

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Findings

- During the Commission’s 2022 reporting year, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) escalated efforts to “sinicize” religion, a process it defines as strengthening religious believers’ allegiance to the “great motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Chinese Communist Party, and socialism with Chinese characteristics.”
- In December 2021, the Party and government convened the first National Conference on Religious Work since 2016, signaling Xi Jinping and the Party’s intent to prioritize religious affairs.
- The National Religious Affairs Administration issued a set of sweeping Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services, which were announced on December 20, 2021, and went into effect on March 1, 2022. The measures require religious groups to have government-issued permits for their online activity, enact onerous registration requirements, and limit permissible online religious activity by registered groups.
- The Party attempted to co-opt Buddhist and Taoist groups for a Party history campaign intended to inculcate patriotism and loyalty, including by forcing clergy to watch “patriotic movies.”
- Authorities continued to suppress the religious freedom of ethnic minority Muslims throughout the country, promoting the eradication of distinct ethnic and religious characteristics and increasing assimilation with Han Chinese culture.
- The PRC continued to exert pressure on unregistered Catholic communities in 2021 and 2022, as demonstrated by the detention of lay Catholics, clergy, and at least two Vatican-appointed bishops. Hong Kong authorities have also increasingly targeted the Catholic Church. In May, Hong Kong national security police arrested former bishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal **Joseph Zen**.
- During this reporting year, PRC authorities continued to violate the religious freedom of Protestant Christians by engaging in pressure campaigns against unregistered churches, especially by detaining church leaders—often under manufactured “fraud” charges—and by cracking down on religious education and publishing.
- Public security and judicial authorities continued to use Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law, which forbids “organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law,” to persecute members of spiritual groups deemed to be illegal or to be “cults” (*xiejiao*), including Falun Gong, Church of the Almighty God, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and others.
- Authors of a 2022 study published in the American Journal of Transplantation concluded that it was highly likely that transplant surgeons in China had participated in the execution of prisoners “by organ transplant” as recently as 2015. They further concurred with previous “anecdotal and textual” accounts provided by Falun Gong-affiliated organizations alleging

Freedom of Religion

organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience. There also continued to be accounts that Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in the XUAR have also been targeted for forced organ removal.

Recommendations

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

- Call on the Chinese government to guarantee freedom of religion to all citizens in accordance with its international human rights obligations and PRC law. Stress to PRC authorities that freedom of religion includes the right to freely adopt beliefs and engage in religious practice without government interference.
- Call for the release of religious leaders and practitioners whom Chinese authorities confined, detained, or imprisoned for peacefully pursuing their religious beliefs, including Catholic bishop **Zhang Weizhu**; Protestant pastors **Wang Yi**, **An Yankui**, **Yang Rongli**, and **Wang Xiaoguang**; and Falun Gong practitioners **Xu Na** and **Zhou Deyong**, as well as those confined, detained, or imprisoned in connection with their association with those citizens. 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 trade agreements.
- 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 the rights to freedom of religion and to religious culture and expression are fully observed and protected; cooperating with the UN human rights system, specifically UN special procedures mandate holders; 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.
- 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.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Introduction

During the 2022 reporting year, the Commission observed ongoing violations of religious freedom by the Chinese Communist Party and government aimed at increasing control of believers in both registered and unregistered communities. The Party and government sought to further cement its policy of “sinicization” (*zhongguohua*), defined as the strengthening of religious believers’ allegiance to the “great motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Chinese Communist Party, and socialism with Chinese characteristics.”¹ Authorities signaled that increased oversight of religion would be an ongoing priority by convening the first National Conference on Religious Work in five years, enacting sweeping legislation circumscribing religious expression and activity on the internet, and bolstering surveillance and supervision of religious groups in the name of national security. A U.S.-based advocacy organization concluded that this reporting year “might have been one of the worst periods for religious freedom in recent history.”²

International and Chinese Law on Religious Freedom

Both Chinese and international law guarantee religious freedom. Under international law, freedom of religion or belief encompasses both the right to form, hold, and change convictions, beliefs, and religions—which cannot be restricted—and the right to outwardly manifest those beliefs, or none at all, which can be limited by certain specific justifications.³ 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).⁴ Article 36 of China’s Constitution guarantees citizens “freedom of religious belief” and protection for “normal religious activities.”⁵ With terms such as “normal” undefined, it is unclear whether China’s Constitution is intended to protect the same range of beliefs and outward manifestations that is recognized under international law.⁶ Nevertheless, China’s Constitution and other legal provisions⁷ align with the ICCPR in prohibiting discrimination based on religion⁸ and loosely parallel the ICCPR’s prohibition on coercion⁹ by forbidding groups or individuals from compelling citizens to believe or not believe in any religion.¹⁰ 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.”¹¹

Regulations and Policies Pertaining to Religious Freedom

In December 2021, the Party and government convened the first National Conference on Religious Work since 2016, signaling Xi Jinping and the Party’s intent to prioritize national security in religious affairs.¹² In his speech at the conference, Xi emphasized the ongoing importance of national security in religious work, especially with regard to online religious activity and content.¹³ Experts have identified such “securitization” as a major theme of governance under Xi: since assuming leadership, Xi has applied a na-

