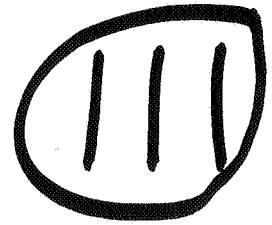


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**U.S. Department of State
Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999:
China**

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CHINA

(Note: Tibet is discussed in a separate annex at the end of this report.)

Section I. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups. During 1998 and the first half of 1999, some unregistered religious groups were subjected to increased restrictions, although the degree of restrictions varied significantly from region to region, and the number of religious adherents, in both registered and unregistered churches, continued to grow rapidly, and--in some areas--with little official interference. Overall, in the years since the Cultural Revolution, when religion was banned, there has been a loosening of repression and a resurgence in religious activity. There are over 180 million religious adherents with a great variety of beliefs and practices, mostly professing Eastern faiths, but with millions adhering to Christianity as well.

The Criminal Law states that government officials who deprive citizens of religious freedom may, in serious cases, be sentenced to up to 2 years in prison. However, there are no known cases of persons being punished under this statute.

The State Council's Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) is responsible for monitoring and judging the legitimacy of religious activity. The RAB and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) United Front Work Department, both of which are staffed by officials who are rarely religious adherents, provide policy "guidance and supervision" over implementation of government regulations on religious activity, as well as the role of foreigners in religious activity.

During the period covered by this report, the Government continued, and, in some areas, intensified a national campaign to enforce 1994 State Council regulations and later provincial regulations that require all places of worship to register with government religious affairs bureaus and to come under the supervision of official "patriotic" religious organizations. The Government officially permits only those Christian churches affiliated with either the Catholic Patriotic Association/Catholic Bishops Conference or the (Protestant) Three-Self Patriotic Movement/Chinese Christian Council to operate openly. There are six requirements for the registration of venues for religious activity: possession of a meeting place; citizens who are religious believers and who regularly take part in religious activity; an organized governing board; a minimum number of followers; a set of operating rules; and a legal

source of income. There are five officially recognized religions--Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism.

At the end of 1997, the Government reported that there were more than 85,000 approved venues for religious activities. Some groups registered voluntarily, some registered under pressure, while authorities refused to register others. Unofficial groups claimed that authorities often refuse them registration without explanation. The Government contends that these refusals were mainly the result of inadequate facilities and meeting spaces. Many religious groups have been reluctant to comply with the regulations out of principled opposition to state control of religion or due to fear of adverse consequences if they reveal, as required, the names and addresses of church leaders. In some areas, efforts to register unauthorized groups are carried out by religious leaders and civil affairs officials. In other regions, registration is performed by police and RAB officials, concurrently with other law enforcement actions. Police closed many "underground" mosques, temples, seminaries, Catholic churches, and Protestant "house churches," many with significant memberships, properties, financial resources, and networks. Leaders of unauthorized groups are often the targets of harassment, interrogations, detention, and physical abuse.

In the past, official tolerance for religions considered to be traditionally Chinese, such as Buddhism and Taoism, has been greater than that for Christianity. As these non-Western faiths have grown rapidly in recent years, there are signs of greater government concern and new restrictions, especially on syncretic sects.

According to official figures published in late 1997, there are over 180 million religious adherents and 3,000 religious organizations. According to some estimates, a large percentage of the population practice some form of traditional folk religion (worship of local gods, heroes, and ancestors). Approximately 8 percent of the population are Buddhist, approximately 1.4 percent are Muslim, an estimated 0.4 to 0.8 percent belong to the unofficial Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church, an estimated 0.08 percent to 1.2 percent are registered Protestants, and perhaps 2.4 to 6.5 percent worship in house churches that are independent of government control. There are no available estimates of the number of Taoists. However, according to a 1997 Government publication, there are over 10,000 Taoist monks and nuns and over 1,000 Taoist temples.

Traditional folk religion has revived in recent years and is tolerated unofficially to varying degrees as a loose affiliate of Taoism, or as an ethnic minority cultural practice, despite government campaigns to eliminate "feudalism and superstition" and to destroy thousands of shrines.

The Government estimates that there may be as many as 2.1 million adherents of Falun Gong (or Wheel of the Law); followers of Falun Gong estimate that there are over 100 million adherents. Some experts estimate that the true number of Falun Gong adherents lies in the tens of millions. Falun Gong blends aspects of Taoism, Buddhism, and the meditation techniques of Qigong (a traditional Chinese martial art) with the teachings of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi (a native of China who currently resides in the United States). Despite the mystical nature of some of Li's teachings, Falun Gong does not consider itself a religion and has no clergy or formal places of worship.

Buddhists make up the largest body of organized religious believers. The Government estimates that there are more than 100 million Buddhists, most of whom are from the dominant Han ethnic group.

However, it is difficult to estimate accurately the number of Buddhists because they often practice their faith without participating in public ceremonies. The Government reports that there are 13,000 Buddhist temples and monasteries and more than 200,000 nuns and monks. In some areas, local governments enforced strictly regulations on places of worship, particularly on illegally constructed Buddhist temples and shrines. During a May 1998 conference in Hunan on provincial religious work, a senior provincial party official said that goals for the coming year were to "Tighten management of places of religious activities, properly handle issues concerning the indiscriminate establishment of temples and the setting up of outdoor Buddha statues, and crack down on heretical religious organizations and illegal religious activities." (A discussion of government restrictions on Tibetan Buddhism can be found in the Tibet annex to this report.)

