

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Findings

- Observers have described religious persecution in China over the last year to be of an intensity not seen since the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese government under President and Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping has doubled down on the “sinicization” of religion—a campaign that aims to bring religion in China under closer official control and in line with officially sanctioned interpretations of Chinese culture. Authorities have expanded the “sinicization” campaign to target not only religions perceived as “foreign,” such as Islam and Christianity, but also Chinese Buddhism, Taoism, and folk religious beliefs.
- Party disciplinary regulations were revised to impose harsher punishments on Party members for manifestations of religious belief.
- In sharp contrast to their past treatment of Buddhist and Taoist communities, local officials directly targeted local Buddhist and Taoist sites of worship throughout China. Local officials in the provinces of Liaoning, Shanxi, Hubei, and Hebei ordered the destruction of Buddhist statues. In past decades, government and Party officials had rarely targeted Chinese Buddhist and Taoist communities with direct suppression—both were considered to be relatively compliant with Party and government leadership and compatible with the official promotion of traditional Chinese culture.
- In September 2018, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed an agreement with the Holy See, paving the way for the unification of state-sanctioned and underground Catholic communities. Subsequently, local Chinese authorities subjected Catholic believers in China to increased persecution by demolishing churches, removing crosses, and continuing to detain underground clergy. The Party-led Catholic national religious organizations also published a plan to “sinicize” Catholicism in China.
- As in previous years, authorities continued to detain Falun Gong practitioners and subject them to harsh treatment, with at least 931 practitioners sentenced for criminal “cult” offenses in 2018. Human rights organizations and Falun Gong practitioners documented coercive and violent practices against practitioners in custody, including physical violence, forced drug administration, sleep deprivation, and other forms of torture.
- Violations of the religious freedom of Hui Muslim believers continued to intensify, with plans to apply “anti-terrorism” measures currently used in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (Ningxia)—a region with a high concentration of Hui Muslim believers. A five-year plan to “sinicize” Islam in China was passed in January 2019. Meanwhile, ongoing policies included measures requiring Islamic religious leaders and lay believers to demonstrate their political reliability.
- Religious communities outside of the five religions that are the main objects of official regulation continued to exist in

Freedom of Religion

China, but the religious practices of communities that previously received tacit recognition and support were subject to repression over the last year.

Recommendations

Members of the U.S. Congress and Administration officials are encouraged to:

- Call on the Chinese government to guarantee to all citizens freedom of religion in accordance with its international human rights obligations. Stress to Chinese authorities that freedom of religion includes the right to freely adopt beliefs and practice religious activities without government interference.
- Stress to the Chinese government that the right to freedom of religion includes, but is not limited to: the right of Buddhists and Taoists to carry out activities in temples and to select monastic teachers independent of state control; the right of Catholics to be led by clergy who are selected and who conduct their ministry according to the standard called for by Catholic religious beliefs; the right of Falun Gong practitioners to freely practice Falun Gong inside China; the right of Muslims to freely preach, undertake overseas pilgrimage, select and train religious leaders, and wear clothing with religious significance; the right of Protestants to exercise their faith free from state controls over doctrine and worship, and free from harassment, detention, and other abuses for public and private manifestations of their faith, including the display of crosses; and the right of members of other religious communities to be free from state control and harassment.
- Call for the release of Chinese citizens confined, detained, or imprisoned for peacefully pursuing their religious beliefs, as well as people confined, detained, or imprisoned in connection to their association with those people. The Administration should use existing laws to hold accountable Chinese government officials and others complicit in severe religious freedom restrictions, including by using the sanctions available in the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (Public Law No. 114–328) and the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law No. 105–292). Ensure that conditions related to religious freedom are taken into account when negotiating any trade agreement as mandated by the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (Public Law No. 114–26).
- Call on the Chinese government to fully implement accepted recommendations from its October 2013 session of the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review, including taking necessary measures to ensure that rights to freedom of religion, religious culture, and expression are fully observed and protected; cooperating with the UN human rights system, specifically UN special procedures and mandate holders; facilitating visits to China for UN High Commissioners; taking steps to ensure that lawyers working to advance religious rights can practice their profession freely, and promptly investigating allegations of violence and intimidation impeding their

Freedom of Religion

work; and considering possible revisions to legislation and administrative rules to provide better protection of freedom of religion.

