

## **Table of Contents**

- [Chinese police detain ailing Catholic bishop](#)
- [Chinese house church pastor sentenced to 7.5 years](#)
- [Religious books' tortuous route to the shelves](#)
- [Mainland Church leaders welcome Vatican delegation's visit to Beijing](#)
- [1958 Evangelical Christians arrested in one year](#)
- [A veiled revolution in China](#)
- [Vatican delegation in Beijing](#)
- [China claims 'full and broad freedom of religious belief'](#)
- [China rejects US criticisms on religious freedom](#)
- [Rabbi Amar urges China to officially recognize Judaism](#)
- [28 Chinese Christians detained in raid on service](#)
- [Hong Kong leader upsets Catholics with illicit China mass](#)
- [Tibetan nuns finish epic trek](#)
  
- [Religious Freedom in East Turkestan](#)
- [Muslim Issue: Rebiya Kadeer's adult children beaten and detained during the visit of a US congressional team in Xianjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region](#)
- [My testimony](#)
- [China still seems to be on the another planet](#)
- [Dalai Lama still waiting to hear on China trip](#)
- [Press briefing at the European Parliament on freedom of religion in China](#)
- [MEP Simon Coveney calls for freedom of religion and belief in China](#)
- [Confucianists seek recognition in China](#)
- [Chinese official says Catholic Church blossoming under government control](#)
- [China still arresting Christian leaders](#)
- [China defies Rome over Bishop's post](#)
- [Chinese Muslims to get first Hajj Service](#)
- [China warns countries against hosting Dalai Lama](#)
- [China's Catholics divided by new bishop appointment](#)
- [Chinese Bishops may escape censure](#)
- [Pope condemns China for elevating bishops](#)
- [Vatican excommunicates four Chinese Bishops](#)
- [China says Tibetan boy not political prisoner](#)
- [Chinese regime comes out against ritual offerings to dead](#)
- [China reins in Christianity's spread](#)
- [US Christians detained briefly after China raid](#)
- [China Church official says believers are free to worship within limits](#)
- [U.N. envoy looks at Falun Gong torture allegations](#)
- [Vatican and Beijing discussing forging ties](#)
- [The European Commission answers questions about religious persecutions in China](#)
- [Vatican sees warming relations with China](#)
- [House hearing: NGO calls for investigation of Sujiatun concentration camp](#)
- [China set to host Buddhist forum](#)
- [China's Panchen Lama steals show with Buddhists](#)
- [Disputed Panchen Lama defends China on religion](#)
- [Chinese Court seeks advice in case against Zhang Rongliang](#)
- [China official says no timetable on Vatican ties](#)
- [Court Hearing set for ailing Chinese Pastor Zhang Rongliang](#)
- [New Chinese Cardinal: Beijing must change](#)
- [China detains two underground Catholic priests](#)

- [Chinese evangelist escapes government's watchful eye](#)
  - [The European Commission answers questions about Christians in Xinjiang in north-west China](#)
  - [The European Commission answers questions about Christians tortured in Chinese prisons](#)
  - [China raises concerns over religion](#)
  - [Businessman back in U.S. after detention in China](#)
  - [The European Commission answers a question about Chinese laogai](#)
  - [The European Commission answers a question about democracy in China](#)
- 

## **Chinese police detain ailing Catholic bishop**

DPA (07.07.2006) / HRWF Int. (07.07.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Police detained an elderly bishop from the underground Roman Catholic Church shortly after he underwent surgery in northern China's Hebei province, a US-based Catholic group said on Friday.

Police from China's religious affairs bureau took bishop Jia Zhiguo away from a hospital in Hebei's Jinzhou city on June 25, while he was 'still very sick with his catheter in place' following unspecified surgery in early June, the Cardinal Kung Foundation said in a statement.

Officials told hospital staff that Jia, 72, would be sent home but later told members of his congregation that he was sent for 'education,' the statement said.

Some local Catholics believed that Jia was taken away because a delegation from the Vatican was believed to be holding talks in Beijing at that time.

During sensitive anniversaries or visits by foreign dignitaries, police and officials often keep controversial religious figures, dissidents and other critics of the ruling Communist Party away from public view.

Those deemed likely to give negative views of the government are normally kept under house arrest or sent to police-run hotels or short-term detention centres.

But friends had heard nothing of Jia since his arrest, even though the Vatican officials are believed to have left China, the foundation said.

'He is still in detention and his whereabouts are unknown,' the statement said.

Foundation president Joseph Kung said the continuing lack of religious freedom in China raised questions over its suitability to host the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

'To kick a person out of a hospital and send him away for detention with his catheter still in place and without adequate medical care is obviously naked evidence of total violation of human rights in China,' Kung said.

'Once again I urge the [International] Olympic Committee to consider cancelling the Games in China in order to preserve their good name and spirit,' he said.

Jia, who has previously spent about 20 years in prison, was ordained as a priest in 1980.

He has been detained at least nine times in the past two years, the foundation said.

China has an estimated 4 million members of its state-supervised Catholic churches, with activists estimating that at least double that number attend masses in underground Catholic churches that are loyal to the Vatican.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Chinese house church pastor sentenced to 7.5 years**

By Timothy Chow

Compass (06.07.2006) / HRWF Int. (07.07.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - The Zhongmu City People's Court sentenced Chinese house church pastor Zhang Rongliang to seven and a half years in prison on June 29, though a co-worker said he was not notified of the verdict until Tuesday (July 4).

Zhang is a key leader of the China for Christ house church movement, formerly known as Fangcheng but renamed by Zhang in October 2004.

He was arrested by Henan police without charges on December 1, 2004. Only months later was he charged with "attaining a passport through cheating" and with "illegal border crossing." Chinese authorities often deny passports to well-known house church leaders.

Previously Zhang had been detained five times and spent a total of 12 years in prison for his religious activities. He also co-authored a joint house church "Confession of Faith," written in 1999, to plead for clemency during a widespread government crackdown against "cult" movements.

Following his arrest, authorities confiscated Christian DVDs and other materials from Zhang's house that allegedly linked him with foreign Christians. Contact with foreign co-religionists can constitute illegal activity in China.

### ***Insufficient evidence***

Chinese law allows the defendant to appeal within 10 days of receiving the verdict, but Zhang's lawyer, Zheng Laiyou, was not optimistic about an appeal.

"It is very clear that the verdict was not made independently by the People's Court," he said.

The verdict follows a series of court hearings, the last of which was held on April 6. By April 13, the Zhongmu City People's Court had acknowledged that "there was insufficient evidence and ambiguous facts," and submitted the case to the Zhengzhou City Intermediate People's Court for legal advice.

At the April 6 hearing, Zhang had argued his right for a passport as a Chinese citizen and denied the charge of "attaining passports through cheating" for three of his co-workers.

Pastor Zhang's wife, Chen Hongxian, was shocked at Tuesday's verdict. She had not seen him for six months.

"Who would have thought the outcome would be this bad?" Chen said, adding that she had lost confidence in the people's court and would not appeal the verdict. "It is the Communist Party's court, not the People's Court, that makes the real decision."

Pastor Zhang has five chronic diseases, including high blood pressure and severe diabetes, which were all acknowledged in an official hospital diagnosis in 2005.

According to Chinese law, Pastor Zhang is qualified to ask for medical parole based on his health condition.

Chen has appealed to human rights groups around the world to pay close attention to her husband's case – and has asked the international Christian community to continue praying for her husband.

### ***Shifting Courts***

Following hearings in June and August 2005, presiding chief judge Xu Zhijun told Zhang's family that he had no personal grudge against Zhang and that he would judge his case fairly according to the law. But four months later, in December 2005, officials suddenly transferred Zhang to a prison in Zhongmu city, about 60 kilometers (37 miles) away from Xinmi.

According to a government official sympathetic to the plight of house church members, the Zhengzhou City Political and Legal Committee was displeased with an impending decision by the People's Court of Xinmi to dismiss all charges and release Zhang. The Zhengzhou committee therefore asked the Zhongmu city court to re-examine the case.

Officials in Zhongmu refused to accept Zhang, however, fearing he might die in their custody as a result of serious health problems. Zhang was then admitted to the Xinmi city People's Hospital on December 19, 2005, where he stayed until January 23. One witness reported seeing Zhang handcuffed and chained to his hospital bed.

Later Zhang was transferred to a Zhongmu City hospital, where he spent most of February and March. Officials, however, judged him well enough to attend the final hearing in April.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Religious books' tortuous route to the shelves**

By Magda Hornemann

Forum 18 (06.07.2006) / HRWF Int. (07.07.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Book lovers find no shortage of outlets on the streets of contemporary China's urban centres, even if bookshops must jostle for space with restaurants, coffee shops and retail outlets which range from small boutiques to large department stores. Reflecting a culture that has traditionally placed a high premium on scholarship, the love of books is an unquestioned trait of the Chinese people. The large number of bookshops testifies to the continuity of that cultural tradition.

Yet, it is also a symbol of a new China that is no longer characterised by Maoist dogmatism, but instead is increasingly open to the competition of ideas from both within and outside the country. Maoist and other socialist ideological tracts occupy an ever-decreasing stock in most bookshops. Shelves are instead dominated by books on a wide range of topics - from university entrance examinations and government employment applications, business management, learning foreign languages and applying to foreign educational institutions, to translations of Western classics and contemporary know-how

books.

Among the diverse subjects represented on the shelves is religion. This is undoubtedly surprising to some given the communist regime's historical ideological antagonism toward religion. Yet it is also in keeping with the public acknowledgment in recent years by Chinese leaders, notably former president Jiang Zemin, that religion is likely to remain a part of Chinese society and therefore the communist party and the government must make every effort to facilitate the "mutual accommodation" of religion and the ruling party.

This means that while religion must be tolerated, it must be managed or controlled so that it will not become a vehicle for any social and political movement against the regime. It is therefore little wonder that the literature on religion stocked by Chinese bookshops addresses very little, if at all, any connection between religion and contemporary Chinese society and polity.

Two major bookshops in Shanghai and Beijing, both recently visited by Forum 18 News Service, symbolise the changes. The Shanghai Bookmall (Shanghai Shucheng) and the Wangfujing Bookshop in Beijing are both part of the large state publishing and news conglomerate, the New China corporation (Xinhua). According to their respective official introductions, the building of the Shanghai Bookmall was funded by the Shanghai municipal government and went into operation in December 1998. The Wangfujing Bookshop, on the other hand, has a history dating back to 1949, but its current structure was built in 2000. Each shop is several tens of thousands of square meters (yards) in size.

Both bookshops contain sections on religion. The Shanghai Bookmall places religious literature under the broader heading of philosophy, in a smaller section labelled religion (zongjiao). On the other hand, the Wangfujing Bookshop stocks these books under the category of religion, separate from the philosophy section.

Regardless of the section headings under which literature on religion is shelved, the contents of the books on offer are broadly similar. Most treat religion in historical, doctrinal and artistic contexts, largely from an academic approach. A typical example is a book entitled *Elementary Buddhism: History and Doctrine* (Fojiao Rumen: Lishi yu Jiaoyi), published by the People's University.

Another is a book entitled *the History of Islam* (Islan Jiaoshi), published by the Ningxia Autonomous Region's People's Press (Ningxia Renmin Chubanshe). There are also more theoretical books on religion as a whole, such as one entitled *Religion and Science* (Zongjiao yu Kexue), published by the Commercial Press (Shangwu Chubanshe), which one leading Chinese scholar on religion told Forum 18 is the most prestigious publisher, at least among academics, in China today.

Perusing the sections on religion in these and other bookshops, it is clear that most of the titles address either Buddhism or Daoism. Fewer titles cover Christianity, which is further divided between Catholicism (Tianzhujiao) and Protestantism (Jidujiao). Even sparser are titles on Islam.

Although the state controls and censors publications on religion, those intent on meeting the demand for books presented from the standpoint of a particular faith are increasingly finding creative ways to bypass or work through official channels - mainly through the right connections.

As Forum 18 found last year, Bibles are unavailable for sale in general bookshops, but compilations of biblical stories can be found. For example, a book published by the People's Press of Jiangxi Province entitled *Stories of the Bible* (Shengjing de Gushi)

contains both Chinese and English texts. Another book bearing the same title but with no English text is published by the Teachers' University of Guangxi Province.

As the earlier Forum 18 analysis indicated, publishing biblical stories instead of the whole Bible appears to be a way to circumvent the monopoly of the state-approved China Christian Council (CCC) on the printing of Bibles and other related study guides and devotional texts. In this regard, it is not only all but impossible to discover in general bookshops any religious texts published by the CCC, Forum 18 also did not find books published by the other four state-sponsored religious organisations, namely the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, the Chinese Buddhist Association, the Chinese Islam Association, and the Chinese Daoist Association.

Even more interestingly, readers wanting to learn about the policies and practices of the communist party and the government in dealing with religion face considerable difficulty locating publications that address these issues. Forum 18 was able to find one or two titles in the Shanghai Bookmall that deal specifically with the government's policies and practices on what it calls "cults" (xiejiao). It was also able to locate in the Shanghai Bookmall some party and government handbooks that consider these issues. However, Forum 18 was unable to find any in the Wangfujing Bookshop.

There may be several reasons for the dearth of publications on these subjects in these popular bookshops.

First, inasmuch as religion is undergoing a revival in contemporary China, it still faces considerable competition as the Chinese people are facing numerous challenges in a dynamic economy. Young people are very concerned about gaining entry into universities and colleges as a means toward future prosperity and prestige. For example, June is traditionally the nation-wide university entrance examination month. During that month, the subject of the examinations dominates all the news headlines. In the meantime, socio-economic issues - such as skyrocketing housing prices, the need for healthcare and education reforms, and the increasing income gap - occupy the minds of ordinary people.

The general preoccupation with these concerns is reflected in the fact that most bookshop customers tend to frequent sections dealing with subjects such as university examinations, employment applications and business management. In contrast, significantly fewer linger in the sections on religion. In this general climate, it is little wonder that even fewer people are interested in the government's policies on religion and "cults", and hence bookshops have little incentive to stock these publications in significant quantities.

In addition, it is clear that the Chinese people are generally uninterested in rhetorical policy areas - such as religion and minorities - which are within the purview of the United Front Department (Tongzhanbu) of the communist party. This reflects a collective lack of interest in and/or fear of becoming involved in politics. Translate this into the small universe of bookshops, it means that considerably fewer people are found perusing government publications.

For example, Forum 18 found a large section on the second floor of the Shanghai Bookmall devoted to party histories and government handbooks. Yet almost no-one - except Forum 18 - was examining the publications.

A third probable factor is that the government views policies on religious affairs and their implementation as highly sensitive. Therefore, much of the literature on these subjects is produced by the publishing houses affiliated with the relevant government agencies, most notably the Religion and Culture Press (Zongjiao Wenhua Chubanshe) of the State Administration on Religious Affairs (SARA) and the Ministry of Public Security's Mass

Press (Qunzhong Chubanshe). Many of these agencies' publications are meant for "internal circulation only" (neibu faxing) and therefore are understandably accessible only through their own circulation outlets. Not everyone, particularly foreigners, is able to access these publications.

In Beijing, Forum 18 is aware of a small bookshop on a side street near the city centre carrying only works produced by the Mass Press. The bookshop apparently holds a wealth of publications relating to public security. However, when a foreigner attempted to purchase some of these publications, the shopkeepers reportedly stated that the foreigner would not be permitted to buy anything in the bookshop.

Indeed, even publications not deemed "internal" also have limited circulation. Forum 18 found a 2005 publication compiled by the faculty of the Public Security University of the Ministry of Public Security that deals with the treatment of "cults" in Hong Kong. Although the book was not labelled "internal circulation only", Forum 18 was unable to locate it in commercial outlets in either Beijing or Shanghai.

Aside from publications produced by SARA and the Ministry of Public Security, it remains difficult to assess whether the lack in general commercial outlets of religious texts that are instructional, both for groups and for individual study, reflects some form of state censorship or self-censorship on the part of the bookshops. Even in Taiwan, where religious freedom is unquestioned, sections on religion in general bookshops do not seem to carry these types of religious texts. Thus, the decision not to carry these publications in China's general bookshops may simply be a consequence of the profit motive – though the rapid sale of Bible stories and other overtly "devotional" books whenever they are available may belie this.

Of course, one cannot entirely rule out the possibility of state control in the decision-making process. For example, the 25 December 2001 State Council Regulations on Publication Administration include a list of distribution prohibitions.

Among publications banned from being distributed are: "those which incite national hatred or discrimination, undermine the solidarity of the nations, or infringe upon national customs and habits" (Article 26(4)); "those which propagate evil cults or superstition" (Article 26(5)); and "those which disturb public order or destroy public stability" (Article 26(6)). Given the communist regime's tendency to apply these restrictions to religious groups that it perceives to represent threats to its interests, it should surprise no-one if religious instructional texts or any "questionable" religious texts are barred from general circulation.

Overtly "devotional" or doctrinal religious books and texts are generally limited to outlets owned by the five "Patriotic" faiths. Thus, these state-sanctioned religious groups serve as important distributional outlets for religious texts that are sought after by individual believers. The religious texts stocked in the general bookshops Forum 18 has visited are clearly neither intended to promote any religion nor to offer religious adherents texts which are important in ordinary religious practices. These latter forms of publications, however, can be easily found in bookshops operated by the state-sanctioned religious groups – at least in larger cities.

When Forum 18 visited the Three-Self Patriotic Movement/China Christian Council bookshop in Shanghai, and the Chinese Buddhist Association bookshop and a Patriotic Catholic Church bookshop in Beijing, in all three places individuals seem unhindered in having access to the great majority, if not all, contemporary religious texts. Even so, what is unclear is whether bulk quantities can be obtained from these outlets and what is the required identification that must be produced in order to purchase large quantities of these publications. This is important, as many have already reported about the difficulty

that unregistered religious groups, especially Protestant house churches, encounter in obtaining religious texts through the state-sanctioned religious bookshops.

Critically, books produced by the approved faiths do not have ISBN numbers, which are required before printers can produce any books for the commercial market. Such books are therefore technically for internal circulation at registered church and temple outlets only, thus preventing them from reaching the general book trade.

However, the state-sanctioned religious groups are not necessarily unhappy about this. They have tremendous incentives to monopolise the distribution of religious texts. One obvious incentive is that the sale of religious texts represents a major source of income for these groups, which have very limited alternative sources of funding.

One relatively new phenomenon is the growth of private Protestant Christian bookshops (usually owned by house-church members). Reportedly, as many as 50 or 60 have opened in major cities. These stock (often in very cramped surroundings) as many of the legal titles relating to Christianity with ISBN numbers the owners can find.

Most of these books have small print-runs of anything up to 10,000 copies. Catalogues seen by Forum 18 suggest about 400 titles are now published legally relating to the Christian faith - many academic but some more "religious" or "devotional". This is a drop in the ocean for a constituency of perhaps 50 million Protestants compared to what is available in Chinese in Taiwan or Hong Kong. That these shops are multiplying suggests there is a large commercial market which could open up if censorship controls were ever loosened.

