A black and white photograph of a hand with a ring on the ring finger, pressed against dark, vertical metal bars. The background is dark and textured, suggesting a prison or a place of confinement. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the hand and the bars.

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN

# SHACKLED TO THE PODIUM

Remembering the Victims of China's  
Christian Persecution

FEBRUARY 2022

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*REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS OF CHINA'S CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION*



International Christian Concern  
P. O. Box 8056  
Silver Spring, MD 20907  
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Version 1.0 | 04.20.2022

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# SHACKLED TO THE PODIUM

## Remembering the Victims of Chinese Persecution

As the world gathered for the opening ceremonies of the Winter Olympics, audiences prepared to embrace the globally forged spirit of competition - a tradition we cherish every four years. However, not since 1980 had the Olympics been such a contentious topic.

This became the second Olympic games overshadowed by the prolonged anxiety around the COVID-19 pandemic, and the first occurring amongst a backdrop of genocide and persecution in plain sight. While we may have hoped this would be an occurrence left in the past, the world is only now coming to terms with the blind-eye it has held toward the ongoing crisis of persecution underway in China.

Given the severity of the human rights abuses currently taking place in China, it was to our collective shock that China kept its mantle as the 2022 Winter Olympics host. Whether it is the harassment of Christians, the hijack of Hong Kong's basic rights, or the enslavement and outright attempt at genocide against the Uyghur populations, International Christian Concern (ICC) concluded that Beijing's continued role as Olympic hosts was a shameful reality. To outdo this existing absurdity, China became the first host country, in recent memory, to formally warn its incoming athletes of the consequences that speaking out against Chinese laws would have, laws which enable the harassment and persecution of religious minorities.

While our prayers are with the athletes who stood tall for their respective countries through the mastery of their sport, we must stop and reflect on those within the country who are suffering for their stand for their faith. For decades, the world has seen the brutality of China's actions against religious minorities, but under its current leadership, China has expanded this persecution.

For many of us, the Beijing Olympics demonstrated a direct neglect and disregard for the victims of the host government and sends a message to China of where our true values lie. It shows that we value the spectacle of the games and the potential profits, over the well-being of those suffering persecution. However, with little means to challenge the International Olympic Committee and the People's Republic of China (PRC), ICC was determined to inform our audience of the situation in China.

Over the course of the Beijing Olympics, from February 3rd – 20th 2022, ICC highlighted several Christian victims of the PRC's attempt to suppress religious minorities in the country, challenging the regime's attempt to hide behind the Olympic spectacle. Within this text, you will find stories of Christians living under Chinese rule with a relentless pursuit of their faith. These champions may not have run the eight-hundred meter, but they continue to run the race set out for them. Wearing irons over gold, they continue to display their faith like trophies of their own, knowing it comes at a cost. These individuals demonstrate the perseverance and commitment to be recognized as champions of our faith – they are our persecuted family.

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Hebrews 12:1-3*



## PASTOR WANG YI

### Early Rain Covenant Church

Pastor Wang Yi was the pastor and founder of the Early Rain Covenant Church (ERCC), a house church based in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan, China. Pastor Wang Yi has been in police custody since his arrest on Dec 14, 2018.

Pastor Wang has long been a staunch advocate for Christians and religious freedom in China. Prior to his arrest, Pastor Wang had become a celebrated name among Chinese Christian leaders, having even met with U.S. President George Bush in 2006. Among Pastor Wang's works, he published an essay criticizing the Chinese government's control over religion.

In a Martin Luther-like fashion, Pastor Wang directed his message to the Chinese Communist government, the regulator of religious practice in China. In Pastor Wang's 95 Thesis, he challenged the government's Sinicization of the gospel, upheld the supremacy of God and God's delegated authority given to the Chinese state, and encouraged Chinese Christians to peacefully disobey the rules placed on Chinese Christians which would limit their duty to fulfill the Great Commission.

*"As long as the government maintains the mentality of 'Unity of Church and State,' continues to consider religious affairs as internal government matters, violently interferes with the Church's power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and refuses to allow any local church to independently register with any*

*civil affairs departments, the Church must hold firm the above declarations of the House Church, that we will obey any legal, administrative management, and respect the government's authority of the sword; but on the other hand, with the use of non-violence, maintain our opposition in our conscience, walk in the way of the cross, hold firm to the Church's sovereignty and freedom of faith, and protect the believer's freedom of conscience."* An excerpt from Wang Yi's 95 Thesis: The Reaffirmation of Our Stance on the House Church.

Pastor Wang's advocacy for the rights of Chinese Christians and house churches quickly subjected him to the scrutiny of the Chinese State. In December 2018, he and nearly 100 members of the church were detained by Chinese authorities. Having suspected a future arrest, Pastor Wang prepared a letter two months prior, which was to be released shortly after his arrest. In his Declaration of Faithful Disobedience, Pastor Wang stood by his conviction to uphold for God's truths, to disobey unjust Chinese laws, and to let his suffering lead others toward the future heavenly kingdom that would come.

*"If God decides to use the persecution of this Communist regime against the church to help more Chinese people to despair of their futures, to lead them through a wilderness of spiritual disillusionment and through this to make them know Jesus, if through this he continues*



*disciplining and building up his church, then I am joyfully willing to submit to God's plans, for his plans are always benevolent and good."* An excerpt from Wang Yi's My Declaration of Faithful Disobedience

In December 2019, Pastor Wang was found guilty on charges of "incitement to subvert state power" and "operating an illegal business," both are familiar charges for those running unregistered house churches and practicing outside of the sanctioned rules for religious groups in China. The Chengdu People's Court sentenced Pastor Wang to nine years in jail. Several of his family members were placed under house arrest and detained members of church were later charged with lesser offenses.

To this day, Pastor Wang continues to endure his imprisonment, denying the charges levelled against him. He continues to run the race set out for him in a passionate pursuit of the Great Commission in China.

While the lights may shine bright over Beijing's Olympic games, pray for the victims like Pastor Wang, who China hides in the dark.

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*  
*Matthew 5:10*





## **MINISTER AN YANKUI** **and the Six Christians of Xuncheng Reformed Church**

Minister An Yankui of the Xuncheng Reformed Church was one of seven Christians targeted for traveling to a major Christian conference being held in Malaysia. However, unknown at the time of their return, Minister An Yankui and his six fellow travelers would be detained and charged with “illegal border crossing,” nearly two years later.

Beginning in January 2020, Minister An Yankui, Zhang Ligong, Wang Runyun, Wang Shiqiang, Zhang Yaowen, Song Shoushan, and Zhang Chenghao all flew to Malaysia to attend the “KL2020 Gospel and Culture” Christian conference hosted by the prominent Chinese Indonesian pastor, Stephen Tong, and featured renown speakers including Pastors Tim Keller and D.A. Carson. Although they departed and returned to China through customs with their passports in tow, the Chinese government determined that their trip was illegal – nearly two years later they were arrested or detained.

On November 21, 2021, Minister An and fellow congregant Zhang Chenghao were both detained following Sunday church by Fenyang authorities. The notice of their detention did not arrive for some time later, when on December 28, 2021 their arrest for their travel the previous year was finalized.

