

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, XINJIANG, HONG KONG, AND MACAU) 2019 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

Reports on Hong Kong, Macau, Tibet, and Xinjiang are appended at the end of this report.

The constitution, which cites the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, states that citizens have freedom of religious belief but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities” and does not define “normal.” Despite Chairman Xi Jinping’s decree that all members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) must be “unyielding Marxist atheists,” the government continued to exercise control over religion and restrict the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents that it perceived as threatening state or CCP interests, according to religious groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international media reports. The government recognizes five official religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Only religious groups belonging to the five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” representing these religions are permitted to register with the government and officially permitted to hold worship services. There continued to be reports of deaths in custody and that the government tortured, physically abused, arrested, detained, sentenced to prison, subjected to forced indoctrination in CCP ideology, or harassed adherents of both registered and unregistered religious groups for activities related to their religious beliefs and practices. There were several reports of individuals committing suicide in detention, or, according to sources, as a result of being threatened and surveilled. In December Pastor Wang Yi was tried in secret and sentenced to nine years in prison by a court in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in connection to his peaceful advocacy for religious freedom. There was one self-immolation by a former Tibetan Buddhist monk reported during the year. According to The Church of Almighty God, a Christian group established in the country in 1991 and which the government considers an “evil cult,” authorities in Shandong Province arrested more than 6,000 members during the year as part of a nationwide crackdown. Media sources reported local officials in Tibetan areas explicitly stated supporters of the Dalai Lama could be arrested under the government’s nationwide anti-organized crime program. According to *Minghui*, a Falun Gong publication, police arrested more than 6,000 Falun Gong practitioners during the year. *Bitter Winter*, an online publication that tracks religious liberty and human rights abuses in the country, reported instances of individuals being held for extended periods of time

in psychiatric hospitals for practicing their religious beliefs, beaten, and forced to take medication. The government continued a campaign begun in 2016 to evict thousands of monks and nuns from Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes. Authorities in many provinces targeted religious groups with overseas ties, particularly Christian groups. The government offered financial incentives to law enforcement to arrest religious practitioners and to citizens who reported “illegal religious activity.” The government continued a campaign of religious Sinicization to bring all religious doctrine and practice in line with CCP doctrine, adopting a formal five-year plan on January 7. Officials across the country shut down religious venues, including some that were affiliated with the authorized patriotic religious associations, and placed surveillance cameras in houses of worship as a condition of allowing these venues to continue operating. There were numerous reports that authorities closed or destroyed Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, Taoist, Jewish, and other houses of worship and destroyed public displays of religious symbols throughout the country, including the last remaining crosses in Xiayi County, Henan Province, and all Jewish symbols identifying the site of the former Kaifeng Synagogue, also in Henan Province. Nationwide, the government prohibited individuals under aged 18 from participating in most religious activities. The Holy See maintained its 2018 provisional agreement with the government that reportedly addressed a decades-long dispute concerning the authority to appoint bishops. Officials routinely made public statements denigrating the Dalai Lama.

The government continued to cite what it called the “three evils” of “ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism” as its justification to enact and enforce restrictions on religious practices of Muslims in Xinjiang. The U.S. government estimates that since April 2017, the PRC government arbitrarily detained more than one million Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and members of other Muslim groups, as well as Uighur Christians, in specially built or converted internment camps in Xinjiang and subjected them to forced disappearance, political indoctrination, torture, physical and psychological abuse, including forced sterilization and sexual abuse, forced labor, and prolonged detention without trial because of their religion and ethnicity. There were reports of individuals dying as a result of injuries sustained during interrogations. In November *The New York Times* and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) reported on leaked internal government documents that included descriptions of the government’s mass internment program in Xinjiang and a manual for operating internment camps with instructions on how to prevent escapes, how to maintain total secrecy about the camp’s existence, and methods of forced indoctrination. A third document, the “Karakax List,” originally leaked in November and later made public, presented evidence the government initially interned or extended the

internment of individuals on religious grounds in four reeducation centers in Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture. Authorities in Xinjiang restricted access to mosques and barred youths from participating in religious activities, including fasting during Ramadan. According to human rights groups and international media, authorities maintained extensive and invasive security and surveillance, in part to gain information regarding individuals' religious adherence and practices. This surveillance included forcing Uighurs and other ethnic and religious minorities to install spyware on their mobile phones and accept government officials and CCP members living in their homes. Satellite imagery and other sources indicated the government destroyed mosques, cemeteries, and other religious sites. Nearly 40 percent of all elementary and middle school students – approximately half a million children – lived in boarding schools where they studied Han culture, Mandarin, and CCP ideology. The government sought the forcible repatriation of Uighur and other Muslims from foreign countries and detained some of those who returned.