- Call on the Chinese government to abolish Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law, which criminalizes “organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law,” and Article 27 of the PRC Public Security Administration Punishment Law, which provides for detention or fines for organizing or inciting others to engage in “cult” activities and for using “cults” or the “guise of religion” to disturb social order or to harm others’ health.

- Encourage U.S. political leaders to visit religious sites in China to raise awareness of and promote freedom of religion.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

International and Chinese Law on Religious Freedom

Both Chinese and international law provide guarantees of religious freedom. Despite these guarantees, the Commission continued to observe widespread and systematic violation of the principles of religious freedom, as Chinese authorities exercised broad discretion over religious practice.

Under international law, freedom of religion or belief encompasses both the right to form, hold, and change convictions, beliefs, and religion—which cannot be restricted—and the right to outwardly manifest those beliefs—which can be limited for certain, specific justifications.¹ These principles are codified in various international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).² China has signed³ and stated its intent to ratify⁴ the ICCPR, which obligates China to refrain in good faith from acts that would defeat the treaty’s purpose.⁵

Article 36 of China’s Constitution guarantees citizens “freedom of religious belief” and protection for “normal religious activities.”⁶ With essential terms such as “normal” undefined, it is unclear whether China’s Constitution protects the same range of belief and outward manifestation that is recognized under international law.⁷ Nevertheless, China’s Constitution and other legal provisions⁸ join the ICCPR in prohibiting discrimination based on religion⁹ and loosely parallel the ICCPR’s prohibition on coercion¹⁰ by forbidding state agencies, social organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe or not believe in any religion.¹¹

China’s Constitution prohibits “making use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt social order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system of the State.”¹² The ICCPR does allow State Parties to restrict outward manifestations of religion or belief, but such restrictions must be “prescribed by law and . . . necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.”¹³

Policies and Regulations Pertaining to Religious Freedom

• **Top Chinese officials continued to emphasize the importance of the national-level campaign to “sinicize” religion.** Members of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party Central Committee Political Bureau (Politburo)—China’s top policymaking body—continued to highlight the need to “sinicize” religion in China at national-level political gatherings.¹⁴ Politburo Standing Committee member Wang Yang promoted the campaign among lower level officials through local visits¹⁵ and in meetings with state-affiliated religious organizations.¹⁶ Party General Secretary Xi Jinping announced “the need to uphold the sinicization of religion in order to actively guide religions to adapt to socialist society” in 2015,¹⁷ and the subsequent “sinicization” campaign aims to bring religion in China under closer official control and in line with officially sanctioned interpretations of Chinese culture.¹⁸ In the years following, officials have escalated the repression of reli-

Freedom of Religion

gious practice, which one scholar of Chinese politics has characterized as being the worst since the Cultural Revolution.¹⁹

• **The “sinicization” campaign characterizes control over religious groups as connected to national security and foreign affairs.** The repression of religion is happening alongside a general crackdown on popular culture²⁰ as the Party responds to the increased complexity of society and the growth of new groups in the period of economic reform and opening.²¹ Religious believers are among the social groups of which Chinese officials are the most wary.²² This is in part because the fast growth and the level of organization within certain religious communities represents the potential for competing with the Party and government monopoly on collective organization.²³ Party and government officials accuse some of these religious communities of being used by foreign forces to “infiltrate” Chinese society,²⁴ targeting Christian, Muslim, and Tibetan Buddhist groups in particular as retaining undue foreign influence.²⁵ Official pronouncements also identified “extremism” as a particular problem that officials should address within Islam.²⁶ Meanwhile, Party and government policy promoted the Chinese Buddhist community to project an image of China as a country supporting Buddhism while fostering connections with majority-Buddhist countries.²⁷

• **Administration of religious affairs and implementation of the revised Regulations on Religious Affairs.** Local government bureaus continued to be responsible for managing religious affairs.²⁸ These religious affairs agencies have effective authority over the state-sanctioned “patriotic” religious associations that act as liaisons between the government and practitioners of the five “main” religions in China,²⁹ while the Party’s United Front Work Department vets the association leaders.³⁰ Public security bureaus are generally responsible for enforcement of laws against religious activity that authorities deem illegal.³¹ Following President and Party General Secretary Xi Jinping’s exhortations to focus on religious work,³² the regulatory framework for religion imposed increased restrictions on religious freedom through revisions to the Regulations on Religious Affairs that took effect on February 1, 2018.³³ The revisions include prohibitions on groups, schools, and venues engaging in or hosting religious activities unless they have been officially designated as religious (Article 41) and on clergy acting as religious professionals without official certification (Article 36).³⁴ The revisions also established legal responsibilities and penalties for violations of the regulations, including fining those who “provide the conditions” for unauthorized religious activities (Article 71).³⁵

