

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Findings

- The Chinese government under President and Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping has further intensified 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.
- Chinese authorities at the national level in February 2020 implemented new Measures on the Administration of Religious Groups, supplementing the revised Regulations on Religious Affairs of 2018. The Measures subject registered religious groups to even tighter government control and surveillance than before, requiring their leaders and lay believers to accept, support and promote the Party’s leadership among their leaders and lay believers, publicize Party policies, and implement the Party’s campaign to “sinicize” religions—i.e., to force them to conform to the Party’s version of Chinese culture. The Measures essentially render all unregistered groups illegal, whereas there had previously been some tolerance for many of them. Critics wrote that these combined Regulations (2018) and Measures (2020) led to increased control or persecution of religious groups.
- Chinese believers and outside experts compared the current situation to the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976), widely seen as the most repressive era for religions in PRC history, with one expert describing the present situation as “a toxic blend of Mao’s ruthlessness and sophisticated 21st-century surveillance techniques—in effect, an updated religious Cultural Revolution.”
- Chinese authorities reportedly used the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID–19) pandemic as a pretext to shut down religious sites and restrict religious activities, including online activities, in the name of enforcing COVID–19 precautions, even after other normal activities in society had resumed.
- Local officials continued to directly target local Buddhist and Taoist sites throughout China. In past decades, government and Party officials had rarely targeted Chinese Buddhist and Taoist communities with direct suppression—viewing both as relatively compliant with Party and government leadership and compatible with the official promotion of traditional Chinese culture. Since 2018, however, local officials in the provinces of Liaoning, Shanxi, Hubei, and Hebei ordered the destruction of Buddhist statues.
- The Sino-Vatican agreement on the appointment of bishops signed in September 2018 led to the jointly approved appointment of four bishops as of July 1, 2020, and some friendly high-level interactions between the two sides. Critics said, however, that authorities had used the agreement to increase pressure on unregistered Catholic clergy to agree to a separa-

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tion (i.e., “independence”) of the Church in China from the Holy See and to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), a government body that oversees this separation. Authorities subjected unregistered (“underground”) Catholic clergy who resisted—because they view joining the CCPA as a violation of their faith—to pressure tactics, detention, surveillance, and removal from their churches and duties. Authorities also continued to demolish Catholic church buildings, remove crosses, cancel religious activities and pilgrimages, and pursue the “sinicization” campaign.

- As in previous years, authorities continued to detain Falun Gong practitioners and subject them to harsh treatment, with at least 774 practitioners sentenced for criminal “cult” offenses in 2019. Falun Gong news outlet Clear Wisdom reported that abuse by authorities resulted in the deaths of 96 practitioners in 2019 and an additional 17 in the first quarter of 2020.

- 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 and in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region—a region with a high concentration of Hui Muslim believers. Authorities required Islamic religious leaders to study Party ideology and demonstrate their political reliability or risk losing their legal status. A five-year plan to “sinicize” Islam in China continued in 2020, leading officials in many locations to demolish mosques; remove minarets, domes, and other Islamic features from buildings; place surveillance cameras inside mosques; close Islamic schools; and restrict Islamic preaching and clothing, Arabic script, halal food, and use of the Islamic financial system.

- Authorities also subjected registered Protestant churches to the intensified restrictions described above, and continued to shut down unregistered or “house churches,” and continued to detain some leaders for refusing to join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Authorities charged one house church pastor, **Zhao Huaiguo**, with “inciting subversion of state power,” and sentenced pastor **Wang Yi** of Early Rain Covenant Church, whom they previously charged with the same crime, to nine years in prison.

- Members of “illegal” spiritual groups such as Falun Gong and the Church of Almighty God, especially those labeled by authorities as cults (*xiejiao*), continued to be persecuted under Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law, which forbids “organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law.”

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

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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 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 beliefs; the right of Falun Gong practitioners to freely practice Falun Gong inside China; the right of Muslims to freely preach, undertake overseas pilgrimages, select and train religious leaders, and wear clothing with religious significance; the right of Protestants to exercise their faith free from state control 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 with 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 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 the November 2018 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 work; and considering possible revisions to legislation and administrative rules to provide better protection of freedom of religion.

- Work with Vatican officials to address increased repression of Catholics in China, offer technical assistance to protect Vatican diplomatic communications from Chinese cyberattacks, and offer diplomatic assistance, as appropriate, to reevaluate the 2018 Sino-Vatican agreement on the appointment of bishops, and advocate for the publication of the original agreement and any negotiated revisions in order to transparently evaluate the Chinese government’s compliance.