Christians, Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and Falun Gong practitioners reported severe societal discrimination in employment, housing, and business opportunities. In Xinjiang, tension between Uighur Muslims and Han Chinese continued in parallel with the authorities' suppression of Uighur language, culture, and religion and the promotion of the Han majority in political, economic, and cultural life. Anti-Muslim speech in social media remained widespread

The President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Ambassador, and other U.S. embassy and consulates general representatives repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns about abuses of religious freedom throughout the country. At the second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in July, the United States and other nations issued a statement calling on the government to cease its crackdown on religious groups. In a September 23 speech at the UN General Assembly, the Vice President said, "The Communist Party in China has arrested Christian pastors, banned the sale of Bibles, demolished churches, and imprisoned more than one million Muslim Uighurs." On September 24 the United States co-sponsored a panel discussion on the human rights crisis in Xinjiang during the United Nations General Assembly session, hosted by the Deputy Secretary of State. During a press conference on November 26, the Secretary of State said, "We call on the Chinese government to immediately release all those who are arbitrarily detained and to end its draconian policies that have terrorized its own citizens in Xinjiang." The Ambassador and other embassy and consulate general officials met with a range of Chinese officials to advocate for greater religious freedom and tolerance and the release of individuals imprisoned for religious reasons. The Ambassador

and other embassy and consulate general officials met with members of registered and unregistered religious groups, family members of religious prisoners, NGOs, and others to reinforce U.S. support for religious freedom. The embassy continued to amplify Department of State religious freedom initiatives directly to Chinese citizens through outreach programs and social media.

In October the U.S. government added 28 PRC entities to the Department of Commerce's Entity List and imposed visa restrictions on PRC government and CCP officials for their responsibility for, or complicity in, human rights abuses in Xinjiang. When announcing these measures, the Secretary of State said, "The Chinese government has instituted a highly repressive campaign against Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other members of Muslim minority groups in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region that includes mass detentions in internment camps; pervasive, high-tech surveillance; draconian controls of expressions of cultural and religious identities; and coercion of individuals to return from abroad to an often perilous fate in China."

Since 1999, China has been designated as a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. On December 18, the Secretary of State redesignated China as a CPC and identified the following sanction that accompanied the designation: the existing ongoing restriction on exports to China of crime control and detection instruments and equipment, under the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1990 and 1991 (Public Law 101-246), pursuant to section 402(c)(5) of the Act.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 1.4 billion (midyear 2019 estimate). According to the State Council Information Office (SCIO) report "Seeking Happiness for People: 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China," published in September, there are more than 200 million religious adherents in the country. The SCIO April 2018 white paper on religion in China states there are approximately 5,500 religious groups.

Local and regional figures for the number of religious followers, including those belonging to the four officially recognized religions, are unclear. Local governments do not release these statistics, and even official religious organizations do not have accurate numbers. The Pew Research Center and other observers say the numbers of adherents of many religious groups often are

underreported. The U.S. government estimated in 2010 that Buddhists comprise 18.2 percent of the population, Christians 5.1 percent, Muslims 1.8 percent, and followers of folk religions 21.9 percent. According to a February 2017 estimate by the U.S.-based NGO Freedom House, there are more than 350 million religious adherents in the country, including 185-250 million Chinese Buddhists, 60-80 million Protestants, 21-23 million Muslims, 7-20 million Falun Gong practitioners, 12 million Catholics, 6-8 million Tibetan Buddhists, and hundreds of millions who follow various folk traditions. According to the Christian advocacy NGO Open Doors USA's 2019 World Watch List, there are 97.2 million Christians. According to 2017 data from the Jewish Virtual Library, the country's Jewish population is 2,700.

The SCIO April white paper found the number of Protestants to be 38 million. Among these, there are 20 million Protestants affiliated with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the state-sanctioned umbrella organization for all officially recognized Protestant churches, according to information on TSPM's website in March 2017. The SCIO report states there are six million Catholics, although media and international NGO estimates suggest there are 10-12 million Catholics, approximately half of whom practice in churches not affiliated with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), the state-sanctioned organization for all officially recognized Catholic churches. Accurate estimates on the numbers of Catholics and Protestants as well as other faiths are difficult to calculate because many adherents practice exclusively at home or in churches that are not state sanctioned.