• **Other laws and Party policies also continued to restrict citizens’ freedom to hold religious beliefs and practice religion.** Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law criminalizes “organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law,”³⁶ and the PRC National Security Law prohibits “the use of religion to conduct illegal criminal activities that threaten state security.”³⁷ The latter also contains mandates to “maintain the order of normal religious activities,”

Freedom of Religion

“oppose the interference of foreign influence into domestic religious affairs,” and “suppress cult organizations.”³⁸

• **Revised Party disciplinary regulations impose harsher punishments on Party members for manifestations of religious belief.** New disciplinary measures for Party members that increased the penalty for involvement in religious activities in violation of Party policies from a warning for a “minor offense” to dismissal took effect on October 1, 2018.³⁹ One international law expert has noted that because Party membership to a large degree determines the extent to which citizens may participate in public life, the ban on religious belief for Party members constitutes discrimination against religious believers and a violation of freedom of religious belief.⁴⁰

Buddhism (Non-Tibetan) and Taoism

In sharp contrast to the past treatment of Buddhist and Taoist communities, the Commission observed numerous reports of local officials ordering the destruction of Buddhist statues throughout China, including in the provinces of Liaoning, Shanxi, Hubei, and Hebei.⁴¹ Officials in Dalian municipality, Liaoning province, ordered Buddhist iconography taken down and replaced with the Chinese national flag.⁴² In September 2018, the Party secretary of Hebei province threatened county-level officials with dismissal if a large bronze Guanyin bodhisattva statue in their jurisdiction was not demolished.⁴³ In November 2017 the State Administration for Religious Affairs and 11 other central Party and government departments issued a joint opinion targeted at combating commercialization in Buddhism and Taoism that prohibited the construction of large outdoor statues so as to avoid negative effects on “the healthy development of [the two religions’] dissemination.”⁴⁴ One human rights expert has noted that when a state distinguishes between proper and improper conduct in order to uphold religious standards or to enhance the legitimacy of particular religions over others, it violates the state neutrality necessary to maintain the free exercise of religious freedom.⁴⁵

A large number of Chinese citizens engage in Buddhist and Taoist practices, with estimates of around 244 million Buddhists as of 2010,⁴⁶ and 173 million citizens engaging in some Taoist practices as of 2007.⁴⁷ [For information on Tibetan Buddhism, see Section V—Tibet.] Both communities have been subjected to extensive regulation and control by officials: government authorities connected with local religious affairs bureaus are involved with the administration of officially sanctioned temples; all candidates for the clergy must obtain the approval of the local patriotic association and religious affairs bureau for ordination;⁴⁸ and Buddhist ordinations themselves are restricted by the state-run patriotic associations.⁴⁹

In past decades, government and Party officials rarely targeted Chinese Buddhist and Taoist communities with direct suppression—both were considered to be relatively compliant with Party and government leadership and compatible with the official promotion of traditional Chinese culture.⁵⁰ At the outset of the implementation of “sinicization” policies in Buddhist and Taoist contexts, Chinese officials had sought to bolster the idea of these two religions as indigenous religions embodying Chinese culture and val-

Freedom of Religion

ues so that they might serve as a bulwark against “infiltration” of other values via religions perceived as foreign.⁵¹ Officials also sought to leverage the Buddhist and Taoist communities to foster closer diplomatic ties with other countries with significant Buddhist or Taoist communities—an aim that has persisted within this reporting year to include overtures toward majority-Buddhist countries.⁵²