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- 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 a “cult” 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.

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During the 2020 reporting year, the Commission observed the Chinese government's ongoing violation of religious freedom through policies and actions aimed at increased control of believers in both registered and unregistered communities.¹ Rights groups and a governmental organization noted that conditions for religious freedom worsened and that the Party had become, as one source wrote, "increasingly hostile" toward religion.² These groups also reported that in 2019 the Chinese government increased its use of advanced technology to repress religious communities, including surveillance cameras, biometrics, and artificial intelligence.³

International and Chinese Law on Religious Freedom

Both Chinese and international law guarantee religious freedom. Despite these guarantees, the Commission continued to observe widespread and systematic violation of religious freedom, as Chinese authorities exercised broad discretion over religious practice, internal affairs, and interpretations of faith.⁴ 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 by certain specific justifications.⁵ These principles are codified in various international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).⁶ Article 36 of China's Constitution guarantees citizens "freedom of religious belief" and protection for "normal religious activities."⁷ 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.⁸ Nevertheless, China's Constitution and other legal provisions⁹ align with the ICCPR in prohibiting discrimination based on religion¹⁰ and loosely parallel the ICCPR's prohibition on coercion¹¹ by forbidding state agencies, social organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe or not believe in any religion.¹² 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."¹³

Policies and Regulations Pertaining to Religious Freedom

On February 1, 2020, the National Religious Affairs Administration implemented the new Measures on the Administration of Religious Groups, a set of 41 articles that emphasizes the role of the government and Party in controlling the government-affiliated religious associations that manage the five officially registered religions recognized by the government: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and Catholic and Protestant Christianity.¹⁴ The newly released Measures supplement the already restrictive revised Regulations on Religious Affairs (RRA), in force since 2018.¹⁵

The 2020 Measures contain articles that emphasize that the management of religious groups, including legal registration, leadership appointments, major events, and discipline under law, is subordinate to the government and Party.¹⁶ They also specify that

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religious organizations must follow the Party's leadership and instruct leaders and lay believers to do so, accept the government's oversight, and publicize Party directives and policies.¹⁷ Experts criticized the Measures as further violations of religious freedom, including the rights to freedom of worship and to choose one's religious leaders without interference.¹⁸ One expert wrote that, if enforced, the new Measures, in requiring that all religious activities be approved by or registered with government officials, ring a "death bell" for the activities of unregistered (or "underground") religious groups.¹⁹ Placing the present situation in historical context, Richard Madsen, a sociologist and expert on religion and society in China, wrote that the Party's policy framework on religion, started four decades ago, "contains ambiguities that rendered it unable to address the complexity of China's religious situation. And this complexity has been increasing, which makes the framework even more out of touch with reality today."²⁰

The new Measures also require that religious groups "persist in the direction of sinicization (*zhongguohua*) of religion" under the Party's leadership.²¹ The Party promotes the idea that "sinicization" means "integrating religious doctrines into Chinese culture,"²² and guiding religions to adapt to "Chinese Cultural Traditions," as it says Buddhism has done in the past.²³ Two prominent scholars argued, however, that the Party actually employed the term for political rather than cultural aims.²⁴ Yang Fenggang, a scholar of Chinese religions at Purdue University, argued that the Party's use of the English term "sinicization" is inappropriate because in Party usage, "*zhongguohua* is not about cultural assimilation, but political conformity and obedience."²⁵ Madsen wrote that "[s]ince Sinicization generally requires adaptation to an idealized version of Han Chinese culture, outsiders to this culture, such as Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, and Muslims, especially Uighurs, are subject to even harsher repression than they were under the former Marxist ideology."²⁶ He further explains that in the "sinicization" campaign, the "main imperative is to homogenize Chinese Culture to make all parts conform to a party-led nationalism and to use the full force of the state to control any dissenting voices."²⁷

Some observers have compared the Chinese government's policies toward religion since the implementation of the RRA in 2018 to the era widely regarded as the most repressive toward religious believers in modern Chinese history, the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976).²⁸ International religious freedom expert Thomas Farr described current government practices as "a toxic blend of Mao's ruthlessness and sophisticated 21st-century surveillance techniques—in effect, an updated religious Cultural Revolution."²⁹ A Chinese Catholic priest commented, "[i]n practice, your religion no longer matters, [whether] you are Buddhist, or Taoist, or Muslim or Christian: the only religion allowed is faith in the Chinese Communist Party."³⁰

