



## A Glimpse of China's Persecution of Christianity

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has, particularly under the aegis of President Xi Jinping, been undying in its moves to suppress Christianity amid an estimated increase in the number of Christian believers in the country.

Rather than acknowledge the spread of Christianity in the country, the CCP has stepped up its repression, including permitting only state-sanctioned churches that advocate anti-Christian communist ideas to lawfully function in China.

A report by *International Christian Concern* stated that "Xi Jinping's regime is fearful of many things; one thing being people with religious beliefs. They want to ensure Chinese citizens are loyal to the CCP's ideology and nothing else. This fear translates into church crackdown, 're-education camps' for Uyghurs, and demolition of Buddhist statues. House churches are bracing themselves for potentially the worst clampdown since the Cultural Revolution."

For years, the atheistic Beijing regime has been clamping down on Christians by demolishing and laying siege to house churches for declining to join the government-sanctioned Three-Self Protestant body or the Chinese Catholic Church. The regime has also been guilty of detaining worshippers and rewriting the Bible.

Xi's administration defends the persecution by labeling it as "Sinicization," or the practice of bringing Christianity into sync with Chinese culture. It is noteworthy that as communism is an offshoot of Marxist thought hailing from western Europe, the Chinese government has also mentioned that the ideology requires considerable "Sinicization" to succeed.

A tragic example of such religious persecution can be illustrated in how Pastor Lian Chang-Nian and his wife Guo Jiuju, his son Pastor Lian Xuliang and wife Zhang Jun, along with their nine-year-old son, Preacher Fu Juan, and sister Xing Aiping from Xi'an's Abundant Church were hauled to Shilipu police station after their homes were raided last August.

The following day, the detained adults from the church were handcuffed and taken to their church for a staged photo shoot. After the photo shoot, the authorities declared the alleged crimes of the detainees, including having an illegal gathering and venue as well as organizing an illegal collection of funds. A church member who witnessed the process said Pastor Lian Xuliang sustained various injuries to his head and arms as evidence of physical abuse.



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Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 1, 2023

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Apart from confiscating the church's money, the Chinese authorities labeled the church as an "illegal social organization," with members possibly facing arrest and detention if they continue to operate.

In August 2022, various members of Sunshine Reformed Church in Changchun City, Jilin Province, were arrested during their Sunday service. While members of the church were instructed by the pastor to go home, police outside the church assaulted and arrested some, leading to two women suffering heart attacks and getting hospitalized.

According to a report by *ChinaAid*, a Gothic-style cathedral of the Beihan Catholic Church of the Catholic Diocese, situated in Taiyuan City, was demolished by the local authorities in August 2022 to make room for markets, a theater, and tourism facilities.

The same report added that China Overseas and Investment Limited, the company overseeing the development of the new project, said that a new church would be constructed at another location but did not provide specific information.

Various local governments in some of China's most populous provinces published edicts forbidding Christmas decorations from 2018 lasting till the present. These edicts show no signs of abating.

Universities also prohibited "celebrating or talking about Christmas on social media." Such a ban was broadened to criminalize most mentions of Christianity on social media by anyone, not only students, in March.

Years ago, in May 2013, police in Hebei province surrounded a Chinese village to deter pilgrims from joining a Catholic parade honoring the Virgin Mary.

These aforesaid examples only serve to prove the veracity of Radio Veritas Asia (RVA)'s reports that China ranks 17th among 50 countries where Christians are persecuted.

*Bitter Winter*, a magazine covering issues of religious freedom in China, reported that Christians and churches in the country were recently instructed to mourn the late CCP leader Jiang Zemin for his "good job in religious work" and for his legacy in starting the "sinicization of Christianity."

Also, the leaders of the CCP-sanctioned Three-Self Church, the only legal Protestant body in China that is also called the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, convened in Shanghai to watch the Memorial Conference for Jiang, extolling him as "a great Marxist we all love and miss." Pastor Kan Baoping, the Vice Chairman of the China Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee, lauded Jiang for kickstarting the "sinicization of Christianity" now completed by Xi.

In 2021, the Three-Self Church even unveiled an exhibit titled "Chinese Christianity Loves the Party, the Country, and Socialism" to champion the notion that Christianity cannot operate without communism.

Yet reality bears testament to Jiang's past actions in terms of his "religious work". For years during his rule, Jiang persecuted religious believers and increased government surveillance on religious groups in China.

Notably, Jiang personally directed the brutal suppression of Falun Gong believers in 1999. As a result, thousands of these targets were detained and tortured, with many becoming victims of extrajudicial killings.

Jiang supplemented former leader Deng Xiaoping's Document no. 19 of 1982 that allowed some limited tolerance to independent believers with Document no. 6 of 1991, stating that cooperation of believers in the clampdown of illegal religious groups was necessary.



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The same *Bitter Winter* report indicated that Jiang convened a National Work Conference on Religious Affairs, whose original aim was to gather support for his cruel persecution of Falun Gong. During the conference, Jiang declared that Falun Gong was being exterminated and the adaptation of religion and socialism was now the main priority.

Besides, the conference also saw Jiang pledging that the Party would persist in touting atheism, especially in the schools. Jiang elaborated that authorized or tolerated religions should cooperate with the government to persecute banned groups.

In short, Jiang's religious policy could be encapsulated in the "Three Sentences": the enforcement of Party policies on religion, the boosting of control over religion, and the spearheading of efforts to adapt religion to socialism.

Chinese-American Pastor Bob Fu, the founder and president of the U.S.-based Christian nonprofit ChinaAid, told *The Christian Post* that the authorities intended to "re-translate the Bible or re-write biblical commentaries" with the purpose that "the new Bible should not look westernized and [should look] Chinese and reflect Chinese ethics of Confucianism and socialism."

Echoing Fu's views was Chinese Pastor Sean Long, who uttered to *Christianity Today* a common communist slogan, "One more Christian, one less Chinese," and reiterated government verdicts of Christianity as an invasive cultural phenomenon from the West.

Such government claims about the "invasive" and "Western" nature of Christianity do not match with archeological evidence that hints Christianity arrived in China as early as the 600s AD, over a thousand years before communism reached Chinese shores.

To make matters worse, the Communist Party has also tried to distort nearly every message from Christian leaders and the core of the faith itself. For instance, in 2020, the University of Electronic Science and Technology Press, a state-owned university in China, altered a biblical story from John 8 about how Jesus pardoned a woman who had committed adultery, *Bitter Winter* disclosed.

The blasphemous version mentioned that Jesus stoned the woman, saying "I too am a sinner. But if the law could only be executed by men without blemish, the law would be dead."

Additionally, the CCP instructed the removal of crosses from churches and threatened to close churches if followers disobeyed.

Even children are not left untouched by the long-arching arms of China's communist state. As an incontrovertible proof of communism's attack on the family, Chinese schoolchildren as young as elementary school-age were instructed not to believe in God, failing which they would be expelled from school. The children were briefed to report their religious parents and neighbors to the police. Several children were even promised monetary gains if they divulged the religious status of their parents and relatives.



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