Christianity—Catholicism

The number of Catholics in China is estimated to be around 10.5 million,⁵³ and they have historically been divided between “official” congregations led by state-sanctioned bishops and “underground” congregations whose bishops are not recognized by the Chinese government.⁵⁴ Official statistics reported in 2018 that 6 million Catholics were part of officially sanctioned congregations⁵⁵ with bishops selected by Party-led religious organizations and ordained by other official bishops—a process described by the Chinese government as “self-selection and self-ordination.”⁵⁶ Underground Catholic believers have historically avoided the ministry of official bishops because of the belief that legitimate ecclesiastical authority can be conferred only by the Pope’s mandate,⁵⁷ and also an objection to official bishops’ affiliation with the Party-led body for Catholic leadership in China, the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA).⁵⁸ Underground clergy are frequently subjected to detention and other government pressure to compel them to join the CPA.⁵⁹

The Holy See and the Chinese government announced a provisional agreement on the appointment of bishops on September 22, 2018.⁶⁰ A representative for the Holy See stated that its aim was for Chinese Catholic believers to have bishops recognized by both the Holy See and Chinese authorities,⁶¹ while observers noted that the Chinese government was likely seeking to increase its control over the underground community.⁶² Although the terms of the agreement were not made public, a source familiar with the negotiations stated that the agreement gave the Chinese government the authority to nominate bishops, which the Pope would retain the right to veto.⁶³ The Holy See also recognized seven formerly excommunicated official bishops as part of the deal,⁶⁴ having already asked two underground bishops to give up their positions to make way for two of these state-sanctioned bishops;⁶⁵ the Chinese government made no commitments toward recognizing the more than 30 underground bishops.⁶⁶

Observers and Catholic believers expressed concern that the agreement did not provide sufficient support for the Chinese Catholic community,⁶⁷ with one scholar pointing out that the authorities’ persecution of both underground and official Catholic communities has actually intensified over the last year under the “sinicization” campaign.⁶⁸ In spring 2019, authorities detained three underground priests of Xuanhua diocese in Hebei province.⁶⁹

Christianity—Protestantism

During the 2019 reporting year, Chinese officials further⁷⁰ escalated the repression of Protestant Christian belief. While official repression has historically focused on unregistered church commu-

Freedom of Religion

nities (commonly referred to as “house churches”), believers worshipping at state-sanctioned churches have also become targets of state restrictions under President Xi Jinping.⁷¹ The number of Chinese Protestants is estimated to number around 60 to 80 million.⁷² Instances of official persecution recorded by U.S.-based organization advocating for religious freedom, ChinaAid Association (ChinaAid), increased from 1,265 in 2017 to more than 10,000 in 2018.⁷³

Much of the increased repression targeted house church communities. Several major house churches with hundreds to thousands of members were forcibly closed: Zion Church and Shouwang Church, among the largest unregistered churches in Beijing municipality, were banned in September 2018 and March 2019, respectively;⁷⁴ Rongguili Church, an important church in southern China, Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province, was forced to suspend activities in December 2018;⁷⁵ and Early Rain Covenant Church (Early Rain) in Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province, was declared an “illegal social organization” in December 2018.⁷⁶ Beginning December 9, authorities also detained more than 100 Early Rain church members for several days, including Early Rain pastor Wang Qi,⁷⁷ who, along with three other church members, remained in criminal detention as of August 2019.⁷⁸

Local authorities also banned or shut down activities at numerous other house churches across China,⁷⁹ with a campaign in Henan province reportedly aiming to close more than two-thirds of all churches within the province.⁸⁰ Local authorities in different areas also pressured unregistered churches to disband with repeated raids and harassment,⁸¹ heavy administrative penalties,⁸² termination of electricity and water supplies,⁸³ and compelling landlords to evict churches from meeting spaces.⁸⁴ Authorities also subjected individual members of house church communities to detention: ChinaAid recorded more than 5,000 detentions in 2018, more than 1,000 of which were of church leaders.⁸⁵ Members were also subject to other rights abuses—for example, various people connected to Early Rain, including lawyers defending the detained, reported ongoing detentions⁸⁶ and disappearances,⁸⁷ denying detainees access to lawyers,⁸⁸ and various forms of harassment, including physical assault, eviction, cutting off utilities, death threats, and surveillance.⁸⁹ Authorities also tried to compel at least one member to sign a statement renouncing the church.⁹⁰

Officials in different localities violated believers’ freedom of religion by eliminating their options to join unregistered churches, shutting down state-sanctioned churches, and increasing control over remaining churches. In some cases, unregistered house churches were pressured into joining the state-sponsored Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)—a national religious organization responsible for maintaining political relations between the Protestant community and Party and government leadership.⁹¹ In some areas, officials refused to let churches register and demanded instead that individual believers join already-established TSPM churches.⁹² In Henan, even TSPM churches were ordered closed by officials, with most of the 10,000 churches shut down in Henan in 2018 being state-sponsored.⁹³ For many of the remaining TSPM churches in Henan and in other areas such as Beijing municipality,