According to the SCIO report, there are 10 ethnic minority groups totaling more than 20 million persons in which Islam is the majority religion. Other sources indicate almost all Muslims are Sunni. The two largest Muslim ethnic minorities are Hui and Uighur, with Hui Muslims concentrated primarily in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and in Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan Provinces. The State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) estimates the Muslim Hui population at 10.6 million. Most Uighur Muslims are concentrated in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

While there is no reliable government breakdown of the Buddhist population by branch, the vast majority of Buddhists are adherents of Mahayana Buddhism, according to the Pew Research Center.

Prior to the government's 1999 ban on Falun Gong, the government estimated there were 70 million adherents. Falun Gong sources estimate tens of millions

continue to practice privately, and Freedom House estimates seven to 20 million practitioners.

Some ethnic minorities retain traditional religions, such as Dongba among the Naxi people in Yunnan Province and Buluotuo among the Zhuang in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Media sources report Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, is growing in popularity among the Han Chinese population. The central government classifies worship of Mazu, a folk deity with Taoist roots, as “cultural heritage” rather than religious practice.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution, which cites the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, states citizens have “freedom of religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities.” The constitution does not define “normal.” It says religion may not be used to disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system. The constitution provides for the right to hold or not to hold a religious belief. It says state organs, public organizations, and individuals may not discriminate against citizens “who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion.” The constitution states “Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.”

The law does not allow legal action to be taken against the government based on the religious freedom protections afforded by the constitution. Criminal law allows the state to sentence government officials to up to two years in prison if they violate a citizen’s religious freedom.

The CCP is responsible for creating religious regulations. The CCP manages the United Front Work Department (UFD), which in turn manages SARA’s functions and responsibilities. SARA is responsible for implementing the CCP’s religious regulations. SARA administers the provincial and local bureaus of religious affairs.

CCP members and members of the armed forces are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. Members found to belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion, although these rules are not universally enforced. The vast majority of public office holders are CCP members,

and membership is widely considered a prerequisite for success in a government career. These restrictions on religious belief and practice also apply to retired CCP party members.

The law bans certain religious or spiritual groups. Criminal law defines banned groups as “cult organizations” and provides for criminal prosecution of individuals belonging to such groups and punishment of up to life in prison. There are no published criteria for determining, or procedures for challenging, such a designation. A national security law also explicitly bans “cult organizations.”

The CCP maintains an extralegal, party-run security apparatus to eliminate the Falun Gong movement and other such organizations. The government continues to ban Falun Gong, the Guanyin Method religious group (Guanyin Famen or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy), and Zhong Gong (a *qigong* exercise discipline). The government also considers several Christian groups to be “evil cults,” including the Shouters, The Church of Almighty God (also known as Eastern Lightning), Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), Full Scope Church (Quan Fanwei Jiaohui), Spirit Sect, New Testament Church, Three Grades of Servants (San Ban Puren), Association of Disciples, Lord God religious group, Established King Church, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church), Family of Love, and South China Church.

The Counterterrorism Law describes “religious extremism” as the ideological basis of terrorism that uses “distorted religious teachings or other means to incite hatred, or discrimination, or advocate violence.”

The government recognizes five official religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Regulations require religious organizations to register with the government. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations are permitted to do so and only these organizations may legally hold worship services. These five associations operate under the direction of the CCP UFWD. The five associations are the Buddhist Association of China (BAC), the Chinese Taoist Association, the Islamic Association of China (IAC), the TSPM, and the CCPA. Other religious groups such as Protestant groups unaffiliated with the official TSPM or Catholics professing loyalty to the Holy See are not permitted to register as legal entities. The country’s laws and policies do not provide a mechanism for religious groups independent of the five official patriotic religious associations to obtain legal status.

According to regulations, religious organizations must submit information about the organization's historical background, members, doctrines, key publications, minimum funding requirements, and government sponsor, which must be one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations.

The 2018 Regulations on Religious Affairs state that registered religious organizations may possess property, publish approved materials, train staff, and collect donations. Religious and other regulations permit official patriotic religious associations to engage in activities such as building places of worship, training religious leaders, publishing literature, and providing social services to local communities. The CCP's UFWD, including SARA, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs provide policy guidance and supervision on the implementation of these regulations.