Buddhism (Non-Tibetan), Taoism, and Chinese Folk Religion

This past year, the government's relationship with Chinese Buddhists (not including Tibetan Buddhists) and Taoists continued to reflect a tension between promotion of these traditions, based on

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perceived benefits to Party goals, and coercive control.³¹ Authorities promote Buddhism, Taoism, and Chinese folk religion as elements of “fine traditional Chinese culture” that counter the perceived detrimental influences of foreign religions, especially Christianity and Islam.³² In a 2014 speech, President Xi Jinping pointed to Buddhism (which came to China from India) as a model of “sinicization,” an example of a religion successfully integrating into Chinese culture.³³ Despite these outward statements of support for Buddhism and Taoism and the acknowledgment that they are either indigenized (Buddhism) or indigenous to China (Taoism), however, authorities nevertheless require them to undergo “sinicization” and support the leadership of the Party.³⁴

The religious freedom magazine *Bitter Winter* documented the demolition and closure of Buddhist, Taoist, and folk religious temples, forced participation by believers in displays of loyalty to the Party and nation, and the covering of outdoor statues that attracted tourists and pilgrims.³⁵ Observers said that these actions were part of the government’s effort to counter the influence of religion in favor of nationalism under Party leadership.³⁶ The violations reported by *Bitter Winter* in this reporting year include the following:

- Government officials in Wu’an city, Handan municipality, Hebei province, destroyed the Buddhist Miaolian Temple.³⁷
- In Shuangyashan municipality, Heilongjiang province, over 100 individuals from various government departments secretly demolished a Taoist temple at 4 a.m.³⁸
- Officials in Lushan city, Jiujiang municipality, Jiangxi province, required Buddhist monks and nuns to swear allegiance to the Party and the country at a National Day celebration.³⁹
- Officials in Ruzhou city, Pingdingshan municipality, Henan province, forced over 50 Taoist priests to march in a local National Day parade while waving Chinese flags and singing revolutionary songs, threatening them with fines and possibly having their temples made illegal.⁴⁰
- A Taoist priest in Qinghai province reported that he had been forced to attend political indoctrination classes, under threat of losing state approval for his temple.⁴¹

[For information on religious freedom for Tibetan Buddhists, see Section V—Tibet.]

Christianity—Catholic

Unofficial estimates of China’s Catholic population vary between 10 and 12 million and include individuals from both registered and unregistered communities.⁴² The State Council estimated in 2018 that six million Catholics were part of registered congregations.⁴³ In 1957, the Chinese government and Communist Party created the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), which stated that the Church in China must be completely cut off, or “independent,” from the Vatican.⁴⁴ Since then, although a number of significant developments have transpired,⁴⁵ Catholics in China have largely remained divided between registered or “official” congregations led by state-sanctioned bishops, and unregistered or “underground” (*dixia*) congregations whose bishops are not recog-

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nized by the government.⁴⁶ 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,⁴⁷ and also because of their objection to official bishops' affiliation with the CCPA.⁴⁸ Authorities frequently pressured underground clergy to join an "independent" church, which violates their consciences and Catholic teaching because, as Bernardo Cervellera, head of Rome-based news outlet AsiaNews explains, "the Party intends this 'independence' also as a detachment from the Holy See and the universal Church."⁴⁹ Historian Anthony Clark wrote in November 2019 that government control of the Catholic Church in China "has reached its highest level since the death of Mao in 1976."⁵⁰

Status of the Sino-Vatican Agreement

The Holy See announced in September 2018 that a Provisional Agreement on the appointment of bishops had been signed with the Chinese government, although the details were not published.⁵¹ As of July 1, 2020, four bishops had been installed under the agreement.⁵²

Supporters of the agreement point out that Chinese leaders recognize the Pope as head of the Church in China for the first time and accept his authority to approve or reject candidates for ordination as bishops.⁵³ Critics pointed out, as several news sources have reported, that since the agreement was signed Chinese authorities have detained clergy, pressured them to join an "independent church," closed unregistered churches, and removed children and young people from church services.⁵⁴ Professor Beatrice Leung concluded that the agreement so far has helped President Xi Jinping's policy of "sinicization" more than it has helped Catholics.⁵⁵ Cardinal Joseph Zen, a vocal opponent of the agreement, characterized its effects in a letter to fellow Cardinals as the "complete [destruction] of the Church in China at the hand of those who have the sacred duty of protecting it."⁵⁶