What conclusions can be drawn? On the one hand, it is encouraging that general publications about religion seem to be widely available to ordinary readers - at least in larger cities. On the other, the fact that the distribution of religious texts that are vital to regular religious practices is constrained should concern those wanting to see religious freedom flourish in China. Religious believers can only seek out those that have slipped through the net into the general publishing trade or go to the limited outlets controlled by the state-approved religions.

It is important to recognise that the impediments to religious freedom in China may not always be state-driven. A rapidly modernising society that emphasises material wealth must be taken into account. In addition, the powers of the state-sanctioned religious groups vis-à-vis the state must be recognised. These organisations are not simply puppets in the hands of the state: they have their own interests and those interests can directly affect whether genuine religious freedom will indeed flourish.

Source : <http://www.forum18.org>

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Mainland Church leaders welcome Vatican delegation's visit to Beijing**

AsiaNews (05.07.2006) / HRWF Int. (07.07.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - China Church leaders have welcomed the visit of two Vatican officials to Beijing to discuss China-Vatican relations with Chinese government officials, but details on their meeting have not been disclosed.

Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli and Monsignor Gianfranco Rota Graziosi arrived in Beijing on June 25 and departed July 1. In the Chinese capital, they shared "informal talks" with the Chinese officials, sources who asked not to be named told UCA News recently.

The Vatican delegates' agenda and itinerary have not been made public, but sources say they met with the Chinese government officials and visited Shandong province in eastern China.

Beijing welcomed the visitors soon after bishops were illicitly ordained -- one in Kunming diocese on April 30, the other in Anhui diocese on May 3.

Anthony Liu Bainian, vice president of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), told UCA News on June 28 that he knew nothing about the visit of the delegates because it was "a government matter."

However, Liu remarked, "their visit will prove the two episcopal ordinations have not blocked dialogue between China and the Holy See. Those ordinations increased the Holy See's concern about the shortage of bishops. More than 40 dioceses have no bishop, and evangelization needs in China are acute."

The visit of the Vatican officials to China has delighted three of the four mainland bishops whom Pope Benedict XVI invited to the Special Synod on the Eucharist last October. One of them, Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian of Shanghai, told UCA News on June 27 he was surprised to learn about the China-Vatican talks. He said Archbishop Celli, whom he knows well, "loves and cares about China very much and supports the establishment of China-Holy See relations.

Bishop Jin, a Vatican-recognized prelate in China's "open Church," also said he does not expect diplomatic ties to be achieved quickly, but the 90-year-old bishop joyfully added, "Once the talks have started, there is hope."

Bishop Joseph Wei Jingyi of Qiqihar in northeastern China told UCA News on June 28 he believes that the resumption of China-Holy See talks is good news.

The 48-year-old "underground Church" bishop, who is recognized by the Vatican but not by the Chinese government, said the invitation that China extended to the Vatican visitors so soon after the two bishops were ordained without papal mandate reflects China's "bargaining skill" in diplomatic talks with the Holy See.

"If the Chinese really want to buy something," Bishop Wei elaborated, "they may pretend not to be interested in the transaction and turn away until the salesperson lowers the price." Bishop Wei admitted that the recent negotiations in Beijing cannot quickly achieve consensus or result in normalized diplomatic ties, but "this kind of direct talk is constructive because it can eliminate misunderstandings."

Bishop Luke Li Jingfeng of Fengxiang in Shaanxi province, central China, also welcomed the Beijing talks, but he told UCA News on June 28 the Holy See must never give way to China's stand on "self-electing and self-ordaining" bishops.

"If the Holy See does not insist on this Catholic Church principle, it had better continue the present situation," the 84-year-old prelate asserted.

Besides Bishop Jin, Bishop Wei and Bishop Li, the Holy Father also invited Bishop Anthony Li Du'an of Xi'an to attend the special synod of bishops in Rome last year. The Xi'an prelate died of liver cancer this past May 25.

For Father Josef Bai Jianqing of Shanghai, 36, the Vatican delegation's visit to Beijing represents a good start. He told UCA News on June 27 it gives him hope that China and the Vatican will continue contacts and negotiations.

"I hope to see communion between the China Church and the Universal Church in 2008 when the world family gathers for the Olympic Games in Beijing," said the priest, who has been involved with media work of Shanghai diocese.

Anthony Lam Sui-ki, senior researcher of Hong Kong diocese's Holy Spirit Study Centre, told UCA News on June 28 that in the wake of the recent talks, China and the Holy See likely will increase contacts through such a high-level communication channel. In his view, this development also "hints to mid-level personnel in the State Administration for Religious Affairs and the CCPA not to engage in 'petty actions' anymore."

Meanwhile, in a release issued on June 27, Joaquin Navarro-Valls, director of the Holy See Press Office, offered "no comment" to media inquiring about "ongoing contacts between a Holy See delegation and the Chinese authorities."

Jiang Yu, spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told the ministry's regular press conference June 27 that she has not heard of a Vatican delegation's visit in Beijing. But a week later when asked the same question on the July 4 press conference, she said, "I do not grasp the details of the situation."

In both conferences, she said, "The Chinese government is always sincere to improve relations with the Vatican. We are willing to start constructive dialogues with the Vatican based on the two basic conditions."

Those conditions are that the Holy See must sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and must not interfere in China's internal affairs.

Kwun Ping-hung, a Church-in-China observer in Hong Kong, told UCA News on June 28 that the recent visit of the Vatican officials to China indicates that the Vatican and China both urgently feel the need to dialogue and explore each other after the two illicit episcopal ordinations in Kunming and Anhui.

Kwun, not a Catholic, said he believes the dialogue in Beijing will help promote mutual understanding. He cautioned, however, that one "need not try to determine its nature, and it is too early for formal diplomatic negotiations."

According to Kwun, both Vatican delegates who recently were in Beijing have been dealing with the issue of China-Holy See relations for years. He said they are well aware of the past and present situations, and know the principles that neither side will concede in negotiations.

"It will not be easy to achieve a win-win solution," he concluded. "Both sides still have a rugged road to go."

Archbishop Celli, 64, is secretary of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See. From December 1990 to December 1995, he was the Holy See's undersecretary for relations with states, roughly equivalent to a deputy foreign minister. He has visited mainland China several times.

When Archbishop Celli was presented with the Freinademetz Award last Sept. 20 for his contribution to a better understanding between the cultures and peoples of China and Europe, he declared: "The Holy See is available, is disposed, from tomorrow, from morning to night, to start a constructive dialogue with our colleagues in China to reach normalization."

Monsignor Rota Graziosi, who heads an office in the Secretariat of State's section responsible for relations with states, also previously visited China.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **1958 Evangelical Christians arrested in one year**

AsiaNews (27.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (28.06.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - The Chinese Communist regime arrested 1958 pastors and followers of unofficial Protestant churches over the past year. This was revealed yesterday by the China Aid Association (CAA), a US-based non-governmental organization that lobbies for religious freedom in China. Together with this charge, the organization published a detailed report describing anti-Christian persecution carried out by the authorities of 15 Chinese provinces.

The report said: "Hardest hit by persecution are meetings of Christian pastors and teachers, viewed with particular hostility by the government whose aim is to control the indoctrination of new generations. There is endless proof of ill treatment and torture suffered by community leaders at the hands of police officers and religious affairs cadres."

The most badly affected province was Henan: within 12 months, the authorities arrested 823 Christians in 11 raids. Five American citizens were arrested during the same period.

Many detainees were abused during the time they spent in prison. After the arrest of a group of Christians in Wen County on 13 March, two women, aged 72 and 21, were forced to strip during interrogation. A disabled pastor, Li Gongshe, was severely beaten and had one of his ribs broken.

Beijing allows the practice of Protestant Christianity only within the Movement of the Three Autonomies (MTA), born in 1950 after Mao seized power and the expulsion of foreign missionaries and church leaders, including Chinese ones.

Official statistics reveal that there are 10 million official Protestants in China, all belonging to the MTA. Unofficial Protestants, who meet in unregistered "house churches", are estimated to reach more than 50 million.

The report said: "Local Chinese authorities have continually repressed religious activities that they determine to be outside the scope of the state-controlled religious system. Their decisions are often arbitrarily made in a manner inconsistent with the right to freedom of religion."

The report continued: "Throughout 2005 and into 2006, the crackdown on house church activities deteriorated in some provinces where local officials concentrated on raiding large-scale meetings bringing together Christians from other provinces and cities."

The most serious incident took place in May 2005, when an unusual series of raids led to the arrest of some 600 believers in Jilin Province. The CAA believes this was "an attempt at shutting down the growing influence of the Christian community in the province's charity and academic world."

Source: <http://www.forum18.org>

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **A veiled revolution in China**

By Saibal Dasgupta

Times of India (27.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (28.06.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - A veiled revolution is under way among China's Muslims who were earlier denied barest of religious freedom during the Cultural Revolution. Muslim women in the country are now part of a change that has set them apart from their counterparts elsewhere on the globe. A handful of female imams (priests), considered unthinkable in Islamic countries, are at the helm of this change.

Wang Shan Zhen, 61, is one of them. She leads the prayers, intoning verses in Arabic with 50 women devotees repeating after her, at a small mosque in north-west China. "It's very important to have female imams in China. Women devotees don't understand Arabic and they need someone to help them in offering the prayers properly," she told TOI at her mosque in Wuzhong in Ningxia province.

The position of imam is hardly held by women in Islamic society anywhere in the world. The rise of female imams in west China is a sign of Islamic resurgence of a different kind, where women are asserting their religious rights in an independent manner, sources in Wuzhong said.

There are about 50 female imams in China, most of whom are in the western provinces of Ningxia, Xianggang, Guizhou, Shanxi and Inner Mongolia, where most of the country's Muslims live.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Vatican delegation in Beijing**

AP (27.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (28.06.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Two senior Vatican officials were in Beijing Tuesday for talks on re-establishing diplomatic relations with China that were severed more than five decades ago, a Hong Kong newspaper said.

China's Foreign Ministry would not immediately confirm the report in The South China Morning Post.

The Vatican issued a one-line statement saying it had no comment on the report, but it did not deny it.

AsiaNews, a missionary news service close to the Vatican, said Monsignor Claudio Celli, a veteran Vatican diplomat, and Monsignor Gianfranco Rota Graziosi of the Secretariat of State have been in Beijing since Sunday.

Such a visit could mean a deal for the Holy See to switch diplomatic recognition to Beijing from Taiwan was in sight.

The communist mainland claims Taiwan as part of its territory and refuses to have relations with any nation that recognizes the self-ruled island's popularly elected government.

The deputy chairman of the government-backed Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, Liu Bainian, said he couldn't confirm whether a Vatican delegation was in Beijing.

Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen, viewed as a key figure in Sino-Vatican relations, said he was aware of a planned visit by Vatican envoys to China.

"I don't have any detailed information," he said "The Vatican hasn't told me anything. I just know people from the Vatican were planning on going to China."

China forced Catholics to cut ties with the Vatican in 1951 after the communists took power. The government allows worship only in state-monitored churches, but millions of Catholics remain loyal to the Vatican and worship in secret.

A major stumbling block for the resumption of Sino-Vatican ties is a dispute over who has the power to appoint bishops.

The Holy See has said it wants final say on appointments but is willing to listen to China's opinion. Beijing doesn't appear ready to give up control of the issue.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China claims 'full and broad freedom of religious belief'**

By Timothy Chow

Compass (27.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (28.06.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Chinese officials have expressed "strong dissatisfaction" with a resolution passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on June 12 condemning rising persecution of religious believers in China.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said the resolution was based on "groundless accusations," the *Associated Press* reported on June 13. Jiang Yu also said Chinese citizens enjoyed "full and broad freedom of religious belief in accordance with the law."

The resolution against "rising persecution" came after U.S. President George W. Bush invited three members of China's house church network to the White House on May 11: author Yu Jie, law professor Wang Yi and legal scholar Li Baiguang.

### ***A Christian activist speaks***

During his meeting with Bush, Yu claimed that Chinese Christians – particularly Christian activists – want to bring change "through the love and justice of God and through non-violent means," according to a *Washington Post* report.

Yu, 33, attends Ark Church, an unregistered Protestant house church that meets in a rented apartment in Beijing.

The Chinese government requires all Protestant churches to register with the government. Citing strict controls and theology adapted to be "compatible with socialism," many Christians prefer to meet in a burgeoning number of unregistered house churches.

Ark Church grew out of a simple home Bible study group run by Yu and his wife Liu Min. Police raided the church on January 15; since then, the church has had to shift location six times to escape harassment.

When Yu was asked to visit the White House, secret police in Beijing immediately called Liu at her office in downtown Beijing.

"They asked me to come down to the first floor right away," Liu said.

Liu met with two men and a woman in a coffee shop. "They bluntly asked me to stop attending Ark Church, assuming that if I stopped going, the others would also scatter," she said.

When she replied that she could not obey the order, the police said they would spread rumors to damage her husband's reputation. They also advised her to divorce Yu.

"I told them they could do whatever they wanted, but I know and trust my husband," Liu said.

In response, the police said that they would give her one month to think about it, and that they would return the next time Yu left the country.

When Yu and law professor Wang Yi arrived back in Beijing, a huge crowd of journalists and secret police met them at the airport. Yu may find it difficult to travel in the future; in early May, customs officials detained Christian lawyer Fan Yafeng when he attempted to join Yu for the meeting with President Bush.

Fan was instrumental in the formation of the Association of Chinese Christian Lawyers, which offers legal advice to house church believers who are persecuted because of their faith.

Both Fan and Li Baiguang attend Ark Church; the two have worked together on several persecution cases, including that of Pastor Cai Zhuohua – convicted of "illegal business practices" after a warehouse full of Christian literature was discovered and seized in September 2004.

### ***Beijing and the Vatican***

Two other resolutions were passed on June 12. One censured China for ordaining Catholic bishops without the approval of Pope Benedict XVI, while another advocated remembrance of the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square.

The government-approved Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) ordained Joseph Ma Yinglin and Joseph Liu Xinhong as bishops in May, despite complete lack of authorization from the Vatican.

The Pope immediately invoked a rule ordering those who took part in the ordination to be excommunicated.

China's Communist government broke off ties with the Vatican when it came to power in 1949. The government maintains tight control of the CPA and all affiliated churches.

An unregistered or "underground" Catholic church also exists; this branch of the church rejects CPA ordinations and remains loyal to the Vatican.

### **Particular concern**

The China Aid Association (CAA), a U.S.-based group that monitors religious oppression, claimed in a report issued on Monday (June 26) that authorities in China arrested at least 1,958 Christians over the past 12 months.

Some China commentators say the arrests were an exception in a country where tens of millions worship openly and without penalty. CAA's report indicated there were no known arrests in half of China's provinces.

Chinese Christians in urban centers say the key is to maintain a low profile and avoid provoking or embarrassing local officials. In rural areas, however, officials are far more likely to attack and raid house church meetings, beating pastors and interrogating church members.

Following a trip to China in August 2005, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) reported that the Chinese government had continued to systematically violate the right to "freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief," contrary to China's constitution and international humanrights agreements signed by China.

The U.S. Department of State designated China a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) in 2005. Last May 3, when the USCIRF announced its recommended CPCs for 2006 to the state department, China remained on its list of 11 such countries.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Protestant clergyman arrested on charges of Christian propaganda**

Asianews (15.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (14.06.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - A House Church clergyman has been arrested and accused of "illegally printing and distributing Bibles and other Christian literature". Pastor Wang Zaiqing, 43, is also charged with illegal business practices, this according to US-based China Aid Association (CAA), an NGO fighting for religious freedom in China.

According to a CAA spokesperson, a Security Protection Squad from the Public Security Bureau (PSB) of Huainan City, in Anhui province, notified his wife of the arrest on May 26.

"He is now being held at No. 1 Detention Center of Huainan City," the spokesman said, "and his wife might be arrested as well."

According to the CAA, charges were laid based on an internal secret document entitled 'Notice on Preventing and Dealing with Illegal Activities by Using Christianity' issued by the National Department of Public Security and the State Administration on Religious Affairs.

"On April 25 and 26, Pastor Wang's house was searched twice and a number of items were confiscated including Christian literature such as Hymnals, Christian Life Quarterly

magazine Why Believe Jesus, Chinese Church History, Pauline Epistles and bank cards as well as an electronic piano used by Pastor Wang's daughter".

Two days later, Pastor Wang was taken from his home and declared under 'criminal detention' by Huainan City's Public Security Bureau.

The spokesperson explained that "Pastor Wang was crippled at the age of five from an illness. He became a Christian in 1993 and later became a very well-known House Church planter and preacher in several provinces around Anhui. He has been printing and distributing Bibles and other Christian literature to fellow believers free of charge to meet the rapid growth of believers."

Legal experts say this is the third such case in which the Chinese government has used a criminal business-related charge against a House Church pastor.

Last April 26, Pastor Liu Yuhua from Shandong province was arrested on the same charge. Last year, Beijing Pastor Cai Zhuohua was sentenced to three years imprisonment for illegally printing Christian literature.

In mainland China, Protestant Christianity can exist only within the framework of the 'Three Autonomies Movement' (TAM), an umbrella organisation set up in 1950 after Mao's takeover and the expulsion of foreign missionaries and Church leaders, including those who were Chinese.

According to official figures, state-sanctioned Protestant Churches within TAM have some 10 million members. Estimates put the number of members in underground Churches, known as House Churches, at more than 50 million.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China rejects US criticisms on religious freedom**

Reuters (13.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (14.06.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - China dismissed U.S. resolutions criticizing it for religious persecution on Tuesday, saying it was based on "groundless accusations" and constituted interference in its internal affairs.

The U.S. House of Representatives approved resolutions on Monday that condemned what it said were escalating levels of religious persecution in China and rejected the state-sponsored ordination of Catholic leaders.

"Chinese citizens enjoy full and broad freedom of religious belief in accordance with the law," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told a news conference, adding that China expressed its "strong dissatisfaction" with the resolutions.

"We advise some in the United States Congress to pay more attention their own problems and think about how to resolve their own human rights issues," Jiang said.

The United States has been taking an increasing interest in China's religious affairs, with President George W. Bush attending a Christian service in Beijing during his visit in November and hosting Chinese Christian dissidents at the White House in May.

The House criticism also follows Pope Benedict's public censure of China last month for installing bishops without the Holy See's approval.

China broke ties with the Vatican shortly after the Communist government came to power in 1949 and moves toward rapprochement have been complicated by the bishops' appointments.

China has some 10 million Catholics who are split between an underground church loyal to the Holy See and the official church, whose members lack formal ties to the Vatican.

It also has thousands of Christian "house churches" springing up in the countryside in the shadows of official tolerance.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Rabbi Amar urges China to officially recognize Judaism**

IsraelINN (13.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (14.06.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel and Rishon LeZion, Rabbi Shlomo Amar, urged China to extend official state recognition to Judaism. As of now, the Chinese state officially recognizes Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, Taoism and Islam.

In addition, the rabbi called upon China to restore a Shanghai synagogue, Ohel Rachel, which is currently used for government offices. Rabbi Amar said, "I have come here to strengthen the community here, to aid spiritual growth, and to pray for the government to allow freedom of religion for the Jews."