The SCIO April 2018 white paper states there are approximately 144,000 places of worship registered for religious activities in the country, among which 33,500 are Buddhist temples (including 28,000 Han Buddhist temples, 3,800 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, and 1,700 Theravada Buddhist temples), 9,000 Taoist temples, 35,000 Islamic mosques, 6,000 Catholic churches and places of assembly spread across 98 dioceses, and 60,000 Protestant churches and places of assembly.

The 2018 revisions to the Regulations on Religious Affairs increased restrictions on unregistered religious groups. Individuals who participate in unsanctioned religious activities are subject to criminal and administrative penalties. The regulations stipulate any form of income from illegal activities or illegal properties shall be confiscated, and a fine imposed of between one to three times the value of the illegal income/properties. If the illegal income/properties cannot be identified, a fine below renminbi (RMB) 50,000 (\$7,200) shall be imposed. Authorities may penalize property owners renting space to unregistered religious groups by confiscating illegal incomes and properties and levying fines between RMB 20,000-200,000 (\$2,900-\$28,700).

Government policy allows religious groups to engage in charitable work, but regulations specifically prohibit faith-based organizations from proselytizing while conducting charitable activities. Authorities require faith-based charities, like all other charitable groups, to register with the government. Once registered as an official charity, authorities allow them to raise funds publicly and to receive tax benefits. The government does not permit unregistered charitable groups to raise funds openly, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property. According to several unregistered religious groups, the government requires faith-based charities

to obtain official cosponsorship of the registration application by the local official religious affairs bureau. Authorities often require these groups to affiliate with one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations.

The law requires members of religious groups to seek approval to travel abroad.

The regulations specify all religious structures, including clergy housing, may not be transferred, mortgaged, or utilized as investments. In December SARA issued regulations that place restrictions on religious groups conducting business or making investments by stipulating the property and income of religious groups, schools, and venues must not be distributed and should be used for activities and charity befitting their purposes; any individual or organization that donates funds to build religious venues is prohibited from owning the venues.

The regulations impose a limit on foreign donations to religious groups, stating any such donations must be used for activities that authorities deem appropriate for the group and the site. Regulations ban donations from foreign groups and individuals if the donations come with any attached conditions and state any donations exceeding RMB 100,000 (\$14,400) must be submitted to the local government for review and approval. Religious groups, religious schools, and “religious activity sites” must not accept donations from foreign sources with conditions attached. If authorities find a group has illegally accepted a donation, they may confiscate the donation and fine the recipient group between one to three times the value of the unlawful donations or, if the amount cannot be determined, a fine of RMB 50,000 (\$7,200).

The Regulations on Religious Affairs require that religious activity “must not harm national security.” This includes support for “religious extremism.” The regulations do not define “extremism.” Penalties for “harm to national security” may include suspending groups and canceling clergy credentials.

National laws allow each provincial administration to issue its own regulations concerning religious affairs, including penalties for violations; many provinces updated their regulations after the national 2018 regulations came into effect. In addition to the five officially recognized religions, local governments, at their discretion, permit followers of certain unregistered religions to carry out religious practices. In Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, and Guangdong Provinces, for example, local governments allow members of Orthodox Christian communities to participate in unregistered religious activities.

SARA states, through a policy posted on its website, that family and friends have the right to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study, without registering with the government. A provision states, however, that religious organizations should report the establishment of a religious site to the government for approval.

According to the law, inmates have the right to believe in a religion and maintain their religious beliefs while in custody.

The law does not define what constitutes proselytizing. The constitution states “Any state units, social organizations and individuals must not force a citizen to believe or not believe in a religion.” Offenders are subject to administrative and criminal penalties.

An amendment to the criminal law and a judicial interpretation by the national Supreme People’s Procuratorate and the Supreme People’s Court published in 2016 law criminalize the act of forcing others to wear “extremist” garments or symbols; doing so is punishable by up to three years’ imprisonment, short-term detention or controlled release, and a concurrent fine. Neither the amendment nor the judicial interpretation defines what garments or symbols the law considers “extremist.”

Regulations restrict the publication and distribution of literature with religious content to guidelines determined by the State Publishing Administration. The regulations limit the online activities (“online religious information services”) of religious groups by requiring prior approval from the provincial religious affairs bureau. Religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles, Qurans, and Buddhist and Taoist texts, may be confiscated, and unauthorized publishing houses closed.

The government offers some subsidies for the construction of state-sanctioned places of worship and religious schools.