According to government figures, there are 18 million Muslims, 30,000 Islamic places of worship, and more than 40,000 imams. In some areas where ethnic unrest has occurred, particularly among Central Asian Muslims (and especially the Uighurs) in Xinjiang, officials continue to restrict the building of mosques and the religious education of youths under the age of 18. After a series of violent incidents in Xinjiang in 1997, police cracked down on Muslim religious activity and places of worship, and local authorities issued regulations further restricting religious activities and teaching. According to Amnesty International (AI), a May 1998 report on Xinjiang People's Radio quoted a senior provincial official accusing separatists of having "carried out subversion and sabotage in the region in the name of religious activities." The official said that the Government must "resolutely oppose illegal religious activities" and that religious practice must "uphold the dignity of laws, the interest of the people, the unification of the motherland, and the unity of the nationalities. Any violation will not be tolerated by the people's democratic dictatorship." On April 17, 1998, the Urumqi Evening news reported that 56 mosques in Egarqi had been searched by police. There have been reports that some young Uighur Muslims are being trained outside of the country in Muslim religious schools, or madrassas.

The Government permits, and in some cases subsidizes, Muslim citizens who make the Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. According to government statistics, more than 45,000 Muslims have made the pilgrimage in recent years--5,000 in 1998. Government sensitivity to concerns of the Muslim community is, however, limited. In November 1998, a Qing dynasty mosque was destroyed in Chengdu's Muslim quarter to make way for a boulevard near an expanded city square despite strong opposition from the city's Muslim population. The construction of a new mosque over a complex of retail establishments further offended the community.

The unofficial, Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church claims a membership far larger than the 4 million persons registered with the official Catholic Church. Precise figures are difficult to determine, but Vatican officials have estimated that there are as many as 10 million adherents. According to official figures, the government-approved Catholic Church has 5,000 clergy and over 4,600 churches and meeting houses. China so far has refused to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and there is no Vatican representative in China. Bishops in the official Catholic Church are not consecrated by Rome, but many have been recognized unofficially by Rome. Two Bishops of the official Catholic Church were denied passports to attend the Synod for Asia in April 1998.

The Government maintains that there are between 10 and 15 million registered Protestants, 18,000 clergy, over 12,000 churches, and some 25,000 meeting places. According to foreign experts, perhaps

30 million persons worship in house churches that are independent of government control, although estimates by some house church groups range as high as 80 million.

In recent years, some local authorities have subjected worship services of alien residents to increased surveillance and restrictions. There were reports that in early 1999 the Government issued a circular to tighten control over foreign missionary activity in the country.

Weekly services of the foreign Jewish community in Beijing have been held uninterrupted since 1995 and High Holy Day observances have been allowed for more than 15 years. During the fall of 1998, the foreign Jewish community in Shanghai began holding services in a local hotel. Members experienced initial difficulty in establishing worship services due to the fact that Judaism is not one of the five officially recognized religions, and meetings were temporarily suspended. However, the group since has reestablished its meetings at the hotel, with the approval of the local religious affairs bureau.

Foreigners are not permitted to conduct missionary activities, but foreign Christians currently are teaching on college campuses with minimum interference from authorities as long as their proselytizing is low key. The authorities permit officially sanctioned religious organizations to maintain international contacts that do not entail "foreign control." What constitutes "control" is not defined. Regulations enacted in 1994 codified many existing rules involving foreigners, including a ban on proselytizing by foreigners, but allow foreign nationals to preach to foreigners, bring in religious materials for their own use, and preach to Chinese at churches, mosques, and temples at the invitation of registered religious organizations.

After forcefully suppressing all religious observances and closing all seminaries during the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, the Government began in the late 1970's to restore or replace some damaged or confiscated churches, temples, mosques, and monasteries, and to allow the reopening of seminaries. Implementation of this policy has varied from locality to locality. According to official figures published in late 1997, there are 300,000 clergy and 74 religious schools and colleges. Official religious organizations administer local Bible schools, nearly two dozen Catholic and Protestant seminaries, nine institutes to train imams and Islamic scholars, and institutes to train Buddhist monks. Students who attend these institutes must demonstrate "political reliability" and all graduates must pass an examination on their theological and political knowledge to qualify for the clergy. The Government permitted some Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and Buddhist clergy to go abroad for additional religious studies. In most cases, funding for these training programs is provided by foreign organizations. Both official and unofficial Christian churches have problems training adequate numbers of clergy to meet the needs of their growing congregations. However, due to government prohibitions unofficial churches have particularly significant problems training clergy or sending students to study overseas, and many clergy receive only limited and inadequate preparation.

In May 1999, the Nanjing Union Theological seminary reportedly ordered three students to leave the seminary "voluntarily" because they allegedly opposed the basic principles of the seminary, which include training church workers who are patriotic and who support the Chinese Communist Party. The three students, who were nearing graduation, refused to accept this expulsion, but later left voluntarily in protest.

There was no significant change in official policy toward religious freedom in the period covered by this report and serious problems continued in violation of internationally recognized norms. The Government expanded and intensified the "patriotic education campaign" in Tibet aimed at controlling the monasteries and expelling supporters of the Dalai Lama and launched a crackdown against the Falun Gong spiritual movement in July 1999. The ongoing growth of unregistered churches and registered churches also continued to cause concern among many government and Communist Party officials who perceive unregulated religious gatherings as a potential challenge to their authority, a threat to public order, and an alternative to Communist dogma. In areas where considerable unofficial and unregistered religious activity takes place, local regulations call for strict government oversight of religion and authorities have cracked down on unregistered churches and their members. Some house church members maintained that authorities had renewed efforts in the last half of 1998 to register house churches and to harass or to detain those who resist, especially in Henan and Shandong provinces. In other areas registered and unregistered churches are treated similarly by authorities, existing openly side by side, and many congregants worship in both types of churches and enjoy greater freedom to profess and practice religion than in the past.