Examples of authorities violating the rights of Catholics in the past year include the following:

- On November 1, 2019, authorities demolished Wugaozhuang Catholic Church in Handan municipality, Hebei province, after hundreds of Catholics gathered in opposition.⁵⁷
- In April and May 2020, authorities issued orders to extend the cancellation of Catholic religious events, including annual May pilgrimages to Marian sites on holy days, even though officials had lifted restrictions related to the coronavirus outbreak nationwide in March and nearby tourist sites had already reopened.⁵⁸
- In November 2019, the Party pressured underground bishop **Vincent Guo Xijin**, auxiliary bishop of Mindong diocese, Fujian province, to join the CCPA and agree in writing to join an "independent church," separate from the Holy See, and subjected him to public security bureau supervision.⁵⁹ Party leaders reportedly wanted to use him to weaken the resistance of other underground priests in the diocese,⁶⁰ but he refused to

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sign the agreement.⁶¹ As of April 2020, he was reportedly under government surveillance.⁶²

- In April 2020, authorities in Fujian province detained Father **Huang Jintong**, after he refused to sign a similar agreement of separation from the Holy See.⁶³

The Commission is monitoring the cases of the following Catholic clergy who, among others, are believed to be in detention or confinement:

- **Thaddeus Ma Daqin.** This past year, Thaddeus Ma Daqin of the Diocese of Shanghai remained under extralegal confinement at Sheshan Seminary in Shanghai municipality in connection to his public resignation from the CCPA during his ordination ceremony in July 2012.⁶⁴ While confined at Sheshan, Ma has written blog posts with ecclesiastical content,⁶⁵ such as one in early February 2020 that encouraged prayer in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶⁶ In an essay attributed to Ma's blog from June 2016, however, Ma expressed contrition over his 2012 resignation from the CCPA,⁶⁷ and he reportedly rejoined the CCPA in September 2016.⁶⁸ Some commentators speculated that the essay was written under official pressure.⁶⁹

- **Cui Tai, Zhang Guangjun, and Zhang Jianlin.** Authorities in Xuanhua district, Zhangjiakou municipality, Hebei province, continued to detain underground bishop Cui Tai of the Xuanhua diocese.⁷⁰ Cui has been repeatedly detained since 2007, including in March 2019, although authorities temporarily released him in January 2020 for the Chinese New Year.⁷¹ Authorities detained him again in June 2020 at an unknown location.⁷² The Commission did not observe updates on underground priests Peter Zhang Guangjun and Zhang Jianlin, also of the Xuanhua diocese, whom authorities also detained in April 2019 and March 2019, respectively.⁷³

- **James Su Zhimin and Cosmas Shi Enxiang.** The Commission did not observe any updates on underground bishops James Su Zhimin or Cosmas Shi Enxiang, who were disappeared in 1997 and 2001, respectively.⁷⁴ Authorities in 2015 refused to confirm an unofficial report that Bishop Shi had died.⁷⁵

Christianity—Protestant

Chinese authorities in this reporting year intensified their persecution of Protestant Christians in many locations throughout China.⁷⁶ International religious freedom non-governmental organization ChinaAid Association (ChinaAid) concluded that the persecution of Christians had worsened in 2019.⁷⁷ Christian Solidarity Worldwide wrote that “freedom of religion or belief in China is in rapid decline,” and that violations against Protestant Christians have intensified since the 2018 Regulations on Religious Affairs took effect.⁷⁸

Documented violations of the religious freedom of Protestant Christians this past year include the following:

- Demolishing, raiding, and forcing the closure of churches, including hundreds of house churches;⁷⁹ prohibiting large gatherings and holiday celebrations, and injuring believers who re-

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sist;⁸⁰ forcing believers to promise not to attend church;⁸¹ and converting a forcibly closed church building into one used for secular purposes.⁸²

- Ordering the installation of surveillance cameras inside and outside church buildings.⁸³
- Arresting, detaining, or sentencing church leaders and lay believers.⁸⁴
- Pressuring state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) churches to sing Party songs and display the national flag during community worship.⁸⁵
- Forbidding Christians of the Miao ethnicity from reading the Bible and preaching in their native language.⁸⁶
- Enacting a system of rating and performance review for churches.⁸⁷