Freedom of Religion

tional security framework to non-traditional sectors, including the online activity of many businesses, individuals, and civil society groups.¹⁴ A Beijing municipality-based professor characterized the religious work conference's emphasis on online activity as noteworthy, saying that religious practitioners would be "disciplined for inappropriate online commentary."¹⁵ This is consistent with Xi's speech at the event, which called for adherence to the "overall national security concept" including "strengthen[ed] management of online religious affairs."¹⁶ To this end, at a December 2021 Ministry of Public Security meeting on implementing the goals set by the religious work conference, Minister of Public Security Zhao Kezhi said that religious affairs work should guard against "radicalism," "terrorism," and "infiltration by hostile forces," and should crack down on "illegal missionary activity" and on *xiejiao* (a historical term usually translated as "evil cults" or "heretical teachings," and used by the Party to refer to new religious movements it perceives as threatening, notably Falun Gong).¹⁷

At the December conference, Xi also reiterated the need for religious groups to pursue greater autonomy from foreign influence through "sinicization." Omitting reference to the traditional "three-self" formula for institutional autonomy mandated by the Party for approved religious groups—that these groups be "self-governing," "self-financing," and "self-propagating," and from which the Three-Self Patriotic Movement organization governing Protestant churches in China takes its name¹⁸—Xi said that religious work should strengthen "self-education, self-management, and self-discipline."¹⁹ Scholar Carsten Vala concluded that the intent behind this "twist" on the formula is not merely to limit foreign influence on religious groups, as the traditional formula did, but to "ensure [religious practitioners'] activities are circumscribed within Party-state bounds."²⁰ Xi added that education in Party history was essential to cultivating patriotism among religious groups and believers, most likely referring to a nationwide history campaign associated with the Party's centenary and urging its appropriation by religious believers.²¹ [For more information on the new iteration of Party history issued this past year, see Section V—Governance.]

Concurrent with the conference, the National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA) and four other agencies, including the Ministries of Public Security and of State Security, issued the Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services, which went into effect on March 1, 2022.²² In an authoritative response to reporters, NRAA authorities characterized the wide-ranging measures as intended to ensure both "network security and ideological security."²³ The measures increased state oversight of online religious activity by:

- Prohibiting unregistered domestic organizations and all foreign groups from posting religious content on the internet²⁴ and banning a range of online religious material and activities, including most forms of proselytizing, many forms of worship,²⁵ and content targeted at "enticing" minors;²⁶
- Requiring that groups apply for an internet religious information services permit in order to host or share even licit content online,²⁷ with the permit to be renewed every three years;²⁸ and

Freedom of Religion

- Instituting identity verification and real-name registration requirements in order to use online religious platforms,²⁹ preach,³⁰ or participate in online religious training or religious education.³¹

Formally issued in December 2021, the measures came amid what one journalist described as a “harsh and capricious regulatory crackdown” on China’s internet and technology sectors, targeting a number of platforms and content deemed inconsistent with Party goals.³² Observers and stakeholders expressed concern that the measures provide a framework for curtailing the already diminishing space for religious believers in China.³³ [For more information on cyberspace and technological developments, see Section III—Freedom of Expression.]

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

The Chinese Communist Party and government’s relationship with Buddhist, Taoist, and folk religious groups has continued to reflect the tension between appropriation of these groups by PRC leadership and coercive control, both of which infringe on the ability of these religious groups to exercise their freedom of religion in accordance with international standards.³⁴ Consistent with the Party and central government’s “sinicization” policy, PRC officials have lauded Taoist and Buddhist groups that are perceived as serving the Party’s agenda.³⁵ While the Commission documented ongoing efforts by Chinese authorities during its 2021 reporting year to restrict Buddhist, Taoist, and folk religious groups from exercising their religious freedom,³⁶ during the 2022 reporting year, the Commission observed the Party targeting these groups for patriotic activities to coincide with the Party’s centenary year.³⁷ Examples of efforts to engage Buddhist, Taoist, and folk religious groups in national campaigns and to bolster “sinicization” efforts among these groups include the following:

- In July 2021, a group of teachers and students from the Party-controlled Buddhist Association of China (BCA)-sponsored Emeishan Buddhist Institute in Emeishan municipality, Sichuan province, participated in a “red tour” for the Party’s centenary, visiting revolutionary sites in Sichuan.³⁸ In September, over 40 Buddhist leaders, teachers, and monks from several BCA-affiliated Buddhist institutions in Shaoxing municipality, Zhejiang province, traveled to Party historical sites in Jiangxi as part of a “red tour,” where they placed wreaths at the Red Army Martyrs Memorial Tower and “paid their respects” at a former residence of Mao Zedong.³⁹
- In October 2021, Buddhist monks at Huasheng Temple in Tianjin municipality were forced to view “red movies,” or propaganda films.⁴⁰ According to the temple’s official WeChat account, one viewing featured the Korean War film “The Battle at Lake Changjin” (reportedly commissioned and funded by the central government for the Party’s centenary)⁴¹ and was intended to “thoroughly carry out Party history study and education” and “promote the patriotic spirit.”⁴² On October 14, all instructors and students at the official Chinese Taoist College were also made to view the “patriotic film.”⁴³