Rabbi Amar made the comments during a trip to Shanghai this week, during which he offered prayers at the site of Ohel Rachel, which was built in the 1920s. Other synagogues in China are in Beijing and Hong Kong. In addition, there is a community of Chinese descendants of Jews, some of whom have recently been reclaiming their heritage, in Kaifeng.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **28 Chinese Christians detained in raid on service**

AP (09.06.2006)/ HRWF Int. (12.06.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Chinese authorities detained 28 Christians in a raid on a non-government-authorized church service at a private home, an overseas monitoring group said Friday.

Three members of the congregation, including the host and the presiding minister, were still being held following the May 28 action in Henan province, reported the Texas-based China Aid Association.

All others have been released, some after paying fines of 1,600 yuan (US\$200;euro157), said the group. Host Chen Xuelan, 58, another woman, 55-year-old Cao Yan, and pastor Li Shunmin were being held at the Bayi prison in Henan's Fugou township, the association said.

Police produced no identification or legal documentation during the raid, and confiscated Bibles and notebooks belonging to the congregation without issuing required receipts, the report said.

It said members of the congregation planned to sue over the action and two lawyers have agreed to take up the case on behalf of a group calling itself the Chinese Christian Legal Aid Association. No other information about the group was immediately available.

Bayi prison had no listed phone number and officers contacted at police headquarters in Fugou township and nearby Zhoukou city said they had no information about the reported raid. The officials refused to give their names because they weren't authorized to speak to reporters.

Chinese law does not allow Christians to worship outside the Communist Party-controlled Protestant church, although millions do so in underground congregations that have spread across large parts of China.

Those congregations, often called "house churches" because they gather in private homes to avoid detection, are subject to frequent raids and alleged harassment and extortion from police.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Hong Kong leader upsets Catholics with illicit China mass**

DPA (07.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (12.06.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Hong Kong's leader Donald Tsang was embroiled in a controversy with his church Tuesday after attending a mass led by a bishop ordained without Vatican approval.

Tsang, a devout Catholic, attended a mass in Kunming celebrated by Bishop Ma Yinglin. The latter was appointed by China without the Holy See's blessing in a move that has badly soured Beijing-Vatican relations.

Hong Kong Chief Executive Tsang and his wife Selina were pictured on the front page of Tuesday's South China Morning Post shaking hands with Bishop Ma at Monday's service.

The couple, who are on an official visit to the south-western Chinese city, received communion from a priest concelebrating mass with Bishop Ma, who was appointed in May, the report said.

Tsang attended the service despite a Vatican directive warning Catholics against attending services conducted by bishops and priests who do not have the Holy See's approval.

A church source quoted by the newspaper described Tsang's actions as 'a great scandal,' saying: 'He gave a very bad example to Catholics in mainland China and in Hong Kong. He cannot plead that he did not know.'

Hong Kong Catholic diocese chancellor Lawrence Lee Len, without referring specifically to Tsang, said it was 'grossly inappropriate' for a Catholic to knowingly attend a mass celebrated by an unauthorized priest or bishop.

The appointment of Bishop Ma and another bishop by China in May has set back hopes of diplomatic ties between Beijing and the Vatican being restored after more than half a century.

Reacting to the controversy, Tsang told the government-run radio station RTHK Tuesday

evening he hoped his religious beliefs would not be 'turned into a political issue'.

He said he always attended morning mass when he was out of Hong Kong, wherever he was in the world, and said he had never asked the priest to show 'his licence' before the ceremony.

Tsang was appointed chief executive in 2005 after the resignation of his predecessor Tung Chee-hwa. He is expected to be reappointed for a full five-year term in 2007.

Hong Kong, a former British colony with a population of 6.8 million, is home to an estimated 250,000 Roman Catholics and around 60,000 Anglican worshippers

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Tibetan nuns finish epic trek**

By Baldev Chauhan

BBC News (05.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (06.06.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Two Tibetan nuns have arrived in a hill town in northern India to meet their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

They arrived days after dramatically fleeing Tibet. One of the nuns has reportedly complained of being sick.

Sources in the town of Dharamsala confirmed to the BBC that the much-awaited former political prisoners had reached the town from Nepal.

The women became well-known in Tibetan circles worldwide for songs they composed while they were imprisoned.

### ***Notorious prison***

The Dalai Lama is abroad and is not expected to return to Dharamsala until 12 June.

"Rigzin Choekyi and Lhundrub Zangmo made their risky journey across the frigid Himalayas into Nepal as the Chinese restrictions made it hard for them to survive at home," said the Indian Campaign for Tibet (ICT), an NGO.

The two nuns are reported to have been released from jail recently, after having been held along with other nuns in Tibet's notorious Drapchi prison. Rigzin Choekyi served 12 years in prison and Lhundrub Zangmo nine.

While in jail in 1993, they secretly recorded songs about the Dalai Lama and Tibet's future - the tape that was smuggled out and finally reached the Western world.

After this, they came to be popularly known as the singing nuns.

The Tibetan government in exile had earlier confirmed their escape from Tibet into Nepal.

The Dalai Lama fled Tibet along with thousands of his followers in 1959 and the trickle of refugees into India has been constant since then, mostly through Nepal.

However, the Tibetan government in exile, based in Dharamsala, is not recognised by any country.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Religious Freedom in East Turkestan**

### ***Presentation at the European Parliament***

#### ***Erkin Alptekin, President of the World Uyghur Congress (\*)***

HRWF Int. (01.06.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - The Uyghurs of East Turkestan, also known with its colonial name Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, continue to be a target of systematic religious intolerance and discrimination of the Chinese authorities for the last 55 years.

After occupying East Turkestan in 1949, under the pretext of "socio-economic reform", 96.9 percent of Uyghurs were driven into 30,000 communes in order to destroy their traditional Islamic family bonds.

Under the pretext of "cultural reform" the traditional Arabic script, which the Uyghurs were using for more than thousand years, was eliminated and instead, Latin alphabet was adopted to suit the Chinese phonetics.

Under the pretext of "remnants of the past", only in the city of Urumchi 370,000 copies of Koran were destroyed.

Under the pretext of "unification of national education", all religious schools were banned and the Uyghur children were transferred to other primary schools where Marxism, Leninism and Maoism were taught.

Under the pretext that "attendance of prayers hindered production", Uyghurs were prohibited from fulfilling their religious duties.

Throughout East Turkestan more than 29,000 mosques were closed and turned into barracks, stables, and slaughter houses.

More than 54,000 priests were arrested, tortured, used for forced labor or cleaning sewers.

At present, there are no private religious schools in East Turkestan and private religious instruction is banned. In official religious schools religion is taught only as a negative example with Marxist explanation of correct attitude.

Today there is a shortage of priests, Koran and building of new mosques is prohibited.

Today, the Muslims in East Turkestan do not have even one Islamic publication in their language.

Pilgrimage to Mekkah continued to be restricted by the Chinese authorities.

Since January 2006, the Chinese authorities have banned government officials, state employees, Party members, youth under the age of 18 and in some cases women from entering mosques.

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is also prohibited for the same group of people.

China's religious intolerance and discrimination against the Uyghurs is also well documented in a 114 page report released by Human Rights Watch and Human Rights Watch in China last year.

The reason for the particularly severe attack by the Chinese authorities on Islam is that it is regarded as a major shield to the Chinese Communist Party's policy of assimilating the Uyghurs of East Turkestan. The Chinese authorities believe that before eliminating the belief they cannot assimilate the Uyghurs in order to realise their age-old policy of "Da-Han-Cu-I" meaning to create a "One single great Chinese nation".

Uyghurs who are opposing this policy are arrested, tortured and even executed after being branded as "seperatists", "religious extremists" or "terrorists".

Despite concerns expressed by the international community, the Chinese authorities are continuing to use the war against international terrorism as an excuse to launch massive crackdown on Uyghurs.

As a result of the current policies of the Chinese authorities, the Uyghurs remain in a very hopeless, desperate and frustrated situation. This frustration can lead to grave consequences for all concerned, particularly the Uyghurs, because the Uyghur youth is growing up without being able to learn the essence of their religion. A well-known Uyghur religious leader in Central Asia recently said: "...If a Muslim would know the essence of his religion very well, he could never become a tool of international terrorists because well-informed people can make more responsible judgements about their own and world affairs, while ignorant people can be easily manipulated in directions threatening peace as a whole."

We should not forget the fact that East Turkestan has common borders with countries such as Kashmir and Afghanistan where fierce violence is taking place. This violence could fuel the rising tensions in East Turkestan.

May 30, 2006

(\* ) Former journalist with Radio Free Europe and Former General Secretary of the UNPO (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization)

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Muslim Issue: Rebiya Kadeer's adult children beaten and detained during the visit of a US congressional team in Xianjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**

UHRP (01.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (09.06.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) has learned that two adult children of Rebiya Kadeer were severely beaten by police officers outside the regional capital of Urumchi on June 1. The beating was witnessed by four of Ms Kadeer's grandchildren. Her son Ablikim Abdiriyim who suffers from a heart condition, lost consciousness and was taken to hospital where it is thought he remains. The whereabouts of Ms Kadeer's other son Alim and her daughter Rushangul remain unknown, although the official Chinese press has reported they are under a form of

house arrest. UHRP's sources, however, fear they are in police detention rather than at home, where they are at risk of further ill-treatment.

The three adult children were initially detained on May 30 to try and stop them meeting with a US Congressional team with an affiliation to the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The Congressional team is understood to still be in East Turkistan, also referred to as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and it is almost certain that their removal from Urumchi and beating is an indication of the Chinese authorities' determination that Ms Kadeer's family would not meet the Congressional team.

Before news of the beatings had emerged, a spokesperson for the US State Department told Agence France Presse (AFP), "We are working to contact the families in Xinjiang directly," and added "We will continue to urge that they be allowed to move and act freely."

The Chinese press reported this morning only that all three of Ms Kadeer's adult children had been detained over allegations of financial irregularities at their mother's business, and did not mention the US Congressional team's presence in Urumchi.

According to UHRP's sources, Chinese police told Ms Kadeer's three adult children and four grandchildren that they were being taken out of Urumchi for "sightseeing". The grandchildren, between four and 15 years of age, witnessed the police beating Alim and Ablikim Abdiriyim and are not being permitted to return home.

Several of Ms Kadeer's other family members in Urumchi remain under constant surveillance in their homes, and have reportedly been restricted from cooking or even eating. However, this morning a grandchild of Ms Kadeer managed to make a phone call to her, and told her she was frightened by the presence of seven policemen in her home and asked her grandmother to "rescue her".

"The Chinese police have beaten my sons and terrorized my grandchildren," said Ms. Kadeer, contacted today at her home in the Washington area. "This is just the most diabolical treatment of my family – this is what we the Uyghur people are up against."

Official Chinese media reports this morning described Ms Kadeer as being "a figurehead for the 'three evil forces' abroad" – official Chinese jargon for separatism, religious extremism and terrorism -- and accused her of "engaging in splittist activities".

The reports also repeated previously made charges that Ms Kadeer's company, Akida Trading Company Ltd., has engaged in "illegal methods of avoiding paying taxes", in addition to other charges. Ms Kadeer stated today that her business does not owe any money at all. "We are completely innocent of all tax fraud charges," stated Ms. Kadeer, whose business was once lauded by the Chinese authorities as a model of success. "The Chinese government knows the allegations are false, but it is impossible for us to defend ourselves as they have confiscated all of our financial documents." The persistent allegations of financial irregularities appear designed to discredit Ms Kadeer personally and professionally.

According to an RFA Uyghur Service report, Roshangul Abdurehim, contacted earlier this week at her home in Urumchi, said a police officer named Aksar had warned her, "If you don't cooperate with us, we will destroy your family. You are all criminals."

Rebiya Kadeer's family and former business associates have faced almost constant harassment by police ever since she was first detained by police in Urumchi in 1999, but particularly since her release and exile to the US and her outspoken criticism of the Chinese government's treatment of the Uyghur people. Police in Urumchi last year established a unit devoted to investigating and policing the relatives and businesses of

Rebiya Kadeer.

Ms. Kadeer's detention in 1999, which then led to her formal arrest and eventual sentencing on political charges, came when she herself tried to contact a visiting US Congressional team. Ms. Kadeer was sentenced to eight years in prison, but released early and immediately flown to the US on March 17, 2005, just days before US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was due to visit Beijing.

As she joined the small group of US State Department officials in Beijing accompanying her on the flight to the US, Chinese officials reportedly told her not to speak out on behalf of the Uyghur people, otherwise her "businesses and children will be finished".

Ms Kadeer was elected President of the Uyghur American Association (UAA) on May 29, 2006 by the organization's members at the UAA's bi-annual congress in Washington, DC.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **My testimony**

### **Presentation at the European Parliament**

#### **Ms Ying Chen, a Falun Gong Practitioner**

HRWF Int. (01.06.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - My name is Ying Chen from France. First of all, I would like to thank the European Parliament Member, Mr. Coveney, for giving me this opportunity to present to you my personal experience of persecution in the Laogai.

From February 2000 to November 2001, I was arrested three times arbitrarily without going through legal procedures just because I practiced Falun Gong. The third time I was literally kidnapped by the police and was detained for one month in Tuanhe detention center in Beijing and then sent to a forced labor camp for one year.

Every time, I was tortured by the police. I was forced to take off all my clothes, to remain naked under everybody's watch. Then, they threw cold water over my body although it was winter time and I was forced to sit on the frozen floor for more than 48 hours, during this time I was not allowed to sleep. The policemen ordered the other criminals to beat me. Once they beat me so brutally that those who were watching me started crying.

I was forced to work for more than 16 hours per day, to make toys, dolls, gifts, packing chopsticks, all for export purposes. We were punished and deprived of sleep if we could not fulfill the quota determined by them.

I was not only tortured physically but at the same time I also suffered from severe mental persecution. Everyday, I was forced to read books, watch television programs, which all defamed and demonized Falun Gong. I was forced to make reports defaming my beliefs, to sing songs convincing me that I was a real criminal. Nobody was allowed to talk to others. My conscience and my dignity of human being were destroyed. This vicious forced brainwashing processes made me feel breathless and lose any dignity. I felt death was close to me. This kind of torture was so tense, beyond my limit of endurance of a human being spiritually and physically, that it led to mental destruction. I was forced to give up my beliefs and my conscience. This brainwashing and this forced "transformation" are beyond your imagination and pain or suffering cannot be described with words. I felt I was a dead person without a soul.

What made me even more shameful and painful was that, after I was brainwashed, I was forced to let other Falun Gong practitioners give up their practice and renounce their conscience through exactly the same process and experiences that I went through. By cheating them, by using physical torture to an extreme extent, by forcing them to renounce their beliefs, I, who wanted to become a good person by practicing the « Truthfulness, Compassion, Tolerance », became a demonic figure to torture others. Under fears and threats, I collapsed mentally and a perpetual conscience torment was with me all the time.

Between May and June in 2001, all those who had already been brainwashed, including me, were asked by the police to learn dancing, and we danced for people around to take pictures. It was said it was for the purpose of the 2008 Olympic Games application for Beijing city, to show the world how "kindly" they treated Falun Gong practitioners, so as to avoid an international condemnation upon the Chinese regime's violations of human rights and get the right to hold 2008 Olympic games.

During the summer of the same year, I and other brainwashed Falun Gong practitioners were taken to a well-arranged place to read books and to meet visitors coming from foreign countries and to let them take pictures. We were told they were from human rights organizations. In the Chinese Communist regime's forced labor camps, that is how they deceive the media, foreign journalists, so that the international communities would never know the truth.

During my detention, my husband, under high pressure of his boss, his colleagues and his whole social environment, was forced to divorce me. So my harmonious and happy family was then destroyed. I was then physically and mentally depressed, I couldn't sleep, and I made bad dreams.

Since March of this year, some witnesses coming from China have stood out and bravely testified about the atrocities of organs harvesting practised on alive Falun Gong practitioners all over the Laogai. It reminded me of several physical examinations practiced upon me during my illegal detention. At the end of September 2000, I was brought to the hospital to have an overall health checkup – heart, ECG, blood test and eye exams. Then, I was handcuffed and hung to a window frame. Afterwards, the policeman forcibly gave me an infusion of drugs, although I was healthy. When the drug entered my body, I felt my heart was beating out of my chest. My veins almost burst from piercing pain and I suffocated. From then on, I had problems of thinking, could not react normally, lost memories, always felt sleepy, I had cramps in the left side of my body and I was partially paralysed. Until I came to France in 2003 when I saw the pictures and stories of how Falun Gong practitioners were persecuted, I was shocked and awakened up to remember my own suffering. Fortunately, I was able to come to a free country in Europe and then I started again to practice Falun Gong and the "Truth-Compassion-Tolerance" principle and I recovered my health.

The persecution of Falun Gong in China is a systematic genocide against innocent people, state terrorism. In order to save those who are still being tortured, risking their lives at any moment due to organs harvesting on alive FLG practioners, I plea and urge the European Union and the international community to carry out some independent investigation in all the forced labor camps in China and to contribute to the cessation of the inhuman persecution of Falun Gong.

May 30, 2006

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China still seems to be on the another planet**

By Koos van Houdt

Friesch Dagblad (01.06.2006) / HRWF Int. (01.06.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - After the United States, China is the main trade partner of the European Union. And these trade relations seem to intensify more and more. In 2008, Beijing will be the meeting place of the whole world during the Olympic Games.

"Actually", said the British conservative MEP McMillan Scott, "we should boycott China". He was in China the week before and he had the opportunity there to visit some prisons. "And believe me, Mrs. Ying Chen, who's an active member of the banned religious organization Falun Gong, and the Buddhist nun Namdol Lhamo are right", said McMillan yesterday at a press conference in the European Parliament in Brussels. Mrs. Ying Chen and Mrs. Namdol Lhamo testified at the same press conference about the severity of their prison terms, the torture and their personal experience of labor camps.

The Irish Christian Democrat MEP Simon Coveney, who is the human rights spokesman for his political fraction, stated that China still seems to be on another planet with regard to religious freedom. What can be done about this? According to Coveney, an economic boycott won't help. "It doesn't even seem to be realistic," he said. "And the Olympic Games should definitely go on as well. Nevertheless, we shouldn't ignore this situation and we should go on keeping a strong position in favor of freedom of religion, whenever it is possible." In response to the testimonies of the two Chinese women, Coveney's fraction proposes to support the request of the Special UN-Rapporteur for freedom and religion to investigate the situation in that country. She should mainly get access to the Laogai labor camps, where believers of various religions are detained. (...)

Translation Dutch-English by HRWF Int.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Dalai Lama still waiting to hear on China trip**

Reuters (31.05.2006)/ HRWF Int. - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - The Dalai Lama said on Wednesday he was still waiting for a response from China about whether he can visit the country, which has ruled his homeland Tibet since the 1950s.

In March, the Tibetan spiritual leader said he wanted to see Buddhist landmarks in China and the country's progress since he fled Tibet in 1959 after a failed uprising against Beijing's rule.