In addition, officials committed the following violations in connection with the coronavirus outbreak:

- In February 2020, a government-established “coronavirus control group” in Nenjiang city, Heihe municipality, Heilongjiang province, ordered the shutdown of all unregistered religious venues and offered monetary rewards for residents to report on them.⁸⁸
- In February 2020, the two official Christian Councils in Shandong province issued a prohibition on online religious gatherings,⁸⁹ and Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported that authorities in Guangdong and Shandong provinces had detained Christian believers for sharing information on the coronavirus and offering prayers online.⁹⁰
- Authorities in Zhejiang province reportedly required religious venues to share positive stories about the government’s anti-pandemic efforts, hold a flag-raising ceremony, and use President and Party General Secretary Xi Jinping’s political slogans during prayers as preconditions for reopening after the pandemic.⁹¹

Authorities continued to target house church leaders with repressive measures, including in the following cases:

- On December 30, 2019, the Chengdu Municipality Intermediate People’s Court in Sichuan province sentenced Early Rain Covenant Church (Early Rain) pastor **Wang Yi** to nine years in prison on charges of “inciting subversion of state power” and “illegal business activity” after a closed trial.⁹²
- As of April 2020, authorities reportedly continued to restrict the movement and association of Wang Yi’s wife, **Jiang Rong**, denying her visits from lawyers, relatives, and friends, following six months under “residential surveillance at a designated location” (RSDL) from December 2018 to June 2019, during which she was tortured.⁹³
- On November 25, 2019, the Qingyang District People’s Court in Chengdu sentenced Early Rain deacon **Qin Defu** (also known as **Tan Defu**) to four years in prison on the charge of engaging in “illegal business activity.”⁹⁴
- On April 2, 2020, authorities in Zhangjiajie county, Zhangjiajie municipality, Hunan province, criminally detained **Zhao Huaiguo**, pastor of a house church called Bethel

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Church, on suspicion of “inciting subversion of state power” after he refused to register with the TSPM.⁹⁵

Islam

The Chinese government and Communist Party have expanded the crackdown on Uyghur and other Muslims in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) to Hui Muslims, who comprise the third largest ethnic minority in China.⁹⁶ According to a February 2020 report in *Foreign Policy*, authorities have detained large numbers of Hui in mass internment camps in the XUAR.⁹⁷ In late 2018 a top Party leader from the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (NHAR), home to millions of Hui, visited the XUAR, where he praised the region’s “anti-terrorist” and “social stability” program, and announced his intention to work closely with XUAR leaders to achieve these goals.⁹⁸ A report in September 2019 said that officials in the NHAR have imposed restrictions on Hui Muslims similar to those being carried out on Uyghurs in the XUAR, including requiring imams to pass exams on Communist ideology to retain their licenses.⁹⁹

According to RFA, a staff member at a mosque in Henan province said that a source in the government revealed that Henan, home to over one million Hui, was a testing ground for the “sinicization” of Islam. He further said that all Islamic symbols on buildings would be removed and that all ethnicities in China had to comply with the Party’s orders that buildings must be made to conform to Chinese culture and Chinese building standards, just as during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰⁰ The report also said that in Lushan county, Pingdingshan municipality, Henan province, the government removed domes and other mosque features while large numbers of Hui villagers were absent due to the outbreak of COVID-19, and according to the mosque staff member, three of the county’s four mosques had already been demolished.¹⁰¹ [For more information on Uyghur Muslims, see Section IV—Xinjiang. For more information on Muslims from other ethnic minority backgrounds, see Section II—Ethnic Minority Rights.]

Government officials in many locations continued to restrict expression of religious faith and the linguistic and cultural practices of Hui Muslims, including the following examples:

- In many locations, including Beijing municipality, Yunnan, Henan, Gansu, Shaanxi, and Qinghai provinces, and the NHAR, officials have closed mosques, demolished or removed minarets, domes, and other Islamic features from mosques and placed surveillance cameras inside them, closed Islamic schools, and restricted Islamic preaching, clothing, Arabic script, halal food, and use of the Islamic financial system.¹⁰²
- RFA reported in November 2019 that officials in Hualong Hui Autonomous County, Haidong municipality, Qinghai province, in addition to removing Arabic-style features from mosques, punished 10 imams for noncompliance with orders to study Party ideology.¹⁰³

In addition to these examples, authorities in Jinan municipality, Shandong province, violated the right to freedom of speech of a Hui poet from Shandong, **Cui Haoxin** (pen name **An Ran**), when they

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detained him in January 2020, after he posted criticisms on social media of the mass internment camps and the treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslims in the XUAR.¹⁰⁴ Cui was previously questioned and detained by state security police in 2018 for his writings about the XUAR and about government intrusions into the lives of religious believers, and sent to a “reeducation course.”¹⁰⁵ [For more information on Cui Haoxin, see Section II—Ethnic Minority Rights—Detention of Hui Poet Cui Haoxin.]