Freedom of Religion

- According to the International Campaign for Tibet, the PRC has increasingly barred ethnically Han Chinese Buddhists from practicing Tibetan Buddhism, as part of official efforts to enforce the “sinicization” of Buddhism by marginalizing Tibetan Buddhist influences among the broader Han population, likely in order to maintain a distinctly “Chinese” Buddhist identity outside of Tibetan areas.⁴⁴ In one instance, PRC authorities expelled Han Chinese Buddhists from the Larung Gar Buddhist Institute (Larung Gar), in Seda (Serthar) county, Ganzi (Kardze) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, a site targeted in previous crackdowns.⁴⁵ After forcibly returning them to their hometowns, authorities required former Han Chinese residents of Larung Gar to register with their local police station and submit to regular monitoring.⁴⁶ In November 2021, Larung Gar webcasts accessed by Han Chinese practitioners were shut down.⁴⁷

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

Islam

This past year, the PRC continued to impose the policy of “sinicization” on ethnic minority Muslims throughout the country, promoting the eradication of distinct ethnic and religious characteristics and increasing assimilation with Han Chinese culture. The PRC continued its campaign to remove characteristically Muslim elements from mosques throughout the country.⁴⁸ Authorities also continued to target girls wearing headscarves to school, “quietly” rooting out the practice “at the majority of schools, at all levels, by various means” since 2019, according to Radio Free Asia.⁴⁹ Along with large-scale surveillance operations targeting Muslim communities, the central government has also continued to target Muslim worship by undertaking surveillance and interfering with religious activities at mosques and has imposed quotas on the number of Muslims permitted to gather to observe Ramadan.⁵⁰ Examples of widespread violations of freedom of religion include:

- In July 2021, authorities in Xining municipality, Qinghai province, announced the removal of domes and a minaret from the front gate of Dongguan Mosque. Scholar David R. Stroup has described Dongguan Mosque as China’s “most prominent and culturally important mosque” and one of its largest.⁵¹ One report claimed that authorities had implemented similar removals from at least 10 other mosques throughout Xining.⁵²
- On November 3, 2021, seven Muslim girls were locked out of their elementary school in Changge city, Xuchang municipality, Henan province, for wearing headscarves.⁵³
- Beginning on October 15, government and Party officials launched their latest round of “*wo’erzi*” (a Chinese transliteration of the Arabic word for “admonition,” or sermon) preaching tours, sending preaching groups to mosques throughout Qinghai to promote Party and government policies, loyalty to the Party, and Party-approved interpretations of the Quran.⁵⁴

Freedom of Religion

- In 2022, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported that the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection had launched a corruption investigation into Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference Vice Chair and member of the Hui ethnic minority Wang Zhengwei.⁵⁵ Wang, formerly head of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and former Governor of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, was known for encouraging the building of mosques “on a relatively grand scale” and supporting mechanisms for the certification of halal foods.⁵⁶ According to the WSJ, the investigation into Wang Zhengwei was “prompted by concerns that Mr. Wang had promoted ‘unrestrained Muslim culture’ and encouraged religious extremism.”⁵⁷

[For more information on Uyghur, Hui, and other Muslims in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and other locations, see Section VI—Ethnic Minority Rights and Section X—Xinjiang.]

Christianity—Catholic

Official efforts to assert control over Chinese Catholic leadership and religious practice have continued. The Sino-Vatican Agreement of 2018 established a mechanism for appointing bishops “in full communion” with the pope and “recognized by authorities of the People’s Republic of China.”⁵⁸ Renewed in 2020, the Agreement led to the appointment and ordination of six bishops “within the [Agreement’s] framework” as of 2021, according to the Vatican.⁵⁹ In spite of the apparent thaw in Sino-Vatican relations signaled by the Agreement, the PRC exerted ongoing pressure on unregistered Catholic communities in 2021 and 2022, detaining seminarians, clergy, and at least two unregistered Vatican-appointed bishops.⁶⁰ In May 2021, authorities detained **Zhang Weizhu**, bishop of Xinxiang Apostolic Prefecture in Henan, reportedly subjecting him to political indoctrination and holding him at an unknown location for over nine months without charge.⁶¹ On October 25, 2021, authorities in Wenzhou municipality, Zhejiang province, detained Bishop coadjutor of Wenzhou **Shao Zhumin**; they released him the following month, then detained him again on April 9, 2022.⁶² One observer said that Shao’s repeated detentions before major Chinese Catholic holidays are “almost scientific” in their regularity, noting his disappearance before Easter.⁶³