He was in Belgium to update European Union parliamentarians and Belgian ministers on secret negotiations between Tibet's government-in-exile, based in the Indian hill town of Dharamsala, and China.

Following a news conference, he was asked whether he had concrete plans for a trip.

"Not yet, because there are no clear indications from China," he told Reuters.

A Chinese official had said last month that a trip may be possible "as long as the Dalai Lama makes clear that he has completely abandoned Tibetan 'independence'".

But the Dalai Lama emphasised at the news conference that he sought to protect Tibetan culture, spirituality and environment.

"That is what I call the middle-way approach. Not independence. Not seeking separation," he told a hall packed with reporters.

Beijing considers the Dalai Lama a traitor. Analysts say it has been committed to the dialogue in part because of fears that if the septuagenarian dies in exile, it could spark unrest among Tibetans in China, many of whom regard him as a god-king.

Commenting on the most recent rounds of talks, one former vice chairman of the region said last Friday that changing the status quo of Tibet would violate the Chinese constitution.

He also said the Dalai Lama's envoys had raised the issue of the region's borders, a subject that China could not accept. But a spokesman for the government-in-exile said Beijing was overreacting.

At the news conference, the Dalai Lama, clad in orange and red robes, spoke positively of changing Chinese attitudes toward Tibetan culture, which he said incurred "immense destruction" after Chinese forces took over the region in 1950.

"But now the Chinese -- Chinese intelligentsia, businessmen, people and artists -- more and more numbers are showing genuine interest about Tibetan culture," he said after noting that more than 5,000 monasteries had been destroyed after the Chinese takeover.

"With many difficulties they come to India, attempt (to hear) my teachings."

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Press briefing at the European Parliament on freedom of religion in China**

***Parliamentarians urged Chinese authorities to invite UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief to assess the situation of religious freedom in the country***

HRWF Int. (31.05.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: [www.hrwf.net](http://www.hrwf.net) - At a press briefing organized on the eve of the visit of the Dalai Lama to the European Parliament, MEP Simon Coveney, Spokesman for Human Rights of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats (EPP-ED) in the European Parliament and Member of the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs, urged the Chinese authorities to invite the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief to assess the situation of religious freedom in the country.

The press briefing was organized by MEP Simon Coveney in collaboration with Human Rights without Frontiers Int. (HRWF Int.) with the objective to draw attention to China's policies of repression against religious activities that are considered to be outside the scope of the state-controlled religious system. Simon Coveney, who hosted the event, highlighted that the briefing was organized in order to "facilitate open discussions between representatives of religious minorities in China and the media here in Europe".

The audience had the opportunity to listen to the testimonies of Buddhist, Muslim Uighur, and Falun Gong representatives.

A Buddhist nun testified that the years of imprisonment and the moral suffering inflicted on her because of her religion and culture had built up her resolve to step forward and talk about her experiences.

A Falun Gong female practitioner talked about her one-month detention in the Tuanhe detention centre in Beijing and one-year detention at a forced labour camp in the period between February 2000 and November 2001. She also referred to stories of practices of "organ harvesting" on Falun Gong practitioners. In a comment to this testimony, MEP Edward MacMillan-Scott expressed his conviction that the European Parliament should initiate an investigation into allegations of organ trafficking.

The leader of the World Uighur Congress spoke of the situation of Muslim Uighurs in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and the systematic policies of religious intolerance and discrimination practiced by Chinese authorities for the last 55 years. He also evoked the desperate situation of Uighurs seeking asylum in Europe, who are extradited to China or to Central Asian countries, from which they are then re-directed to China. Several cases of execution of people sent to China were quoted.

In his introductory remarks, the HRWF Int. director Willy Fautré elaborated on China's policies aimed at subordinating religious organizations to the state. In a statement distributed at the press briefing, HRWF Int. called on the Chinese authorities to ratify and implement the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; to invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief to assess the situation of religious freedom in the country; to allow access for the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief to the Panchen Lama designated by the Dalai Lama; to grant access to the Laogai forced labour camps where believers of all faiths are allegedly detained on the ground of their religious beliefs and activities; and to release all prisoners detained on the ground of their religious beliefs and activities.

In his concluding remarks, MEP Simon Coveney expressed his conviction that the European Parliament had levers to induce positive changes due to the fact that China is sensitive to outside pressure. He called on the Chinese authorities to invite Asma Jahangir, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, to assess the situation of religious freedom in the country.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **MEP Simon Coveney calls for freedom of religion and belief in China**

www.Coveney.ie (30.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (31.05.2006) - Website: [www.hrwf.net](http://www.hrwf.net) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - In the last few months, Beijing has sent out contradictory messages concerning its relations with the main faith communities active in China. While the Chinese Government claims that it is liberalising its policy on religion it has recently adopted a number of measures that have angered the leaders of the main religious communities, and their followers.

Speaking on the eve of the Dalai Lama's visit to the European Parliament in Brussels Fine Gael MEP Simon Coveney and his EPP-ED colleague Charles Tannock MEP called on the

Chinese authorities to invite Asma Jahangir, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief, to assess the situation of religious freedom in the country.

Coveney who is human rights spokesman for the EPP-ED Group said: "I am happy to host this briefing to facilitate open discussions between representatives of religious minorities in China and the media here in Europe.

"China's constitution states that its citizens enjoy freedom of religious belief, but this is not the case. For each of the five officially recognised religions there is a Government-affiliated association to monitor and supervise their activities: the Chinese Buddhist Association, the Catholic Patriotic Association, the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the Chinese Islamic Association and the Chinese Daoist Association. All religious groups are obliged to register with the appropriate religious organisation. I believe the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief should be able to assess the situation concerning religious freedom - or the lack of it - in China, and she should also be granted access to the Laogai forced labour camps where believers of all faiths are detained.

"Unfortunately, hopes of restoring diplomatic relations with the Vatican received a blow when bishops were ordained by the state-controlled Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association without the approval of the Vatican. I urge the Chinese leadership to open up a constructive dialogue with the Vatican (as did my fellow EPP-ED colleagues on their recent trip to China) and not to take it upon themselves to appoint bishops. Such a dialogue would improve the country's relations with Catholics living in China."

Dr. Charles Tannock MEP, Vice President of the Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights, said: "China is the EU's second largest trading partner but this commercial closeness is not matched by the PRC's lamentable track record on a whole range of human rights issues. Many people are familiar with the repression of the Tibetans and the Buddhists but less is known of repression of religious minorities particularly Falun Gong practitioners, unregistered Christian groups and Uighur Muslims. China in its defence claims that, as it is the largest country in the world with 1.3 billion people, it cannot afford western style freedom of expression and conscience, as this would lead to a breakdown of national cohesion and law and order. However India, also with over 1 billion people, manages to be a democracy and have a largely tolerant multi-cultural society in spite of its enormous size and it still grows economically and has a thriving free press. China in contrast even feels it has to censor the internet! Its systematic use of torture and the inappropriate use of the death penalty has also led to widespread condemnation in the west.

"We know that China is sensitive to outside western pressure and that a tough message from us gets through to Chinese leading opinion formers that elected representatives in the EU do care how China treats its own people."

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Confucianists seek recognition in China**

UPI (22.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (24.05.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Confucianists in Hong Kong are seeking inclusion among religions recognized by the Chinese government, on a par with Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam.

Tong Yun-kai, president of Hong Kong's Confucian Academy, is leading the campaign to register Confucianism as a major Chinese religion, the South China Morning Post reported Monday.

Only officially recognized groups are afforded protection under China's religious freedom rules. They are subject to government supervision and can only preach inside designated temples, churches and mosques.

There are no official figures for the number of Confucianists in China. However, over 1,600 Confucian temples are registered as academic institutes. The government has also set up numerous Confucian centers overseas as a platform to promote Chinese language and culture.

Tong said that Confucian thought -- which stresses benevolence and loyalty to the family and the country -- would gain prestige and raise national pride if it were registered as a religion.

Some critics of his view, however, feel that Confucianists enjoy greater freedom and flexibility without being labeled as religious believers, since most of China's religious laws are aimed at controlling and curbing the spread of ideas.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Chinese official says Catholic Church blossoming under government control**

AP (16.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (24.05.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - A leader of China's state-sanctioned Roman Catholic church on Tuesday defended its practice of choosing bishops without papal approval, saying it has led to a blossoming of the church, a government news agency reported.

"The growth of the Chinese Catholic church in the past 20 years has greatly exceeded that of the 300 years before," said Liu Bainian, deputy chairman of the China Patriotic Catholic Association, according to the Xinhua News Agency.

Liu credited the growth of China's official church to the government's management, saying, "This is the arrangement of the Christ," Xinhua reported.

Liu, who is not a clergymen, said it has up to 900 more priests than in 1980, according to Xinhua. He said the official church has 5 million followers, nearly double its membership of 2.7 million in 1958.

After coming to power in 1949, the communists set up a state-backed Catholic church outside the Vatican's authority, forcing Catholics to divide their loyalties.

While some of China's estimated 10 million to 14 million Catholics shun the state-approved churches and others dislike the "underground" ones, most Catholics and clergy circulate between both worlds.

Liu called on Chinese Catholics to obey their government.

In recent weeks, China's state-approved Catholic hierarchy appointed three bishops without papal assent, drawing a threat of excommunication from the Vatican and aggravating the split.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## China still arresting Christian leaders

Spero News (15.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (17.05.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - China Aid Association (CAA) is reporting that it has learned that in the past two weeks multiple arrests of house church pastors occurred at Shandong and Jiangsu Provinces. CAA says that one pastor from South Korea was expelled by the Chinese security agency and a prominent Chinese legal scholar and rights defender was forbidden to go abroad.

CAA said that there are eyewitness reports that House Church Pastor Liu Yuhua was arrested at 11pm on April 26, 2006 at Shandong Province. He has been held since at the Detention Center of Linchu County, Shandong Province.

In the Criminal detention paper issued to Pastor Liu's family by the PSB of Linchu County, Pastor Liu was accused "being involved in illegal business practices." However, CAA says that Liu had been printing and distributing bibles and other Christian literature to fellow believers free of charge to meet the rapid growth of believers.

CAA said that one "reliable source" reported that Liu's office was searched without warrant, his bank account seized and cash in the amount of 8600 Yuan (\$1100) was confiscated.

CAA noted that legal experts say this case is very similar to Beijing Pastor Cai Zhuohua's case. In that case, Cai was sentenced in 2005 to three years imprisonment for printing Christian literature.

This is because, CAA said, "the Chinese government tries to persecute religious leaders by criminalizing their religious activities," said Mr. Gao Zhisheng, a lawyer whose law firm was closed last year by the Chinese government because of his volunteer work defending the rights of Pastor Liu Yuhua.

CAA said that it has also learned at 1:30pm on May 10, 11 pastors and house church leaders were arrested at #3 Chuyuan Residence Region, Suqian City, Jiangsu Province.

In this instance, CAA said that approximately 60 house church believers were engaged in a bible study at Pastor Cai Zhirong's house when the raid occurred.

According to an eyewitness account reported by CAA, the PSB officers used electric shock batons to beat those believers who refused to be taken away because the police didn't have an arrest warrant.

Nevertheless, after 10 hours of intensive interrogation, all 11 pastors including South Korean Pastor Cui Rongbo (Korean name unavailable) along with his two translators Pastor Cai Zhirong and Pastor Wu Changle were released, CAA said.

Still, on May 11, South Korean Pastor Cui was taken away again by the Chinese authority and ordered to leave China within 48 hours. Pastor Cui left China on May 13, CAA said.

CAA said that it has also learned that the legal scholar Dr. Fan Yafeng was forbidden to go abroad. Dr. Fan is a researcher at China Academy of Social Sciences, a top think tank run by the Chinese government. At 12:30pm on May 9, Dr. Fan was informed by the customs security official at Beijing Capital Airport that "he has been put on a list of names that are forbidden to go abroad by a higher authority," according to CAA.

"Dr. Fan was on his way to the United States to attend a meeting with President Bush. He was not allowed to attend the Freedom in China Summit on May 2 at the Hudson Institute because of obstacles put in place by the Chinese authorities," said CAA.

That meeting, held last Thursday, was the first time that a sitting US President met a group of Chinese House Church intellectuals at his private residence in the White House.

US President George W. Bush, along with Vice-President Dick Cheney, Mr. Bush's National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, Mr. Josh Bolton, the White House Chief of Staff and the President's senior Advisor Mr. Michael Gerson as well as the White House press secretary Tony Snow were informed about the situation in China and the latest development of religious freedom in China in the meeting.

"This new wave of arrests is certainly a contradiction to the Chinese government's commitment to religious freedom," said Rev. Bob Fu of CAA, "We urge the Chinese government to take concrete actions to demonstrate the true spirit of rule of law."

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China defies Rome over Bishop's post**

AP (15.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (17.05.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - China's state-approved Catholic Church welcomed the installation Sunday of another bishop who was not approved by the pope, exacerbating the strain in Beijing's relations with the Vatican.

Bishop Zhan Silu, also known as Vincent Zhan, celebrated Mass for 500 Catholics and officials in a church in the southern city of Ningde to mark his formal appointment as head of the Mindong diocese. Hong Kong Cable TV showed Zhan holding a gold staff and wearing the pointed hat, or miter, used by bishops.

The welcoming ceremony compounded tensions in Vatican-China relations. Just a few months ago, Catholics had expressed hope that back-channel communications and concessions by the Vatican would end a rift between Rome and a separate Chinese church set up by the Communist government a half-century ago.

In recent weeks, China's state-approved Catholic hierarchy ordained two other bishops without papal assent, drawing a threat of excommunication from the Vatican and aggravating the split.

"They had to know that this would cause a serious reaction, a breakdown in the efforts to normalization," Richard Madsen, an expert on China-Vatican ties at the University of California at San Diego, said of the ordinations. "This shows at some level, they just didn't want relations to go forward."

In the fallout, the Vatican put on hold a review of Zhan's appointment that could have led to his approval by Pope Benedict XVI, a church official in Hong Kong said on condition of anonymity because of his involvement in the Rome-China dialogue.

Liu Bainian, a senior official in the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, the state-backed agency that administers Catholic churches, dismissed criticism of Zhan's installation, saying the ceremony was planned long ago.

The Vatican declined to comment on the latest development.

Sunday's ceremony was not a new ordination but rather the appointment of an existing bishop to a diocese. In 2000, when Zhan was ordained a bishop without the pope's consent, the Vatican said it "certainly hinders the process" of normalizing ties.

After coming to power in 1949, the Chinese Communists set up a state-backed Catholic church outside the Vatican's authority, forcing a choice of allegiance on Catholics. Some of China's estimated 10 million to 14 million Catholics shun the state-approved church, and others dislike the "underground" church, but many -- including laypeople and clergy -- circulate between both.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Chinese Muslims to get first Hajj Service**

AFP (13.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (24.05.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - The Islamic Association of China (IAC) will set up a special office to assist Chinese Muslims making pilgrimages to Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

"This is the first time China has set up a special pilgrimage service for the country's 20 million Muslims," IAC Vice-Chairman Yang Zhibo told Chinese news agency Xinhua Saturday, May 13.

Yang estimated that more than 8,000 Chinese would make a pilgrimage in 2007. The number of Chinese making the spiritual journey has been rising steadily.

This year it was 7,000. Since 1985, nearly 100,000 Chinese Muslims have completed the pilgrimage.

One of the five pillars of Islam, hajj consists of several ceremonies, which are meant to symbolize the essential concepts of the Islamic faith, and to commemorate the trials of Prophet Abraham and his family.

Every able-bodied adult Muslim -- who can financially afford the trip -- must perform hajj once in their lifetime.

According to official data, China has 20 million Muslims, most of them are concentrated in Xinjiang, Ningxia, Gansu, and Qinghai regions and provinces. Smaller Muslim communities can also be found throughout interior China.

Islam came to China via Muslim businessman during the era of the Tang Dynasty. There have also been reports of companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) coming to China.

Yang said that the IAC will introduce more facilities to the faithful to make the journey much easier.

"Our service has also improved," Yang said. He noted that pilgrims could leave the country now through four cities: Beijing, Lanzhou, Urumqi and Kunming.

A fifth exit port was planned in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, home of most of the Hui ethnic minority, China's second largest Muslim minority group.

Local branches of the IAC offered training programs for first-time pilgrims, Yang said.

"To better serve Muslims, we will add English, international travel tips and emergency treatment to our programs," he noted. He also said the IAC would help pilgrims outside peak times, starting in August and September this year.

Sources with Air China told Xinhua that chartered flights would now carry pilgrims direct to Makkah.

Chinese Muslims have been complaining about government marginalization and heavy-handed police treatment.

International human rights organizations have chided the Chinese government in several reports for its poor human rights record in predominantly Muslim regions, particularly Xinjiang.

Human Rights Watch has said in a recent report that Chinese policy in Xinjiang "denies Uighurs religious freedom, and by extension freedom of association, assembly, and expression."

The Uighurs are a Turkish-speaking minority of eight million whose traditional homeland lies in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in north-west China.

Chinese Muslim leaders have charged that China was using the US-championed "war on terror" to justify its crushing campaign of religious oppression and rights abuses.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China warns countries against hosting Dalai Lama**

PTI (12.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (19.05.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - China on Thursday opposed Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama's visit to Latin American countries and asked foreign governments to be on "high alert" against his political activities and bid for "Tibetan independence" on the "pretext of religion."

"We are opposed to the secessionist movement of the Dalai Lama in the international arena on the pretext of religion. We hope that relevant countries can stay on high alert," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao told reporters in Beijing.

"The Dalai Lama is not a purely religious figure. He is a political exile, engaged in activities in splitting the motherland," he said while commenting on the Dalai's ongoing visits to South American countries like Argentina and Peru.

"The Dalai clique has never abandoned its stance on seeking Tibetan independence or separating the motherland. The Chinese central government has a strong position on that," he said.

When asked to comment on the latest unrest in Lhasa, Tibet's capital, Liu declined to comment. "I have no specific information on the question you asked. You may refer your question to relevant authorities."

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## China's Catholics divided by new bishop appointment

By Chris Buckley

Reuters (12.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (19.05.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Sparring between Beijing and the Vatican is set to intensify on Sunday as China installs another bishop apparently without the blessing of the Pope, extending a row over who rules China's divided Catholic Church.

Zhan Silu, also called Vincent Zhan, will become bishop of Mindong Diocese in eastern Fujian province, and he -- like two other bishops appointed in China in past weeks -- apparently lacks the Holy See's approval, which bishops even in China's state-controlled church have regularly sought in recent years.

"I did write to the Vatican to ask for recognition, but I've never heard anything back," Zhan said on Friday. "For me, Vatican approval is important, but I also have to consider local needs."

Zhan's impending appointment is the latest episode in a row over bishops that has deepened a rift between China and the Vatican, which have been exploring diplomatic ties after decades of division since the Chinese Communists won control of the mainland in 1949.

On Friday, China's official Xinhua News Agency said the country's recently appointed bishops - including two whose promotion the Vatican opposed - "have won wide support from priests and believers." It said the Vatican was told beforehand about the appointments.