Five others who had attended the conference were arrested earlier that year. On January 7, 2022, the Fenyang city court in Shanxi province sentenced those

five individuals with various jail terms, each exceeding six months. Their lawyers and family members attended the trial and have since reported that the five are doing well and remain joyful. They even shared the gospel with the judge during the trial and gave everyone in attendance an opportunity to know God. However, unlike the five, no verdicts for An Yankui and Zhang Cenghao have been announced and they remain only detained.

On November 30, Preacher An’s wife Yao Congya and his lawyer Fang Xiangui went to the police office in Fenyang to submit a request to meet him, only to be turned down by the authorities.

Fang later returned twice more to the Xiaoyi City Detention Center to demand to meet with his client, but he was denied. Fang was informed that the investigation was still ongoing, as the case involves “national security and state secrets.”

Minister An’s close connections to the highly persecuted Early Rain Covenant Church and its pastor Wang Yi, raised red flags in the eyes of the Chinese police. He also signed onto the joint statement “A Declaration for the Sake of the Christian Faith” to the Chinese government in 2018. In light of these circumstances, An has been a target for the Shanxi Department of Ethnic and Religious Affairs, the National Security Department, and the Public Security Department. His



church has also been heavily targeted over the last few years. They have faced constant harassment and this most recent detention of An and several members in November mark the difficulties faced by this house church.

Beijing has been wary of foreign influence since President Xi Jinping came into power. Religions that are regarded as foreign, such as Islam, Tibetan Buddhism, and Christianity, are treated with more scrutiny and tightened control. Under the latest legal religious framework, exchange and communication between Chinese churches and overseas Christian communities need to be pre-approved by the government.

Minister An and his church members were detained and criminalized to deter other Christians from conducting “illegal religious activities” in the eyes of Beijing. Yet despite the persecution, Minister An chooses to stand firm in his faith and trusts God completely.

*“We will not stop our gathering in the Lord but are prepared to bear all possible persecutions and costs for our Lord Jesus Christ — to go to jail or be sentenced or killed. We are willing to entrust ourselves to God,”* said An Yankui, following raid and detention.





## **ELDER ZHANG CHUNLEI**

### **Ren'ai (Love) Reformed Church**

Elder Zhang Chunlei of the Guiyang Ren'ai Reformed Church was supposed to be released after an 11-day administrative detention in March 2021. However, he never left his detention center and instead was charged with “fraud.”

On March 16, 2021, several members of Guiyang Ren'ai Reformed Church were having a Bible study in a rented room at the Wenzhou Hotel, when the police interrupted their activity and accused them of organizing an illegal gathering. The police checked their IDs and cell phones before taking some of them to the Yan An Zhong Road police station.

At 5 p.m., elder Zhang Chunlei travelled from the church to the police station to negotiate his members' release but was detained himself instead. The next day, the police went to Zhang's house and confiscated his computer, cell phone, and some valuables. His wife Yang Ai-Qing was notified of his administrative detention which would last 14 days (later changed to 11 days).

While the other three Christians from his church—Chen Jianguo, Li Jinzhi, and Li Lin—were released after three days of administrative detention, when Zhang's wife Yang went to pick him up on March 28, the police told her that he had already been sent elsewhere for further investigation.

The next day, the police notified Yang that her husband was now being criminally detained and charged with “fraud.” His arrest was not made official until May 7.

On July 3, his wife stated that the detention center officials had repeatedly refused to allow his attorney to visit him. She said that the attorney attempted to see him four times and was denied even though his requests complied with the laws. The last time his attorney was able to meet with Zhang was on June 4. Officials claimed that Elder Zhang was “being interrogated” and that they could not arrange a meeting.

Last October, Elder Zhang's lawyer went to Guiyang to retrieve legal documents pertaining to Zhang's case from Yunyen district's Procuratorate. According to the recommended indictment, the Public Security Bureau in Guiyang accuses Zhang of not having the status of state-sanctioned religious clergy, yet he held religious gatherings and swindled believers of 100,000 RMB (\$15,642 USD), committing fraud. This style of allegation is common among church leaders who will not submit the government sanctioned religious organizations.

On October 29, Zhang's case was sent back to Yunyen district's Public Security Bureau for further investigation. Zhang's lawyer went to visit Zhang at the detention center but was denied access because Zhang's case “allegedly endangers national security.”

On the same day, Zhang's lawyer met with the state security officer in charge of Zhang's case. The officer informed Zhang's lawyer that during the investigation, the authorities found that Zhang's action also allegedly involved "subversion of state power," hence they have established another case against Zhang.

On January 5, 2022, elder Zhang finally got to see his lawyer again at Guiyang City Second Detention Center, more than six months after their last meeting. Zhang is doing great and has peace and joy in his heart. He wishes to pass his greetings to churches who have been praying for him. He was in good spirit, as he sang song of praise.

Despite his unjust treatment by the Chinese government, Elder Zhang once said, *"I do not have a grudge in my heart against the police. I love them as well as State security officers and prosecutors who handle my case. I pray for them. I love and pray for my country—China."*

Elder Zhang's case is noted by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. He was marked as being detained for his religious identity and activity. The house church leader is vocal against religious persecution. It is unknown how much longer he will remain incarcerated.

*"He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters,"* Elder Zhang Chunlei's final Tweet before his arrest.







## PASTOR JOHN CAO

As many Olympians from around the world crossed the Chinese border with ease, for one Christian, an innocent border crossing cost him his freedom.

Chinese pastor John Sanqiang Cao, an icon amongst the Chinese house church movement and missionary, is currently serving a seven-year sentence following an unjust conviction for his ministry in China and Myanmar.

Pastor Cao came to the U.S. as a young adult, where he attended seminary, started a family, and pastored a community of Chinese Americans. Though he had built a new life in the U.S., Pastor Cao was called to serve those in need back in China.

Pastor Cao's passion for the kingdom led him to set up schools that could share the gospel in southern China; in 2013 he grew his mission to Myanmar. Pastor Cao began conducting aid work in Myanmar's Wa State, an eastern province with heavy influence from their eastern neighbor, China. Though an atheistic and single-party socialist government runs Wa State, it has a growing Christian community.

Pastor Cao set up several schools for the needy in Wa State, which quickly began to flourish. Though in March 2017, Pastor Cao was stopped by Yunnan authorities for what the authorities would call an illegal border crossing, even though this was a regular occurrence

for Pastor Cao and his colleague Jing Ruxia. Like Pastor Cao, many others regularly traveled this route, taking a ferry over a narrow river, often without a visa or documentation. The only difference between Pastor Cao's crossing was that he was a Christian undergoing Christian missionary work.

Pastor Cao was later charged with the crime of "organization of illegal border crossings," a charge typically leveled against smugglers and traffickers. He was sentenced to seven years in prison. The severity of his punishment for such an innocent offense speaks volumes to the Chinese government's harassment of Christians. Since his arrest, we have seen similar charges against other Chinese Christians for similar frivolous offences – the only similarity, they are all against Christians.

*"Human traffickers cross borders and break laws.  
Day and night, they smuggle Wa people to take  
money from their misery.*

*As they abuse power, arbitrariness emerges.*

*Yet authorities involve righteous people with no  
sense of shame"*

*"The Smuggling,"*

Living Lyrics, Poems from Prison by Pastor John Cao

Despite the unfairness of Cao's charges, he continues to keep his spirit and rely on his faith in God while

imprisoned. Texas-based aid organization, ChinaAid, has received reports from Pastor Cao's lawyer, that though he suffers some ailments in prison, he still is in good spirits, however the ongoing pandemic has been used to deny Pastor Cao a visit from his 84-year-old mother, and the desire to have a Bible.