Religious groups that preach beliefs outside the bounds of officially approved doctrine--such as the coming of the Apocalypse--often are singled out for particularly severe harassment. Police continued their efforts to close down an underground evangelical group called the "Shouters;" an offshoot of a pre-1949 indigenous Protestant group. The group has been deemed an antigovernment, counterrevolutionary "cult." Since the early 1980's, authorities repeatedly have detained, fined, or imprisoned its members.

On May 13, 1999, the Zhongguo Sanxia Gongcheng Bao (China Three Gorges Project News) reported that on April 21, 1999 71 members of Men Tu Hui (Disciples Sect) were detained by police and members of the Public Security Bureau in Chengkuo county, Chongqing. The article stated that the group was illegal and had carried out various reckless and criminal activities in recent years, including using heresy to spread rumors and stirring up quarrels and trouble among the masses. Newspapers reported in May 1999 that Hunan authorities had initiated a crackdown against the "heretic cult" organization "God's Religion."

On April 25, 1999, more than 10,000 adherents of Falun Gong gathered in front of the Zhongnanhai leadership compound, where most of the country's top officials live and work. The Falun Gong adherents were protesting the detention of some of their members and seeking government acknowledgment of the legitimacy of their practice. The Government allowed the peaceful protest to continue for more than 12 hours. In June 1999, a commentary in the official People's Daily newspaper that called on all Communist Party members to "take the lead in advocating science while doing away with superstition" was seen as an indirect criticism of Falun Gong. The article noted that "some party members and officials who pursue personal gain have been deeply involved in worshipping Buddha and practicing astrology, divination, geomancy and physiognomy." In late June 1999, a media campaign was launched against superstition, theism, and religious idealism. Also in June 1999, the Government warned the group against disturbing social stability and banned it from holding large gatherings. Despite this warning, Falun Gong members reportedly continued to hold demonstrations. On July 20, 1999, authorities began a crackdown on Falun Gong by arresting Falun Gong leaders around the country. On July 22, 1999, Falun Gong was banned by the Government. In the days after the ban was announced, tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners were reportedly detained and

held in stadiums around the country. There were reports that some of those detained were government officials and Communist Party members, and that those detained were required to write statements disavowing the Falun Gong. Government officials who are practitioners of Falun Gong have been required to undergo anti-Falun Gong study sessions. The Government also launched a massive propaganda campaign against the group and its leader, accusing Falun Gong of engaging in antigovernment activities; official commentators labeled Falun Gong's activities "the biggest political disturbance" since 1989. In addition, authorities seized and destroyed Falun Gong literature. On July 29, 1999, a warrant for the arrest of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi was issued; he was charged with holding demonstrations without appropriate permits and disturbing public order.

Restrictions on religious practices in Xinjiang were tight and the Government dealt harshly with religious adherents accused of separatist activities (between 1997 and 1999, there were reported bombings in Xinjiang, Wuhan, and Beijing, which the foreign press suggested may have been the responsibility of Uighur organizations). Amnesty International reported that on January 28, 1999, Ibrahim Ismael was executed in Ili prefecture, Xinjiang. Ismael was a religious scholar known for holding private religious classes for Muslim youth in his home in Memyuzi village, near Gulja, Ili prefecture, Xinjiang. He had been arrested in 1997. After his execution, officials stated that he joined a reactionary organization in 1991, participated in illegal religious activities, helped to organize protests in 1995 and 1997, and helped to organize an attack in 1997 in which five persons died. AI also reported that on January 20, 1998, 11 Uighurs were executed in Jelilyuzi, north of Gulja. They had been arrested after an incident in July 1997 in which a local religious teacher reportedly tried to stop police from arresting 15 villagers whose guilt was doubted by townspeople. The teacher himself was detained, at which point his students tried to intervene and a violent conflict ensued, resulting in the deaths and injury of several persons, including police officers. On October 20, 1998, 10 Uighurs, including 2 women, allegedly were executed in Urumqi. They were convicted of "separatist" activities; six of them reportedly were religious students. Two Uighur prisoners, Ahmat Imin and Eysa Tursun, reportedly were shot in Dachang prison in Lanchau, Gansu province, in 1998; they had reportedly been fired from their jobs with the State Security Bureau in Urumqi for praying and were arrested 3 months later on charges of leaking state secrets. Their families were told that they had been shot while trying to escape from prison.

In some areas, security authorities used threats, demolition of unregistered property, extortion of "fines," interrogation, detention, and at times physical abuse to harass religious figures and followers. Implementing regulations, provincial work reports, and other government and party documents continued to exhort officials to enforce vigorously government policy regarding unregistered churches. In March 1998, the Guangzhou Municipal People's Congress passed highly restrictive religious regulations. Zhejiang province also promulgated new religious affairs regulations that stipulated that "illegal" property and income would be confiscated from those who "1) preside over or organize religious activities at places other than those for religious activities or at places not approved by a religious affairs department; 2) do missionary work outside the premises of a place of religious activity; and 3) sponsor religious training activities without obtaining the approval of a religious affairs department at or above the county level." Regulations in Guangxi, Shanghai, and Chongqing also call for strict government oversight. Authorities particularly targeted unofficial religious groups in Beijing and the provinces of Henan and Shandong, where there are rapidly growing numbers of unregistered Protestants, and in Hebei, a center of unregistered Catholics.