Hong Kong authorities have also increasingly targeted the Catholic Church. Ta Kung Pao, a newspaper owned by the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region,⁶⁴ issued a series of attacks on Christian education, Catholic church leaders, and the role of religion in the 2019 protests.⁶⁵ In an editorial targeting former Hong Kong Cardinal **Joseph Zen**, the paper said that students from over 300 schools had been arrested during the 2019 protests and that many of these schools had been Christian-run.⁶⁶ One Hong Kong Catholic clergy member concluded that “once they control the school, they could control the churches fairly easily,” asserting that the focus on religious education represents a key component of mainland Chinese leaders’ strategy for consolidating control over the Catholic Church in Hong Kong.⁶⁷ Another approach has been for the United Front Work Department to facilitate meetings between Chinese

Freedom of Religion

Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) leaders and key members of Hong Kong's Catholic clergy: on October 31, 2021, Hong Kong bishop-elect Stephen Chow, then-acting bishop Cardinal John Tong, and 13 priests attended a meeting where CCPA bishops and leaders briefed them on Xi's vision for "sinicization."⁶⁸ On May 11, 2022, Hong Kong national security police arrested Cardinal Zen, along with four other trustees of the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund.⁶⁹ On May 12, Zen was released on bail.⁷⁰ A West Kowloon court charged the other four with failing to register the fund with the police, and a trial was set for September 19, 2022.⁷¹ [For more information on the suppression of civil society in Hong Kong, see Section XI—Hong Kong and Macau.]

Christianity—Protestant

During this reporting year, PRC authorities continued to violate the religious freedom of Protestant Christians, engaging in pressure campaigns against unregistered churches by detaining church leaders and cracking down on religious education and media. The Commission has observed the Chinese government using charges such as "fraud"⁷² and "illegal business activity"⁷³ to project a veneer of criminality onto activities that—according to international law—fall within the scope of normal religious practices.⁷⁴ Local authorities also continued to target several influential unregistered or "house" churches.⁷⁵ Widespread violations of Protestant Christians' freedom of religion included:

- **Fraud charges used against church leaders.**

- In August 2021, police in Linfen municipality, Shanxi province, detained nine members of Linfen's Golden Lampstand Church, including pastors **Yang Rongli** and **Wang Xiaoguang**, in a series of raids on the church and its network.⁷⁶ After releasing several members on bail, Linfen authorities charged both pastors, along with members **Li Shuangping**, **Dong Yongyong**, **Zhao Guo'ai**, **Huo Zhuangping**, and **Wu Ling'e**, with "fraud."⁷⁷

- In November 2021, Deyang municipality, Sichuan province, authorities detained elder **Wu Jiannan** and former elder **Hao Ming** of Qingcaodi Church in Deyang on suspicion of "fraud."⁷⁸ A ChinaAid Association report noted that Chinese authorities commonly deploy this charge against Christian leaders, effectively criminalizing churches' offering-based funding structures.⁷⁹

- **Church members detained for international travel.**

In November 2021, Fenyang city, Luliang municipality, Shanxi, public security officers detained **An Yankui**, pastor of Taiyuan Zion (*Xuncheng*) Reformed Church in Luliang, along with a co-worker, **Zhang Chenghao**, for "illegally crossing the border" after traveling to a Christian conference in Malaysia in 2020.⁸⁰ In July 2021, authorities detained five other church members for attending the same conference, despite the two leaders and five members having valid passports.⁸¹ Luliang authorities initially denied both men access to legal counsel.⁸² The church has remained under pressure from authorities; in April 2022, police raided the congregation during a worship service.⁸³

Freedom of Religion

- **Christian schools targeted.**
 - In May 2021, Wuhu municipality, Anhui province, authorities raided the Mount Carmel Church-run Jordan River Learning Center, shutting down the church and detaining 10 teachers, 4 of whom they formally arrested for “illegal business activity” in August 2021.⁸⁴ Two of the teachers, **Wan Hongxia** and **Wang Minghai**, remained in custody as of June 2022.⁸⁵
 - In September 2021, local officials raided the Maizi Christian Music High School in Harbin municipality, Heilongjiang province, holding all of the students for questioning and detaining the school’s principal.⁸⁶
 - In November 2021, Tongzhou district, Beijing municipality, authorities evicted and closed the Golden Lampstand-run Golden Reed Learning Center, which served the children of Christian families who did not want to place their children in state-run public schools as well as “many children with autism and other special needs.”⁸⁷
- **Christian homeschooling targeted.**
 - Authorities in Wenshui county, Luliang, detained Taiyuan Zion Reformed Church member **Zhao Weikai** in July 2021 for “illegal possession of materials promoting terrorism or extremism,” likely based on materials relating to the 1989 Tiananmen protests and to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region found during a previous raid on his residence.⁸⁸ Local officials had visited Zhao and his wife, Li Xin, on several previous occasions in an effort to pressure the couple to send their children to state schools.⁸⁹
 - In October 2021, Suzhou municipality, Jiangsu province, police detained five Chinese representatives of the United States-based Abeka homeschooling program, including country representative **Wang Jian**.⁹⁰ According to ChinaAid, Abeka’s curriculum is used widely by homeschooling families and Christian schools in China.⁹¹
- **Crackdowns on Christian media.**
 - In July 2021, the Bao’an District People’s Court in Shenzhen municipality, Guangdong province, sentenced four employees of Shenzhen Tree of Life, a communications company focused on producing multimedia and digital Christian resources, to prison terms ranging from one year and three months to six years, and fines ranging from 10,000 to 200,000 yuan (US\$1,500 to US\$30,000) for “illegal business activity” associated with the sale of audio Bibles.⁹² In December 2021, the Taizhou Intermediate People’s Court in Taizhou municipality, Zhejiang province, upheld on appeal Christian bookseller **Chen Yu**’s original seven-year sentence for “illegal business activity.”⁹³