He reflects on the word through poetry and through verses written on his heart. Neither the overcrowded cells, the denial of visitors, nor the refusal to access the Bible, has broken his call to serve the kingdom. Like Apostle Paul, Pastor Cao's fortitude in the face of adversity may offer the word of God access to unknowing places, and his testimony a light for all those who hear it.

*"...no matter what empty promises Satan makes to the world, in the end, persecuted, Godly people achieve the victory whether in or outside prison."*

Except from "In Prison," Living Lyrics, Poems from Prison by Pastor John Cao.

So as thousands of athletes have crossed and continue to cross Chinese borders for the winter games, let us pray for those like Pastor Cao, who are persecuted for the luggage they bring; for Pastor Cao, it is a call to grow the Kingdom of God around China which cannot be checked.

*"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!" 2 Timothy 2:8-9*







## GUANGDONG'S AUDIO BIBLE SELLERS

On July 2, 2020, four Christians in China's Guangdong province —Fu Xuanjuan, Deng Tianyong, Han Li, and Feng Qunhao were arrested on charges of “illegal business operations” for selling audio Bible players.

Fu is the general manager and executive director of Life Tree Culture Communication Co., Ltd., and her husband Deng is the company's supervisor. Their company was founded in April 2011 in Shenzhen, a sub-provincial city in southern Guangdong. It is a legally established company that produces audio bible players, committed to spreading biblical culture and has cooperated with many influential churches, bookstores, institutions, and sales agents at home and abroad.

The four were detained in the Jiuwei Detention Center in Shenzhen, and the authorities threatened both their families and lawyers to not reveal any information about the case.

On Oct. 23, 2020, Shenzhen Bao'an People's Procuratorate announced the following sentences for the four Christians: As the general manager and executive director of Life Tree Culture Communication Co., the suggested sentence for Fu is five years; Deng as the company's supervisor is three years with fine; Feng as the technician also three years with fine, while Han as the accountant 15 months with fine. However, the Life Tree Company case carried on through several trials and appeals.

For Han, this process became complicated as her original attorney, Yang Hui, had to withdraw from the case, having been targeted by the authorities for defending Christians and Hong Kongers; this included both the imprisoned pastor, John Cao, and 12 Hong Kong activists. A new attorney, Huang Derqi took over and pled not guilty for Han, claiming that she was merely an accomplice and did not endanger the society. Her not-guilty plea gained her consideration for a reduced sentence, but the People's Court in Bao'an District confirmed the initial 15 months and 10,000 yuan (\$1551 USD). Han obtained the shortest sentence, however, she still considered an appeal, however, after learning that her detention through the process would likely last the length of her sentence, she settled for her initial sentence.

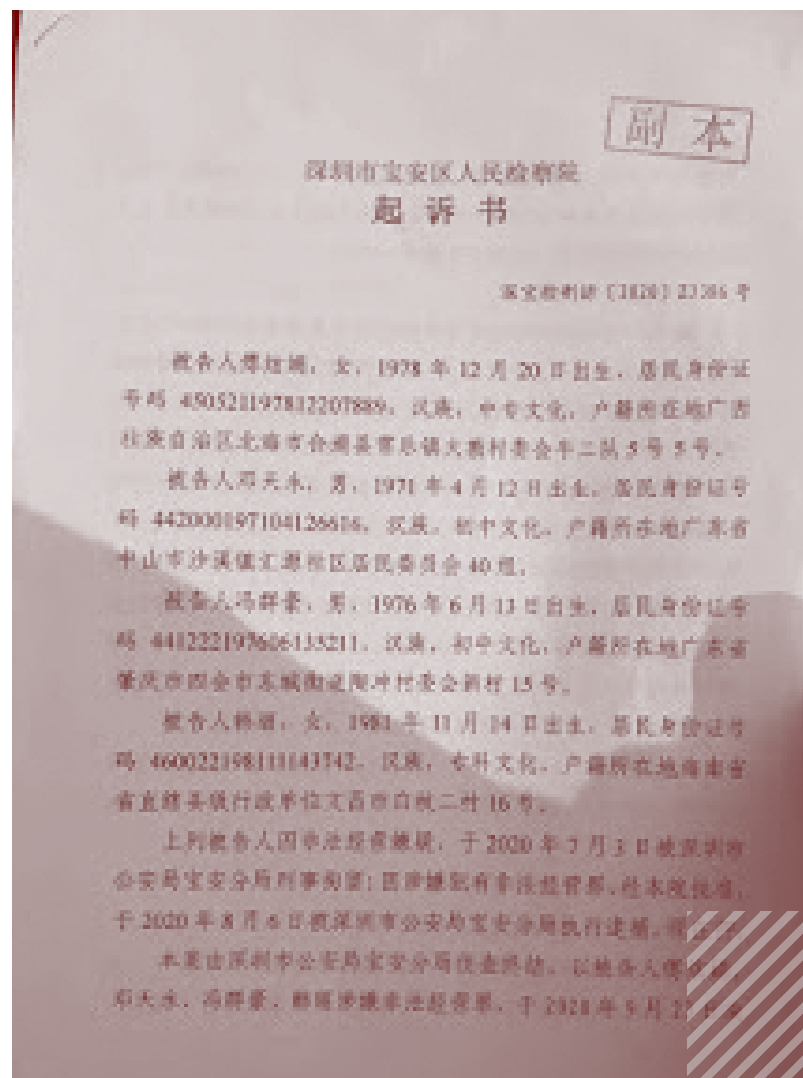
On Dec. 16, 2021, Shenzhen Intermediate People's Court in Guangdong province held an appeal court for the remaining three employees of Life Tree company: Fu, her husband Deng, and colleague Feng. The appeal for their “illegal business operation” charge to be dropped was rejected, and the court sustained the original ruling: Fu was sentenced to five years, while Deng and Feng were sentenced to three years with a fine.

The verdict reads, *“After investigation, based on the testimonies of the appellant and the defendants of First*

*Instance, along with evidence such as the witnesses' testimonies and audit reports, it is confirmed that from Jan 2018 to June 2020, Shenzhen city Life Tree Technology Development company illegally sold audio players with Bible or other religious content and obtained CNY 3,661,847.84 of profits."*

In China's latest crackdown against Christianity, it has become increasingly difficult to purchase a Bible online or through private sellers. One must go to the state vetted Three Self churches to purchase Bibles. Those who sell Bibles without authorization are hit with fines or incarceration, as in the cases of Life Tree and Christian entrepreneur Lai Jinqiang, who was also put on trial in Guangdong Province in December 2020 for producing audio Bible players.

*"For my life, I want to do something meaningful— I want to help people so they can draw near and believe in Jesus," said Deng Tianyong, after coming to Christ.*



*Above: Indictment of the four Christians*



## GAO ZHISHENG

### Christian Lawyer and Activist

Gao Zhisheng is a Christian human rights attorney in China, who had dedicated his career toward those being persecuted by the Chinese government, during a time not unlike today. While not always a Christian, Gao was a former member of the People's Liberation Army and later the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). However, Gao tossed that identity aside and took up the fight for victims of persecution in China, as China looked to rebrand its cruel identity. This made him a clear target for the CCP throughout his career, leading to many cycles of being abducted, tortured, and released. Today, Gao's whereabouts are unknown to anyone but his most recent captors, who made Gao disappear in 2017.