To establish places of worship, religious organizations must receive approval from the religious affairs department of the local government when the facility is proposed and again before services are first held at that location. Religious organizations must submit dozens of documents to register during these approval processes, including detailed management plans of their religious activities, exhaustive financial records, and personal information on all staff members. Religious communities not going through the formal registration process may not

legally have a set facility or worship meeting space. Therefore, every time such groups want to reserve a space for worship, such as by renting a hotel or an apartment, they must seek a separate approval from government authorities for each service. Worshipping in a space without prior approval, gained either through the formal registration process or by seeking an approval for each service, is considered an illegal religious activity, which may be criminally or administratively punished.

By regulation, if a religious structure is to be demolished or relocated because of city planning or construction of key projects, the party responsible for demolishing the structure must consult with its local bureau of religious affairs (guided by SARA) and the religious group using the structure. If all parties agree to the demolition, the party conducting the demolition must agree to rebuild the structure or provide compensation equal to its appraised market value.

The Regulations on Religious Affairs include registration requirements for schools that allow only the five state-sanctioned religious associations or their affiliates to form religious schools. Children under the age of 18 are prohibited from participating in religious activities and receiving religious education, even in schools run by religious organizations. One regulation states that no individual may use religion to hinder the national education system and that no religious activities may be held in schools.

The law mandates the teaching of atheism in schools, and a CCP directive provides guidance to universities on how to prevent foreign proselytizing of university students.

The law states job applicants shall not face discrimination in hiring based on factors including religious belief.

The country is not a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). With respect to Macau, the central government notified the UN secretary general, in part, that residents of Macau shall not be restricted in the rights and freedoms they are entitled to, unless otherwise provided for by law, and in case of restrictions, the restrictions shall not contravene the ICCPR. With respect to Hong Kong, the central government notified the secretary general, in part, that the ICCPR would also apply to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Government Practices

Police continued to arrest and otherwise detain leaders and members of religious groups, often those connected with groups not registered with the state-sanctioned religious associations. There were reports police used violence and beatings during arrest and detention. Reportedly, authorities used vague or insubstantial charges, sometimes in connection with religious activity, to convict and sentence leaders and members of religious groups to years in prison.

There were reports of deaths in custody and forced disappearances, and organ harvesting in prison of individuals whom, according to sources, authorities targeted based on their religious beliefs or affiliation. There were reports that authorities tortured detainees, including by depriving them of food, water, and sleep. NGOs reported some previously detained individuals were released but still denied freedom of movement.

The Political Prisoner Database (PPDB) maintained by human rights NGO Dui Hua Foundation contained the following number of imprisoned religious practitioners at year's end: 121 "non-cult" Protestants, 487 "cult" Protestants, including members of The Church of Almighty God, 114 Muslims, 22 Buddhists, and four Catholics, compared with 119 "non-cult" Protestants, 316 "cult" Protestants, 136 Muslims, 22 Buddhists, and nine Catholics at the end of 2018. According to Dui Hua, these numbers were based on Dui Hua's classification system for inclusion in the PPDB and were not the total number of religious prisoners. The number of Muslim prisoners did not include Uighur and ethnic Kazakh prisoners, which Dui Hua classified as "ethnic prisoners." According to Dui Hua, these figures did not account for Muslims in detention centers, which the government referred to as "vocational skill education training centers." The PPDB listed 2,979 Falun Gong practitioners imprisoned at year's end, compared with 3,486 at the end of 2018. Dui Hua defined imprisoned religious practitioners as "people persecuted for holding religious beliefs that are not officially sanctioned."

According to a report released by The Church of Almighty God, during the year at least 32,815 Church members were directly persecuted by authorities, compared with 23,567 in 2018. The report stated that authorities harassed at least 26,683 church members (at least 12,456 in 2018), arrested 6,132 (11,111 in 2018), detained 4,161 (6,757 in 2018), tortured 3,824 (685 in 2018), sentenced 1,355 (392 in 2018), and seized at least RMB 390 million (\$56 million) in Church and personal assets. At least 19 Church members died as a result of abuse (20 in 2018). These 19 included two who died as a result of undergoing physical abuse and forced labor, three who committed suicide as a result of authorities surveilling

and pressuring them to renounce their faith, and 11 who died of medical complications during or following their detention.