Falun Gong

Chinese authorities continued to prosecute Falun Gong practitioners under Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law, which criminalizes “organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law.”⁹⁴ The Falun Gong-affiliated website Minghui reported

Freedom of Religion

the deaths of dozens of Falun Gong practitioners due to treatment while in custody and hundreds of cases of Falun Gong practitioners being sentenced by authorities, apparently for their connection with Falun Gong.⁹⁵ The Commission observed the following reports of authorities targeting Falun Gong practitioners and seeking to impede or deter their legal counsel:

- In November 2021, the Xiangyang District Court in Jiamusi municipality, Heilongjiang province, sentenced Falun Gong practitioner and former teacher **Liu Lijie** to three years and six months in prison.⁹⁶ Liu was detained in October 2020 in connection with a gathering she attended at the home of an elderly Falun Gong practitioner and released on bail.⁹⁷ In 2021, she was tried and sentenced without her lawyer or legal advisors present and was reportedly taken into custody on January 12, 2022, after her appeal was denied.⁹⁸
- On January 16, 2022, authorities sentenced 11 Falun Gong practitioners detained in 2020 for sharing COVID-19-related materials with an overseas publication and in connection with Falun Gong religious materials confiscated at their residences.⁹⁹ Beijing municipality authorities imposed a sentence of eight years on artist **Xu Na**, who was also fined 20,000 yuan (US\$3,000), in connection to having shared photos with the Falun Gong media outlet Epoch Times, which showed Beijing during the early days of the COVID-19 outbreak in China.¹⁰⁰
- In December 2021, Beijing Justice Bureau officials disbarred Xu Na's original lawyer, **Liang Xiaojun**, partly over his social media posts that defended the rights of Falun Gong practitioners.¹⁰¹

In a peer-reviewed study in the American Journal of Transplantation, two researchers shared their findings from “a forensic review of 2,838 papers drawn from a dataset of 124,770 Chinese-language transplant publications” published between 1980 and 2015.¹⁰² Noting the common use of death row prisoners in China to harvest organs during this period, the authors of the study concluded that it was highly likely that transplant surgeons in China had participated in the execution of prisoners “by organ removal,” in violation of the medical field’s “dead donor rule.”¹⁰³ They also described their findings as consistent with previous “anecdotal and textual” accounts provided by Falun Gong-affiliated organizations regarding alleged organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience.¹⁰⁴ There also continued to be accounts that Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in the XUAR have also been targeted for forced organ removal.¹⁰⁵

Other Religious Communities

According to a Dui Hua Foundation report, the Chinese government has taken increased measures to crack down on practitioners it has deemed to be part of “unorthodox” religious communities, defined as groups outside of the five religions subject to official regulation.¹⁰⁶ Authorities had designated certain groups as “cults” or “heterodox teachings” (*xiejiao*), such as the Church of Almighty God¹⁰⁷ and the Association of Disciples,¹⁰⁸ and have continuously prosecuted adherents under Article 300 of the PRC Criminal

Freedom of Religion

Law.¹⁰⁹ Dui Hua noted an official focus on controlling religious activity in rural areas, as seen in an opinion issued by the Supreme People's Court in July 2021,¹¹⁰ which calls for “more severe punishment of illegal religious activities, ‘cults,’ and overseas infiltration in rural areas.”¹¹¹ Examples of the suppression of religious communities outside of the five religions subject to official regulation included:

- According to a report produced by the Church of Almighty God, the PRC central government has continued to crack down on this new religious movement as part of a three-year campaign launched in 2020.¹¹² The online magazine Bitter Winter reported that between August and November 2021, authorities in Guangdong, Henan, and Shandong provinces and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region detained over 300 members of the Church of Almighty God.¹¹³
- In November 2021, the Dalad (Dalate) Banner People's Court in Ordos (E'erdusi) municipality, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, reportedly sentenced eight members of the Association of Disciples to prison sentences and fines under Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law.¹¹⁴

Notes to Section III—Freedom of Religion

¹“Xi Jinping zai Quanguo Zongjiao Gongzuo Huiyi shang qiangdiao jianchi woguo zongjiao zhongguohua fangxiang jiji yindao zongjiao yu shehui zhuyi shehui xiang shiying” [At the National Conference on Religious Work, Xi Jinping stressed: persevere on the path of [China’s] sinicization of religion and actively lead religion in the adaptation of religion with socialism,” *Xinhua*, December 4, 2021.