But in private, many Chinese Catholics have said they are distressed by the rift between the two sides and by China's unilateral moves.

There are some 10 million Catholics in China, divided between an "underground" church loyal to the Holy See and the state-approved church that respects the Pope as a spiritual figurehead but has no formal ties with the Vatican.

Zhan, 45, was appointed a bishop in 2000, when China appointed five contrary to Vatican opposition, and he has since been based in Fujian. But he has not been formally installed as a head of a diocese or hosted a full Mass as bishop.

On Sunday, he in effect comes off the reserves bench to replace the former bishop of Mindong, based in the small city of Ningde, who died last year aged 88.

A priest from Fujian familiar with Zhan said priests even in the state-recognized church there were considering boycotting the ceremony as Rome had not signaled its approval, but were under pressure from government officials to attend.

"Some priests are very worked up about this," he said. "Because he has not been recognized by the Vatican, priests have not cooperated with him and so he hasn't consulted them."

He said the church in Fujian, an avidly commercial province where people have a history of spurning central control, is sharply split between the government-approved church and a large, often strong-willed "underground" church loyal to Rome alone.

"I don't think the Vatican has approved of Zhan because of his background and because the underground parishioners there are so opposed," he said. Zhan holds a senior post in the Communist Party-run Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association.

Zhan said he had invited representatives of the large underground Catholic church to his ceremony, but they had not responded. "We have different views about things," he said.

Officially atheist China traditionally refused to allow the Vatican to appoint bishops, saying it would be interference in its internal affairs.

In recent years, Beijing and the Holy See came to an implicit understanding that allowed prospective bishops to seek Vatican approval before taking up their posts, said Father Jerom Heyndrickx, director of the Verbiest Institute at Louvain University in Belgium, who often travels to China.

But in past weeks, China has consecrated a bishop in Wuhu in the eastern province of Anhui and another in Kunming in southwestern Yunnan, drawing harsh criticism from Pope Benedict himself.

"It is such a pity, because there was a kind of peaceful evolution going on, with the (Chinese) authorities closing one eye to approval from Rome," said Heyndrickx.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Chinese Bishops may escape censure**

By Nicole Winfield

AP (05.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (09.05.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Vatican officials cited church law that called for automatic excommunication in condemning China for appointing bishops without papal consent, but legal experts said Friday that the appointees may be spared formal censure because they may have been pressured.

The Vatican said Thursday that the consecration of two bishops this week in China carried with them the automatic penalty of excommunication for the two men as well as the bishops who ordained them because Pope Benedict XVI hadn't approved the appointments.

While Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls didn't use the word "excommunication" in his statement Thursday, he cited Article 1382 of the Code of Canon Law, which says both the newly ordained bishop and the bishop who consecrates him without papal consent incur a "latae sententiae excommunication" — automatic excommunication.

However, canon law experts said that in order for the excommunication to have actual effect, it must be formally declared by the pope, and that that requires a process that could take into account several factors.

"This one is an automatic penalty, but in order for it to have effect in the external forum, it must be declared," said the Rev. James Conn, a professor of canon law at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University.

"That doesn't mean it isn't binding in conscience on the person if he incurs it automatically ... (but) there needs to be a procedure before a penalty is declared," he said.

Attempts to reach Navarro-Valls on Friday were unsuccessful.

However, a Vatican official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to interpret church law, said Thursday that while church law provides for automatic excommunication, the fact that the prelates may have been pressured was important.

"There are two levels: The objective level, which says the law is automatic, and a subjective level, which only God knows. That is a matter between them and God," said the official.

Conn noted that Article 1323 in Canon Law sets out exceptions to when church penalties can be imposed, such as when someone "acted under the compulsion of grave fear, even if only relative, or by reason of necessity or grave inconvenience."

"If the act was not a free act, then it's less imputable, less punishable," Conn said.

In his statement, Navarro-Valls said Chinese bishops and priests had been subject to "strong pressures and to threats" to take part in the ordinations by "external entities to the church" — an apparent reference to the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, the church's official name in China.

"Various prelates have given a refusal to similar pressures, while others were not able to do anything but submit with great interior suffering," the statement continued.

Conn said at this point, only the bishops in question know whether they acted out of fear.

"If the individual himself knows that he did not act out of grave fear, he is burdened in conscience to carry out the excommunication," he said.

Conn likened the situation to that of a woman who obtains an abortion. The act of getting an abortion carries with it the same automatic excommunication. But since there is rarely a formal declaration of an excommunication for an abortion, the woman is burdened with the penalty in her conscience, he said.

Official ties between the Holy See and Beijing were severed after communists took control of China in 1949. While Benedict has reached out to Beijing in hopes of restoring ties, the ordinations this week set back the efforts.

In China, a senior official in the state-backed Catholic church said Friday that religious conflicts can only be addressed after the Vatican establishes diplomatic relations with Beijing.

Liu Bainian, vice chairman of the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, a state-backed agency that oversees administration of the Catholic church, called on the Vatican to change its policies toward China.

"Once the relationship between the Chinese government and the Vatican improves, the church issues can be resolved," Liu said in a telephone interview.

Liu's comments were the first official response since the Vatican lashed out against the Chinese church's ordination of the bishops.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## Pope condemns China for elevating bishops

International Herald Tribune (05.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (08.05.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – Pope Benedict XVI issued a condemnation of the official Chinese Catholic church for having consecrated two bishops against the Vatican's wishes. The Vatican underscored its anger by noting that the act is punishable by excommunication, the church's severest censure.

"The Holy Father has learned of the news with profound displeasure", the pope's spokesman, Joaquin Navarro-Valls, said in a statement. "It is a grave wound to the unity of the church".

The statement marked a significant moment, both in the young papacy of Benedict and in the church's relationship with China, a major priority for the Vatican. Since Benedict was elected a year ago to lead the world's billion Catholics, China and the Vatican have engaged in intense talks re-establishing diplomatic ties that were broken 55 years ago.

The new rift, experts said, seemed to be a severe setback to the talks with the pope making it unusually clear that the church would not accept appointment of bishops by any institution other than the Vatican.

He left no doubt in raising the possibility of excommunication, a rare and serious step that has not been carried out for such an offense since 1988.

"It is the strongest protest, not only of this papacy but the strongest protest in the last decade surely", said Marco Politi, a Vatican expert for the Italian daily newspaper La Repubblica. "This is a little of a surprise."

Moreover, Benedict sounded a theme that is shaping up as an important one in his papacy: religious freedom. The issue is important not only in China, but in Muslim countries where Christian minorities have been fleeing from what the Vatican says is harassment and fear.

The rapidly intensifying crisis reflected strongly held positions on both sides.

For China, the dispute is about retaining control over a potentially powerful institution with mass appeal at a time of rising social unrest.

Though the number of Catholics in China is relatively small, China has a long history of protests that religious movements have helped bind together against the rule of fading dynasties.

For decades the government has sought to control the Catholic community through an official church, run by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. About four million people belong to an "underground" church loyal to Rome.

But the lines are blurred, and most bishops in the official church in recent years have informally obtained the Vatican's blessing. This practice, in effect despite the lack of ties between China and the Vatican, set up the current dispute.

On Sunday, bishops loyal to the Patriotic Association consecrated one of its top officials, Ma Yinling, as bishop of Kunming, in the southwest. Then on Wednesday, the association arranged for the consecration of Liu Xinhong as bishop of Wuhu, in Anhui Province.

The Association said it did not mean to slight the Vatican and was acting merely to fill a large number of vacant bishops' posts.

But several experts saw the move as an assertion of control amid talks that involve a more explicit role for the Vatican in the affairs of the Chinese church and after the Vatican's appointment in February of a Chinese cardinal in Hong Kong who is outspoken in his support of greater freedom in mainland China.

"China is not ready to let go" of its control over the church, said Beatrice Leung, a specialist in Sino-Vatican relations at Wenzao Ursuline College in Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

Other experts blamed the Patriotic Association specifically, saying that a renewal of diplomatic ties would reduce its influence.

Experts said that Benedict had set a stern and dramatic tone by raising the issue of excommunication, which essentially exiles the guilty party from the church. In the case of clerics, excommunication bans them from saying Mass and administering sacraments.

But experts in canon law say that the issue is complicated and that Benedict appeared to leave the room for compromise.

Under the church law, the excommunication would apply in this case to four Chinese priests: the two bishops who consecrated new bishops without the Vatican authority and the two who accepted.

The offense calls for "automatic" excommunication without any discrete action from the church, experts say, in the same way that any woman who undergoes an abortion is automatically excommunicated. But for the excommunication to make formal effect in the wider community, experts say, the church must issue a declaration of excommunication, something the pope did not do in his statement.

"It's an extremely delicate situation" said Reverend James Conn, a professor of canon law at the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome.

Canon law also states that people may be considered innocent if they acted under "grave fear". The pope's statement left open that possibility.

According to this information received, bishops and priests have been subjected to – on the part of the entities external to the church – strong pressures and threats so that they would take part in the Episcopal ordinations", Navarro-Valls said in the statement.

The main question now, it seems, is whether the Vatican and China will be able to continue their talks.

Experts note that both sides have an interest in doing so: The Vatican would bring into the fold millions of Catholics in a singularly important country, and to do so it has said it would sever its diplomatic relations with Taiwan. China would strengthen its prestige as a world power and aid its claim, in regard to Taiwan, to be the only true China.

In the Vatican statement, Navarro-Valls said the church was willing to continue talks only as long as no more bishops were named independently.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## Vatican excommunicates four Chinese Bishops

By Alessandra Rizzo

AP (04.05.2006) / HRWF Int. (08.05.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - The Vatican declared Thursday that two bishops ordained by China's state-controlled church without papal consent were excommunicated, escalating tensions as the two sides explored preliminary moves toward improving ties.

The Vatican also excommunicated the two bishops who ordained them, citing church law. The Holy See then criticized China for allegedly forcing bishops and priests to participate in "illegitimate" ordinations that "go against their conscience."

Pope Benedict XVI's first major diplomatic clash since being elected pontiff a year ago shatters hopes for any re-establishment soon of official ties that ended after communists took control of China in 1949.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls cited Article 1382 of the Roman Catholic Church's canon law in announcing the excommunications. That article states that "both the bishop who, without a pontifical mandate, consecrates a person a bishop, and the one who receives the consecration from him, incur a 'latae sententiae' excommunication," which means they are excommunicated.

Earlier, Navarro-Valls said Benedict was deeply saddened by news of the ordinations, which have occurred in recent weeks.

"It is a great wound to the unity of the church," Navarro-Valls said in a statement.

Chinese Foreign Ministry officials were not available to comment on the excommunications. But earlier, when the Vatican had only denounced the ordinations, a duty officer referred to a statement issued Sunday after the first ordination.

"The criticism toward the Chinese side by the Vatican is groundless," that statement said. "We hope the Vatican can respect the will of Chinese church and the vast numbers of priests as well as its church members so as to create good atmosphere for the improvement of Sino-Vatican ties."

On Wednesday, the official church, known as the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, ordained Liu Xinhong as bishop at the city of Wuhu's St. Joseph's Church in the eastern province of Anhui.

It was the second ordination in three days without the consent of the Vatican, which traditionally appoints its own bishops. On Sunday, China's official church ordained Ma Yinglin as a bishop in the southwestern province of Yunnan.

The association has said the new appointments were meant to fill shortages and were not intended to offend the Vatican.

The Vatican statement said officials had received information indicating that "bishops and priests have been subjected — by institutions not related to the church — to strong pressures and threats, in order for them to take part in the ordinations that, because they were not approved by the Vatican, are illegitimate and go against their conscience."

"We are therefore faced with a grave violation of religious freedom," Navarro-Valls said, adding the Vatican "had thought and hoped that such despicable events belonged to the past."

The ordinations come as China and the Holy See try to re-establish ties that ended after communists took control of China in 1949.

Formal ties would give some security to Vatican loyalists in China, who are frequently harassed and fined and sometimes sent to labor camps. Most Chinese Catholics are only allowed to worship in government-controlled churches, but millions are loyal to the Vatican.

But the Vatican said any dialogue was at risk now.

"The Holy See has in various occasions reiterated its willingness to have an honest and constructive dialogue with the competent Chinese authorities to find solutions that would satisfy the legitimate requirements of both sides," Navarro-Valls said.

"Initiatives such as those mentioned above not only don't favor this dialogue, but instead create new obstacles against it."

The Holy See also expressed alarm at reports that 20 more bishops might be ordained without Vatican approval and stressed "the need for respect for freedom of the church and for the autonomy of its institutions from any external interference."

It added the Vatican "sincerely hopes that there will not be a repetition of these unacceptable acts of violence and inadmissible acts of coercion."

In the last high-profile case, the Vatican in 2002 excommunicated seven women — including former Ohio first lady Dagmar Braun Celeste — who participated in an ordination ceremony aboard a boat on the Danube River between Germany and Austria. The women called themselves priests.

That case was handled by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who led the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith before becoming pope last year.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China says Tibetan boy not political prisoner**

By Benjamin Kang Lim

Reuters (28.04.2006) / HRWF Int. (08.05.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - China condemned exiled Tibetans and international human rights watchdogs on Friday for calling a Tibetan youth the world's youngest political prisoner, saying their aim is to push for independence for the Himalayan region.

The whereabouts of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, 17, who pro-Tibet groups say has been under house arrest since the region's exiled god-king, the Dalai Lama, appointed him the 11th Panchen Lama in 1995, is one of China's most keenly guarded secrets.

In reply to questions submitted by Reuters, the State Council Information Office said China had not arranged meetings between the boy and foreign organisations or media out of respect for the family's wishes not to be disturbed.

"Exiled Tibetan splittist elements and some foreign organisations with ulterior motives have been whipping up opinion that Gendun Choekyi Nyima is the world's youngest political prisoner," the cabinet spokesman's office said in a statement.

"Their objective is to split China, sabotage ethnic unity and internationalise the Tibet issue to serve Tibetan independence."

The Dalai Lama's unilateral announcement embarrassed and enraged China's atheist Communists, who dropped Nyima's name from a shortlist of candidates and endorsed Gyaltzen Norbu as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama, who died in 1989.

Tibetan Buddhists believe in reincarnation and that the soul of a "living Buddha" migrates to a boy born shortly after the holy monk's death. Reincarnations are identified through a mystical search that includes a series of ancient and rigorous tests such as picking out items that belonged to a late lama.

The cabinet spokesman's office said Nyima was "no reincarnation of the Panchen Lama" and was "just an ordinary boy belonging to China's Tibetan ethnic group".

"At present, his health is good. He lives a normal happy life and is receiving good cultural education," it said. "According to the wishes of his family, meetings with foreign organisations, the media and others have not been arranged to avoid disturbing him and his family's normal life."

In reply to a question on whether the Panchen Lama anointed by the Dalai Lama was studying Buddhism, the cabinet spokesman said it was totally his personal religious freedom.

The Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama made his debut on the world stage this month at China's first international religious forum since 1949. The 16-year-old is reviled by Dalai Lama loyalists as a pretender and security is extremely tight wherever he goes, apparently to prevent assassination attempts.

The return of the Dalai Lama, who fled into exile in India in 1959 after an abortive uprising, does not hinge on whether he recognises the Chinese Panchen, the cabinet spokesman's said.

It argued that the Chinese central government had the final say on determining reincarnations of "living Buddhas" like the Dalai or Panchen according to a 1793 agreement between Tibet and China's last dynasty, the Qing (1644-1911).

The door to dialogue with the Dalai Lama was open, the statement said, but he must truly abandon his advocacy of Tibetan independence and publicly recognise Tibet as an inseparable part of China, Taiwan as a Chinese province and the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate government of China.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Chinese regime comes out against ritual offerings to dead**

AsiaNews (26.04.2006) / HRWF Int. (15.05.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - The atheistic Chinese Communist Party has launched a new attack against the religious nature of its citizens' lives: soon, ritual funeral offerings, which have

been practiced in the country for around 3,000 years, will be "outlawed".

On 23 April, Dou Yupei, Vice-Minister of Civil Affairs, told a conference in Chengdu: "The government is working to revise regulations for funeral services to make the ritual of burning offerings an offence."

In China, it is commonplace to burn paper offerings of images before the pyre of deceased people, representing their luxuries and necessities in the netherworld. Now, this will no longer be possible.

"Burning this stuff not only encourages an air of superstition, but also looks vulgar and obscene," continued Dou. Right now, the most popular offerings are Viagra, Super Girls [a sort of singer-soubrette] and luxury cars, but models of villages and land are also burned.

"Those who burn models of villas, sedans and actresses will be punished by the ministries of land and resources, forestry, and civil affairs," he added.

"There was never any guarantee that the dead could enjoy the luxuries burned by their relatives," wrote a journalist of Hong Kong in reaction to the news. "But the authorities of mainland China are going to make sure their citizens don't enjoy in another life those benefits they were deprived of on this earth."

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China reins in Christianity's spread**

By Charles Hutzler

AP (19.04.2006) / HRWF Int. (24.04.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - For decades, Zhang Rongliang roamed across China, an energetic Christian preacher setting up one of the largest networks of Protestant churches operating outside state control.

For the past 16 months, however, authorities have shunted Zhang between detention centers, looking for a court to convict him on charges one judge sought to dismiss because he thought the evidence was flimsy.

"They just keep delaying and delaying and delaying," said Zhang Yinan, no relation to the preacher but a friend and a chronicler of China's unofficial Christian churches. "Just this morning, I prayed for his release."

Always wary of religion, the communist government has sought to rein in Christianity's rapid spread in China, targeting activist preachers for arrest and intimidation. Preachers have been jailed or driven into exile or deeper underground, depriving Chinese Christians of some of their best-organized and most entrepreneurial leaders.

China's limits on religion are sure to come up when Chinese President Hu Jintao meets with President Bush at the White House today.

Bush raised the issue with Hu in Beijing in November and later told reporters: "A society which recognizes religious freedom is a society which will recognize political freedom as well."

In a China where free-market reforms have upended lives once tightly circumscribed by the state and sent people searching for answers, religious belief of all kinds is exploding.

While Buddhism is the most popular religion, Christians now number a conservatively estimated 35 million, up from less than 1 million 50 years ago, according to religious scholars.

Most worship in private homes rather than in churches monitored by state-backed religious organizations.

Many of those caught in the latest dragnet were instrumental in Christianity's revival during Mao Zedong's prohibition on religion in the 1970s.

Zhang Rongliang, the detained preacher, surreptitiously started preaching in central China in 1974. Arrested and sent to a labor camp, he evangelized fellow prisoners.

His China for Christ church, started in the central province of Henan, now is one of the most popular in China. To keep up with the demand for preachers, the church runs secret seminaries where 20 or so students at a time lead cloistered lives of Bible study for a year or two.

"Every day is a risk of imprisonment," said Wang Xincui, leader of an evangelical group. He was visiting Beijing - he said his home in Henan is under police surveillance.

Authorities say some religious groups have carried out questionable acts. In the most shocking allegation, prosecutors accused Xu Wenku and 16 members of his Three Grades of Servants church of killing 20 members of a heretical sect.