According to the annual report of The Church of Almighty God, in January Ren Cuifang of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region died 12 days after being arrested. The report stated that on her remains there was bruising around her eyes and the left side of her chest. There was a burn scar on her thigh and lacerations with blood marks on her wrists and heels. The report also stated that on May 30, police arrested a couple in Xinmi City, Henan Province. During questioning, police struck the husband repeatedly across the face, kicked him in the lower back, clubbed his toes with an iron bar, and forced him to take off his clothes and kneel on an iron rod. He suffered two broken ribs on his left side. They stomped on the wife's toes and instep, struck her in the face with a ruler, and handcuffed her behind her back with one arm twisted up over her shoulder and one arm twisted from below. In August Liu Jun of Jiangxi Province, who suffered from kidney disease, died in custody of uremia after authorities delayed his treatment. In July Cheng Dongzhu of Hubei Province, under the pressure of constant surveillance by authorities, drowned herself in a lake. The NGO Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Religious Freedom said that in May police attempted to arrest Li Sulian, a member of The Church of Almighty God, in her apartment, but before they entered she died from a fall in an attempt to escape out the window using a bed sheet. On November 22, *Bitter Winter* described the arrests, detentions, and seizure of assets of The Church of Almighty God members as part of the government's nationwide campaign to "clean up gang crime and eliminate evil."

According to *Bitter Winter*, local authorities throughout Shandong Province arrested more than 50 members of The Church of Almighty God. According to the family of one of the individuals arrested in Dezhou City on April 17, eight police officers suddenly broke into his home and, without presenting any credentials, searched the dwelling, seizing RMB 6,000 (\$860), two computers, and other items. The man's wife was later taken away as well and held in detention. In another instance, according to *Bitter Winter*, police knocked on the door under the false pretense of checking the home's electricity circuit. When the owner opened her door, more than one dozen police officers entered, searched the house, and seized spiritual books and other faith-related items and two computers. Police arrested her and took her away in handcuffs with a hood over her head.

The Church of Almighty God reported that in May 52 members were arrested in coordinated raids in Chongqing, Sichuan Province. Some detainees reported they were put in a "tiger chair," a device used to create stress positions during

interrogations, and others said authorities denied them medical treatment and prevented them from sleeping. During the raid police seized RMB 190,000 (\$27,000) of Church and personal property

According to *Minghui*, police arrested 6,109 and harassed 3,582 Falun Gong practitioners during the year for refusing to renounce their faith. At year's end, 3,400 practitioners remained in custody. The arrests occurred throughout the country. Eighteen provinces, including Shandong, Hubei, Sichuan, Jilin, and Liaoning, reported hundreds of cases of harassment and arrests. According to *Minghui*, those arrested included teachers, engineers, lawyers, journalists, and dancers. On April 17, more than 100 officers arrested 10 members of a family in Bozhou City, Anhui Province, including a mother, her five daughters, three sons-in-law, and a 12-year-old grandson. Four of the sisters stood trial on December 5 and were awaiting verdicts at year's end. Wang Shaoqing of Hubei Province and 12 other practitioners, including Zhou Xiuwu (aged 79) were arrested on March 7 for talking to others about Falun Gong in a park. According to her daughter, as of November, Wang was being held at the Wuhan City No. 1 Detention Center and denied access to her attorney.

Minghui reported that during the year, authorities were responsible for the deaths of 96 individuals on account of their beliefs or affiliations, 19 of them while being held in prisons, police stations, or detention. In the early morning on January 11, Guo Zhenxiang (aged 82) of Zhaoyuan City, Shandong Province, was arrested for passing out leaflets at a bus station. At approximately 10 AM authorities informed her family that she had died after becoming ill at the station and being taken to a local hospital. Yang Shengjun of Jiamusi City, Heilongjiang Province, was arrested on August 2 and died on August 11. Authorities told Yang's family that he had vomited blood at the detention center early that morning and been sent to Jiamusi Central Hospital for emergency treatment. According to the family, they were charged RMB 30,000 (\$4,300) for Yang's medical treatment. On December 7, Li Yanjie of Heilongjiang Province fell to her death while trying to escape out the window of her 6th floor apartment as police attempted to force open the front door.

During the year, two international academic studies examined the country's transplant system. These studies revealed new information about reports of the government's practice of forcibly extracting organs from prisoners, including religious adherents, and noted ethical lapses on the part of the government and scientific research papers examining the country's transplant system which the authors of the studies said left doubt about how voluntary the system actually was.