Freedom of Religion

government officials implemented measures subjecting congregations to increased control, for example, by requiring the installation of surveillance equipment inside church buildings.⁹⁴

In many areas, local authorities required both TSPM and house churches to demonstrate political loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese government, for example, by requiring changes to church services to include singing the national anthem and speeches by government officials, as well as demanding that churches hang national flags, portraits of President Xi, and posters listing “socialist core values,” while also ordering the removal of Christian symbols such as crosses and signs with Christian messages.⁹⁵ In parts of Henan province, the prohibition on Christian symbols was extended to the homes of believers.⁹⁶

Falun Gong

As in previous years, authorities continued to detain Falun Gong practitioners and subject them to harsh treatment.⁹⁷ Due to government suppression, it is difficult to determine the number of Falun Gong practitioners in China.⁹⁸ Chinese authorities commonly prosecute Falun Gong practitioners under Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law;⁹⁹ the Falun Gong-affiliated website Clear Wisdom reported that at least 931 practitioners were sentenced under Article 300 in 2018, with the greatest number sentenced in the northern provinces of Liaoning, Shandong, Hebei, and Heilongjiang.¹⁰⁰ In November 2018, two lawyers had their licenses to practice temporarily suspended by the Ministry of Justice in Changsha municipality, Hunan province, for arguments made in defense of Falun Gong practitioners against Article 300 charges.¹⁰¹ International human rights non-governmental organization Dui Hua Foundation characterized the penalties as part of an incipient pattern of official punishment of attorneys representing politically sensitive clients that will likely discourage other criminal defense lawyers from pursuing “perfectly legal and effective defense strategies.”¹⁰² Clear Wisdom, an organization that reports on the Falun Gong community, documented coercive and violent practices against practitioners during custody, including physical violence,¹⁰³ forced drug administration,¹⁰⁴ sleep deprivation,¹⁰⁵ and other forms of torture.¹⁰⁶ In February 2019, Clear Wisdom reported 69 confirmed deaths of Falun Gong practitioners in 2018 due to abuse by officials.¹⁰⁷

Islam

Violations of the religious freedom of the 10.5 million¹⁰⁸ Hui Muslim believers continued to intensify, with observers raising alarm at an announcement in November 2018 that authorities in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (Ningxia) had signed an “anti-terrorism” cooperation agreement with counterparts in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).¹⁰⁹ The agreement would apply “anti-terrorism” measures currently used in the XUAR to Ningxia—a region with a high concentration of Hui Muslim believers.¹¹⁰ Ningxia authorities announced in March 2019 that they would launch “thorough inspections” of religious venues and carried out “innovative” religious management measures, such as rais-

Freedom of Religion

ing national flags in mosques and organizing religious leaders to study the Chinese Constitution, socialist core values, and traditional classical Chinese culture.¹¹¹ Local officials in Weishan Yi and Hui Autonomous County, Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan province, reportedly accused Hui Muslim believers of engaging in “illegal religious activities” and forcibly evicted the local Muslim community from three mosques in December 2018 before a planned demolition.¹¹² [For more information on Uyghur Muslim believers, see Section IV—Xinjiang; for more information on Muslim believers of other ethnic minority backgrounds, see Section II—Ethnic Minority Rights.]

A five-year plan to “sinicize” Islam in China was passed in January 2019.¹¹³ Meanwhile, ongoing policies included measures requiring Islamic religious leaders and lay believers to demonstrate their “political reliability”—for example, to be officially certified, imams and other religious personnel must be educated at one of 10 state-sanctioned Islamic schools or otherwise obtain equivalent education,¹¹⁴ and be vetted by the local religious affairs bureau and the China Islamic Association.¹¹⁵ After certification, religious leaders are required to continue attending political training sessions.¹¹⁶ All Chinese Muslims seeking to carry out the Hajj pilgrimage must fulfill requirements for “political reliability,” including taking “patriotic education” classes, obtaining the approval of their local religious affairs bureau, and participating only through tours arranged by the China Islamic Association.¹¹⁷