Gao became a lawyer in 1995 and his legal career quickly gained steam, winning significant cases against Chinese government agencies, and successfully representing a case before the Chinese Supreme Court. As Gao's legal career developed, it took a new turn as he began representing the cases of Christians, coal miners, and Falun Gong practitioners, all of whom regularly found their way into the crosshairs of the CCP.

Gao's career led him to be a champion for those who could not defend themselves from China's violent reign of persecution. He soon earned the title "the Conscience of China."

Gao wrote open letters to the Chinese government

advocating for reform, equal protection under the law, and fair treatment of those currently facing persecution by the government. He made the plight of Falun Gong known to the world through a series of open letters to the Chinese government. Gao called on the government to end their harassment, arrest, and torture, which still occurs today. Following his discoveries, Gao openly separated himself from the *"cruel, untrustworthy, inhumane, and evil party [the CCP]."*

As a result of his fight for religious minorities and victims of persecution, Gao became a target of the CCP's suppression. In 2006, Gao was charged on crimes of "inciting subversion of state power." Shortly after, Gao called on the U.S. government to take a stand against the 2008 Olympics coming to Beijing, and he would later disappear, facing torture by the police. Gao's family was soon forced to flee to the U.S. to escape the constant CCP surveillance and the looming danger that awaited them.

*"Today, as we approach the Beijing Olympic Games, I ask you to pay attention to the ongoing human rights disaster in China and wish you to forward my appeal to the whole world. I ask you to seriously consider the outlook of morality, justice, and humanity for today's mankind, as well as to what extent such values are undermined in China."* Gao Zhisheng, "Open Letter to

the United States Congress,” Sep. 12, 2007.

A cycle of abduction, imprisonment, and torture by Chinese authorities followed Gao, as the CCP tried to end Gao’s fight for the rights of the persecuted. Gao suffered severe beatings, sleep deprivation, and electric shock. He has spent many years incarcerated and endured solitary confinement. In a later memoir, Gao reflected on his Christian faith and the support from those close to him, for his ability to endure the hardship that he faced through his many arrests.

*“...God has protected me and by which God has sustained me in my time of trouble and nurtured the faith that has allowed me to carry on.”* From *Unwavering Convictions* by Gao Zhisheng, pg. 1

In 2014, he was released on house arrest from his most recent stint imprisoned, where he remained under constant watch for years. During this time, Gao reflected on his abuse at the hands of the Chinese state, though he never let go of his hope for a fairer and merciful China that he believed would come once this regime falls.

*“I would like to add here that when this evil regime falls, there will be a squaring of accounts. Investigating and punishing evil is one of humanity’s most common methods for protecting justice, but we likewise know that without forgiveness there is no hope for*



*tomorrow.”* From *Unwavering Convictions* by Gao Zhisheng, pg. 161.

His memoir drew a lot of attention from the Chinese authorities, and with a renewed eye on Gao, he tried to escape his house arrest. Even with the help of his friends, Gao was recaptured weeks later. Gao’s wife and children, who fled to the U.S. years ago, have now gone almost four-and-half years without any sign of Gao’s whereabouts.

As Beijing cheers for the athletes fighting for glory, let us pray for those fighting for Beijing’s victims, like Gao Zhisheng, who has been forcibly disappeared for his courage to challenge the regime.

*“How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” Psalm 82:2-4*



## ZHANG ZHAN

### Christian Activist

In search of truth, a Christian lawyer-turned-activist went to the epicenter of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, Wuhan. Little did she know that this would cost her freedom and perhaps even her life.

Zhang Zhan, 38, graduated from Southwestern University of Finance and Economics with a master's degree in finance. She was once a lawyer, until her license was stripped by the authorities for her participation in several rights-defending activities. In February 2020, as a citizen journalist, she livestreamed the unfiltered situation in Wuhan and interviewed many locals. Three months later, she went missing.

On Dec. 28, 2020, she was convicted of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” by a court in Shanghai, where she was sentenced to four years. She became the first person in China incarcerated for reporting on the pandemic.

In the months leading to her trial, she was forcibly fed by officials after she staged a hunger strike to protest her unfair detention. She was shackled and her hands were bound 24/7 for more than three months. According to her lawyers, by the time she was brought before Pudong New District Court in December 2020, her health condition had already worsened, and she was too weak to stand on her own.

She told her lawyers that during her detention, every

day is torment, and that she feels exhausted both mentally and physically. She would only be comforted from praying and reciting verses from the Bible. Quoting the book of First Corinthians, she said, *“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.”*

While her lawyers attempt to convince her to stop her hunger strikes, fearing that her life will perish in jail, she insists on resisting evil and persecution until she can see the grand light one day. She explained her choice by stating that she is not patriotic, she just wants to be a good Christian, even if she may fail miserably. She stated, *“I cannot take lies and deception, not to mention cohabitating with darkness. After I have been arrested, I still pray often, praying for the redemption of those evil ones and sinners.”*

In October 2021, her brother Zhang Ju shared the dire situation of his sister's health in a tweet. *“Zhan is 177cm tall, now she weighs less than 40kg (90 lbs.). She may not survive the coming cold winter. I hope the world remembers how she used to be.”* The doctor had warned him in August that his sister could die if she continues her hunger strike.

On Nov. 8, 2021, Department of State spokesman Ned Price said that the United States were “deeply concerned about the deteriorating health” of Zhang, and that it had *“serious concerns about the arbitrary*



*nature of her detention and her mistreatment during it,” and called for her “immediate and unconditional release.”*

On December 14, 2021, Zhang’s lawyer Li Dawei talked to Zhang’s mother on the phone. Her mother said that she was allowed to talk to Zhang using video chat at the end of November. Zhang was still weak and needed to be supported whenever she walked. Her situation was concerning. While the prison sent Zhang to the hospital at the end of October, the results were never presented to her family.

*“I once thought there must be some people who can escape from the framework of this system— their lives and souls are spared from being crushed by their destiny and the years gone by. There must be someone who is lucky, and oh how I wish to become that lucky one. But I just realized, this socialism system entangles everyone’s fate. None of us can run away from it. We are merely maintaining the grandeur on the surface.”* Zhang Zhan, while covering the pandemic in Wuhan. Source: Twitter.





## PASTOR ZHANG SHAOJIE

### Nanle County Community Church

Pastor Zhang Shaojie was the pastor of the Nanle County Christian Church, a Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) affiliate in Henan, meaning it was sanctioned by the Chinese government. Pastor Zhang acquired a new piece of land that he intended to use for a new church for his congregation, but he quickly fell out of good graces with the Chinese government. Pastor Zhang is currently serving a 12-year sentence on trumped up charges for his involvement in this dispute.

Upon his acquisition of the land, Pastor Zhang quickly found himself in a land dispute with the local government. This dispute quickly drew the attention of the central government, putting Pastor Zhang on unequal footing. Chinese authorities planned to meet with him at his Church to resolve the dispute in November 2013. However, on their arrival, they took Pastor Zhang and twenty other Christians into custody.