On February 6 the peer-reviewed medical journal *BMJ Open* published the findings from an Australian-led academic study examining 445 scientific research papers that drew on Chinese transplant recipient data reported by the government and domestic hospitals. The academic study found 440 of the papers (99 percent) knowingly “failed to report whether organ donors had given consent for transplantation,” resulting in unethically published research. *The Guardian* reported the study found that some of the research papers stated organs were procured from volunteer deceased donors rather than from executed prisoners. The study concluded, however, that the government’s voluntary deceased donor program, instituted in 2010, was not in place at the time the research for the scientific papers took place, suggesting the government and hospitals had manipulated and falsified the data. The study further concluded the only source for organs at the time was executed prisoners, including prisoners of conscience. In an op-ed published in *The Conversation* on February 6, the study’s authors said, “[A] growing body of credible evidence suggests that organ harvesting is not limited to condemned prisoners, but also includes prisoners of conscience. It is possible therefore – though not verifiable in any particular case – that peer reviewed publications may contain data obtained from prisoners of conscience killed for the purpose of organ acquisition.”

In November a second Australian-led academic study reported in *BMC Medical Ethics* found the government and medical bureaucracy manipulated and falsified data on organ transplants. The study concluded that rather than the “untarnished voluntary system promised by officials,” a “voluntary system appears to operate alongside the continued use of nonvoluntary donors (most plausibly prisoners) who are misclassified as ‘voluntary.’” The study also said the goal of the manufactured data was “to create a misleading impression to the international transplantation community about the successes of China’s voluntary organ donation reform, and to neutralize the criticism of activists who allege that crimes against humanity have been committed in the acquisition of organs for transplant.” The study noted the government formalized regulations on organ transplantation in 2006, shortly after witnesses alleged Falun Gong practitioners were being used as an organ source, which the government denied.

In June an independent tribunal established by the international NGO International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China issued its final judgment that “forced organ harvesting has been committed for years throughout China on a significant scale and that Falun Gong practitioners have been one – and probably the main – source of organ supply.” The tribunal presented its finding to the United Nations in September.

Minghui reported that He Lifang, a Falun Gong practitioner from Qingdao City, Shandong Province, was arrested in May and died in custody on July 2. According to *Minghui*, his family observed a sewn-up incision on his chest and an open incision on his back. The police first said the incisions were a result of an autopsy, but his family suspected his organs had been harvested either while he was alive or shortly after his death. In November Wang Dechen of Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province, died after serving four years of a 10-year prison term. According to the family, prison authorities would not allow them to get close to Wang's body and pressured them to consent to have his body cremated two days after his death. His family said they suspected he had been a victim of organ harvesting.

In December *Bitter Winter* published an article describing instances in which individuals were held against their will in psychiatric hospitals for extended periods of time for practicing their religion. One member of an unregistered Christian house church said he was held in a mental asylum twice for evangelizing, spending a total of 248 days there. A member of The Church of Almighty God from Hunan Province said she was held for 154 days because of her faith. Both individuals described being forced to take medication. The woman said beatings for disobedience were commonplace and that staff used sticks and electric batons to force inmates to take medication.

International religious media outlets and watchdog groups reported local authorities in several districts around the country implemented rules awarding compensation to police officers for arresting religious practitioners of certain affiliations or confiscating donation money. Local officials were allegedly disciplined if they did not meet a certain quota for arrests of religious practitioners each month. For example, media outlets reported in January that in Dalian, the second largest city in Liaoning Province, the National Security Bureau implemented a quota system in which police officers' performances were evaluated based on the number of Christians they arrested. One Dalian police officer reportedly told the *Gospel Herald* magazine that senior officers risked losing their jobs if the quotas were not met. *Bitter Winter* reported the government of Qingdao, Shandong Province, launched a three-month operation in September and set quotas for the arrest of 100 to 200 adherents from various denominations and religious movements.

The whereabouts of Gao Zhisheng remained unknown, although media reported it was believed he remained in the custody of state security police. In September

2017, police detained Gao, a human rights lawyer who had defended members of Christian groups, Falun Gong practitioners, and other groups.

In June *Bitter Winter* reported that at least 45 of its correspondents and contributors in the country were detained, and some physically abused, as a result of the government's retaliation against reporting on religious freedom.

Sources reported Pastor Yang Hua was detained several times throughout the year for his religious work. Yang was the pastor of the Livingstone Church, which was the largest unregistered church in Guizhou Province before the government shut it down in 2015.

In April *AsiaNews* reported national security agents took Father Paul Zhang Guangjun, a Catholic priest, into custody in Xuanhua, Hebei Province. Zhang had refused to join the government-run CCPA. According to *AsiaNews*, authorities stopped Zhang's car, smashed the window, and beat him before taking him away. Another man in the car was also beaten but not taken into custody. Fifteen days prior to this event, police raided a house in which Zhang was leading Mass. His whereabouts were unknown at year's end.