There were many religious detainees and prisoners. In some cases, public security officials have used prison or reform-through-education sentences to enforce regulations. Prominent Protestant house church leader Xu Yongze continues to serve a 3-year reform-through-labor sentence in Pingyuan prison in Henan for allegedly disturbing public order. The Government's 1997 White Paper on Religious Freedom stated that Xu had violated the law by promoting a cult, preaching that the Apocalypse was near, and asking worshipers to wail in public spaces for several consecutive days. Group members deny these charges. Xu's colleagues Qin Baocai and Mu Sheng continue to serve reeducation-through-labor sentences. In September 1998, a group of leaders from house church networks met in Henan and issued a public communique calling on the Government to enter into a dialog with unofficial Protestant churches, to release all religious prisoners, and to redefine what constitutes a "cult." In December 1998, another communique set forth a common theological creed and a joint position on relations with the Government.

In Hebei, where perhaps half of the country's Catholics reside, friction between unofficial Catholics and local authorities continued. Hebei authorities have been known to force many underground priests and believers to make a choice of either joining the "patriotic" church or facing punishment such as fines, job loss, and, in some cases, having their children barred from school.

The whereabouts of Roman Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin, whose followers reported that he was arrested in October 1997, remained unclear. Underground Catholic sources in Hebei claimed that he was still under detention, while the Government denied having taken "any coercive measures" against him. Reliable sources reported that Bishop An Shuxin, Bishop Zhang Weizhu, Father Cui Xing, and Father Wang Quanjun remained under detention in Hebei. In January 1999, Father Hu Duo reportedly was detained in Hebei; and according to a Human Rights Watch report, on January 28, 1999, authorities reportedly detained, beat, and fined an unknown number of underground Catholics in Baoding, Hebei. In May 1999, auxiliary Bishop Yan Weiping was found dead in Beijing, shortly after being released from detention. The circumstances surrounding his death are unclear.

Father Wei Jingkun and Sister Zhang Yanzhi were detained in August 1998 for celebrating the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In addition the Cardinal Kung Foundation reported that Bishop Jia Zhiguo was detained during the June 1998 visit of President Clinton. Reliable sources reported that priests Dong Zhenlu, Chun Yunpeng, and Zhang Ruowang were detained in February 1998; some linked their detention to the visit to China of three foreign religious leaders. Father Lu Genyou and Father Shi Wende reportedly were detained in the spring of 1998. Underground Catholic Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang of Shanghai remained under surveillance and often had his movements restricted. A delegation of American religious leaders was unable to arrange a visit with him when they visited Shanghai in February 1998. In November 1998 Roman Catholic priest Li Qinghua was arrested. According to press reports, Li has been tortured since his arrest.

In May 1999, 500 Christians reportedly occupied Xian's largest church to prevent its demolition after the local Three-Self Patriotic Movement authorities allegedly sold the church to a local property developer (although those authorities had used the proceeds to purchase a new, larger church in a distant suburb). The Hong Kong press reported that the Guangdong provincial government had issued a circular ordering authorities to step up the monitoring of Christian and Muslim activities. In April 1999, a house church service in Henan reportedly was raided by Public Security personnel and 25 Christians were detained. There were reports that as many as 48 Christians, including Catholics and Prote-

stants, were arrested in Henan in January 1999. Human Rights Watch reports that Pastor Li Dexian was detained by Public Security officials on December 2, 1998, in a raid on his meeting place. Bibles and other property were confiscated during the raid. In Henan there were reports that police raided two house church services and detained approximately 140 worshipers in late 1998, beating some of them in the process. On November 5, 1998 the Public Security Bureau surrounded a gathering of house church members in Nanyang and detained over 100 persons, including church leaders, who reportedly were beaten. Some house church leaders have alleged that this raid was initiated at the urging of officials from the local branch of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. There were reports that among those beaten was Cheng Meiyeng, who suffered memory loss as a result of the beating she received. On October 26, 1998 the Public Security Bureau broke up a house service and detained 40 house church members in Liuwan. According to reports some were beaten. House church Pastor Allen Yuan, age 85, reportedly was placed under virtual house arrest for a period of time in June 1998 and again in August 1998 after he held a large ceremony in which 350 worshipers were baptized.

There were reports that foreign missionaries were detained in Fujian province in March 1999 for engaging in missionary activities with an unregistered church.

In May 1998 the authorities released 78-year-old Roman Catholic Bishop Zeng Jingmu 6 months before the end of his 3-year reeducation sentence after foreign governments and religious leaders interceded on his behalf. He is reportedly under house arrest.

Amnesty International reported that a group of four men and four children, all of whom were Muslim Uighurs from Xinjiang, were returned forcibly to China from Kazakhstan in late August or early September 1998; the group had left the country in July 1998. Two of the men, Yasim Karim and Abla Karim, are mullahs; Yasim Karim allegedly had been imprisoned in 1995 in Xinjiang for forming a class to teach the Koran. Both men reportedly refused to acknowledge publicly the merits of government policies in their mosques. The children allegedly were released after 18 days, but the men were believed to remain in detention in Kashgar as of January 1999.