²ChinaAid Association, “ChinaAid’s 2021 Annual Persecution Report,” March 7, 2022.

³Paul M. Taylor, *Freedom of Religion: UN and European Human Rights Law and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 19, 24, 203–4.

⁴Universal 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, adopted and 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 Xingdong Jihua (2016–2020 Nian)” [National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2016–2020)], September 29, 2016, sec. 5; 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, art. 18.

⁵*PRC Constitution*, passed and effective December 4, 1982 (amended March 11, 2018), art. 36.

⁶*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.

⁷See, e.g., *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, 1995, amended December 29, 2018, art. 12.

⁸International 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.

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. 18(2).

¹⁰*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.

¹¹*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, September 27, 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.”

¹²Amber Wang, “China Tightens Control of Religion, with Focus on National Security,” *South China Morning Post*, December 6, 2021.

¹³“Xi Jinping zai Quanguo Zongjiao Gongzuo Huiyi shang qiangdiao jianchi woguo zongjiao zhongguohua fangxiang jiji yindao zongjiao yu shehui zhuyi shehui xiang shiying” [At the National Conference on Religious Work, Xi Jinping stressed: persevere on the path of [China’s] sinicization of religion and actively lead religion in the adaptation of religion with socialism,” *Xinhua*, December 4, 2021; Amber Wang, “China Tightens Control of Religion, with Focus on National Security,” *South China Morning Post*, December 6, 2021.

¹⁴Experts have noted that Chinese authorities have broadly interpreted “national security,” using it as grounds to punish speech or actions that did not conform to Chinese Communist Party and government priorities. See, e.g., Rudolf Fürst, “Cultivating the Art of Anxiety: Securitising Culture in China,” *China Report* 57 (October 19, 2021): 4; Nis Grünberg, “Unlocking Anti-Fragile China: How Xi Reinforces the Party State for Global Leadership,” in *The CCP’s Next Century: Expanding Economic Control, Digital Governance and National Security*, eds. Nis Grünberg and Claudia Wessling, MERICS Papers on China 10, June 2021; Raphaël Viana David, International Service for Human Rights, “China’s Abuse of National Security to Curtail Human Rights: 4 Things You Need to Know,” January 27, 2022; Helena Legarda, Mercator Institute for China Studies, “China’s New International Paradigm: Security First,” June 15, 2021; Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “UN Rights Chief Concerned by ‘Broad Scope’ of China’s New Security Law,” July 7, 2015.

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Freedom of Religion

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²⁰Carsten T. Vala, “Reading Tea Leaves from the 2021 National Religious Work Conference,” *ChinaSource* (blog), February 4, 2022.

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²⁴National Religious Affairs Administration et al., *Hulianwang Zongjiao Xinxi Fuwu Guanli Banfa* [Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services], issued December 3, 2021, effective March 1, 2022, art. 6.

²⁵National Religious Affairs Administration et al., *Hulianwang Zongjiao Xinxi Fuwu Guanli Banfa* [Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services], issued December 3, 2021, effective March 1, 2022, art. 17.

²⁶National Religious Affairs Administration et al., *Hulianwang Zongjiao Xinxi Fuwu Guanli Banfa* [Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services], issued December 3, 2021, effective March 1, 2022, art. 14(8).

²⁷National Religious Affairs Administration et al., *Hulianwang Zongjiao Xinxi Fuwu Guanli Banfa* [Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services], issued December 3, 2021, effective March 1, 2022, arts. 6–7.

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Freedom of Religion

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Freedom of Religion

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Freedom of Religion

⁸² Rights Defense Network, “Zao jiya de Shanxi Xuncheng Guizheng Jiaohui chuandao, Jidutu An Yankui, Zhang Chenghao huijian lushi de hefa quanli bei boduo lushi yu jiandu” [Detained Shanxi Zion (Xuncheng) Reformed Church preachers, Christians An Yankui and Zhang Chenghao denied legal right to meet lawyer, lawyer calls for oversight], January 26, 2022. In June 2022, ChinaAid Association reported that Zhang had later been allowed to meet with his lawyer. Yu Bing, ChinaAid Association, “Shanxi Taiyuan Xuncheng Guizheng Jiaohui An Yankui chuandao he tonggong Zhang Chenghao she ‘tou yue (guo) bianjing zui’ an yi yijiao fayuan” [Shanxi Taiyuan Zion (Xuncheng) Reformed Church preacher An Yankui and coworker Zhang Chenghao “crossing (the country’s) border” case has already been transferred to the court], June 16, 2022.

⁸³ Yu Bing, ChinaAid Association, “Taiyuan Zion Reformed Church Raided—Seven Christians Questioned,” April 6, 2022.

⁸⁴ Yu Bing, ChinaAid Association, “Two Teachers Released on Bail, Two Teachers Arrested with No Update,” March 4, 2022.

⁸⁵ Yu Bing, ChinaAid Association, “Two Teachers Released on Bail, Two Teachers Arrested with No Update,” March 4, 2022. For more information, see the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database records 2022-00140 on Wan Hongxia and 2022-00141 on Wang Minghai.