Such violations of religious freedom have caused some Hui to feel a sense of unease.¹⁰⁶ One Hui man from the NHAR said the pressure on the religious behavior and daily lives of Hui people was “unbearable,” and another feared that the Hui would be the next group to suffer the same mistreatment as the Uyghurs in the XUAR.¹⁰⁷ A Hui man in Gansu province commented that while they were not suffering outright violence, the government is “slowly boiling us like frogs.”¹⁰⁸

Falun Gong

As in previous years, authorities continued to detain Falun Gong practitioners and subject them to harsh treatment.¹⁰⁹ Due to government suppression, it is difficult to determine the number of Falun Gong practitioners in China.¹¹⁰ The U.S. Department of State reported that the Party employs an “extralegal, party-run security apparatus to eliminate Falun Gong” and other groups.¹¹¹ Chinese authorities continue to prosecute Falun Gong practitioners under Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law, which criminalizes “organizing and using a cult (*xiejiao*) to undermine implementation of the law.”¹¹² The Falun Gong-affiliated website Clear Wisdom reported that Chinese officials were responsible for the deaths of 96 Falun Gong practitioners in 2019,¹¹³ and that 774 practitioners were sentenced in 2019, with the largest numbers in the northern provinces of Shandong, Heilongjiang, Liaoning, and Jilin.¹¹⁴ The site also documented violations of religious freedom against practitioners including detention and arrest,¹¹⁵ beatings,¹¹⁶ sleep deprivation,¹¹⁷ and other forms of torture.¹¹⁸ Clear Wisdom reported that between January and April 2020, 6 practitioners died as a result of being tortured while in custody, and 11 more died after being released or as the result of mistreatment by security officials.¹¹⁹

Other Religious Communities

The Chinese government in the past has permitted the activities of some religious communities outside of the five religions that are the main objects of official regulation, such as Eastern Orthodox Christians¹²⁰ and Latter-day Saints (Mormons).¹²¹ It has designated approximately 22 other groups, including Falun Gong and the Church of Almighty God, as cults (*xiejiao*),¹²² and prosecutes adherents under Article 300 of the Criminal Law.¹²³ The Commission observed the violations of religious freedom against members of religious communities that do not fall within the five officially regulated religions, including:

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- **Church of Almighty God.** Police in Fujian and Shandong provinces reportedly detained at least 30 members of the Church of Almighty God.¹²⁴
- **Kaifeng Jews.** A small community of Chinese Jews has lived in Kaifeng municipality, Henan province, for centuries.¹²⁵ Authorities this past year subjected their synagogue to surveillance, prohibited Jewish festivals, removed signs in Hebrew, and barred visits from foreigners.¹²⁶
- **Jehovah's Witnesses.** In June 2019, authorities in Korla (Ku'erle) city, Bayangol (Bayinguoleng) Mongol Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, indicted 18 Jehovah's Witnesses under Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law.¹²⁷

Notes to Section II—Freedom of Religion

¹ ChinaAid Association, “2019 Annual Report: Chinese Government Persecution of Churches and Christians in Mainland China,” February 28, 2020, 37–38; Christian Solidarity Worldwide, “Repressed, Removed, Re-Educated: The Stranglehold on Religious Life in China,” February 2020, 10.

² U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, “Annual Report 2020,” April 2020, 14–15; Christian Solidarity Worldwide, “Repressed, Removed, Re-Educated: The Stranglehold on Religious Life in China,” February 2020, 5; ChinaAid Association, “2019 Annual Report: Chinese Government Persecution of Churches and Christians in Mainland China,” February 28, 2020, 37; Sarah Cook, “Worsening Religious Persecution in China Requires Stronger U.S. Response,” *Berkley Forum* (blog), Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, & World Affairs, Georgetown University, March 16, 2020.