The law does not prohibit religious believers from holding public office; however, most influential positions in government are reserved for party members, and Communist Party officials state that party membership and religious belief are incompatible. Party membership is also required for almost all high level positions in Government and state-owned businesses. The Communist Party reportedly issued a circular in 1997 ordering party members not to adhere to religious beliefs. This followed a 1995 document circulated to party organizations at the provincial level ordering the expulsion of party members who belong to religious organizations, whether open or clandestine. There were reports that the Government issued a circular during early 1999 to remind party cadres that religion was incompatible with party membership, a theme reflected in authoritative media in the summer of 1999. Muslims allegedly have been fired from government posts for praying. The People's Liberation Army's (PLA's) "Routine Service Regulations" state explicitly that servicemen "may not take part in religious or superstitious activities." There is no available evidence indicating whether party or PLA military personnel were expelled under such regulations. According to government officials, many local Communist Party officials engage in some kind of religious activity; in certain localities, as many as 20 to 25 percent of Party officials may engage in religious activities. Religious figures, who are not members of the CCP, are included in national-level government organizations. The National

People's Congress (NPC) includes several religious leaders, including Pagbalha Geleg Namgyai, a Tibetan "living Buddha," who is a vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC. Religious groups also are represented in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a forum for "multiparty" cooperation and consultation led by the Chinese Communist Party, which advises the Government on policy.

The increase in the number of Christians has resulted in a corresponding increase in the demand for Bibles. In 1998 the Government approved the printing of more than 3 million Bibles, and there are currently more than 18 million Bibles in print. One printing company that is a joint venture with an overseas Christian organization also prints approximately 500,000 Bibles a year. Although Bibles can be purchased at some bookstores, they are not readily available and cannot be ordered directly from publishing houses by individuals. However, they are available for purchase at most officially recognized churches, and many house church members buy their Bibles from churches without incident. Nonetheless, some underground Christians hesitate to buy Bibles at official churches because such transactions sometimes involve receipts identifying the purchaser. Foreign experts confirm reports of chronic shortages of Bibles, mostly due to logistical problems in disseminating Bibles to rural areas. However, they note that the situation has improved in recent years due to improved distribution channels, including to house churches. Customs officials continue to monitor the "smuggling" of Bibles and other religious materials into the country.

During the period covered by this report, the Government engaged in international dialog on religious issues. It invited a larger number of foreign religious organizations to visit religious sites and to talk to official religious leaders and figures than in previous years. As a result of the October 1997 summit between President Clinton and President Jiang Zemin, a delegation of three American religious leaders traveled to China in February 1998 at the invitation of President Jiang to open a bilateral dialog on issues of religious freedom. After the visit, President Jiang, who met personally with the three religious leaders, commissioned the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to draft separate volumes on Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism--the five "official" religions--for study by government and party cadres. However, since that time, work on this project has been suspended.

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

Section II. Societal Attitudes

The communities of the five official religions--Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Catholicism, and Protestantism--coexist without significant friction. However, in some parts of the country, there is a tense relationship between registered and unregistered Christian churches. In general the majority of the population shows little interest in the affairs of the religious minority beyond visiting temples during festivals or churches on Christmas Eve. Religious/ethnic minority groups such as Tibetans and Uighurs experience societal discrimination, but not based solely on their religious beliefs. Traditionally, there has also been tension between the Han and the Hui.

Section III. U.S. Government Policy

The Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the four consulates general in China make a concerted effort to promote greater religious freedom in the country that uses both focused external pressure on abuses and support for positive trends within the country. In regular exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, diplomatic personnel consistently urge both central and local authorities to respect citizens' rights to religious freedom. Embassy officials protest vigorously whenever there are credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination, in violation of international laws and standards, and request information in cases of alleged persecution where the facts are incomplete or contradictory. At the same time, Embassy officials make the case to the country's leaders that freedom of religion can only strengthen, not harm, the country. The U.S. Embassy and consulates also collect information about abuses and maintain contacts in China's religious communities with a wide spectrum of religious leaders including bishops, priests, ministers of the official Christian churches, and Taoist and Buddhist leaders. U.S. officials also meet with leaders and members of the unofficial Christian churches. The Department of State's nongovernmental (NGO) contacts include experts on religion in China and religious groups in the United States. The Department of State convened a conference of experts on religion in China to underscore the importance of the issue and to help educate government officials and NGO's about the situation in China.

At their October 1997 summit, Presidents Clinton and Jiang agreed that a delegation of U.S. religious leaders should travel to China to begin a bilateral dialog on religious freedom. The Department of State, the Embassy, and the consulates general in Shanghai and Chengdu worked closely with the interdenominational delegation before and during its February 1998 visit. Before the delegation's arrival, embassy officers, including the Charge d'Affaires, worked to ensure that the religious leaders would have direct access to the country's most senior leaders, including President Jiang Zemin, and briefed the delegation in depth on the religious freedom situation and the attitudes of the government leaders with whom the group would be meeting. The Embassy also suggested talking points and recommended a strategy to secure the release of religious prisoners. In Shanghai, Nanjing, and Chengdu diplomatic personnel also provided support for the delegation and accompanied the religious leaders on their itineraries. The delegation received unprecedented cooperation from the Government, including a meeting with President Jiang and information about the status of a number of prominent religious prisoners.

After the visit, embassy officers, including the Ambassador, repeatedly urged the authorities to free the religious prisoners whose names had been raised by the delegation. In May 1998, the Government informed the Ambassador that, taking into account the requests of the religious leaders' delegation and the Embassy, they had decided to release Roman Catholic Bishop Zeng Jingmu.

When reports surfaced that the Bishop had been put under house arrest, the Ambassador raised his case with a senior Foreign Ministry official and requested that a U.S. official be allowed to meet with the Bishop to verify his status. Although the authorities turned down this request on the grounds that it would interfere in the country's domestic affairs, after checking with judicial departments in May 1998 they assured the Ambassador that Bishop Zeng was free; however, without independent verification, the Bishop's exact situation remains in doubt.