Pastor Zhang was held for seven months, and in July 2014, he was sentenced to 12-years in prison for “fraud” and “gathering a crowd to disturb public order”—neither charge dealing with the land dispute. Pastor Zhang tried to appeal this conviction multiple times, and only received harsh treatment and torture by his captors as a result.

Others have speculated that the government’s targeting of Pastor Zhang went further than the land dispute, or even the desire to stop his congregation’s

growth, but to also put an end to Pastor Zhang’s often defense of those who were having their rights violated.

As we know now, the TSPM has become more in line with the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) agenda, and Pastor Zhang would have been a roadblock in Henan. Today, the CCP has continued to expand that reach over Christian pastors through strict oversight and surveillance of the TSPM across China.

Given the mystery around these charges, ICC investigated Pastor Zhang’s sentence in 2014.

During conversations with locals of Nanle County, ICC was told, *“he who has a mind to beat his dog will easily find a stick - the government wants to get rid of Pastor Zhang and they can easily find excuses.”* Regardless of the specific charges, the arrest and sentencing of Pastor Zhang show little outside of a deliberate attempt to prevent his growing presence and congregation in Henan.

Pastor Zhang has continued to serve out his sentence, keeping his faith and spirits high, even though he has been treated terribly by the Chinese authorities. He has been forcibly starved, deprived of sleep, and his cell was fit with CCTV cameras to ensure he never had his hands on a bible or any non-approved literature. His case gained profile as his daughter, who escaped China after his arrest, joined a delegation that met

with the Obama administration and informed them of her father's condition.

In January 2021, after seven years in a Xinxiang prison, Pastor Zhang's family learned that he was transferred to a Xinmi Prison in Zhengzhou. They were also informed that Zhang will receive a "collective education," while at this new prison. Xinmi Prison is the facility which is reported to hold many Falun Gong practitioners and has a bad reputation as a result. Reports of torture and hard labor against the Falun Gong followers have been reported from Xinmi, having left many of those incarcerated with permanent mental disorders and even death. In October 2021 optimism returned when China Aid's Bob Fu, shared news that Pastor Zhang remains *"peaceful regarding his imprisonment for the Lord."*

As Beijing touts its government regulated freedom of religion, pray for those slandered for practicing out their faith according to conscience, like Pastor Zhang, who chose his congregation over the priorities of the government.

*"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:11-12*





## CHEN YU

### Wheat Christian Bookstore

Given the limited resources available in China, a Christian in China's Zhejiang province purchased thousands of Christian books from other countries and put them for sale through his online bookstore. His business benefited tens of thousands of Chinese Christians eager to grow in their faith. Unfortunately, Chinese authorities found him to be a threat to the society.

On Sept. 1, 2019, Chen Yu, who operated his Wheat Bookstore in Zhejiang province's Taizhou city, was detained for selling unapproved religious publications imported from Taiwan, the U.S., and other countries. Consequently, the police launched a nationwide investigation to track down the bookstore's customers through sale records and confiscate their purchased books.

Many of Chen's customers were harassed and questioned by local authorities. According to China Aid, the Chinese government was utilizing this investigation opportunity to search for "illegal [religious] activities locally."

Wheat Bookstore had to notify its customers to warn them of potential visits from the police and give suggestions on how they should respond after consulting with a lawyer. Christians who bought from this bookstore were advised to delete their order records and hide the books from the authorities if they

were asked to show their purchase.

A house church pastor from Shenzhen city in the southern province of Guangdong told Bitter Winter, *"People who buy Christian books are practicing believers, so the government looks into them to determine how dangerous they are to the stability of their regime."* He too, was summoned for purchasing from Wheat Bookstore.

Another Christian customer who also was summoned by the police alleged that police were trying to collect evidence to accuse Wheat Bookstore and to deter Christian bookstores in China from selling books with the aim of creating a "spiritual famine" in China.

On Sept. 27, 2020, Chen was charged with "illegal business operations." He was sentenced to seven years in prison and fined 200,000 RMB (\$29,450 USD).

According to a document from the People's Court of Linhai City, in addition to the seven-year sentence and imposed fine, Chen's phone was confiscated. Moreso, the remaining 12,864 Christian books from his bookstore were to be destroyed by the Linhai City Public Security Bureau.

Chen asked for a Bible after he was detained. His mother Zheng Jinmei sent him a Bible, but the prison staff did not forward it to him. In response, Zheng wrote down Psalms and Romans for his son.

*“Our loving God knows Chen Yu’s needs and desire. He moved the prison staff, and he passed the Bible I had sent to Chen Yu in the end,” she said.*

On Jan. 17, 2021, Chen penned a letter for his parents to greet them. He revealed that his new prison mate was also Christian and was glad that they can fellowship together. Chen also encouraged his parents by saying, *“We have to wait patiently. God is righteous, and He also hears our prayers. Take good care of yourself and grow in your spiritual life. I believe that we will reunite soon.”*

Chen’s mother, Zheng, was hit with cancer and went through several surgeries. Tragically, she is concerned that she might not make it before her son’s release.

On Jan. 7, 2022, Taizhou City Intermediate People’s Court in Zhejiang province rejected the appeal of Chen Yu and maintained the original sentence. Oddly, the verdict was first released on the WeChat public account of “Combating Pornography and Illegal Publications in Zhejiang,” instead of through Chen’s lawyer.

Zheng Jinmei contacted Chen’s lawyers after reading the post, only to learn that the lawyers did not receive the verdict. She was shocked that the court did not notify the lawyers about the verdict of the appeal court. The lawyers responded that they would continue to appeal and asked Zheng not to worry about the legal



fees.

Chen’s parents remain frustrated by the verdict, but Zheng continues to pray. In a later prayer group, Zheng prayed, *“Dear God, my tears shed for You, we offer our knees for these brothers and sisters in Christ who are imprisoned. We know that the souls behind bars also need your gospel and grace. Oh Lord, through these pastors, elders, your sons, and daughters, including Chen Yu, they will be a lamp for you in these prisons and bring light to the places filled with darkness.”*

Let us all follow Zheng’s prayer and uplift Chen in prayer as our persecuted brother.





## ELDER HU SHIGEN

In 2015, the Chinese government underwent an aggressive campaign to suppress human rights lawyers, activists, and political dissidents. This crackdown led to over three hundred lawyers and activists being swept up by Chinese authorities, who would face detention, abuse, and interrogation.

Among them was Elder Hu Shigen, a leader of several house churches in Beijing. Elder Hu, a former democracy activist, was arrested on suspicion of “the subversion of state-power” and was later sentenced to seven-and-a-half years of imprisonment following a show-trial in 2016.

Prior to Elder Hu’s current sentence, he previously spent 16 years in prison for his work promoting democracy in China in the wake of the Tiananmen Square massacre. Elder Hu was founding member of the China Free Democratic Party and worked to publicize the government’s violent Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989. While initially sentenced to 20 years in prison, he was released early on account of his poor health, following harsh treatment and torture by the Chinese authorities.