⁸⁶ Yu Bing, ChinaAid Association, “CCP Police Arrest Staff and Students at Maizi Christian Music High School/Principal Xu Unreachable for More than 60 Hours,” September 7, 2021.

⁸⁷ John Ma, ChinaAid Association, “Beijing Government Shuts Down Another Private School,” November 3, 2021.

⁸⁸ Rights Defense Network, “Taiyuan Xuncheng Guizheng Jiaohui Jidutu Zhao Weikai bei zhengshi pibu” [Taiyuan Zion (Xuncheng) Reformed Church Christian Zhao Weikai formally approved for arrest], July 21, 2021; Yu Bing, ChinaAid Association, “Taiyuan Xuncheng Jiaohui tonggong Zhao Weikai bei zhengshi daibu” [Taiyuan Zion (Xuncheng) Reformed Church coworker Zhao Weikai formally arrested], July 21, 2021. For more information on Zhao Weikai, see the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database record 2021-00513.

⁸⁹ Rights Defense Network, “Taiyuan Xuncheng Guizheng Jiaohui Jidutu Zhao Weikai bei zhengshi pibu” [Taiyuan Zion (Xuncheng) Reformed Church Christian Zhao Weikai formally approved for arrest], July 21, 2021; Yu Bing, ChinaAid Association, “Taiyuan Xuncheng Jiaohui tonggong Zhao Weikai bei zhengshi daibu” [Taiyuan Zion (Xuncheng) Reformed Church coworker Zhao Weikai formally arrested], July 21, 2021.

⁹⁰ Yu Bing, ChinaAid Association, “Meiguo Jidujiao jiating jiaoyu jigou Abeka Zhongguo dai li bei jingfang daizou” [China representatives of U.S. Christian homeschooling education program, Abeka, are taken away by police], October 13, 2021.

⁹¹ Yu Bing, ChinaAid Association, “Meiguo Jidujiao jiating jiaoyu jigou Abeka Zhongguo dai li bei jingfang daizou” [China representatives of U.S. Christian homeschooling education program, Abeka, are taken away by police], October 13, 2021.

⁹² Wang Kexin, “Sentenced Up to Six Years in Jail for Selling Bible Players,” *Bitter Winter*, August 3, 2021; ChinaAid Association, “Bao’an District Court Authorities Harshly Sentence Four Christians, Fu Xuanjuan, Deng Tianyong, Han Li, and Feng Qunhao for Selling Bible Players,” July 31, 2021; Rights Defense Network, “Yin hefa xiaoshou Shengjing bofangqi er zao zhuabu de Fu Xuanjuan, Deng Tianyong, Han Li, Feng Qunhao deng si Jidutu mianlin 5 nian yu 1 nian 6 ge yue budeng de xingqi” [Four Christians, including Fu Xuanjuan, Deng Tianyong, Han Li, and Feng Qunhao, who were arrested for legally selling Bible players, face sentences ranging from five years to one year and six months], December 12, 2020. For more information, see the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database record 2021-00015 on Fu Xuanjuan, 2021-00030 on Deng Tianyong, 2021-00031 on Han Li, and 2021-00032 on Feng Qunhao.

⁹³ ChinaAid Association, “Jidujiao shudian ‘Xiaomai Shufang’ Chen Yu an ershen: weichi yuanpan” [Second instance trial in case of Chen Yu’s Christian bookstore “Xiaomai Bookstore”: original verdict upheld], January 7, 2022; ChinaAid Association, “ChinaAid’s Annual Persecution Report 2021: January–December 2021,” March 1, 2022, 42. For more information on Chen Yu, see the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database record 2020-00247. Chen Yu is also known as Zhang Xiaomai.

⁹⁴ *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Xing Fa* [PRC Criminal Law], passed July 1, 1979, revised March 14, 1997, amended December 26, 2020, effective March 1, 2021, art. 300.

⁹⁵ “Reported in 2021: 132 Falun Gong Practitioners Die in the Persecution of Their Faith,” *Minghui*, January 8, 2022; “Reported in 2021: 1,187 Falun Gong Practitioners Sentenced for Their Faith,” *Minghui*, January 5, 2022.

⁹⁶ “Jiamusi Liu Lijie an bei yishen fayuan feifa panjue yi tichu shangsu” [The Jiamusi Liu Lijie case was illegally judged by the Court of First Instance, appeal already filed], *Minghui*, November 20, 2021; “Lu zao pohai Jiamusi shi youxiu rencai Liu Lijie you mianlin tingshen” [Repeatedly suffering persecution, Jiamusi municipality outstanding talent Liu Lijie once again faces a court hearing], *Minghui*, September 22, 2021. For more information on Liu Lijie, see the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database record 2021-00535.

⁹⁷ “Lu zao pohai Jiamusi shi youxiu rencai Liu Lijie you mianlin tingshen” [Repeatedly suffering persecution, Jiamusi municipality outstanding talent Liu Lijie once again faces a court hearing], *Minghui*, September 22, 2021.