At his trial last month in a northeastern city, Xu - an avuncular-looking man who ran his church like a stern patriarch - denied the charges and said he was tortured into confessing, as did many of his co-defendants.

In one week, Xu was deprived of sleep and suspended in mid-air for five hours, his lawyer said, according to a copy of his closing statement. "The defendant thought living was not as good as dying, that whatever they wanted him to say, he would say," the lawyer said.

The court has yet to issue a ruling.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **US Christians detained briefly after China raid**

AP (19.04.2006) / HRWF Int. (24.04.2006) - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Chinese police detained five US citizens in a raid last month on a Christian retreat in the country's southwest, an overseas church monitoring group said yesterday.

They were released after five hours of interrogation, along with two Taiwanese and 80 Chinese citizens representing congregations worshiping outside the tightly controlled official state Protestant church, the China Aid Association said.

The US citizens, three of whom are ethnic Chinese, are attached to churches in Greensboro, North Carolina, the association said. It did not identify them by name because they are still in China.

Interrogators accused the five of being "foreign religious infiltrators," it said -- not a formal criminal charge, but a reflection of the Communist Party's fears that outside forces are using burgeoning Christianity to undermine their rule.

About 120 officers took part in the raid on a conference center outside Kunming on the morning of March 23, said the association, based in Midland, Texas.

Calls to the Kunming police spokesman's office and the city Religious Affairs Bureau rang unanswered yesterday.

The association said that China detained at least 1,300 underground Chinese Christians and 17 foreign missionaries last year.

"The persecution against Protestant house churches in China has intensified," the association said in a statement.

A total of 1,317 detentions of house church pastors, leaders and believers occurred in 20 provinces while 17 foreign missionaries, including 11 Americans, were detained between February and December last year, it said.

Most were released after they had been interrogated for periods ranging from 24 hours to several months, the group said. But it claimed that police and state security agents tortured, drugged and practised other abuses against some of the detainees.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China Church official says believers are free to worship within limits**

AP (19.04.2006) / HRWF Int. (24.04.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – A leader in China's state-backed church defended government limits on religious freedom in China Tuesday, saying Christians are free to worship and spread their faith as long as they do so privately.

The Rev. Cao Shengjie, president of the China Christian Council, said that government regulations allow worship in authorized venues but not in public places in order to protect the rights of others.

"So we don't have religious activities in public places because we don't want to cause religious disharmony," Cao said at a news conference.

Government controls on religion have attracted sharp criticism from Christians overseas and Chinese who refuse to submit to state authority. At issue, is what many feel is a duty for Christians: the right to propagate the faith.

Unauthorized Protestant churches, often called house churches because believers gather in private homes, are growing more rapidly than state-approved churches in part because of zealous proselytizing, according to Chinese and foreign religious scholars. The government has fought back by arresting some of China's best organized and entrepreneurial evangelical preachers.

These divisive religious controls are now set to follow Beijing's leadership to the United States. President George W. Bush is expected to raise religious freedom in summit Thursday with Chinese President Hu Jintao in Washington.

Cao's Christian Council, which oversees administration of state-approved churches, hopes to dispel American misgivings by bringing an exhibit on the Bible in China to three American cities starting in late April. Former President Jimmy Carter and the Rev. Billy Graham are lending their names to the tour, giving China's state-backed church a chance for greater legitimacy.

"We enjoy policies of religious freedom," Cao said. "Many people don't know the situation in China, especially Americans."

Sometimes, she said, American Christians pray for Bibles for Chinese Christians, not realizing that council-backed Amity Printing Press publishes 2.5 million Bibles a year. With a network of 70 distribution centers nationwide, Bibles are reaching Christians in remote areas, she said.

Even as she defended government restrictions, Cao also offered a nuanced depiction of the controls, Christianity's continued spread despite the limits and the state-backed churches' role.

"We believe that every Christian has the responsibility to spread the Gospel," said Cao. In authorized congregations, she said, believers were attracting converts by talking privately about their faith to friends and colleagues.

At Cao's Huai'en Church in Shanghai, "every year we have 200 to 300 baptisms. These are people who are brought in by friends and relatives," she said.

Cao stuck to the official estimate that China has 16 million Christians, rejecting higher estimates as "far-fetched." Foreign scholars have estimated that there are 35 million Protestants and another 12 million Catholics.

Nevertheless, Cao rejected the notion that Chinese Christians were divided between approved and unofficial or underground churches. "I pray to the Lord that the number of believers in China will be great," she said.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **U.N. envoy looks at Falun Gong torture allegations**

Reuters (30.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (03.04.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - The United Nations torture investigator said on Thursday he was looking into allegations by the Falun Gong group that thousands of its followers were being held at a Chinese "concentration camp" and some had been killed.

The banned spiritual movement alleged this month that up to 6,000 people at a time were kept at a state-run camp in the Sujiatun district of the northern city of Shenyang, where it said some had been killed and their organs sold.

"The allegation is Falun Gong practitioners are being used for the sale of organs and human tissues ... According to the allegation nobody has so far left this concentration

camp," said Manfred Nowak, U.N. special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

"I am presently in the process of investigating as far as I can these allegations ... If I come to the conclusion that it is a serious and well-founded allegation, then I will officially submit it to attention of the Chinese government," he told a news briefing.

Nowak, who visited China late last year after a decade of negotiations, reported last week he found torture widespread in the country, home to the world's biggest prison population.

China has denied earlier abuse and torture charges made by Nowak and asked the U.N. envoy to think again.

The Falun Gong bulletin said the allegations were based on "testimony from an insider and formal journalist from China", who also alleged the camp had a crematorium and many doctors.

Nowak, an Austrian law professor, said if the allegations proved true it would be a serious violation of many basic human rights, including the right to life and the right not to be subjected to torture or ill-treatment.

In his report last week he called on China to abolish its "re-education through labour" system and urged authorities to release all political prisoners and people held for exercising their right to freedom of speech, assembly and religion.

This included imprisoned practitioners of Falun Gong, banned in 1999 as a "cult" that threatens the government.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Vatican and Beijing discussing forging ties**

AP (30.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (03.04.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Hong Kong's new cardinal said Thursday the Vatican and Beijing are discussing forging fresh ties, which could allow Pope Benedict XVI to make a historic visit to China.

Joseph Zen, an outspoken champion of religious freedom in China, was uncertain when an agreement would be reached. China cut ties with the Vatican in 1951.

No pope has ever visited mainland China.

The Vatican's foreign minister, Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, said Saturday the "time is ripe" for the Holy See and Beijing to establish diplomatic relations, and confirmed it is ready to move its embassy from Taiwan.

When a country shifts its formal recognition to China, Beijing usually demands that the nation's leaders and high-ranking officials avoid visiting Taiwan. Beijing insists Taiwan is part of Chinese territory and should not have diplomatic relations with other countries. The two sides split amid civil war in 1949.

But Zen said the Beijing government may allow Benedict to visit both mainland China and Taiwan because he is a religious leader, not a politician.

If the Vatican cut ties with Taiwan, it would be a huge blow to the island since the Holy See is its only diplomatic ally in Europe. The island's other partners are mostly impoverished African, Latin American and Caribbean nations.

Zen, appointed cardinal last week, said Thursday the Taiwanese would understand if the Vatican switched its diplomatic relations.

"If there is a guarantee after the normalization of relations and the Catholic church is given freedom (in China), the government and people of Taiwan would accept the decision of the holy father," Zen said.

He added: "The holy father would go to visit mainland China. Of course, I think he can also go visit Taiwan."

One of the Vatican's goals is to restart official relations with China, which forced its Roman Catholics to cut ties with the Holy See after the officially atheist Communists took power. People can worship only in government-controlled churches.

But millions of Chinese belong to unofficial congregations loyal to Rome. They say they are frequently harassed, fined and sometimes sent to labor camps by authorities.

Pope John Paul II, the most-traveled pontiff in history, was unable to visit China during his 26-year papacy. Pope Paul VI made a three-hour stopover in Hong Kong in 1970 when it was a British colony.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **The European Commission answers questions about religious persecutions in China**

***Written Question E-0812/06 by Charles Tannock (PPE-DE) to the Commission***

**Subject: Detention of Pastor Cai Zhuohua in China**

Is the Commission aware of the arrest and conviction of Pastor Cai Zhuohua in China for 'illegal' business practice', namely distributing Bibles free of charge to Christian church members, and of that of his wife Xiao Yunfei and her brother Xiao Gaowen?

Allegedly, Pastor Cai has been repeatedly subjected to abusive treatment and torture during interrogation, and was warned that his sentence would be increased if he 'annoyed' the judges with an appeal. Under such pressure Cai and his family reluctantly agreed to drop their appeal.

Can the Commission investigate this appalling situation and, if it agrees with this version of events, appeal for their early release?

***Answer given by Mrs Ferrero-Waldner on behalf of the Commission (28.3.2006)***

The Commission shares the concern expressed by the Honorable Member regarding the situation of pastor Cai Zhuohua, and more in general the situation of Chinese individuals deprived of their basic right to freely express their beliefs and opinions.

The EU has conducted a bilateral dialogue with China on human rights for years, and freedom of expression and religion is always very high on its agenda. Moreover, pastor Cai is on the list of individuals which the EU regularly submits to the Chinese on the occasion of this dialogue.

On 29 December 2005, the EU Troika undertook a demarche in Beijing regarding the case of Pastor Cai as well as of his lawyer Gao Zhisheng. The Commission will continue to press the Chinese authorities to allow individuals in China the right to exert their religion or belief without any restriction.

***Written Question E-0716/06 by Marco Pannella (ALDE) to the Commission***

**Subject: Human rights situation in China – Persecution of Christians and of Falun Gong members**

The 41-year-old Gao Zhisheng is a Chinese lawyer who is fighting to ensure the principle of constitutional government finally prevail. For years he has sided with those who challenge the authorities' malpractices and call for freedom of speech and the freedom to express one's thoughts.

He is a famous throughout the country on account of the open letters in which denounces the misgovernment practiced by the leaders of the Communist Party and on account of his valiant support for 'unofficial' Christians and Falun Gong members, which has cost him his lawyer's practice (which he has had to close) and his lawyer's license (which the government has withdrawn).

On 6 February, Gao Zhisheng launched a nationwide campaign of hunger strikes in support of Yang Maodong (also known as Gao Feixiong) – a lawyer who is involved in particular in defending the people of Taishi (a village in Guangdong), who are endeavoring to remove their corrupt village chief and to introduce democracy into the way in which politics and the local economy are run.

Precisely on account of his involvement, Yang has on a number of occasions been subjected to violence and ill-treatment at the hands of the police and 'unknown assailants', who have been shadowing him 24 hours a day. Last Thursday they took photographs of him, his wife and their two children. The next day, Yang sought out the 'photographers' and forced them to accompany him to a police station, where he made them hand over the camera films. On leaving the building he was set upon by seven 'unknown assailants', who destroyed the films.

In response, Gao Zhisheng undertook a 48-hour hunger strike (as did Ye Shuang), whilst other Chinese activist and democrats resident on the Chinese mainland, in Hong Kong, in Japan and in the West gradually joined the protest. The protesters included Qi Zhiyong, who had his legs amputated after the police fired at him during the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations.

What action is the Commission considering with a view to persuading the Chinese Government to cease the kind of persecution described above and to uphold freedom of worship?

Is the Commission intending to ensure that respect for human rights is made the central issue in the EU's relation with the People's Republic of China?

### ***Answer given by Mrs Ferrero-Waldner on behalf of the Commission (28.3.2006)***

The Commission shares the concern expressed by the Honorable Member regarding the situation of Chinese individuals deprived of their basic right to freely express their beliefs or opinions.

Respect for basic human rights is at the core of relations between the EU and China. The EU has conducted over the years a bilateral dialogue with China on human rights, and freedom of expression and religion had been constantly – and will continue to be – very high on the agenda, including at political level.

On 29 December 2005, the EU Troika undertook a demarche in Beijing regarding the case of Gao Zhisheng. A second demarche took place again in Beijing on 15 February 2006, requesting a public investigation to establish the truth regarding Gao's alleged harassment by the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Public Security and an attempted assassination on 17 January 2006.

The Commission will continue pressing the Chinese authorities to recognize the right of their people to exercise their religion or belief without restrictions.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Vatican sees warming relations with China**

By Victor L. Simpson

AFP (25.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (30.03.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - The Vatican's foreign minister said Saturday that the "time is ripe" for the Holy See and Beijing to establish diplomatic relations, and confirmed it is ready to move its embassy from Taiwan.

However, there were some things that the Vatican will not give up, Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo said, in an apparent reference to the Roman Catholic Church's tradition that the pope names his bishops. China demands a say in the appointment of bishops.

"As is known, there have already been various contacts, with ups and downs," Lajolo said in an interview with Hong Kong station I-Cable TV.

"It seems to me that the Holy See has clearly explained what it is asking for, what it is ready to concede and what it can never give up if it is to remain faithful to itself. In our opinion, the time is ripe."

The text from the interview was made available at the Vatican during the ceremonies installing 15 new cardinals, including Hong Kong Bishop Joseph Zen, an outspoken champion of religious freedom in China.

Zen acknowledged in an interview with The Associated Press that the appointment of bishops was the chief obstacle, but said he was confident a formula could be found to overcome the differences.

"They should not be afraid," Zen said of the Beijing authorities, suggesting they held an outdated view of the Church as an "imperialist" institution.

Zen stressed the importance of continuing contacts with the Holy See, spurred by Pope Benedict XVI's desire to reach out to China. "For a long time they had stopped talking," he said.

Lajolo said it was clear that the spiritual needs of the several million Catholics in China are more urgent than those of the 300,000 Catholics in Taiwan.

"For this reason the Holy See has manifested its willingness to transfer the apostolic nunciature from Taipei to Beijing just as in 1952, on account of the circumstances of the time, it transferred the nunciature from mainland China to Taiwan."

He added that the Vatican had communicated its wish to move its embassy to both governments.

Roman Catholics on mainland China were forced to cut ties with the Vatican shortly after the officially atheistic Communist Party took power in 1949. Worship is allowed only in government-controlled churches, but millions belong to unofficial congregations loyal to Rome. The authority to appoint bishops on the mainland has been a major obstacle in relations between the Vatican and China.

Lajolo said the Vatican does not intend to weaken its "bonds of friendship" with Taiwan Catholics and the entire population.

Last month, Zen said the Taiwanese were "psychologically preparing" for a change in their status with the Vatican.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **House hearing: NGO calls for investigation of Sujiatun concentration camp**

Clearwisdom.net (19.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (21.03.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - At 2:00 p.m. on March 16, a house hearing, "Monitoring Respect for Human Rights Around the World: A Review of the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005*" - was held at the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, DC. Nina Shea, director of Freedom House gave a testimony and called for investigation of the Sujiatun Concentration Camp.

Ms. Nina Shea said, "Though still being investigated and yet to be verified, a report has surfaced that is so grave it warrants mentioning here: According to a Chinese journalist who recently escaped to the United States, a concentration camp, Sujiatun, in the city of Shenyang, has been specially constructed to hold some 6,000 Falun Gong practitioners from northeast China. The camp is said to have a large staff of doctors, whose job there is to conduct experiments on the prisoners and kill them efficiently. It is said to include a crematorium to dispose of the evidence.

"The journalist, working with a network of informants, states that the Chinese government uses the prison to conduct a business in selling organs harvested from those who are killed inside. In light of Harry Wu's past reports on organ harvesting from executed prisoners in China, this story must be taken seriously and investigated."

The hearing was hosted by Christopher H. Smith, Chairperson of the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations. Barry

Lowenkron, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Bishop Thomas Wenski, Chairman of the US Bishops' Committee on International Policy, Ms. Elisa Massimino, Washington Director of Human Rights First, Sharon Hom, Executive Chair of Human Rights in China, Ms. Nina Shea, Director of Freedom House, and Ali Al-Ahmed, Director of the Gulf Institute, each gave testimonies.

Congressman Smith pointed out that human rights are not a compromise or welfare given by a government, but are the basic rights of everyone based on human beings' dignity and worth. Smith said that some human rights are fundamental and are the foundation of other rights. Among them, the right to live is the foremost. If one's life is endangered, all other rights will become meaningless. Therefore, every life is of paramount importance.

On March 8, the Department of State issued its *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005*, in which it detailed human rights violations in Zimbabwe, China, Burma and Cuba, among other countries.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China set to host Buddhist forum**

By Benjamin Kang Lim

Reuters (17.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (18.04.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – China is set to host its first major international forum on Buddhism since 1949 to complement President Hu Jintao's campaign to build a "harmonious society" and burnish China's tarnished image on religious freedom.

Some 1,000 monks and experts on Buddhism from about 10 countries and China, Hong Kong and Taiwan will descend on the scenic city of Hangzhou in the eastern province of Zhejiang for the World Buddhist Forum opening on April 13.

"Religion will play a big role in China's creation of a harmonious society," Xiao Wunan, vice-chairman of the World Buddhist Peace Foundation, told Reuters when asked if the forum indicated a greater official tolerance for religion.

A theme of the forum printed on brochures reads: "A harmonious world begins in the mind."

Hu has launched a campaign to build a "harmonious society" as Chinese society has become more diverse but also more unequal. The government continues strict curbs on religious practice, but has also sought to fend off international criticism by underscoring the country's diversity of beliefs.

Many Catholics worship in underground churches and Protestant preachers have been detained for peddling unauthorized versions of the Bible.

The government is generally less fearful of Buddhism with its home-grown roots, but maintains tight control on monasteries, especially in Tibet where nuns and priests have been jailed for expressing sympathy with the exiled Dalai Lama.

It was unclear whether Hu or the Communist Party's 24-member decision-making Politburo had given their blessings to the forum, organized by China's Buddhist Association and the China Association for Religious and Cultural Exchanges.

"Government support for such a big event is very important," Xiao, a 41-year old convert to Tibetan Buddhism, said in an interview. He declined to elaborate or confirm whether any member of the Politburo would attend.

### **Low risk**

Observers said the forum in Hangzhou was a low-risk move that could help counter damage to Hu's and China's image caused by government crackdowns on journalists, Internet writers, civil rights campaigners and academics in the past year.

"My guess is it needs Hu's approval ... It'll change his image but it's also the safest, the least troublesome and an easy event to control," said Xu Youyu, an expert on philosophy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a government think-tank.

The four-day forum is to move on April 15 to nearby Zhoushan, where delegates will pray for world peace.

Hu's policy on religion appears to extend changes made by his predecessor, Jiang Zemin, who banned the Falun Gong spiritual movement and jailed thousands of adherents but also sought to raise the profile of officially approved religions.

Under Jiang, China refused to recognize the boy chosen by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the second holiest monk in Tibetan Buddhism and anointed its own Panchen Lama.

China's atheist Communist leaders are deeply suspicious of religion and see it as a tool to help control a population of 1.3 billion, the biggest in the world. But the end of Mao Zedong's personality cult after his death in 1976 has left an ideological vacuum which the party has been unable to fill.