Other Religious Communities

Religious communities outside of the five religions that are the main objects of official regulation¹¹⁸ continued to exist in China, but the religious practice of communities that previously received tacit recognition and support were subject to repression over the last year. For example, although folk religion was acknowledged in a 2018 white paper issued by the State Council Information Office,¹¹⁹ authorities in Jiangsu province launched a wide-scale campaign from February through March 2019 to demolish over 5,900 temples of *tudigong*, a god from traditional Chinese folk religion.¹²⁰ Authorities also destroyed religious iconography and filled in the *mikveh* (a bath used for religious ceremonies) in a synagogue in Kaifeng municipality, Henan province, and subjected the Jewish community of less than 1,000 to other increased restrictions, including the cancellation of plans for foreign support for the local Jewish community.¹²¹

Notes to Section II—Freedom of Religion

¹Paul M. Taylor, *Freedom of Religion: UN and European Human Rights Law and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 19, 24, 203–04.

²Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217A (III) of December 10, 1948, art. 18; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 18. Article 18 of the ICCPR upholds a person’s right to “have or adopt a religion or belief” and the freedom to manifest that religion or belief “in worship, observance, practice and teaching.” Article 18 also prohibits coercion that impairs an individual’s freedom to freely hold or adopt a religion or belief. See also Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 36/55 of November 25, 1981.

³International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976; United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter IV, Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, accessed June 29, 2019. China has signed but not ratified the ICCPR.

⁴State Council Information Office, “Guojia Renquan Xingdong Jihua (2016–2020 nian)” [National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2016–2020)], September 29, 2016, sec. 5. The Chinese government stated its intent to ratify the ICCPR in its 2016–2020 National Human Rights Action Plan.

⁵United Nations Conference on the Law of Treaties, Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, adopted May 23, 1969, entry into force January 27, 1980, arts. 18, 26.

⁶*PRC Constitution*, passed and effective December 4, 1982 (amended March 11, 2018), art. 36.

⁷*PRC Constitution*, passed and effective December 4, 1982 (amended March 11, 2018), art. 36; Liu Peng, “Crisis of Faith,” *China Security* 4, no. 4 (August 2008): 30.

⁸*PRC Constitution*, passed and effective December 4, 1982 (amended March 11, 2018), art. 36; State Council, *Zongjiao Shiwu Tiaoli* [Regulations on Religious Affairs], issued November 30, 2004, amended June 14, 2017, effective February 1, 2018, art. 2; *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Laodong Fa* [PRC Labor Law], passed July 5, 1994, effective January 1, 1994, amended December 29, 2018, art. 12.

⁹International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 26.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, art. 18(2).

¹¹*PRC Constitution*, passed and effective December 4, 1982 (amended March 11, 2018), art. 36; State Council, *Zongjiao Shiwu Tiaoli* [Regulations on Religious Affairs], issued November 30, 2004, amended June 14, 2017, effective February 1, 2018, art. 2.

¹²*PRC Constitution*, passed and effective December 4, 1982 (amended March 11, 2018), art. 36.

¹³International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 18; UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 22: Article 18 (Freedom of Thought, Conscience or Religion), CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4, July 30, 1993, para. 8.

¹⁴State Council, “Li Keqiang zuo de zhengfu gongzuo baogao” [Government work report delivered by Li Keqiang], March 5, 2019; John Dotson, “Propaganda Themes at the CPPCC Stress the ‘Sinicization’ of Religion,” *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, April 9, 2019, 1–4.

¹⁵“Wang Yang: quanmian tigao zongjiao gongzuo shuiping, qieshi weihu zongjiao lingyu hexie wending” [Wang Yang: raise level of religious work across the board, earnestly safeguard harmony and stability in the religious sphere], *Xinhua*, April 17, 2019; “Wang Yang: quanmian guanche Dang de zongjiao gongzuo fangzhen jianchi woguo zongjiao zhongguohua fangxiang” [Wang Yang: thoroughly implement the Party’s religious work policy, adhere firmly to sinicization of religion in China], *Xinhua*, February 6, 2018; “Wang Yang: shenru zashi zuohao minzu zongjiao he tuopin gongjian gongzuo” [Wang Yang: thoroughly and practically accomplish ethnic and religious work, and poverty alleviation], *Xinhua*, October 17, 2018.