Following his release, Elder Hu assumed roles in both the Sheng Ai Fellowship Church and the Yahebo Covenant Church, both unregistered house churches in Beijing. He continued to allow his faith to inform his view on government and continued to speak out

for the rights of Chinese citizens and a future peaceful transition to democracy. Regardless of this being the common consensus among most folk in China, his words were quickly vilified by Chinese state-media, for fear it could fracture the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) itself for its reasonableness.

When the Chinese crackdown detained Elder Hu, nobody in his family was informed of his arrest, as Chinese authorities kept it a secret until January 2016. While in his secret detention, it is alleged that Elder Hu, like several other activists swept up in the campaign, was forced to dismiss his lawyer. He and three others were then paraded around on televised trials, where each was forced to make a statement pleading guilty – no one tried to appeal.

Many were concerned over the coercion used to produce such unanimous pleas, and whether the government planned to uphold its word for medical treatment and medical parole in exchange. However, the government media quickly used them to give credibility to their authoritarian crackdown.

Elder Hu’s family continues to advocate for his release on medical grounds as he continues to suffer from coronary disease, however the government continued to deny such request, leaving Elder Hu’s condition in question today.

As Beijing continues to hamper the rights of its people, their voices, their freedom of religion, pray for those like Elder Hu, who are persecuted for allowing their faith to inspire their fight for justice and for the oppressed in China.

*“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”*  
*Proverbs 31:8-9*





## LEADERS OF THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND CHURCH

The sight of a Chinese megachurch crumbling down captured media attention in 2018, as it created visual of persecution that so many tried not to see. Using heavy machinery and dynamite, local authorities demolished the Golden Lampstand Church, where more than 50,000 Christians once worshipped.

Since 2009, the Golden Lampstand Church, located in Shanxi province's Linfen city, has faced persecution from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The church is part of a network of house churches with more than 50,000 members called Sola Fide. Sola Fide is Latin for by faith only and these churches refuse to affiliate with the CCP-sanctioned Protestant church denomination.

On Sept. 13, 2009, four hundred local police, government officials, and hired thugs descended upon the network's Fushan campus, demolished its new building and clashed with hundreds of members of the Linfen church network who rushed to defend their church. Dozens were severely beaten, and more than thirty were hospitalized with critical injuries.

Ten days later, the Golden Lampstand Church was surrounded by armed police. On Sept. 25, Preacher Yang Rongli and six other leaders were hijacked on their way to Taiyuan to petition their plea. The authorities offered 10 million RMB to purchase the property of Golden Lampstand Church, to which Yang rejected.

*"They offered me ten million and asked me to sign. They said the church is illegal and asked us to demolish the church. [...] The ten million plus fund was money collected from brothers and sisters in Christ (for the construction of the church), I did not contribute. I asked them to negotiate with those members. If they agree, you pass the fund to them; if not, do not even negotiate with me, I do not have the authority to do so," she said at the time.*

On Oct. 8, Pastor Wang Xiaoguang, the husband of Yang, had his house raided. On Oct. 11, nine coworkers of the church, including Yang, were criminally detained.

On Nov. 25, Linfen City court found Linfen's church leaders culpable of "illegally occupying agricultural land" and "assembling crowds to disrupt traffic." These leaders were sentenced to prison for the following terms: Yang Rongli, seven years; Wang Xiaoguang, three years; Yang Xuan, three-and-a-half years; Cui Jiaying, five-and-a-half years; Zhang Huamei, four years. Five others were sentenced to "reeducation through labor."

As if the punishment of the church was not sufficient, in January 2018, the church building, which cost an estimated \$2.6 million USD to construct, was destroyed by dynamite by the CCP – local authorities moved on the property as they were eyeing for the property's commercial value. Since then, the church congregation has continued to meet outdoors or in private homes

and is facing ongoing persecution.

On Aug. 7, 2021, nine leaders from the church were arrested in a well-prepared and coordinated Public Security operation. Among those detained were Pastor Wang Xiaoguang and his wife Yang Rongli, who had both previously been incarcerated in 2009. Members of other house churches associated with the Golden Lampstand network were also arrested and taken to police stations for interrogation.

On Sept. 27, the husband-and-wife leaders, along with Li Shuangping, Dong Yongyong, Zhao Guoai, Huo Zhuangping, and Wu Linge were formally arrested. They were accused of “fraud” on December 27 and are awaiting trial.

*“Me and my family, along with Christians, we are willing to withstand suffering, for God, for this country, for all the leaders in my city, and for all the Christians out there. I am also willing to sacrifice my life. In sum, whether I live or die, I am always the child of God.”* Preacher Yang Rongli, in her 2009 appeal to Linfen City





## THE HOHHOT BIBLE SELLERS

Four Christians in China's Inner Mongolia were arrested for selling Bibles and seeking to put the word of God in the hands of their community. For this, they were accused of an "illegal business operation," a charge that could result in several years of incarceration, as China banned the online sale of Bibles in 2018. Since then, internet users could no longer purchase a Bible through e-commerce sites and had to go to state-sanctioned churches to buy Bibles. Since then, many online sites and apps have been shut down, with many Bible sellers arrested and imprisoned.

As a result of these laws, Wang Honglan, 66, her husband, her second son, and a daughter-in-law were arrested in April 2021 for selling Bibles. The Chinese prosecutors, the procuratorate, suggested a 15-year sentence for Wang Honglan, since she is listed as the first defendant, and had made an "illegal profit" of more than ¥40 million CNY (\$6.2 million USD).

Hearing of these charges, four Christian lawyers came to Hohhot, the capital of Inner Mongolia on Jan. 11, 2022, having been commissioned by the accused to handle their "illegal business operations" case before the Huimin People's Court. However, the four lawyers were notified that the case will open promptly on Jan. 17.

Given the short turnaround, it would be impossible for Fang Xiangui, Zhu Shujin, Zhao Qingshan, and Yuan

Mao to read the 123 files and learn about the case thoroughly in time. They immediately protested Judge Han Yanjie, hoping that the court would guarantee sufficient time for them to read the materials pursuant to law.

Judge Han responded that the court has already made all the preparations, including assigning judicial police, and arranging court hearings, so she rejected their demand to postpone the trial.

After a long debate with Judge Han and the presiding judge, the four lawyers knew that their request would not be granted. In response, they turned to social media to protest the violation of their legal rights by tagging several WeChat accounts belonging to the government.

Victoriously, on Jan. 15, Lawyer Fang shared on his social media, "Thank you all for your prayers and attention. Because the procuratorate has supplied new files, the court has notified us that the trial has been postponed."

Further details and dates of Wang and the family of bookseller's trial have not been revealed. Please continue to pray for Wang Honglan and her family members who are jailed and awaiting trial.

"The government and most Chinese people 'perceive Christianity as a foreign religion,' and see limiting access



to Bibles as a way to ‘wipe out Western influence.’” A Chinese Christian when asked about the crackdown on Bibles.

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*Right: Four lawyers of the Hohhot Bible sellers.*





## FORMER THREE-SELF PASTOR HAO ZHIWEI

### Egangqiao Church

Pastor Hao Zhiwei graduated from the South-Central Seminary in 2001 and was offered to preach at Ezhou's Three-Self Church. However, after finding disagreement with the governance on state-sanctioned churches, her pastoral license application was rejected in 2007 and the Ezhou Three-Self Church was closed. The church was soon converted to a house church under her leadership, later called Egangqiao Church.