⁹⁸ “Heilongjiang Woman Imprisoned to Serve Wrongful Term Despite High Blood Pressure,” *Minghui*, January 22, 2022.

⁹⁹ “Beijing shiyi ming Falun Gong xueyuan bei feifa panxing er zhi ba nian” [Eleven Beijing Falun Gong practitioners illegally sentenced to between two and eight years], *Minghui*, January 24, 2022; Rights Defense Network, “Yin yiqing qijian fabu yixie guonei yiqing zhaopian, Falun Gong xueyuan Xu Na nushi jin huo xing ba nian” [Falun Gong practitioner Ms. Xu Na was sentenced to eight years for sharing some photographs of the domestic epidemic situation during the period of the epidemic], January 16, 2022. For more information on Xu Na and the ten other Falun Gong practitioners sentenced concurrently on January 12, 2022, see the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database record 2008-00675.

Freedom of Religion

¹⁰⁰“Beijing shiyi ming Falun Gong xueyuan bei feifa panxing er zhi ba nian” [Eleven Beijing Falun Gong practitioners illegally sentenced to between two and eight years], *Minghui*, January 24, 2022; Rights Defense Network, “Yin yiqing qijian fabu yixie guonei yiqing zhaopian, Falun Gong xueyuan Xu Na nushi jin huo xing 8 nian” [Falun Gong practitioner Ms. Xu Na was sentenced to eight years for sharing some photographs of the domestic epidemic situation during the period of the epidemic], January 16, 2022.

¹⁰¹Liang Xiaojun (@liangxiaojunlawyer), “Suimo, diao zhao ganyan” [An end-of-year reflection on my disbarment], WeChat post, December 31, 2021.

¹⁰²Matthew P. Robertson and Jacob Lavee, “Execution by Organ Procurement: Breaching the Dead Donor Rule in China,” *American Journal of Transplantation*, April 4, 2022, 1–3.

¹⁰³Matthew P. Robertson and Jacob Lavee, “Execution by Organ Procurement: Breaching the Dead Donor Rule in China,” *American Journal of Transplantation*, April 4, 2022, 1, 4, 6–7.

¹⁰⁴Matthew P. Robertson and Jacob Lavee, “Execution by Organ Procurement: Breaching the Dead Donor Rule in China,” *American Journal of Transplantation*, April 4, 2022, 1, 4, 6–7.

While the latest date of sources that comprise the dataset used by the researchers was in 2015, they state that “if prisoners—of whatever sort—are indeed still being used as an organ source, we think it is most rational to believe that the procurement of their organs continues to occasion violations of the DDR.” For prior anecdotal and textual claims, see World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong, “Zhongguo dalu yixue zhuan ye lun wen zhong youguan Zhonggong huoti zhai qu Falun Gong xueyuan qiguan de zhengju” [Evidence of the CCP harvesting of organs from Falun Gong practitioners in medical papers in mainland China], September 24, 2014.

¹⁰⁵*Forced Organ Harvesting in China: Examining the Evidence, Hearing of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission*, U.S. House of Representatives, 117th Cong. (2022), (testimony of Ethan Gutmann, Senior Research Fellow in China Studies, Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation).

¹⁰⁶Dui Hua Foundation, “The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups,” March 29, 2022, 1, 3.

¹⁰⁷Dui Hua Foundation, “The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups,” March 29, 2022, 4, 12–14; Wang Yichi, “600 Church of Almighty God Members Sentenced in 2021,” *Bitter Winter*, November 3, 2021; Jiang Tao, “Church of Almighty God: Another 300+ Arrested in China,” *Bitter Winter*, December 16, 2021.

¹⁰⁸Dui Hua Foundation, “The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups,” March 29, 2022, 25–26; Dui Hua uses “Society of Disciples” for “Association of Disciples.” Fang Yongrui, “Crackdown on Association of Disciples Extends to Inner Mongolia,” *Bitter Winter*, December 30, 2021.

¹⁰⁹*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Xing Fa* [PRC Criminal Law], passed July 1, 1979, revised March 14, 1997, amended December 26, 2020, effective March 1, 2021, art. 300.

¹¹⁰Supreme People’s Court, *Guanyu Wei Quanmian Tuijin Xiangcun Zhenxing Jiakuai Nongye Nongcun Xiandaihua Tigong Sifa Fuwu he Baozhang de Yijian* [Opinion on Providing Judicial Services and Safeguards for Comprehensively Advancing Rural Revitalization and Accelerating the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Areas], July 14, 2021, para. 9.

¹¹¹Dui Hua Foundation, “The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups,” March 29, 2022, 63.

¹¹²The Church of Almighty God, *2021 Annual Report on the Chinese Communist Government’s Persecution of the Church of Almighty God*, March 3, 2022.

¹¹³Jing Tao, “Church of Almighty God: Another 300+ Arrested in China,” *Bitter Winter*, December 16, 2021.

¹¹⁴Fang Yongrui, “Crackdown on Association of Disciples Extends to Inner Mongolia,” *Bitter Winter*, December 30, 2021.