruments and equipment (Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, P.L. 101-246).

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*Other current U.S. Department of State annual reports available in Refworld:*

- [2014 Trafficking in Persons Report](#) (June 2014)
  - [2013 Country Reports on Terrorism](#) (April 2014)
  - [2013 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) (February 2014)
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