In January, Jia Qinglin, ranked fourth in the Communist Party hierarchy, warned against foreign infiltration using religion.

Two of the top lamas of Tibetan Buddhism will be absent from the forum. The Dalai Lama has lived in exile in India since 1959 when he fled his Himalayan homeland after an abortive uprising.

The Karmapa Lama, the third ranking monk in Tibetan Buddhism, joined the Dalai Lama in India in 1999.

"The time is not ripe. But we do not rule out the possibility in the future," Xiao said when asked why they were not invited.

It was unclear whether the Beijing-anointed Panchen Lama, ranked second behind the Dalai Lama, would attend. The boy chosen by the Dalai Lama has disappeared from public view.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## China's Panchen Lama steals show with Buddhists

AFP (13.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (17.04.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – China's rule over Tibet took center stage at the first World Buddhist Forum here, with Beijing's choice as the next Tibetan spiritual leader making a surprise appearance.

In an address to about 1,000 monks and nuns from around the world on Thursday, the 11th Panchen Lama made clear his loyalties to China's atheist communist rulers who appointed him in 1995.

"Defending the nation and working for the people is a solemn commitment Buddhism has made to the nation and society," said the 16-year-old boy, who ranks second only to the exiled Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhism's religious hierarchy.

"In this new era we need to shoulder the historical responsibility of defending the nation and working for the people."

While China's government had hailed the gathering in the lakeside city of Hangzhou that ends Sunday as a showcase of religious harmony and tolerance, sharp political overtones continued with the notable absence of the Dalai Lama.

"If he appears at the forum, he will surely pose a really disharmonious note to the general harmonious tone," the vice-director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, Qi Xiaofei, said on Wednesday.

"The Dalai Lama is not only a religious figure but is also a long-time stubborn secessionist who has tried to split his Chinese motherland and break the unity among different ethnic groups."

The Dalai Lama has been living in exile since fleeing his homeland after a failed uprising in 1959 -- nine years after China took control of the region -- and is regarded by Beijing as a major threat despite his 1989 Nobel Peace prize.

The Dalai Lama's own choice as the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, disappeared from public view in 1995 and is believed to have been under a form of house arrest ever since.

"In Europe, we are worried about his state and we try to ask for access to him," Sabine Thielow, president of German Buddhist Union, told Reuters on the sidelines of the forum, "I would be happy if the two boys could meet and exchange their experiences."

Many Tibetans dismiss China's choice as a sham.

On Thursday, one Tibetan Lama shook his head and declined to comment when asked about the Panchen's speech. Another Lama smiled and only said: "It's hard to explain" after a brief moment of silence.

Two other top lamas of Tibetan Buddhism were conspicuously absent from the forum.

The Dalai Lama's absence came as a surprise to Munkhbayar Bataa, 27, a monk from Mongolia who nevertheless said the gathering of monks and nuns from more than 30 countries provided good opportunities to learn.

"I was quite surprised as I actually thought he could be here but it's still good to be able to meet so many monks from different countries," said Bataa.

As monks sipped tea, took photos and chatted excitedly in the eastern city's Great Hall of the People, keynote speakers at China biggest religious meeting since the party seized power in 1949 stressed the need to heed the values of the religion that has its origins in India about 2,500 years ago.

"This meeting is about bringing together all Buddhists no matter from what school of Buddhism and uniting as one heart for peace," said Shi Jianyin, a nun from Taiwan.

China has long claimed that it allows freedom of religion, even though it routinely jails Buddhist monks and nuns as well as Christians who refuse to acknowledge the authority of the Communist Party in religious affairs.

Nevertheless the event illustrated the party's changing attitudes towards religion, even if those motives appear politically motivated, according to some of the delegates.

A photo exhibition is being held at the forum venue, but there were no pictures of either the Dalai Lama or from the chaotic 1966-76 Cultural Revolution when monasteries were closed, statues smashed and religious texts burned.

China has since sought to control but not stifle religion in a society where an ideological vacuum has spawned corruption and eroded ethics in the post-Mao era.

But in the face of rising unrest, China has no qualms about crushing any challenge to its rule, banning the Falun Gong spiritual movement as an evil cult in 1999.

China is less fearful of home-grown Buddhism than other religions, even though many Tibetan monks and nuns have been jailed for their loyalty to the Dalai Lama, whom Beijing accuses of pushing for independence.

Yue Qin, a monk from Macau who teaches 150 students in a monastery in southern China's Guangdong province, said the party was turning to more traditional Chinese values because it had to.

"The government knows that young people in China have lost the traditional values. And so through this forum they want more people to start paying attention to Buddhism -- and this will be a benefit for all of China," he said.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Disputed Panchen Lama defends China on religion**

By Benjamin Kang Lim

Reuters (13.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (18.04.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – Tibet's 11th Panchen Lama, anointed by China's atheist Communists but not by the Tibet's Dalai Lama, took centre stage at the World Buddhist Forum on Thursday, defending China's record on religion.

Chinese leaders opened the forum in the eastern city of Hangzhou with a pledge to respect religious freedom and seeking to ease fears the rise of the world's most populous nation would be a threat to the world.

Gyaltsen Norbu, appointed in 1995 as the Himalayan region's second most important religious figure after Beijing rejected the Dalai Lama's nominee, shared the stage at an

auditorium with eight Buddhist leaders from South Korea, Taiwan and Sri Lanka, taking the middle seat.

"Chinese society provides a favourable environment for Buddhist belief," the 16-year-old told the forum which winds up on Sunday.

Wearing a yellow and maroon robe, he delivered his terse speech in Tibetan which was interrupted twice by applause from more than 1,000 delegates from 34 countries.

The Dalai Lama's nominee is believed to have been under house arrest since 1995, when he was six years old. International human rights watchdogs call him the world's youngest political prisoner.

"In Europe, we are worried about his state and we try to ask for access to him," Sabine Thielow, president of German Buddhist Union, told Reuters on the sidelines of the forum, "I would be happy if the two boys could meet and exchange their experiences."

Many Tibetans dismiss China's choice as a sham.

Gyaltzen Norbu made his debut on the world stage on Wednesday, sitting alongside about 50 Buddhist leaders during an audience at a hotel with Jia Qinglin, ranked fourth in the Communist Party hierarchy. But the other delegates ignored him.

### ***Lamas absent, no pictures***

On Thursday, one Tibetan Lama shook his head and declined to comment when asked about the Panchen's speech. Another Lama smiled and only said: "It's hard to explain" after a brief moment of silence.

Two other top lamas of Tibetan Buddhism were conspicuously absent from the forum.

The Dalai Lama, branded by Beijing as a "splittist", has lived in exile in India since 1959 when he fled his homeland after an abortive uprising. A 23-year-old backed by the Dalai Lama as the Karmapa Lama, ranked third, fled to India in 1999.

Liu Yandong, number two in the top advisory body to parliament and the most senior Chinese leader at the forum, sought to play down fears China's rise would be a threat to the world.

"Internal harmony will definitely lead to external peace," she said, days before a summit between Chinese President Hu Jintao and his deeply religious U.S. counterpart, George W. Bush, in Washington.

"A peacefully developing China looks forward to a peacefully co-existing world."

A photo exhibition is being held at the forum venue, but there were no pictures of either the Dalai Lama or from the chaotic 1966-76 Cultural Revolution when monasteries were closed, statues smashed and religious texts burnt.

China has since sought to control but not stifle religion in a society where an ideological vacuum has spawned corruption and eroded ethics in the post-Mao era.

But in the face of rising unrest, China has no qualms about crushing any challenge to its rule, banning the Falun Gong spiritual movement as an evil cult in 1999.

China is less fearful of home-grown Buddhism than other religions, even though many Tibetan monks and nuns have been jailed for their loyalty to the Dalai Lama, whom Beijing accuses of pushing for independence.

## **Chinese Court seeks advice in case against Zhang Rongliang**

By Timothy Chow

Compass (13.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (17.04.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – The court judging house church leader Zhang Rongliang, acknowledging that “there are insufficient evidence and ambiguous facts,” this week submitted the case to the Zhengzhou City Intermediate People’s Court asking for legal advice.

The Zhongmu City People’s Court made the request after a two-hour court hearing on April 6 in which Zhang, charged with falsifying a passport, argued his right for a passport as a Chinese citizen. Zhang also denied the accusation that he was behind “attaining passport through cheating” for three of his co-workers.

According to a source who has seen the document requesting legal advice, the Zhongmu City People’s Court acknowledges that “there are insufficient evidence and ambiguous facts” in Zhang’s case.

“The Zhengzhou City Intermediate People’s Court is expected to give an answer to Xinmi Court by April 24,” said one of Zhang’s co-workers. “Otherwise, we will have to wait for one more month for the court verdict.”

Zhang is now being held in custody in Zhongmu City.

Zhang is a key leader of the China for Christ house church movement, formerly known as Fangcheng but renamed by Zhang in October 2004. During a court hearing in 2005, Zhang said the movement was now 10 million strong, though others believe it numbers around 1 million.

Zhang also co-authored a joint house church “Confession of Faith,” written in 1999, to plead for clemency during a widespread government crackdown against “cult” movements.

The 55-year-old Zhang was arrested by Henan police without charges on December 1, 2004. Only months later was he charged with “attaining a passport through cheating” and with “illegal border crossing.” Chinese authorities often deny passports to well-known house church leaders.

Health problems such as diabetes and high blood pressure have grown worse while in custody. Previously Zhang had been detained five times and spent a total of 12 years in prison for his religious activities.

Zhang, who has suffered from diabetes for six years and high blood pressure for four years, has spent most of his time in the hospital since December 19, 2005, but officials believe he is well enough to attend the hearing.

Following his arrest, authorities confiscated Christian DVDs and other materials from Zhang's house that allegedly linked him with foreign Christians. Contact with foreign co-religionists can constitute illegal activity in China.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China official says no timetable on Vatican ties**

Reuters (12.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (17.04.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – China has no timetable for re-establishing ties with the Vatican, a religious official was quoted as saying, throwing into doubt earlier reports that the two sides could have diplomatic relations by the 2008 Olympics.

Qi Xiaofei, deputy head of the State Administration of Religious Affairs, made the remarks on Wednesday in Hangzhou where the World Buddhist Forum, China's first international religious meeting since the Communists swept to power in 1949, got under way on Thursday.

Ties between China, whose Catholics must worship in state-backed churches, and the Vatican were cut in 1951. The Vatican has formal relations with Taiwan, the self-ruled island Beijing considers a breakaway province.

"We gave two clear and consistent principles on handling Sino-Vatican relations," Qi told the official Xinhua news agency in an interview.

"The Vatican must sever the so-called 'diplomatic relations' with Taiwan and recognize the Chinese government as the sole legitimate government of China and not interfere in our internal affairs in the name of religion."

Momentum for rapprochement between the Vatican and China appeared to have been building since the death of Pope John Paul last year and as the Beijing Games approach.

Earlier this month, Ye Xiaowen, director of the cabinet's State Bureau of Religious Affairs, said China could establish relations with the Vatican "very soon" if it broke ties with Taiwan and refrained from interfering in China's affairs.

Ye gave no timetable.

Cardinal Joseph Zen of Hong Kong, who has taken an active interest in Sino-Vatican affairs, said the two sides could re-establish ties by 2008.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Court Hearing set for ailing Chinese Pastor Zhang Rongliang**

By Timothy Chow

Compass (05.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (06.04.2006) – Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – A major Chinese house church leader is scheduled for a potentially decisive court hearing on April 6 after more than 16 months in police custody.

Zhang Rongliang, 55, was arrested by Henan police without charges on December 1, 2004. Only months later was he charged with "attaining a passport through cheating" and with "illegal border crossing."

Chinese authorities often deny passports to well-known house church leaders. Previously Zhang had been detained five times and spent a total of 12 years in prison for his religious activities.

"This will be his third hearing," said a co-worker who asked to remain anonymous. "This time I hope the court can make an independent decision based on truth and justice."

Zhang, who has suffered from diabetes for six years and high blood pressure for four years, has spent most of his time in the hospital since December 19, 2005, but officials believe he is well enough to attend the hearing.

Zhang is a key leader of the China for Christ house church movement, formerly known as Fangcheng but renamed by Zhang in October 2004. During a court hearing in 2005, Zhang said the movement was now 10 million strong, though other estimates put the number at 1 million.

Zhang also co-authored a joint house church "Confession of Faith," written in 1999, to plead for clemency during a widespread government crackdown against "cult" movements.

Following his arrest, authorities confiscated Christian DVDs and other materials from Zhang's house that allegedly linked him with foreign Christians. Contact with foreign co-religionists can constitute illegal activity in China.

### ***Chained to hospital bed***

A few of Zhang's relatives and church members were allowed to attend two court hearings in the People's Court of Xinmi city on June 6 and August 2, 2005.

Xu Zhijun, the chief judge at these hearings, later told Zhang's family that he had no personal grudge against Zhang and that he would judge his case fairly according to the law. But four months later, in December 2005, officials suddenly transferred Zhang to a prison in Zhongmu city, about 60 kilometers (37 miles) away from Xinmi.

By that time, Zhang had been held in police custody for 12 months. Although a verdict had not yet been issued, he had already served the maximum sentence for anyone found guilty of using a false passport.

According to one government official sympathetic to the plight of house church members, the Zhengzhou City Political and Legal Committee was displeased with an impending decision by the People's Court of Xinmi to dismiss all charges and release Zhang. The Zhengzhou committee therefore asked the Zhongmu city court to re-examine the case.

Officials in Zhongmu refused to accept Zhang, however, fearing he might die in their custody as a result of serious health problems. Zhang was then admitted to the Xinmi city People's Hospital on December 19, 2005, where he stayed until January 23. One witness reported seeing Zhang handcuffed and chained to his hospital bed.

Later Zhang was transferred to a Zhongmu City hospital, where he spent most of February and March. Doctors have advised him to remain there for treatment.

Hospital staff have confirmed the diabetes and high blood pressure and diagnosed four other chronic health problems.

"I am really concerned about his health," said Zhang's wife, Chen Hongxian, in a recent interview. "This is so unfair. Why are we house church Christians being treated like second-class citizens in our own country?"

### ***Passport issue***

Chinese house church historian Zhang Yinan, released from prison on September 2005, feels strongly about the passport issue.

Zhang Yinan was arrested on September 26, 2003 and imprisoned for two years on charges of "attempting to subvert the national government" for his efforts to document the condition of Chinese house churches. He applied for a passport earlier this year, after friends in the United States invited him to attend the 56<sup>th</sup> National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C.

Authorities knew of the invitation and rejected his application. An estimated 50 to 60 policemen took turns guarding his apartment in Henan for three weeks, from the time of his application until February 1, the day before the prayer meeting began.

"Freedom of religion includes the freedom to travel and fellowship with Christians worldwide," Zhang Yinan said. "As citizens of the People's Republic of China, every Christian has the right to have a passport to travel freely abroad."

He noted that the government grants passports to Chinese Muslims for pilgrimages to Mecca but denies them to many house church leaders.

Civil authorities have rejected passport applications from several other top leaders of the China for Christ house church movement.

One of them is Han Yongqin, a co-worker of imprisoned pastor Zhang Rongliang since the 1980s. A few months ago, when her daughter applied for a passport for overseas study, the police asked her to bring her mother in for questioning.

"I just don't understand the logic here," said Han. "Pastor Zhang and I have been on the blacklist for many years. But why should the police pick on our children?"

Chinese house church leaders said there appeared to be no channel for open dialogue with the government on this issue.

As for Zhang, his wife Chen hopes the hearing on Thursday will bring a positive resolution.

"I hope my husband can come home soon, so that I can take good care of his health," she said.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Religion in China still restricted**

By Lindsay Beck

Reuters (01.03.2006) / HRWF Int. (02.03.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Two Tibetan Buddhists jailed for "splittism" have had their

sentences reduced, but a rights group said on Wednesday that one year after China introduced new regulations on religious rights, freedom to worship remains restricted.

The rules that took effect in March 2005 enshrine religious belief as a basic right of all citizens, but China still forbids worship outside designated religious organizations, fearing the growth of groups that could challenge Communist Party rule.

"Local officials continue to repress religious activities that they determine to be outside the scope of the state-controlled religious system," the New York-based Human Rights Watch said in a statement.

The 2005 regulations were deliberately vague, it added.

"There is nothing accidental about the vagueness -- it gives officials the room they need to legitimize closing mosques, raiding religious meetings, 're-educating' religious leaders and censoring publications," the watchdog said.

Catholics who worship outside the state-backed Catholic Patriotic Association, Muslim Uighurs and Tibetan Buddhists are among those that risk punishment for practicing their religions.

Uighurs and Tibetans face the added problem of their religious beliefs being linked to movements for separatism or greater autonomy for the far-western border regions of Xinjiang and Tibet.

In Tibet, which Communist troops invaded in 1950, Jigme Tenzin had one year taken off his 19-year sentence imposed in 2000 for "splittism" -- the crime of advocating independence -- said the Dui Hua Foundation, which works to secure releases for political prisoners.

His wife, Nyima Choedron, was granted sentence reductions totaling 2- years off her 10-year sentence. The two ran an orphanage in the Tibet capital Lhasa before being detained in 1999 following an anti-Chinese protest.

Beijing has also been seen as particularly harsh in Xinjiang, where rights groups say the government is using support for the U.S.-led war on terrorism to legitimize a crackdown on Muslim Uighur activists.

China, which says it faces a terrorist threat in the border region that contains 30 percent of its oil reserves, on Tuesday ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, giving it another tool to fight unrest.

The government has denied accusations it suppresses Islam in Xinjiang, saying it only wants to stop separatism, terrorism and religious extremism.

China's Catholics are also caught between Beijing and the Vatican, with those who pledge loyalty to the Pope forced to practice underground.

While China and the Vatican have been engaged in an informal dialogue aimed at resuming diplomatic ties severed in 1951, underground priests continue to be detained.

Protestant house churches are also a target.

In November, a Chinese court sentenced a Protestant minister, his wife and her brother to prison terms of up to three years for illegally printing Bibles and other Christian publications.

Such printings require approval from the State Bureau of Religious Affairs and Bibles cannot be bought openly at bookshops.

## **New Chinese Cardinal: Beijing must change**

By Victor L. Simpson

AP (28.02.2006) / HRWF Int. (02.03.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Hong Kong's newly appointed cardinal said Tuesday that China's communist government needs to overcome "old prejudices" toward the Roman Catholic Church for the Vatican to make a breakthrough in forging relations with Beijing.

Bishop Joseph Zen said he was hopeful about the prospect, insisting that there was "no harsh reaction" from China to his appointment, even though the country warned in an official statement that he should avoid addressing politics. Zen, seen as an outspoken supporter of religious freedom, said he will continue speaking out on social issues.

"If the pope can do it for the whole world, I can do it for Hong Kong," he said in an interview with The Associated Press during a brief visit to Rome.

China cut ties with the Vatican in 1951, shortly after the Chinese Communist Party took power. Worship is allowed only in government-controlled churches, although millions of Chinese Catholics belong to the so-called "underground church" loyal to Rome.

