



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 27, 2025

China Issues New Rules Restricting Religion Online

In its continuing efforts to bring all religion under the state's control, China recently announced new regulations aimed at curbing unauthorized religious content on the internet.

Published September 15, the 18-article [Code of Conduct for Religious Clergy on the Internet](#) requires clergy, when online, to toe the Communist Party line, avoid "extremism," use only "legally established" websites, keep their content from minors, and not "collude with foreign forces."



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Articles of Abomination

Article 2 sums up the code:

Religious clergy, when engaging in online activities, should love the motherland, support the leadership of the Communist Party of China, support the socialist system, abide by national laws and regulations and relevant provisions on the management of religious affairs, observe social morality and public order and good customs, model compliance with the "Self-Discipline Convention on Civilized Internet Use," comply with religious rules and regulations, and accept government supervision and social oversight.

Article 3 adds that clergy

should practice the core socialist values, adhere to the principle of independence and self-management of our country's religions, adhere to the direction of Sinicization of our country's religions, actively guide religions to adapt to socialist society, and maintain religious harmony, social harmony, and ethnic harmony.

By contrast, clergy are not to disseminate "content that incites subversion of state power, opposes the leadership of the Communist Party of China, [or] undermines the socialist system, national unity, ethnic unity, and social stability."

Clergy are permitted to "preach or engage in religious training on the internet ... only through websites, applications, forums, etc., legally established by religious groups ... that have obtained an 'Internet Religious Information Services License.'" Streaming of services or other religious activities outside these channels is strictly prohibited, as is "solicit[ing] donations" online.

In addition, "Religious clergy must not collude with foreign forces through the internet, or support or participate in foreign religious infiltration activities."



Foreign Policy

According to the Catholic website [The Pillar](#), “The full scope of the new rules remains unclear. While the norms explicitly mention activities carried out through websites and apps ... the regulations would appear to apply to all online communications, including email.”

One “senior Chinese cleric” told the website this could criminalize routine communications between Chinese bishops and the Vatican:

If you are a mainland bishop and you have any kind of ordinary communication with the Vatican which acknowledges Rome’s jurisdiction on ecclesiastical affairs, if you do it by email you could be found guilty of “foreign collusion.” If any cleric was caught having anything to do with a missionary, that’s “infiltration.” As always with these regulations, the aim is to criminalize anything from outside China.

Continued The Pillar:

The new regulations follow other religious restrictions enacted by the Communist authorities this year aimed at preventing foreign influence on religious practice on the mainland.

Legislation from 2021 banned clerics from “being dominated by foreign forces, accepting the appointment of teaching positions by foreign religious groups or institutions without authorization, and other acts that violate the principle of independence and self-administration of religion.”

In April, new laws were announced banning foreign nationals from common worship with Chinese citizens, and requiring all visitors to affirm the national independence of Chinese Churches and faith communities.

Minor Doctrine

In keeping with existing regulations prohibiting minors from attending religious services, Article 10 of the code forbids proselytizing minors over the internet. Given that [most people become Christians before adulthood](#), keeping kids away from church while forcing them to attend state-run schools is an excellent way to ensure they will grow up to be compliant communists.

Other portions of the new regulations require online clergy not to “promote extremism,” “publish ... false information” (the Party, of course, deciding what is “false”), “stir up discord,” “create confrontation,” or “discriminate against or insult religious or non-religious citizens.”

Those who violate the code could be subject to various “penalties” including the loss of their “religious clergy status.” On top of that, the government may “order the provider of the Internet religious information dissemination platform [used by an offender] to take measures such as warnings, rectifications, function restrictions, and even account closures.”

Beijing demands that clergy using “overseas website platforms” abide by the code, which it also applies to “clergy from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, as well as foreign religious clergy ... when conducting online activities within” China.



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Seeing Red

The Pillar wrote:

Reacting to the regulations, clerics in China told *The Pillar* that the new code was a “natural development of the Sinicization policy.”

“Religion is fine, so long as it is under the control of the state,” said one mainland cleric.

“It’s possible that these [rules] are not even primarily aimed at [Catholics],” he said, “but rather primarily intended to crack down on other religions and sects like Buddhism and the Falun Gong, and corrupt local officials soliciting overseas money.”

“But it will still be easy for us to get killed in the crossfire,” he said.

“However,” reported [LifeSiteNews](#),

Catholics have already been directly and acutely targeted by China’s sinicization [sic], including through recent [arrests](#) of religious [leaders] and the [shutdown](#) of “underground” chapels where Masses have been offered. In fact, according to a July [report](#) from the magazine *Bitter Winter*, 90 percent of Catholic underground worship sites are now closed.

That is particularly bad news considering that most of the growth in the Chinese church occurs underground.

Nixon was welcome in China. Jesus, it appears, is not.



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