Though after 18 years of ministry, Pastor Hao was taken into custody in July 2019, alongside two other women, Hong Ying and Wan Yuanxiang, for collecting offerings for their church—an act deemed as “fraud” by the government. According to the charges, Pastor Hao is accused of swindling ¥2.24-million CNY (\$332,850 USD) in offerings, which can lead to up to 10-years in prison.

She was not charged by city prosecutors until December 2019, five months after her initial arrest. Her attorney, Si Weijiang, claimed that this might be the first case in China where a house church pastor was accused of fraud for preaching the gospel. This was also likely in response to her separation from a state sanctioned church at an earlier age.

On Nov. 23, 2021, Si Weijiang was able to meet with Pastor Hao and provide her updates on her sons' condition from US-based ChinaAid. He disclosed that Moses, Pastor Hao's youngest son, currently suffers

from severe depression. Her husband passed away a few years ago, and her oldest son started college in 2020, leaving him unable to care for his younger brother. Moses dropped out this school this semester and began locking himself in a room and refusing to see people or eat more than one meal per day.

Pastor Hao was heartbroken when she heard the news. Her health also suffers in prison, as after more than two years of detention, she has developed acute pancreatitis several times and been sent to the emergency room, nearly losing her life. Si noticed that Hao's weight has decreased significantly, and half of her hair has turned white as she awaits an outcome. Though finally, after more than two years of not knowing what the future holds, on February 11, 2022, she was sentenced to eight years by the Ezhou Echeng District People's Court.

Learning of this sentence, her eldest son, Paul, wrote his mother a letter; he said, *“Today, that is February 11 around noon, I learned of your news. I do not know how to express my feelings right now. It is very complicated. I have not told Moses about this since I want him to attend school without worries. Regardless of the result, I believe this is God's will. He is molding our hearts through this.”*

When she learned of the eight-year verdict, she met with her lawyer and indicated her intention to appeal,

knowing she had done nothing wrong. She still holds a strong faith that she can be released without charge.

*"Our lives are in God's hands. He is pastoring His people, and He will pastor you, for He who has mercy on them will guide them Himself."* Letter from Pastor Hao to her son Paul.





## BISHOP JAMES SU ZHIMIN and the Disappearing Priests of China

Bishop James Su Zhimin is one of many Catholic clergy in China, who has refused to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), the Chinese government-sanctioned organization to manage Catholic clergy, doctrine, and practice. As a result of his refusal to compromise the faith for the agenda of the Chinese government's propaganda apparatus, Bishop James Su Zhimin was forcibly disappeared.

The now 89-year-old bishop was arrested in 1997 for refusing the state-sanctioned organization and was not seen again until appearing in a hospital in 2003. After leaving the hospital, he has not been seen again, and it is speculated by some that he has now passed away in Chinese custody. The story of Bishop Su Zhimin is one that is a familiar occurrence of persecution in China, as the pervasiveness of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association continues to impact Chinese Catholics.

### The History of the Catholic Church and the CCP

Founded in 1957, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) is one of the few religious organizations in China that is allowed to practice by the State Administration of Religious Affairs, a now sub-department under the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) propaganda and influence arm, the United Front Work Department (UFWD).

The organization was founded to supervise and regulate

Chinese Catholics and prevent foreign influence into Chinese affairs by the Holy See and direct them through the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China. Under this arrangement, the Chinese state has ordained bishops without the consent of the Vatican and has continued to harass and hamper those with papal consent alone or are resistant the government's overreach. As a result, many Chinese priests have refused to submit the CPA, creating an underground Catholic Church in China. These refusals were later bolstered, when in 2007, Pope Benedict XVI deemed the CPA as *"incompatible with Catholic doctrine."*

*"Likewise, the declared purpose of the afore-mentioned entities [Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association] to implement "the principles of independence and autonomy, self-management, and democratic administration of the Church" is incompatible with Catholic doctrine, which from the time of the ancient Creeds professes the Church to be "one, holy, catholic and apostolic."* Excerpt of Benedict XVI's Letter to Chinese Catholics, July 1, 2007

This forced fracture from the Holy See has been seen as a clear violation of the faith by many Catholic clergy in China. As a result of the CCP's overreach, many in the Catholic Church have resisted the CPA and have suffered severe persecution as a result. This persecution of Chinese Catholics predates even Bishop

Su Zhimin, as the CCP has attempted to compromise Chinese Catholics since its successful revolution in 1949.

### **Bishop Kung Pinmei**

In 1955, Bishop Kung Pinmei, was served with a 30-year sentence in Chinese prisons after being branded as a counter-revolutionary for challenging the effort to establish the Catholic Patriotic Association and its attempt to control the church.

Knowing the consequences of his actions, Bishop Kung refused to submit to the government and was sentenced to life in prison. For 30 years, Bishop Kung carried out his sentence faithfully until he was released on house arrest. After three more years, he was able to leave China to the U.S. and learn that he had secretly been made a Cardinal by Pope John Paul II. He continued to perform his duties as a Cardinal from the U.S. until his passing. Following Cardinal Kung's example, many clergy have followed suit, keeping the underground church alive in China, even as the state grows more insidious each year.

*"If we renounce our faith, we will disappear and there will not be a resurrection. If we are faithful, we will still disappear, but there will be a resurrection."* Bishop Ignatius Kung Pinmei – 1954

*Continued >>*







### **Father Thaddeus Ma Daqin**

In July 2012, Father Thaddeus Ma Daqin was ordained as an auxiliary Bishop in Shanghai and like both Kung and Su before him, he too renounced the government's attempt to regulate his duties in the Catholic church. During his ordination ceremony, the now Bishop, publicly resigned from the CPA. Following, he was quickly placed under house arrest in the Sheshan Regional Seminary.

### **Father Lu Danhua and Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin**

In December 2018, Father Lu Danhua of Lishui and Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin were detained for illegally holding Mass. Father Lu, the only priest in a sparsely populated part of Zhejiang, and Bishop Shao were detained for 11 months. As the clergy were detained, Chinese officials intended to intimidate them and garner favor with their underground congregations to join the government-sanctioned church. However, many refused, as this would require them to submit to stringent censorship and deliver government propaganda.

### **Bishop Shao**

In October 2021, Bishop Shao was picked up again by Chinese police for his refusal to comply with the state's religious organizations, adding to the list of repeat arrests of Bishop Shao. The arrests are typically

around minor infractions, used to hamper his duties as a Bishop. Unlike many of the clergy who came before, Bishop Shao was released in November and has returned to his diocese for now.

### **The underground Catholic Church vs the CCP**

This expansion of the CPA continues to target non-aligned Catholics and alienate them from the Vatican. The new regulations on clergy which prevent the use of international digital content will continue drive a wedge between the Holy See in Rome and China's underground Catholic Church. As China's government pretends its agencies act to support the practice of faith in China, pray for those who are persecuted for their fight for the sanctity of their faith.

*"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18*

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*Previous: Bishop James Su Zhimin.*

*Left: Congressman Chris Smith and Bishop Su.*



## PASTOR LI JUNCAL

### Zhongxin Church

A pastor, who was once led one of China's state-sanctioned Three-Self Churches in Henan province, refused to accept new demands being imposed on his church, as Beijing intensified crackdown against Christianity. For this refusal, he was brought up on several trumped-up charges and sentenced for five years imprisonment and a fine of 210,000 RMB (\$32,487 USD).