³ Dominic J. Nardi, “Religious Freedom in China’s High-Tech Surveillance State,” U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Country Update: China, September 2019, 1; U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Annual Report 2020*, April 2020, 16; Christian Solidarity Worldwide, “Repressed, Removed, Re-Educated: The Stranglehold on Religious Life in China,” February 2020, 23; ChinaAid Association, “2019 Annual Report: Chinese Government Persecution of Churches and Christians in Mainland China,” February 28, 2020, 15, 17.

⁴ Universal 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, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 18; U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Annual Report 2020*, April 2020, 16; Office of International Religious Freedom, U.S. Department of State, “2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: China (Includes Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Macau),” June 10, 2020, 1, 78; National Religious Affairs Administration, *Zongjiao Tuanti Guanli Banfa* [Measures on the Management of Religious Groups], passed November 1, 2019, effective February 1, 2020, arts. 5, 6, 17; “China Unveils Regulations on Management of Religious Groups,” *Xinhua*, December 30, 2019; Matthew Taylor King, “The Gospel According to Xi,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 2020; ChinaAid Association, “2019 Annual Report: Chinese Government Persecution of Churches and Christians in Mainland China,” February 28, 2020, 27.

⁵ Paul M. Taylor, *Freedom of Religion: UN and European Human Rights Law and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 19, 24, 203–4.

⁶ Universal 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. China has signed and stated its intent to ratify the ICCPR, which obligates China to refrain in good faith from acts that would defeat the treaty’s purpose. State Council Information Office, “Guojia Renquan Kingdong 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. United 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.

⁷ *PRC Constitution*, passed and effective December 4, 1982 (amended March 11, 2018), art. 36.

⁸ *PRC Constitution*, passed and effective December 4, 1982 (amended March 11, 2018), art. 36; Liu Peng, “A Crisis of Faith,” *China Security* 4, no. 4 (Autumn 2008): 30.

⁹ *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.

¹⁰ International 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.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, art. 18(2).

¹² *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.

¹³ *PRC Constitution*, passed and effective December 4, 1982 (amended March 11, 2018), art. 36; 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; 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. 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.”

¹⁴ National Religious Affairs Administration, *Zongjiao Tuanti Guanli Banfa* [Measures on the Management of Religious Groups], passed November 1, 2019, effective February 1, 2020; “China Unveils Regulations on Management of Religious Groups,” *Xinhua*, December 30, 2019; Central People’s Government, “Zhongguo zongjiao gaikuang” [Overview of religion in China], accessed June 1, 2020. The official religious associations are: the Buddhist Association of China; the Chi-

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nese Taoist Association; the Islamic Association of China; two Protestant organizations: the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the Christian Council; and two Catholic associations: the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China, neither of which is recognized by the Holy See.

¹⁵Massimo Introvigne, "China's New Measures for Religious Groups 2019: From Bad to Worse," *Bitter Winter*, December 31, 2019. See State Council, *Zongjiao Shiwu Tiaoli* [Regulations on Religious Affairs], issued November 30, 2004, amended June 14, 2017, effective February 1, 2018; State Council Information Office, "Zhongguo Baozhang Zongjiao Xinyang Ziyou de Zhengce he Shixian' baipishu" [White paper on "China's Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief"], April 3, 2018; Central People's Government, "Zhongguo zongjiao gaikuang" [Overview of religion in China], accessed June 1, 2020.

¹⁶National Religious Affairs Administration, *Zongjiao Tuanti Guanli Banfa* [Measures on the Management of Religious Groups], passed November 1, 2019, effective February 1, 2020, arts. 6, 25, 26.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 6, 17, 26.

¹⁸Dominic J. Nardi, "The 2019 Regulation for Religious Groups in China," U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Factsheet: China, February 2020; Steven W. Mosher, "How China's Xi Jinping Destroyed Religion and Made Himself God," *New York Post*, February 1, 2020; Massimo Introvigne, "China's New Measures for Religious Groups 2019: From Bad to Worse," *Bitter Winter*, December 31, 2019. See also 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; 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. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217A (III) of December 10, 1948, art. 18.

¹⁹Massimo Introvigne, "China's New Measures for Religious Groups 2019: From Bad to Worse," *Bitter Winter*, December 31, 2019; National Religious Affairs Administration, *Zongjiao Tuanti Guanli Banfa* [Measures on the Management of Religious Groups], passed November 1, 2019, effective February 1, 2020, art. 3. See also Office of International Religious Freedom, U.S. Department of State, "2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: China (Includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)," May 29, 2018. The National Religious Affairs Administration (formerly called the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA)) has stated in the past that family members and friends had a right to pray and read scripture in homes without registration.