Problems of religious freedom "arise from old prejudices," the bishop said, calling it "possible" that China and the Vatican could resolve their differences in time for the Summer Olympics in Beijing in 2008.

"We know they have no reason to be afraid of religion," Zen said.

The main stumbling blocks have been the Vatican's recognition of Taiwan and China's demand to have a say in the appointment of bishops.

Vatican officials have suggested both hurdles can be overcome, and Zen said the Taiwanese are "psychologically preparing" for a change in their status with the Vatican. He did not give more specifics.

Since assuming the papacy in April, Pope Benedict XVI has attached particular importance to improving the Vatican's relationship with China.

Until relations are established, Zen indicated that a papal visit — long the hope of Benedict's predecessor John Paul II — was out of the question.

He confirmed that China blocked John Paul II from stopping in Hong Kong in 1999 for a meeting of Asian bishops. The meeting was held in New Delhi instead, and the pope visited.

Pope Paul VI made a three-hour stopover in Hong Kong in 1970, when it was a British colony.

Zen, a firm advocate of democracy and religious freedom, criticized the Beijing-backed Hong Kong government for chipping away at church control of Catholic schools, which he said have made the church in Hong Kong influential beyond its small numbers.

He denied being barred from visiting China, although he acknowledged being advised to visit only on invitation.

Zen, along with 14 other prelates named by Benedict, will receive their red hats as cardinals in a March 24 ceremony at the Vatican. The Hong Kong bishop also may learn his future career path.

He will turn 75 in January, the normal retirement age for bishops. Benedict could keep him on the job in Hong Kong, offer him a post in Rome or accept his retirement.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China detains two underground Catholic priests**

Reuters (23.02.2006) / HRWF Int. (02.03.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Chinese police detained two underground Roman Catholic priests this week and has held a 70-year-old bishop for three months, the U.S.-based Cardinal Kung Foundation said.

Word of the February 17 detentions of Lu Genjun, 44, and Guo Yanli, 39, while waiting for a friend at a train station in Baoding in northern Hebei province, came ahead of a visit to the United States by President Hu Jintao, expected in April.

It is unclear why the pair were taken into custody. Lu was being held at an undisclosed location, while Guo was sent to a detention center in Xushui county, the foundation said in a statement seen on Friday.

Beijing has had no ties with the Vatican since 1951 and insists relations cannot be resumed unless the Holy See severs links with self-ruled Taiwan, which China has claimed as its own since their split at the end of their civil war in 1949.

China says its Catholics must belong to a state-backed church that does not recognize the Pope's authority. The United States has often criticized China for its intolerance of religion.

Lu spent three years in a labor camp until 2004 and it was the fifth time he had been detained. Guo had never been detained.

Bishop Jia Zhiguo, 70, who takes care of about 100 handicapped orphans in his home, had been in detention since November 8, the foundation said without giving a reason.

Jia spent about 20 years in prison and was under intermittent police surveillance when not in prison, the foundation said. It was the eighth time he had been detained since 2004.

Police were unavailable for immediate comment.

Hong Kong's Bishop Joseph Zen, named a cardinal by the Pope, vowed on Thursday to stick to his outspoken ways and said he did not see China allowing religious freedom anytime soon.

Pope Benedict's top diplomat has said the Holy See has always been ready to switch diplomatic relations to Beijing from Taipei but that China must respect religious freedom and treat the Vatican fairly.

The Vatican estimates it has 8 million followers in China, compared with about 5 million who follow the state-backed church.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Chinese evangelist escapes government's watchful eye**

By Xu Mei

Compass (22.02.2006) / HRWF Int. (01.03.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Gao Wei (not his real name) was an active Christian leader for several years in a large Chinese city until 2004. Now he's an applicant for political asylum in a Western country.

His application makes sobering reading for those who imagine China has made substantial steps towards religious freedom in recent years.

Wei served for five years in a large Three Self Patriotic Movement (state-controlled) church. He was ministering to young people when a spiritual revival in 1999 saw many people come to Christ. This drew the attention of the Public Security Bureau (PSB) - which sent an undercover agent to Wei's church who "stood out because his face was cold and without feeling compared to the entire congregation."

"His presence frightened me because he took a photo of me at the altar," Wei wrote.

Undercover agents commonly monitor both Three Self (TSPM) church and unregistered house churches, according to Wei.

After this scare, Wei applied to study at seminaries overseas. But he found his mail was being monitored. He learned his name was on a government list. The senior pastor at the Three Self church labelled him a troublemaker.

Wei joined a house church in the same city. He began to train other young people in a regular spiritual formation course at his home every Saturday. He printed his own training materials, which was illegal.

He later found out that one of his co-workers was a spy for the PSB. This man went to all the Three Self churches, as well as the house churches, but never settled at any one of them. Eventually, friends in both the TSPM and house churches who had high-level contacts in the PSB discovered this fact and warned Wei.

The PSB heightened their surveillance: after mid-2003, Wei discovered his phone was tapped, as were the phones of six of his house church co-workers. Even their mobile phones were tapped. His parents were so scared they stopped communicating with him altogether. In September 2003, the surveillance was so threatening that he felt compelled to leave the city.

### **On the run**

Wei became an itinerant evangelist in south China, where he led many meetings and baptized many new converts.

He also helped set up an underground Bible school with training sessions for house church leaders from many different provinces. Wei reports: "For security reasons the students lived in a big house with four rooms. Windows and curtains were always closed to prevent any neighbors from seeing through the windows. Students were not allowed to go out of the building during the daytime."

In March 2004, on two occasions the Bible school was raided by PSB agents who checked the students' identity cards and ransacked everything. Wei recounts: "I was scared. I was wearing trainers and sportswear like the students. The officers did not recognize me. Then one student who wanted to protect me stood up and announced he was the teacher in charge. They beat him up and tried to arrest him."

Wei and the students were forced to stand against the wall and were eventually released. But the school was closed, and they secretly relocated in another province.

Wei moved from house to house to avoid arrest. In just 15 months he had to move 15 times to escape the PSB. At the last location he baptized four young people, but the authorities found out.

"At 5 a.m., I was woken up by the Holy Spirit and compelled to pack my things and leave the house immediately. God told me to run out and collect my passport and my laptop. A police car came and parked outside the main door, and three officers came into my apartment block. I believe God blinded their eyes as I fled away from the building still in my night-wear."

Wei came under strong pressure from his family to "confess" to the government in the hope of lenient treatment, but he refused.

"I love God so much, and I will not give up even though they put me in jail for 10 years. I am not guilty of any crime. I will not deny my Lord."

Eventually, in late 2004, Christian friends overseas learned of Wei's plight and issued an official invitation to him to study overseas. He was able to leave China. After much heart-searching, and after taking advice from many Christian friends, he finally applied – very reluctantly – for political asylum overseas.

"I love China, and I love the Chinese people. I still want to go home one day for family reasons. But I am still blacklisted, and I do not want to bring trouble to my family."

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **The European Commission answers questions about Christians in Xinjiang in north-west China**

***Written Question E-0056/06 by Terence Wynn (PSE) to the Commission***

**Subject: Christians in Xinjiang in north-west China**

On 7 July 2005, Pastor Cai Zhuohua, a prominent Beijing house church leader, was tried for 'illegal business practices' at the People's Court of Haidian District, Beijing. The charges are based on the discovery of around 200 000 copies of the Bible and other Christian literature in the storage room managed by Pastor Cai. On 8 November, he was

sentenced to three years' imprisonment. His wife and brother-in-law, who faced similar charges, were sentenced to two years and one and a half years respectively.

Those close to Pastor Cai's churches have consistently insisted that the confiscated materials were solely for internal house church use, and that Pastor Cai made no profit from them. However, at a subsequent hearing on 21 December the court maintained its previous decision. Pastor Cai has gone through heavy interrogations sessions, and an eyewitness reported that he was tortured and forced to sign false confessions, which was confirmed by Pastor Cai's own statement during his trial.

Moreover, there are increasing reports of arrests and discrimination against Christians in Xinjiang in north-west China, including the case of Mr. Tong Qimiao, who was interrogated and tortured by security agents on account of his relationship with a house church in Kashgar and sustained a broken rib for which he needed to be hospitalized. Since his decision to file a civil claim; he has had his business shut down and has been heavily fined.

Pastor Cai has been wrongfully charged and serves a three-year sentence for a crime he did not commit. Therefore, can the commission state what practical steps it has taken to ensure the immediate release of Pastor Cai and his family? Is the Commission aware of the increasing reports of persecution against Christians in Xinjiang? Will the Commission investigate the case of Mr. Tong?

***Answer given by Mrs Ferrero-Waldner on behalf of the Commission (14.02.2006)***

The Commission shares the concern of the Honorable Member regarding the situation of Chinese Christians deprived of their basic rights to have freely expressed their belief.

Freedom of religion and belief has been constantly put very high on the agenda of the EU-China bilateral dialogue on human rights. Pastor Cai is on the list of individuals which the EU regularly submits to the Chinese authorities on the occasion of this dialogue.

The EU Troika undertook a demarche in Beijing in December 2005 regarding the case of Pastor Cai as well of his lawyer Gao Zhisheng.

The Commission was not aware of the case of Mr. Tong Qimiao and will investigate it.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **The European Commission answers questions about Christians tortured in Chinese prisons**

***Written Question E-4650/05 by Cristiana Muscardini (PPE-DE) to the Commission***

**Subject: Christians tortured in Chinese prisons**

According to reports by BBC News, persecution of Christians (both Catholics and Protestants) by the Communist authorities in China is becoming more and more frequent. Although the Chinese Constitution explicitly provides for freedom of worship, persecution against those who do not attend churches controlled by the Chinese authorities is on the increase, and there has been a substantial rise in the number of Chinese Christians

arrested since the beginning of 2004. Christian prisoners are continually beaten and tortured and in many cases this leads to death.

1. Does the European Commission not consider it unacceptable that people should be subjected to discrimination and torture (sometimes causing their death) because of their religious beliefs?
2. Does it not consider that these serious and blatant violations of fundamental human rights, linked to both religious freedom and respect for human dignity, should be taken into account in the commercial relations between the European Union and China.

***Written Question E-4840/05 by Richard Seeber (PPE-DE) to the Commission***

**Subject: Persecution of Christians in China**

Action taken on behalf of persecuted Christians constitutes part of the action taken on behalf of religious freedom in general. In particular, the situation of Christians in China, of whom there are between 40 and 80 million, gives cause for concern. Although China's Constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief as a fundamental right, believers are subject to systematic persecution. In November 2005, for example, the Protestant pastor, Cai Zhuohua, was sentenced to three years in prison for having printed Bibles without authorization ('Chinese Christians step out of shadows for Bush', The Independent, 21 November 2005). Amnesty International reports repeated instances of Christians in prison being tortured for practising their religion ('Christians suffer for their faith', BBC News, UK Edition, 9 November 2004).

1. What possibilities does the Commission see of making freedom of religion a topic for discussion with the People's Republic of China?
2. To date, have any bilateral talks on this subject been held between the PRC and the EU? If so, what was the outcome thereof?
3. What influence does the Commission think that the issue of freedom of religion will have on bilateral trade relations between the PRC and the EU?

***Answer E-4650/05EN/ E-4840/05EN given by Mrs Ferrero-Waldner on behalf of the Commission (25.01.2006)***

The Commission shares the concern expressed by the Honorable Member regarding the situation of human rights in China, and in particular the situation of Chinese Christians deprived of their basic rights to have freely expressed their belief.

Freedom of religion and belief has been regularly addressed - and will continue to be addressed - in the framework of the EU-China bilateral dialogue on human rights. The last session of the dialogue, held in Beijing on 24 and 25 October 2005, has more particularly been focused on this issue.

In general terms, the EU favours a policy of engagement rather than confrontation since it believes that encouraging dialogue and promoting open trade and the exchange of goods, information and ideas is more likely to result in an open society based on the rule of law.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **China raises concerns over religion**

AFP (25.01.2006) / HRWF Int. (25.01.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - A senior Chinese official has warned the nation's religious leaders to obey the ruling Communist Party and guard against foreigners using religion to "infiltrate" China, state press said Monday.

"Religious affairs work must be established within the overall work of the party and state and must completely obey, serve and develop under this task," said Jia Qinglin, who is ranked number four in the party hierarchy. Such work "should unify and lead the overwhelming number of religious believers to fully join the undertaking of building socialism with Chinese characteristics."

Jia was speaking Sunday to the top leaders of China's state-run religious affairs bureaus and his comments were carried in the People's Daily. Jia raised concerns that Western religions and the Muslim religion were entering China in ways that were not in accord with the government's wishes.

Religious affairs work should "fully withstand foreign forces using religion to infiltrate (our country) in any way and safeguard state security and social stability," Jia said. China has millions of Christians and many of them refuse to worship within state-controlled churches.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Businessman back in U.S. after detention in China**

By Carolyn Marshall

NY Times (24.01.2006) / HRWF Int. (25.01.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - A California businessman has returned to the United States after three years of imprisonment in China for his participation in Falun Gong, a spiritual movement banned by the Chinese government.

The businessman, Charles Lee, 41 and a resident of Menlo Park, arrived at San Francisco International Airport on Saturday, welcomed by more than 100 supporters, who for three years have protested and petitioned for his release.

"I feel relief," Mr. Lee said in a telephone interview Monday. "I'm also concerned and worried because the persecution is still going on and there are so many practitioners who have been physically and mentally tortured."

The Chinese government first detained Mr. Lee on Jan. 22, 2003, and he was later held near the coastal city of Yangzhou. The authorities put Mr. Lee on trial based on accusations that he tried to sabotage the government by disrupting broadcasts with videotapes showing government persecution of Falun Gong.

The group drew international attention in 1999, when 10,000 followers peacefully protested in Beijing.

In prison, Mr. Lee said, he was beaten, deprived of sleep and food, and handcuffed in painful positions. He said the government tried to "force brainwash" prisoners and subjected him to "slave labor."

No Chinese officials were immediately available for comment. The government has called Falun Gong "not a religion, but a cult."

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Beijing in post-Christmas crackdown**

WND (17.01.2006) / HRWF Int. (17.01.2006) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - A campaign to crack down on house churches in Beijing has intensified since Christmas, according to a monitor of the Chinese church.

Among the churches targeted was a well-known congregation in Beijing raided by Public Security Bureau agents the past two Sundays, according to U.S.-based China Aid Association.

Several eye witnesses said two uniformed policemen and two plain-clothed agents rushed into the rented apartment where the Beijing Ark House Church was meeting, declaring the church was disturbing the neighbors.

Another officer, identified as Gao Xijun, told the congregation they were at an "illegal religious gathering place" because it's not registered according to State Council Regulations on Religious Affairs.

The witnesses said a plain-clothed officer, after noticing that the raid had been videotaped, beat a member of the church.

A founder of the church, Yu Jie – a best-selling author and internationally known commentator – said many members are prominent writers and lawyers, including freelance writer Bei Cun, Prof. Jiao Guobiao of Beijing University and human rights defense lawyers Li Baiguang and Gao Zhisheng.

Yu said he can't let the church continue to worship at the apartment because the "pressure [from authorities] is already very heavy."

China Aid reported several other house churches have been raided in Beijing recently. Just after Christmas, Jin Tianming, pastor of at least nine house churches in Haidian District, was detained and questioned at a police station overnight.

Dozens of other leaders in his church also were questioned. According to a reliable source, Jin's church had been negotiating with the government to register with the government. But the Public Security Bureau denied the request because Jin insisted his congregations must not be part of the government-controlled Three-Self Patriotic Movement, or TSPM.

All Protestant churches in the communist nation are required to be under the TSPM, which has put restrictions on the theology and practice of congregations to varying degrees throughout the country.

China Aid said a house church of 40 worshippers in Dayinjia Village in Jilin Province was raided Jan. 4. Five officials from the PSB and Religious Affairs office posted a government seal and declared the gathering "illegal." The officials ordered the congregation to move

to a TSPM church. The pastor, Cui Guojun, 40, was released after a three-hour interrogation at a local PSB bureau.

China Aid also learned the mother of jailed pastor Cai Zhuohua was denied the right to meet him Jan. 9. The director of Qinghe Detention Center told Cai's mother the PSB made that decision because her son's case was posted on the Internet and his defense lawyers are all "counter revolutionaries."

China Aid also said five detained church leaders in Ma Na Si County, Xinjiang Autonomous Region were released Jan. 8 under intensive international pressure.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **The European Commission answers a question about Chinese laogai**

***Written Question E-4480/05 by Mario Mauro (PPE-ED) to the Commission***

### **Subject: Chinese laogai**

The European Commission will surely be aware of the controversial issue recently reported in the press of the laogai, or so-called 're-education' camps, that were set up in China by Mao Tse-Tung and still operate today. Serious violations of the human rights of laogai inmates have been reported, relating in particular to the lack of procedural protection, torture, forced labor in often dangerous conditions and removal of the bodily organs of prisoners sentenced to death. The exact number of laogai is unknown, since this is considered a state secret, but it is estimated that they are currently housed between 4 and 6 million inmates.

What action will the Commission take to press the Chinese Government to safeguard human rights?

### ***Answer given by Mrs Ferrero-Waldner on behalf of the Commission (12.1.2006)***

The Commission shares the concern expressed by the Honorable Member regarding the situation on human rights in China, and in particular the use and conditions of administrative detention. The issue of re-education through labor, which has been seen in the general context of the ratification of the international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), has constantly been put very high on the agenda of the EU-China bilateral dialogue on human rights. It has become one of the top priorities which the EU intends to pursue with China in the field of human rights and, as such, has been addressed at the highest political level, and more recently on the occasion of the last EU-China held in Beijing on 5 September 2005.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## **The European Commission answers a question about democracy in China**

***Written Question E-4290/05 by Mario Mauro (PPE-ED) to the Commission***

## **Subject: Democracy in China**

Despite the official utterances by the Beijing Government on the international stage, apparently giving assurances regarding democratization, China is persisting in its opposition to democracy, as reflect in the extensive constraints imposed on democracy by corrupt local leaders.

The list of examples is lengthy, ranging from pro-democracy protests in July by villagers in Taishi to the case in mid-October, in which Lu Banglie, a well known Chinese democracy activist, was beaten up and later died of his injuries: his 'crime' was that he gave directions to two British journalists working for The Guardian newspaper.

Will the European Union urge the Chinese Government to end its repression of democracy activists? If so, what approach will it employ?

### ***Answer given by Mrs Ferrero-Waldner on behalf of the Commission (3.1.2006)***

The Commission shares the concern expressed by the Honorable Member regarding the situation of human rights in China. The respect of human rights is an essential factor of the EU overall external policy and has been – and will continue to be – regularly addressed with the Chinese authorities in the framework of both political dialogue and the specific dialogue on human rights. In this latter framework, the EU has put very high on its agenda the repression of democracy activists and the situation of these individuals who have been deprived of their basic rights because they have freely expressed their opinion. The specific cases referred to by the Honorable Member have been addressed at the occasion of the last session of the dialogue on human rights held in Beijing on 24, 25 October 2005.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

---