Pastor Li Juncal from Zhongxin Church in Yuanyang, Henan province, was first detained by local authorities on Feb. 20, 2019, along with three other Christians from his church: Wu Raoyun, Bai Yun, and Ma Yanfang after being accused of the obstruction of government administration.

Pastor Li's ordeal with the Chinese authorities goes back to 2013, when his former Three-Self church withdrew its affiliation from the government-backed organization. When the government began removing crosses across the province, Pastor Li repeatedly refused to allow the officials to destroy his church's cross. He also stood against the proposal to install a flag-raising platform and replace a sign reading, "Love God Love People" with one saying, "Love [Your] Country Love [Your] Religion" at his church.

A day after their arrest, both the cross and the "Love God Love People" sign were removed, and the national flag was raised at the church. Pastor Li and his coworkers

were charged with "disrupting public service," yet only he remains incarcerated. Two more charges, including embezzlement and destruction of accounting records, were later added to Li's case.

Someone familiar with the case shared that the evidence for these three charges is lacking, yet the authorities want to slap him with these accusations. His son believes Pastor Li was targeted by the government in retaliation of him taking a stance against the forced demolition of the cross and the suppression of house churches as Beijing tightens its control over religion. *"All the accusations against Li are fabricated charges; all the charges are revenge and a crackdown [against him],"* said Pastor Li Juncal's family.

Amidst his detention, Pastor Li has been successful in spreading the gospel within the cell—so far three people have accepted Christ, including a Muslim.

Pastor Juncal Li's church has approximately seventy chapels across the count, after his church broke away from the local Three-Self Patriotic Church and began merging with local house churches. Pastor Li graduated from Henan Theological Seminary and was ordained in Hong Kong. His family members also serve at the same church.

Henan province is estimated to have a Christian population of several million. According to The Amity

Foundation, Henan takes up one fourth of China's Christian population. Some overseas commentators call it the "Galilee of China." Beginning 2018, the authorities in the province began to clamp down on churches, hoping to significantly reduce the number of churches and Christians.





## ALIMUJIANG YIMITI

### Xinjiang

Alimujiang “Alimjan” Yimiti is a Uyghur Christian pastor in China’s western Xinjiang province, a region now well-known following allegations of genocide against its Uyghur Muslim population. Pastor Alimjan was detained on the allegations of “inciting separatism” and “leaking state secrets,” following a conversation with an American colleague. Alimjan is currently serving a sentence of 15 years in an Urumqi prison.

Alimjan is a former Muslim who had converted to Christianity and became involved in a local house church in Kashgar, the capital of Xinjiang. Xinjiang authorities targeted Alimjan for his alleged ministry to the Uyghur people group, an ethnic population, who at the time of Alimjan’s arrest were coming under scrutiny by the Chinese government. In September 2007, Alimjan was accused by the Kashgar authorities that he was using his business, Xinjiang Jiaerhao Foodstuff Company, as a front for spreading Christian messages to Uyghur people.

Months went by, and in January 2008, Alimjan was detained by Chinese authorities on the suspicion of inciting separatism and leaking state secrets, however, he was not formally arrested—that formality would not come until February. The cause of his arrest follows a conversation he had with an American colleague, sharing the experience of his earlier interaction with the authorities. While this was hardly the leaking of

state secrets that is alleged by the Chinese authorities, particularly given that Alimjan had no access to classified material, the contents of Alimjan’s earlier conversation with the police were likely made confidential, setting Alimjan up to be scooped up later.

By April 2008, Alimjan was still in detention awaiting a trial for the questionable allegations. Having learned about the case, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled that Alimjan’s detention was arbitrary, finding that it was solely because of his religious activities. However, Alimjan’s situation did not change.

He spent over a year in detention by the Chinese authorities, while the Chinese courts and prosecutors tried to settle on a charge, he was finally sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for “disseminating state secrets overseas” in July 2009. The charges of separatism were mysteriously dropped throughout this series of secret trials, as there was scant evidence to support the charge. He tried to appeal his sentence; however, the Chinese courts rejected the attempt and upheld his 15-year sentence.

While Alimjan’s sentence will end soon, the arbitrary arrest and punishment at the hands of the government are a horrendous reminder of the severe persecution Christians face in China. His arrest also comes at the beginning of a significant spike in religious and ethnic persecution now seen in the Xinjiang province. Here,



the Chinese government has conducted a mass internment, forced labor, and forced sterilizations against the Uyghur ethnic and religious groups, of whom Alimjan's work was intertwined with. This rise in persecution has been declared a genocide by the U.S. and has remained a significant black eye for Beijing's role as Olympic host.

As Beijing keeps the world's eyes fixed on the Winter Olympics amid a travesty in Xinjiang, pray for those like Alimjan, who are currently suffering persecution for their willingness to share their hope in the face of state suppression.

*"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you." John 15:18-19*





## LAI JINQIANG

### and the Audio Bible Sellers of Shenzhen Cedar Electronics

A The Shenzhen Cedar Electronics was established in 2009 (preceded by Cedar Evangelism Division) and specializes in the development, production, and promotion of biblical audio products and accessories. The business has been instrumental in providing a network of churches access to bible, and it quickly became the top audio Bible seller in China.

However, on July 22, 2019, in China's Guangdong province, Lai Jinqiang and six employees at Shenzhen Cedar Electronics, were arrested on allegations of running "illegal business operations."

Human rights lawyer, Wen Yu, responded to the case, sharing that he met with one of the employees under the surname, Hu, at the local police station, after they were arrested for selling audio Bibles.

The local police told him that their case was brought forward by the Public Security in Shenzhen city, but they did accept Wen's application for the accused's bail, pending further investigation.

More than 16 months later, the owner of Shenzhen Cedar Electronics, Lai Jinqiang, who is also a member of the house church group "China Gospel Fellowship (CGF)," was finally brought before the court on December 7, 2020.

He stood trial in Bao'an People's Court, although no verdict was announced at the time. It remains unclear

whether his six employees who were also arrested have been brought before court yet as well.

On April 13, 2021, the same court met again and held a public trial for Lai's case. However, at the last minute, the court canceled the online streaming, leaving Lai's viewers unable to follow the trial.

Lai's wife, Ms. Huang said, "We have been treated unfairly the moment we entered the court. The public security officers were giving our lawyer a hard time. Today's trial was not open to public, so the [streaming] link that had been provided was invalid.

The trial went on for more than two hours. The prosecutor asked for seven to nine years for Lai. The judge's attitude was all right, and the lawyer argued pursuant to law. There was no verdict announced today."

According to a Christian familiar with Lai's case, in July 2021, Lai was finally sentenced to five and a half years, after being detained for two years. Many churches sent out prayer requests to pray for his family, his wife, and for their three children, one of whom suffers from type-1 diabetes.

A pastor who knows Lai told China Aid that the authorities' arrest of Lai might be intended to frame pastors from CGF, given that CGF is an essential part of the house church network in China. The pastor said,

“The authorities have a plan to eradicate this Christian gospel channel and is conspired to frame CGF pastors.”

“I pray that the righteous God can allow Lai’s case to be judged fairly,” said Lai’s wife, Ms. Huang.



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