²⁰Richard Madsen, "The Sinicization of Chinese Religions under Xi Jinping," *China Leadership Monitor* 61 (Fall 2019), September 1, 2019, 3. Richard Madsen is a Professor of Sociology at the University of California, San Diego, and is the author or co-author of twelve books on Chinese culture, American culture, and international relations.

²¹National Religious Affairs Administration, *Zongjiao Tuanti Guanli Banfa* [Measures on the Management of Religious Groups], passed November 1, 2019, effective February 1, 2020, art. 5. See also "Wang Yang zai canjia Sichuan daibiaotuan shenyi shi qiangdiao jiangding zhidu zixin zengqiang fazhan xinxin fenli duoqu quanmian jiancheng xiaokang shehui weida shengli" [While participating in the deliberations of the Sichuan delegation, Wang Yang emphasized firm institutional confidence, increasing faith in development, and striving to win the great victory of building a well-off society], *Xinhua*, May 22, 2020; "Quanguo Zhengxie Minzongwei zhaokai zongjiao jie zhuti xieshang zuotanhui Wang Yang chuxi bing jianghua" [The Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference held a symposium on the theme of religious circles, Wang Yang participated and delivered a speech], *Xinhua*, November 26, 2019.

²²"5 Main Religions in China Agree to Sinicize," *Global Times*, September 7, 2017.

²³"5 Main Religions in China Agree to Sinicize," *Global Times*, September 7, 2017; Buddhist Academy of China, "Jianchi Fojiao Zhongguohua Fangxiang Wu Nian Gongzuo Guihua Gangyao (2019–2023)" [Outline of the Five-Year Work Plan for Adhering to the Direction of Sinicization of Buddhism (2019–2023)], November 15, 2019.

²⁴Joann Pittman, "3 Questions: Sinicization or Chinafication?," *China Source* (blog), February 3, 2020; Richard Madsen, "The Sinicization of Chinese Religions under Xi Jinping," *China Leadership Monitor* 61 (Fall 2019), September 1, 2019.

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²⁶Richard Madsen, "The Sinicization of Chinese Religions under Xi Jinping," *China Leadership Monitor* 61 (Fall 2019), September 1, 2019.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸Thomas F. Farr, "China's Second Cultural Revolution," *First Things* (January 2020), January 16, 2020; Tang Zhe [pseud.], "Cultural Revolution Returns: Everything Religious Is Purged," June 21, 2020; Massimo Introvigne, "China's New Measures for Religious Groups 2019: From Bad to Worse," *Bitter Winter*, December 31, 2019; Gerry Shih, "'Boiling Us Like Frogs': China's Clampdown on Muslims Creeps into the Heartland, Finds New Targets," *Washington Post*, September 20, 2019; Huizhong Wu, "In Echo of Mao Era, China's Schools in Book-Cleansing Drive," *Reuters*, July 9, 2020; Steven W. Mosher, "How China's Xi Jinping Destroyed Religion and Made Himself God," *New York Post*, February 1, 2020.

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³⁰Wang Zhicheng, "New Administrative Measures for Religious Groups: Total Submission to the Chinese Communist Party," *AsiaNews*, December 31, 2019.

³¹Sarah Cook, Freedom House, "Chinese Buddhism and Taoism: Religious Freedom in China," February 17, 2017.

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³² Kuei-min Chang, “New Wine in Old Bottles: Sinicisation and State Regulation of Religion in China,” *China Perspectives*, no. 1–2 (2018): 40–41; Ian Johnson, “China’s New Civil Religion,” *New York Times*, December 21, 2019.

³³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People’s Republic of China at UNESCO Headquarters,” March 28, 2014; Kuei-min Chang, “New Wine in Old Bottles: Sinicisation and State Regulation of Religion in China,” *China Perspectives*, no. 1–2 (2018): 40–41. See also “Party vs Profit in Tug of War over Chinese Buddhism,” *China Digital Times*, April 27, 2018; Ian Johnson, “China’s New Civil Religion,” *New York Times*, December 21, 2019.

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⁷³ “Underground Priest in China Arrested as Holy Week Begins,” *Union of Catholic Asian News*, April 16, 2019.

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