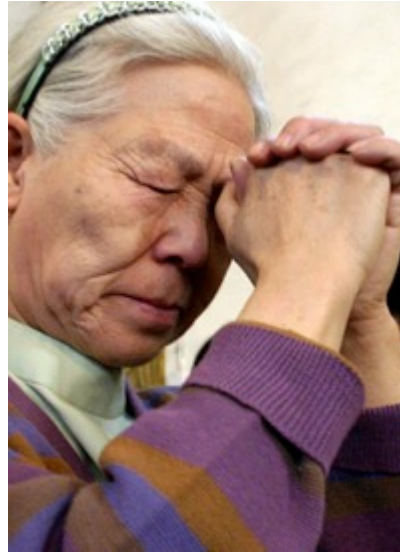




Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 25, 2011

## Chinese Regime Arrests Christians for Easter

Some 500 members of the Shouwang Church congregation — almost half of the evangelical worshippers belonging to the church — had already been placed under house arrest by the regime prior to Easter. As *The New American* [reported](#) earlier this month, nearly 200 members of the church were arrested on April 10 after “illegally” gathering to celebrate mass.



But despite the dictatorship’s best efforts, worshippers from the Protestant church showed up to celebrate on Easter Sunday anyway. Police, however, were waiting for them. Within minutes, more than 35 had been arrested.

The Christian detainees were shipped out on government busses as they defiantly sang hymns, [according](#) to witnesses. And even members of a CNN crew were briefly detained, as foreign journalists were barred from going near the scene.

The Easter repression comes after years of persecution endured by the Shouwang Church. Under pressure from the regime, their previous gathering place was forced to evict them. Communist authorities are also still preventing them from occupying a property they purchased with church funds in 2009.

Many members of the church have been fired from their jobs and evicted from their homes due to pressure from communist “security” forces. And the crackdown has intensified in recent weeks as the congregation continued to defy the dictatorship.

In a message circulated to church members before Easter, Pastor Jin Tianming urged members to sacrifice themselves as Christ had in the battle against government persecution. And despite having already been arrested and eventually confined to his home, he urged believers to stick to the plan for Easter.

"The devil Satan has taken advantage of the authority God has granted to the national government and is seeking to destroy God's church," he wrote in the note. "His devil's claws have finally been revealed. Satan get thee behind me!"

Obviously, the dictatorship was not pleased. As such, a representative of the regime’s foreign ministry defended the persecution by [claiming](#) that the Shouwang Church was “an organization with no legal basis” to exist.

So-called “churches” — approved, registered, and managed by the communist regime — are allowed to operate in China, provided they spout the Party line. An estimated 20 million people worship in the dictatorship’s “patriotic” congregations.

But according to [estimates](#), between 50 million and 80 million Christians worship in establishments that refuse to submit, known as “underground” or “house” churches. And the Chinese regime, like all past



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communist tyrannies, views them as a grave threat.

Reuters [reported](#) that “illegal” Easter services in other parts of China were also blocked by authorities, including two in the city of Guangzhou. And the day before Easter, the regime arrested Zhang Mingxuan, the president of the Chinese House Church Alliance.

But the persecution has not gone unnoticed. Advocates of human rights and religious freedom blasted the Easter arrests and the regime’s repression of Christians and others who refuse to worship the state. And news outlets around the world have reported on the scandal as an international uproar continues to gain strength.

“We are deeply disappointed that the Chinese authorities chose to disrupt peaceful worshippers who were simply celebrating Easter today,” [said](#) Pastor Bob Fu, the founder and president of a U.S.-based non-profit called ChinaAid. The organization draws attention to the regime’s persecution of Christians and others.

“By doing this, [the] Chinese government again demonstrates its total disregard for Chinese citizens’ basic religious freedom and freedom of assembly,” he added. “We continue to call upon the free world to stand firm in solidarity with the persecuted faithful in China.”

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom castigated the regime’s attitude toward the Shouwang Church and other non-government-approved Christians even before the Easter arrests.

“Beijing has again responded with ruthless intolerance to peaceful religious activity,” [said](#) commission chair Leonard Leo in a statement urging the dictatorship to allow Christians to celebrate Easter. Of course, the call went unheeded.

“Beijing’s action further alienates the fast growing number of religious believers in China, particularly during Easter, the most sacred week in Christianity,” Leo said. “Obviously, China does not see the rule of law or religious freedom as being in its long-term interests.” He urged the U.S. government to speak up about the ongoing tragedy.

The Easter crackdown comes amid an increasingly brutal campaign by the Chinese government to suppress any and all perceived dissent. As *The New American* [reported](#) last week, the dictatorship has been accelerating and intensifying its forced disappearances of human-rights activists, lawyers, critics, bloggers, and others.

A large Buddhist monastery in illegally occupied Tibet is also under siege as Communist Chinese authorities [seek to kidnap monks](#) for “patriotic re-education.” Problems began when a monk set himself on fire to commemorate the third anniversary of peaceful Tibetan protests that ended up being brutally squashed by the dictatorship. Several people at least, including two elderly women, have already been murdered by “security” forces in the most recent clashes there.

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