In January 1999, the Embassy coordinated the visit to China of Robert Seiple, the Special Representative of the Secretary of State for Religious Freedom. During his visit, Special Representative Seiple explained the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to government officials. Special Repre-

sentative Seiple underscored for each of the senior officials with whom he met the depth of U.S. concern about reports of religious persecution in the country. He told them that religious freedom was a key priority of U.S. human rights policy, which in turn was one of the foundations of strong U.S.-China relations. Special Representative Seiple also raised a number of specific cases of prominent religious prisoners, including those of Protestant minister Xu Yongze, Bishop Su Zhimin, and Catholic priest Li Qinghua. Special Representative Seiple asked the Chinese to allow either an Embassy official or an independent third party to visit Bishop Su and Father Li to verify their status. Despite the Embassy's follow-up inquiries after Special Representative Seiple's visit, the Government has not responded to these requests.

At the U.S.-China official human rights dialog held in January 1999 in Washington, D.C., Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Harold Hongju Koh and Special Representative Seiple raised at length U.S. concerns about freedom of religion in China in the context of China's obligations under international human rights instruments. They also raised a number of specific cases and underscored the importance of religious freedom in the bilateral relationship.

Special Representative and, since May 1999, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Seiple has also met with RAB and other Government officials in Washington, D.C.

When underground Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin of Hebei province disappeared in the fall of 1997, the Embassy immediately began efforts to ascertain his status and whereabouts. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, requested information on Bishop Su's whereabouts from officials at the Foreign Ministry, the Religious Affairs Bureau, and the Ministry of Public Security, as well as from Hebei provincial authorities. Officials claimed that Bishop Su was free and "had not had any coercive measures taken against him." The Embassy requested that an Embassy officer be allowed to visit the Bishop to verify his status, but the request was turned down by the authorities.

Bishop Su's case also has been raised by President Clinton during the state visit to China in July 1998; by Secretary of State Albright in her meetings with senior government officials; by Special Representative Seiple during his January 1999 trip to China; and by Assistant Secretary of State Koh during the January 1999 U.S.-China official human rights dialog. To date, the authorities have not provided a satisfactory account of Bishop Su's situation.

The Embassy, including the Ambassador and other senior officers, regularly raised with government officials the cases of other religious prisoners, as well as reports of religious persecution. The Charge d'Affaires meets regularly with the head of the Religious Affairs Bureau to discuss concerns and raise cases, such as those of Pastor Xu Yongze and Pastor Li Dexian. Other Embassy officers also raise specific cases in meetings with officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau and the United Front Work Department.

Promoting freedom of religion is also one of the core objectives of U.S. Information Service (USIS) activities. USIS is sending increasing numbers of religious leaders and scholars to the U.S. on international visitor programs to see firsthand the role that religion plays in the United States. USIS also brings experts on religion from the United States to China to speak about the role of religion in United States life and public policy.

TIBET

Section I. Freedom of Religion

(This section of the report on China has been prepared pursuant to Section 536 (b) of Public Law 103-236. The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)--hereinafter referred to as "Tibet"--to be part of the People's Republic of China. Preservation and development of Tibet's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage and protection of its people's fundamental human rights continue to be of concern.)

The Chinese Government strictly controls access to and information about Tibet. Thus, it is difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief, but the Government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibet. Although the authorities permit many traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, those activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent, such as religious manifestations that advocate Tibetan independence or any form of separatism (which are described as "splittist"), are not tolerated and are promptly and forcibly suppressed. The security clampdown throughout China is being felt in Tibet, and Buddhism's "Great Tradition" came under increasing attack. The Government has carried out a campaign criticizing the Dalai Lama, the most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism, and his leadership of a government-in-exile. The official press continued to criticize vehemently the "Dalai clique" and repeatedly described the Dalai Lama as a "criminal" who was determined to split China, in an attempt to undermine the credibility of his religious authority. Toward the end of 1998, the Government stepped up its campaign to discredit the Dalai Lama and limit the power of religious persons and secular leaders sympathetic to him. Beginning in late fall 1998, Tibet's official newspaper intensified its rhetoric aimed at the Dalai Lama in articles that called him a criminal and criticized his "separatist activities." Both central government and local officials often insist that dialog with the Dalai Lama is essentially impossible and claim that his actions belie his repeated public assurances that he does not advocate independence for Tibet. During June 1998, both President Jiang Zemin and the Dalai Lama expressed readiness for dialog; however, the Government later rebuffed efforts by the Dalai Lama to begin such a dialog.

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism to some degree. Chinese officials state that Tibet has more than 46,300 Buddhist monks and nuns and approximately 1,780 monasteries, temples, and religious sites. This number represents only the figures for the Tibet Autonomous Region. There are proportionate numbers of monks and nuns in other Tibetan areas of China. Many ethnic Tibetan government officials and Communist party members practice Buddhism. Some 1,000 religious figures hold positions in local people's congresses and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. However, the Government continues to insist that party members and government employees adhere to the Party's code of atheism. According to reports, there have been instances of Chinese authorities threatening to terminate Tibetan government employees whose children are studying in India if they did not bring the children back to Tibet.

Buddhist monasteries and proindependence activism are closely associated in Tibet, and the Government has moved to curb the proliferation of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, which it charges are a

drain on local resources and a conduit for political infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. The Government generally imposes strict limits on the number of monks in major monasteries; however, these restrictions are not always enforced. Following disturbances in the Ganden monastery near Lhasa in May 1996 and the subsequent campaigns, the number of monks there reportedly decreased from 700 to 500.

