



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 27, 2014

## China Continues to Demolish Crosses, Harass Churches, Watchdog Group Reports

A U.S. group that monitors the church in China has reported that, according to Christians in the country, the communist government continues its aggressive crusade to stifle Christian worship and culture.

[China Aid](#) reported that Christians in Wenzhou and Hangzhou on China's coastal Zhejiang province said that crosses were being forcibly removed from their churches, with only one cross remaining in the Wenzhou area, where believers have suffered severe persecution.



"Local Christians said that more than 300 security agents surrounded Kaiyang Church in Yongjia County between 2-3 a.m. on [October 17]," reported China Aid. While some guards blocked the roads leading to the church, others climbed over the church's wall and opened the gate. Thirty of the officers stood guard over the gate while the remainder entered the church where they removed a middle-aged woman who had been guarding the church and then proceeded to the church's cross. At 3:30 a.m., a crane removed the church's red cross and set it on the ground, after which, the security agents left."

Despite efforts by worshipers at the churches to stop the vandalism, government crews are pushing past volunteer guards to remove the Christian symbols.

Also on October 17, the cross on another Wenzhou church, in the Ouhai district, was taken down by government agents. "Only Zenshan Church's cross [in Pingyang County] has not been taken down," a Christian in the area told China Aid. "Believers from seven or eight pastoral regions in Pingyang are taking turns guarding the cross of Zengshan Church. Now, the only cross listed to be taken down in Pingyang County is Zengshan Church. As many as a hundred people are guarding the place."

According to the U.S. [Congressional-Executive Commission on China](#) (CECC), the demolitions are part of an official campaign, called the "Three Rectifications and One Demolition," launched by the Zhejiang provincial government in March 2013 officially to address the presence in the province of illegal structures. However, said a CECC report, Zhejiang authorities have appeared "to target Christian churches and officials' rhetoric in meetings and government reports appeared to demonstrate a negative view of the growth of Christianity in Zhejiang and an intention to target religious sites, especially Christian sites, for demolition."

The CECC cited a May 2014 *New York Times* investigative report as saying "an internal Zhejiang government document revealed that the government aimed to regulate 'excessive religious sites' and 'overly popular' religious activities, but it specified only one religion, Christianity, and one religious symbol, crosses."

The CECC report said that it appeared the demolition project was part of an attempt to address the



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surge in the Christian faith in the area. The chairman of Zhejiang's Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee reportedly said in a demolition campaign meeting in February 2014 that the growth of Christianity in the area had been "too excessive and too haphazard."

The report added that concurrent with the demolition project, local authorities "also took measures to force several large unregistered house churches to stop religious gatherings. Local and overseas Christian groups expressed concern that the government is using the demolition campaign to tighten control over the growth of Christianity in Zhejiang."

China Aid reported that despite round-the-clock efforts by believers to guard their churches, government agents have descended upon houses of worship, demolished crosses, and in the process destroyed other church property.

In mid-October, the watchdog group reported, government goons took advantage of the absence of Christians, who had left to take part in a seasonal harvest, to attack two churches in Zhejiang, dismantle a cross, and seize or destroy tens of thousands of dollars worth of church property.

A worshipper reported that "the cross at Xianqiao Church in the province was taken down by force. The worshippers who had been guarding the church's cross were carried out by [authorities]. Nearly 10 brothers and sister from other churches, [who helped guard Xianqiao Church's cross], were taken into custody."

Another witness reported that government agents "carried out people inside the church and chased or dragged away some other people. They went directly to the top floor of the church, to the audio equipment room. They then smashed the door leading to the cross. After smashing the door ... it took them three hours to take down the cross."

According to China Aid, while in the church building, government authorities took computers and destroyed audio equipment valued at more than \$80,0000 (U.S.).

Witnesses said the government agents took advantage of the absence of church members, who had been on constant guard at the church, but who had left temporarily to harvest a crop. "For some of the people who came to guard the church, they didn't open their stores and their factories have lain idle," said on church member. "The farmers didn't work their land. The past two days were for harvesting in the paddy fields, and most of them went for the harvest. During this time, the village leaders suddenly brought these people who climbed over the wall [of the church] and broke in."

Some observers speculate that the latest round of persecution of the church in China is tied to the continued surge of the faith in the officially atheist country. As reported earlier this year by [The New American](#), demographic research indicates that communist China is on its way to becoming the most Christian nation on earth within the next 15 years. According to the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, while the estimated number of Christians in China in 1949 was only one million, by 2010 that number had exploded to more than 58 million Protestants alone, compared to 40 million in Brazil and 36 million in South Africa, two traditionally Christian nations.

Fenggang Yang, a professor of sociology at Purdue University and author of *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*, has predicted that "China is destined to become the largest Christian country in the world very soon." Yang, considered one of the leading experts on faith and religion in China, said that China's Protestant population is set to swell to some 160 million, putting it ahead of the United States, whose Protestant population was an estimated 159 million a few years ago, but which has been steadily dwindling.



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In fact, Fenggang predicted, by 2030 the total number of both Protestant and Catholic Christians in Communist China could be more than 247 million, putting it ahead of Mexico, Brazil, and the United States as the most Christian nation in the world.



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