



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 4, 2020

Popular Chinese Christian Leader Sentenced to 9 Years in Prison

A respected Chinese pastor and vocal critic of the communist Beijing regime has been sentenced to nine years in prison.



In direct contradiction to claims of religious freedom for its citizens, Communist China has secretly tried, convicted, and sentenced a popular pastor and Christian leader in southwest China.

The Rev. Wang Yi (shown), pastor of the [Early Rain Covenant Church](#), a congregation of more than 500 members in Chengdu, was taken into custody in December 2018, along with 100 church members, with Wang held in isolation. Since then the church's main facility has been destroyed (although it has planted at least six other local congregations), many of its parishioners have faced intense persecution for their faith, and on December 26 Wang was suddenly and secretly tried, convicted, and sentenced to nine years in prison on charges of "inciting subversion of state power" and "illegal business operations" — all as a direct result of his position as a recognized and respected Chinese Christian leader.

"This is a pure case of unjust religious persecution against a peaceful preacher of a Chinese reformed church," said Dr. Bob Fu of ChinaAid, a U.S.-based watchdog organization that monitors the state of the church in China.

Fu added that the stiff sentence shows the determination of the regime of current Beijing dictator Xi Jinping "to be the enemy of universal values and religious freedom," and shows that "the regime is very afraid of pastor Wang Yi's national and international impact based on his reformed evangelic movement."

Fu said the sentence is an attempt by China's Communist Party to warn "the already-persecuted Christian community in China that unless you're silent on the face of the evil regime, you are going to be put in jail."

Over the years Wang has been a vocal critic of Xi and the Beijing government, and pointedly held an annual prayer service on June 4 in commemoration of the communist government's 1989 massacre of peaceful protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

The sentencing of Wang, and the assault on the Early Rain church and its congregants, is part of a wider Beijing communist crackdown on illegal churches, which has included the demolition of many places of worship across China.

The Trump administration responded strongly to Wang's sentence, with the State Department issuing a [statement](#) condemning the action as "yet another example of Beijing's intensification of repression of Chinese Christians and members of other religious groups. We continue to call on Beijing to uphold its international commitments and promises made in its own constitution to promote religious freedom for all individuals, including members of ethnic and religious minorities and those who worship outside of official state-sanctioned institutions."

In a personal [Twitter](#) post, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called for Wang's freedom, charging that



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the pastor was convicted on “trumped-up charges. Beijing must release him and end its intensifying repression of Christians and members of all other religious groups.”

In an undated personal message published by the Early Rain congregation, Pastor Wang expressed his hope that God would use him throughout the ordeal he is facing, “by means of first losing my personal freedom, to tell those who have deprived me of my personal freedom that there is an authority higher than their authority, and that there is a freedom that they cannot restrain, a freedom that fills the church of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.”

Wang predicted that “those who lock me up will one day be locked up by angels. Those who interrogate me will finally be questioned and judged by Christ. When I think of this, the Lord fills me with a natural compassion and grief toward those who are attempting to and actively imprisoning me. Pray that the Lord would use me, that he would grant me patience and wisdom, that I might take the gospel to them.”

Wang concluded his short epistle with the admonition that “Jesus is the Christ, son of the eternal, living God. He died for sinners and rose to life for us. He is my king and the king of the whole earth yesterday, today, and forever. I am his servant, and I am imprisoned because of this. I will resist in meekness those who resist God, and I will joyfully violate all laws that violate God’s laws.”

Screengrab of Rev. Wang Yi from video: facebook.com/prayforearlyrain/



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