

# china

PERSECUTION 101



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## China's authoritarian government leads the world in using mass surveillance to repress and torment people of faith

The Chinese government, led and controlled by the eponymous Chinese Communist Party (CCP), has long considered religion an existential threat to the authority of the state. Consequently, it wages an intense campaign of persecution against all pockets of religion that dare to exist outside the narrow confines of state-led "religious" bodies such as the Catholic Patriotic Association or the protestant Three Self Church. This situation has continued since the Mao Zedong's CCP took over the country in 1949 and set up the modern-day state of China. From arresting pastors to forcibly sterilizing religious women to enacting a comprehensive surveillance state, the Chinese government has spared no effort in its decades-long campaign to eradicate the free practice of religion from its borders.

# QUICK FACTS



Communist

**Type of Government**



President and General Secretary Xi Jinping

**Chief Executive**



1.4 billion  
*2023 estimate*

**Total Population**



**Religious Demography**

**52.1% Unaffiliated or Atheist** - 736 million  
**21.9% Folk Religions** - 309 million  
**5.1% Christian** - 72 million  
**1.8% Muslim** - 25 million



**Ethnic Demography**

91.1% Han  
8.9% All other ethnicities

## TYPES OF PERSECUTION



### Authoritarian Secularism

The Chinese government considers religion a competing loyalty and severely restricts the ability of Chinese citizens to follow their conscience.

### Mass Surveillance

The government works closely with technology companies to develop new surveillance tools and today has developed an unmatched surveillance web that it uses to monitor and control nearly every aspect of citizens' lives.

### Internment

In addition to the constant arresting of pastors and other religious leaders, China has kidnapped millions of religious minorities en masse — namely Uyghurs living in Xinjian — and held them in concentration camps.

### Medical

The state-run Chinese medical industry forcefully sterilizes minority women, imposes abortions, and kills minorities to sell their organs for profit.



### Cultural and Religious Assimilation

In an attempt to erase any socio-religious identity other than that of secular Han Chinese, the government aggressively coopts religious and cultural practices for the state in a practice known as Sinicization.



## ICC IN CHINA

Gaining access to work in China is extremely difficult. Organizations like ICC have to work in a context where the state seems to know everything, and anything it doesn't know it's trying to find out. As such, ICC is forced to work in secret or risk bringing dangerous attention to the very people it is trying to help.

The underground house church network is the epicenter of Christian persecution in China and ICC works behind the scenes to support the families of imprisoned pastors, advocate for the release of unjustly detained believers, and, on occasion, work to help relocate entire house church communities to safer countries. In one such case, ICC went to Thailand to help the house church prepare its asylum paperwork and was harassed by agents of the Chinese government

**“As the world grapples with the ever-rising threat of Chinese aggression on the international stage, it must not forget the plight faced by minorities within the country. Their condition is dire, and a stark warning of China’s stance towards their perceived enemies.”**

—Jeff King

## ***Political Backgrounder for Religious Freedom Issues in India***

When Mao Zedong led the CCP to victory over the Kuomintang in 1949, it was the end of the Chinese civil war but the beginning of a new war on religion that continues to this day. In the decades since, the Chinese government has spared no effort in its campaign to eradicate free religious expression, fighting religion not only with indoctrination and legal pressure but with guns, scalpels, and physical violence.

Today, Christians and other religious minorities in China are facing a full-on assault from one of the richest, most technologically advanced, and brutal regimes in the world.

China's repression of religions is inexcusable even by its own legal standards, which technically protect the freedom of religion or belief in Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution. Under the Chinese legal framework, constitutionally protected rights may only be infringed upon by laws approved under both the National People's Congress and the Standing Committee. However, religious freedom today in China is heavily infringed upon by the National Religious Affairs Administration's Regulations on Religious Affairs, which is a simple administrative regulation rather than a law.

In 2021 and 2022, China enacted a number of new Administrative Measures, including for religious clergy, religious institutions, religious information online, and regarding the financial affairs of religious premises to further exert control on religion and strangle the unsanctioned churches.

The Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy came into effect in May of 2021 and, among other things, mandated that religious leaders register to a national database. The database serves as the foundation for a clergy-specific social credit system in which clergy may report on each other and participate in other activities supporting the CCP to earn points. House church pastors are deemed illegal if they fail to be registered under such measure.

The *Administrative Measures for Religious Institutions* came into effect in September of 2021. In addition to laying out a burdensome process for establishing religious institutions in the first place, the measure requires that at least 30% of any class time be dedicated to topics such as socialist, Chinese culture, and other CCP-mandated topics.

The *Administrative Measures for Internet Religious Information* make into effect in March of 2022 and represented a significant clamp-down on Chinese Christians' ability to use the internet for religious purposes—a practice that has boomed due to COVID-related restrictions. In short, the measure requires any person posting religious material online obtain a license and demands that any such material promote socialist values.

## US Government Designations

YEAR	USCIRF Recommendation	State Dept. Action
2001	None	None
2002	None	None
2003	None	None
2004	None	None
2005	None	None
2006	None	None
2007	None	None
2008	None	None
2009	None	None
2010	None	None

YEAR	USCIRF Recommendation	State Dept. Action
2017	None	None
2018	None	None
2019	None	None
2020	None	None
2021	None	None
2022	None	None
2023	None	None

## Resources and Reports

[State Department 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom – Nepal Chapter](#)

[Civil Society Leaders in Nepal Convene Seminar on Interfaith Tolerance and Religious Freedom](#)

[COVID-19 Relief in Nepal](#)