¹⁶“Wang Yang: quanmian guanche Dang de zongjiao gongzuo fangzhen jianchi woguo zongjiao zhongguohua fangxiang” [Wang Yang: thoroughly implement the Party’s religious work policy, adhere firmly to sinicization of religion in China], *Xinhua*, February 6, 2018.

¹⁷“Jiang woguo zongjiao zhongguohua chixu tuixiang shenru—Quanguo Zhengxie ‘Xin Shidai Jianchi Woguo Zongjiao Zhongguohua Fangxiang De Shijian Luojing’ Jie Bie Zhuti Xieshang Zuotan Hui zongshu” [Continue to deepen the sinicization of religion in China—a summary of the National Symposium on the Theme of the CPPCC’s “New Era of Adhering to the Practical Path of Our Nation’s Religious Sinicization”], *People’s Political and Legal News*, reprinted in National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, January 7, 2019.

¹⁸John Dotson, “Propaganda Themes at the CPPCC Stress the ‘Sinicization’ of Religion,” *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, April 9, 2019, 4.

¹⁹Willy Wo-Lap Lam, “Vatican Agreement Latest Front in Xi’s Widening Religious Clampdown,” *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, October 10, 2018, 4–5.

²⁰John Dotson, “Dramas Must Feature Goodness: The CCP Launches Renewed Efforts to Control Themes in Popular Culture,” *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, March 5, 2019, 1–5.

²¹Gerry Groot, “The Rise and Rise of the United Front Work Department under Xi,” *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, April 24, 2018, 14.

²²Ian Johnson, “How the Top-Heavy Catholic Church Is Losing the Ground Game in China,” *America*, September 18, 2017; Eleanor Albert, Council on Foreign Relations, “Religion in China,” October 11, 2018.

²³See, e.g., Cyrille Pluyette, “En Chine, le Pouvoir Renforce son Contrôle sur les Religions,” *Le Figaro*, updated December 12, 2017, translated in Marc Alves, “In China’s Crackdown on Re-

Freedom of Religion

ligions, Buddhism Gets a Pass,” *Worldcrunch*, February 5, 2018; André Laliberté, “Buddhist Revival under State Watch,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* (2011): 111–12.

²⁴Theory Study Center Group of the Party Organization for the State Administration for Religious Affairs, “Dang de Shiba Da yilai zongjiao gongzuo lilun he shijian chuangxin” [Innovations in religious work theory and practice since the 18th Party Congress], *Seeking Truth*, September 15, 2017; State Administration for Religious Affairs, “Guojia Zongjiao Shiwu Ju 2018 nian gongzuo yaodian” [State Administration for Religious Affairs 2018 work objectives], February 14, 2018.

²⁵John Dotson, “Propaganda Themes at the CPPCC Stress the ‘Sinicization’ of Religion,” *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, April 9, 2019, 4.

²⁶State Administration for Religious Affairs, “Guojia Zongjiao Shiwu Ju 2018 nian gongzuo yaodian” [State Administration for Religious Affairs 2018 work objectives], February 14, 2018; “Yang Faming weiyuan: jianchi woguo Yisilan jiao zhongguohua fangxiang” [CPPCC member Yang Faming: maintain China’s sinicization of Islam], *Xinhua*, March 10, 2018.

²⁷Sudha Ramachandran, “Rivalries and Relics: Examining China’s Buddhist Public Diplomacy,” *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, March 5, 2019; Angad Singh, “China Is Using ‘Buddhist Diplomacy’ in Its Quest to Dominate Global Trade,” *Vice News*, March 21, 2019.

²⁸China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group, “Report on Religious Freedom in Mainland China (2016),” 2016, 38–39.

²⁹Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 153–54, 330. The “patriotic” religious associations are state-controlled institutions that represent the five “main” religions of China: the Buddhist Association of China, the China Islamic Association, the China Taoist Association, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the National Conference of Bishops (an organization led by Catholic clergy), the Three-Self (for “self-governing, self-financing, and self-expanding”) Patriotic Movement and the Chinese Christian Council (the latter two organizations have overlapping membership and represent Protestants). According to Goossaert and Palmer, although “nominally independent,” the “patriotic” religious associations are effectively under the authority of the State Council’s agency for religious affairs.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 154.

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³²CECC, *2016 Annual Report*, October 6, 2016, 122.

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