The Government, which generally contributes only a small percentage of the monasteries' operational funds, retains management control of the monasteries through the government-controlled democratic management committees and the local religious affairs bureaus. In April 1996, regulations restricted leadership of management committees of monasteries to "patriotic and devoted" monks and nuns and specified that the Government must approve all members of the committees. Despite these government efforts to control monasteries, antigovernment sentiment remains strong.

During the period covered by this report, the Government expanded its patriotic education campaigns begun in 1996 in three monasteries near Lhasa (Ganden, Sera, and Drepung) to include monasteries throughout the Tibet Autonomous Region, and widened the campaign into Tibetan areas in other provinces.

Patriotic education has disrupted religious activities in many monasteries. The campaigns, which have been largely unsuccessful in changing Tibetans' attitudes, are aimed at controlling the monasteries and expelling supporters of the Dalai Lama. The campaign requires monks to be "patriotic" and sign a declaration agreeing to reject independence for Tibet; reject Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama; reject and denounce the Dalai Lama; recognize the unity of China and Tibet; and not listen to the Voice of America. According to some reports, monks who refused to sign were expelled from their monasteries and were not permitted to return home to work. Portraits of Gyaltzen Norbu, the boy selected by the Government to be the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, were on prominent display in some monasteries, as were sets of rules governing religious activity. Resistance to the campaigns was intense, and the Government's efforts were deeply resented both by monks and by lay Buddhists, some of whom fled Tibet. Approximately 3,000 Tibetans enter Nepal each year to escape conditions in Tibet, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

During the period covered by this report, religious freedom in Tibet diminished. The Government in recent months took steps to further tighten its control over religion in Tibet. In January, it launched a 3-year propaganda campaign to boost atheism in the region. On January 10, 1999, the head of the region's propaganda department stated in a television broadcast that "intensifying propaganda on atheism plays an extremely significant role in promoting economic construction, social advancement, and socialist spiritual civilization in the region...it is an important measure to strengthen the struggle against separatists, to resolutely resist the Dalai clique's reactionary infiltration, and to help peasants and herdsmen free themselves from the negative influence of religion." It is too early to tell what concrete effects the campaign will have on freedom of religious practice in Tibet.

A large number of monks and nuns have been detained and/or imprisoned. The warden of Drapchi prison in Lhasa told a delegation of foreign religious leaders that there were 100 monks and nuns there, of whom 90 percent were incarcerated for "crimes against national security." There were reports of imprisonment and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism, the death of

prisoners, and the closure of several monasteries. The Tibetan Information Network (TIN) reports severe beatings of several nuns serving long prison sentences, including Ngawang Sandrol, Ngawang Choezon, and Puntsog Nyidrol. According to several credible reports, there were demonstrations at Drapchi prison in May 1998. Guards are said to have fired on a crowd of demonstrating prisoners to disperse the crowd. According to credible reports at least 10 and possibly 11 persons were killed, some were said to be nuns.

In January 1999, the TIN reported that two major religious sites effectively had been closed as a result of the "patriotic education campaigns" of 1997 and 1998. Monks at the Jonang Kumbum monastery in Shigatse and nuns at the Rakhor nunnery near Lhasa reportedly were dispersed after they refused to accept conditions laid out by the Government's patriotic education teams, including renouncing the Dalai Lama and Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama. The TIN reported that at least five Buddhist monks and two lay persons were arrested in November and December 1998 at the Kirti monastery in Amdo, an ethnically Tibetan area outside of the TAR, following a "patriotic education" campaign being carried out at the monastery. The monks were required to accept conditions that included a ban on pictures of the Dalai Lama and the Kirti Rinpoche (head of the monastery, now resident in India), accept that the Dalai Lama represented a separatist movement, hand over copies of the Dalai Lama's speeches and writings to the authorities, and renounce Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama. Those detained were reportedly suspected of organizing displays of pictures of the Dalai Lama and boycotts of the "patriotic education" campaign. According to one NGO, 15 monks were arrested at the remote Rongpo Rabten monastery for staging a proindependence protest during a government-run patriotic education campaign. NGO's also reported that in the fall of 1998, 49 monks over the age of 60 were forced to retire from the Youning monastery in Qinghai province. Senior monks reportedly traditionally do not retire and play a crucial role in the transmission of religious teachings.

On March 10, 1999, Human Rights Watch reported that two monks were detained by security personnel in Lhasa after they demonstrated in Barkhor Square on the anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule. The TIN reported that 80 persons were detained in Tibet prior to this anniversary.

The ban on the public display of photographs of the Dalai Lama continued, although such pictures were easily available in Tibet and some monasteries and many individuals displayed them privately.

The TIN reports that two Tibetan monks were arrested for preparing a letter to U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson during her visit to China and Tibet in September 1998. One of the monks, Ngawang Kyonmed, allegedly was beaten severely. His current whereabouts are unknown, as are the whereabouts of the second monk. The letter expressed concern about the house arrest of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized as the Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama, and included references to the deaths in Drapchi prison.

