



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on April 4, 2019

## Chinese City Offers Reward for Rattling on Christians and Other “Illegal” Religious Folk

As China continues its efforts to eradicate Christianity and other faiths, Communist Party officials in Guangzhou (shown), the capital of China’s Guangdong province, are offering a reward to residents who can provide information about underground churches, secret Christians, and others involved in unsanctioned religious activity.



Guangzhou’s Department of Ethnic and Religious Affairs recently announced on its website that it would pay up to 10,000 Chinese yuan (around \$1,500) for information leading to the apprehension of unsanctioned religious leaders. That amounts to about two months’ salary for the average resident. Officials are offering smaller rewards for information about churches and other religious meeting places built or used without permission from authorities. Informers can also cash in for rattling on people who incite “religious extremism,” says the website.

Among those targeted are individuals who supposedly “promote, support, or fund religious extremism, or use religion to endanger national security, public security, undermine national unity, split the country and terrorist activities, violate citizens’ personal rights, democratic rights, hinder social management order, and infringe public and private property.” Additionally, according to the website, authorities are seeking information about “those who establish religious venues without authorization, or non-religious groups, non-religious institutions, non-religious venues, non-religious temporary venues, religious activities, and religious donations,” along with those who “organize citizens to participate in religious training, conferences, pilgrimages, etc., without authorization, or conduct religious education and training without authorization.”

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While persecution of Christians in China reaches back to the cultural revolution of the 1960s and before, the crackdown has increased dramatically under President Xi Jinping, with Christians and Muslims particularly targeted. As reported by the Catholic News Agency (CNA), “In 2017, Xi said that religions not sufficiently conformed to communist ideals pose a threat to the country’s government, and therefore must become more ‘Chinese-oriented.’ Since he took power, crosses have been removed from an estimated 1,500 church buildings.” Additionally, said CNA, “Reports of the destruction or desecration of Catholic churches and shrines have come from across China, including the provinces of



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Hebei, Henan, Guizhou, Shaanxi, and Shandong.”

Brynne Lawrence of [ChinaAid](#), which monitors the persecution of Christians and other minorities in China, noted that the Chinese government “is really trying to crack down on religion because it views religion as an attempt by foreign countries to infiltrate and undermine its power.” She added that Chinese citizens “who have connections to foreign religious people are viewed with a lot more suspicion. Some of them might be taken in for questioning, some of them might be arrested.”

The *South China Morning Post* reported that much of the focus has been aimed against “unregistered Protestant churches which despite the restrictions have been flourishing in Chinese cities. But the religious controls have also seen the demolition of Catholic churches and convents, Buddhist statues, temples, and mosques on the grounds they had not been approved.”

Ying Fuk-tsang, director of the Divinity School of Chung Chi College at Hong Kong’s Chinese University of Hong Kong, said the addition of neighbors and friends providing information against Christians “will compress the survival space of house churches. Not only will they have to deal with the official crackdown, but now also the threat from their neighbors.”

Joe Handley of Asian Access, a U.S.-based Christian missions outreach, told Mission Network News that the repression of religious freedom in China “is the worst it’s been in 30 years. The pressure from the government is immense right now. Everything from putting church members in jail to kicking out vast numbers of missionaries to actually demolishing one entire church is happening.”

He added, however, that church growth in China, as elsewhere, has traditionally exploded in the midst of persecution. Handley recalled that when intense persecution occurred during China’s 1960s cultural revolution, “that led to the fastest Church growth in the history of modern China. So it could well be another one of those seasons.”

One Chinese pastor said of the latest crackdown: “We’ve been through this before. We are used to it.” He advised Christians from outside China to “please pray for us, but don’t be discouraged. Be encouraged, because God is doing a new thing, and we will find ways to be the light of Christ in the midst of what’s happening.”

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