The Government continued to insist that the boy it selected in 1995 is the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation. The Panchen Lama is Tibetan Buddhism's second highest figure, after the Dalai Lama. The boy chosen by the Government has appeared publicly in Beijing only on rare occasions. In June 1999, he traveled to the Panchen Lama's traditional residence in Tibet--the Tashilunpo monastery near Shigatse--for the first time, where he blessed lamas and other religious followers. His public appearances

were marked by a heavy security presence. The boy's return to Tibet for the first time in over 2 years received extensive coverage in the media, where he was quoted as telling believers to "love the Communist Party of China, love our Socialist motherland, and love the religion we believe in." In February 1998, the boy attended a religious ceremony at a monastery in Beijing. At all other times he was held incommunicado by Chinese authorities. Meanwhile, the Government also continued to detain Gendun Choekyi Nyima, who the Dalai Lama recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama. The boy's family also was detained. Government officials have claimed that the boy is being held for his own protection. The Government refused to provide access to either of the boys or their families. The location of Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his family remains unknown. Local authorities say that both boys are being well cared for and are receiving a good education, but the Government has not allowed international observers the access necessary to confirm this. The majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama. Tibetan monks have claimed that they were forced to sign statements pledging allegiance to the boy the Government selected as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. The Party also urged its members to support the "official" Panchen Lama, and the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party committees at both the regional and city levels had pictures of the boy printed for use in public and private religious displays.

According to credible reports, Chadrel Rinpoche, who was accused by the Government of betraying state secrets while helping the Dalai Lama choose the incarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama, has been held in a secret compound of a Sichuan prison where he has been separated from other prisoners, denied all outside contacts, and restricted to his cell since his 1997 sentence to 6 years' imprisonment after a trial that was closed to the public.

Prisoners have resisted political reeducation imposed by prison authorities, particularly demands to denounce the Dalai Lama and accept the Panchen Lama appointed by the Government. According to the TIN, punishments meted out to uncooperative prisoner leaders have resulted in hunger strikes among female prisoners on at least two occasions at Drapchi prison. According to the TIN, officials resort to lengthening periods of solitary confinement to isolate demonstrators. The TIN reports one case of two nuns who were still in solitary confinement in mid-1998 after having demonstrated in February 1997. In March 1999, the TIN reported clampdowns in prisons following the anniversary of the Dalai Lama's flight into exile.

An international NGO claimed that Yeshe Samten, a 22-year-old monk who was imprisoned in 1996 for 2 years for taking part in a pro-Dalai Lama protest, died on May 12, 1998, 6 days after his release from prison, as result of torture suffered while incarcerated.

The Government has contributed significant sums towards the restoration of tens of thousands of Buddhist sites, which were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, in part to promote the development of tourism in Tibet. Many other restoration efforts are privately funded. The monasteries continue to house and train young monks. Although by regulation monks are prohibited from joining a monastery prior to the age of 16, many younger boys in fact continue the tradition of entering monastic life.

During the period covered by this report, foreigners, including international NGO personnel, experienced fewer restrictions on access to Tibet than in 1997, and several official delegations traveled to Tibet to discuss human rights issues. These included the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights,

parliamentarians, a delegation of European Union ambassadors based in Beijing, and a delegation of foreign religious leaders. The Government tightly controlled these visits and delegation members had few opportunities to meet local Tibetans not previously approved by the local authorities.

In June 1998, the European Union issued a report based on the trip of its ambassadorial delegation to Tibet in early May 1998. The report was highly critical of the Government's control of religious freedom and stated that "the delegation was in no doubt that the authorities in the TAR exercise extremely tight control over the principal elements of Tibetan religion and culture."

Section II. Societal Attitudes

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism, but tensions exist between Buddhist sects and between Buddhists and other religious groups. Although the Christian population in Tibet is extremely small, there is societal pressure aimed at converts, some of whom reportedly have been disinherited by their families.

Section III. U.S. Government Policy

The Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the consulate general in Chengdu are making a concerted effort to promote greater religious freedom in Tibet. In regular exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, diplomatic personnel consistently urge both central and local authorities to respect religious freedom in Tibet. Embassy officials protest vigorously whenever there are credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination and request information in cases of alleged persecution where the facts are incomplete or contradictory. Diplomatic personnel also regularly travel to Tibet to monitor conditions, including the status of religious freedom. U.S. officials maintain contacts with a wide spectrum of religious figures, and the Department of State's nongovernmental contacts include experts on religion in Tibet and religious groups in the United States. The Department of State hosted a conference of experts on religion in China, including Tibet, to underscore the importance of the issue and to help educate government officials and NGO's about conditions in Tibet.

At their October 1997 summit, Presidents Clinton and Jiang agreed that a delegation of U.S. religious leaders should travel to China, including Tibet, to begin a bilateral dialog on religious freedom. During its February 1998 visit, the delegation visited Tibet.

The Embassy, including the Ambassador and other senior officers, regularly raised with government officials the cases of religious prisoners and reports of religious persecution. Senior embassy officials meet regularly with the head of the Religious Affairs Bureau and have raised many cases during those discussions. Cases raised regularly by the Embassy include those of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, Abbot Chadrel Rinpoche, Ngawang Chopel (the jailed ethnomusicologist), and Tibetan monks and nuns. Other embassy officers have raised specific cases in meetings with officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau and the United Front Work Department.

In January 1999, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Harold Hongju Koh raised specific issues of concern about the human rights situation in Tibet, including

concerns about intensification of the "reeducation" campaign in Tibet's monasteries, the treatment of political and religious prisoners (including Abbot Chadrel Rinpoche, Jigme Sangpo, and Ngawang Sangdrol), and the campaign against the Dalai Lama. He raised the cases of imprisoned Tibetans, requesting that they be released, and requested that an international observer be granted access to Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama, to verify his whereabouts and well being. During the dialog, Assistant Secretary of State Koh also requested that the authorities permit Ngawang Choephel's mother, Sonam Dekyi, to visit her son in prison. The Embassy in Beijing since has actively sought to obtain the Government's agreement to such a visit.

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