On July 25, media reported authorities in Yunnan Province denied the appeal of Protestant pastor Cao "John" Sanqiang, a U.S. lawful permanent resident and Christian leader, who was serving a seven-year prison sentence for "organizing others to illegally cross the border." In 2017 authorities arrested Cao and a fellow Christian teacher when they traveled by waterway from Burma to Yunnan Province. His lawyer was told of the hearing only days before it was scheduled and was denied contact with Cao before the appeal was heard.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on June 17, authorities arrested and interrogated a local pastor at a branch of the South Korea-based Sungrak Church ("Sacred Music Church") in Liaoning Province. The police repeatedly asked the pastor whether the church accepted money from South Korean sources and pressured him for information about church members. Police released him after forcing him to write a statement promising not to hold gatherings anymore.

Minghui reported that in April authorities in separate cases sentenced 38 Falun Gong practitioners to prison terms ranging from six months to 10 years. Authorities also fined 16 of the 38 practitioners a total of RMB 249,000 (\$35,800). One man was convicted of "subverting state power" by mailing letters about the group. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison and fined RMB 100,000 (\$14,400).

According to *Minghui*, authorities surveilled the man for several months before arresting him in August 2017. Authorities sentenced two Falun Gong practitioners in the town of Luodai in Sichuan Province to two years and eight months in prison for removing anti-Falun Gong posters from their neighborhood. *Minghui* reported one 76-year-old man from Ji'nan City, Shandong Province, was sentenced to three years and fined RMB 5,000 (\$720) for refusing to renounce his faith.

Minghui reported that on May 12, police arrested eight elderly practitioners in Zhuhai City, Guangdong Province, while studying Falun Gong books. The police recorded detailed information about each practitioner, including his or her children's employment information and phone numbers, before taking them home and ransacking their residences.

Bitter Winter reported that on January 15, authorities arrested 150 pastors, elders, and leaders from Henan Province's China Gospel Fellowship, a network of unregistered house churches. According to a source, the pastors, elders, and leaders had been under surveillance for an extended period of time. Authorities confiscated their mobile phones and recorded their personal information before transporting each individual to the police station in the municipality of his or her registered residence. Authorities forced each pastor to sign a "statement of repentance" prior to being released. One of the pastors said authorities placed a surveillance camera in front of her house and ordered her to report to the police station every day. According to sources, one pastor suffered a heart attack during the raid and was taken to the hospital.

According to the religious freedom advocacy NGO ChinaAid, most of the 100 members of the Early Rain Covenant Church – the church with the most members among Chengdu's unregistered churches – who were arrested during a violent raid in December 2018, were released during the year. *AsiaNews* reported authorities released church elder Li Yingqiang in August. According to ChinaAid, authorities sentenced elder Qin Defu to four years in prison for "illegal business activity." In December Pastor Wang Yi was tried in secret and sentenced to nine years in prison by a court in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in connection with his peaceful advocacy for religious freedom. According to a statement posted on the court's website, the court also deprived Wang of his political rights for three years and confiscated RMB 50,000 (\$7,200) of his personal property. Prior to his conviction, on July 15, authorities informed Wang's lawyer that Wang was charged with "inciting subversion of state power" and "illegal business activity," which carry the possibility of a life sentence. ChinaAid reported that Wang's lawyer was

prevented from meeting his client, was subjected to surveillance, and had other difficulties representing his client.

According to the NGO International Christian Concern, a member of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Sichuan Province said he was forced to move houses several times during the year. He had been detained for two weeks in February and then evicted from his home in September. Police threatened to arrest the member and his wife and to send his child to an orphanage if he did not immediately leave his home. The man said this was the third time he had been forced to move due to his religious beliefs.

Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported that human rights attorney Jiang Tianyong, who had previously represented Falun Gong adherents and Tibetans, was released from prison in Henan Province in February at the end of his two-year prison term on charges of “inciting state subversion.” The U.S.-based NGO Human Rights in China said that, according to Jiang’s relatives, he was allowed to visit his parents’ home in Xinyang City, Henan Province, following his release. Jiang remained in his parents’ village throughout the year under house arrest, unable to see doctors for medical conditions that began when he was in prison, which included discoloration on his legs and swollen feet.

In its annual report, ChinaAid stated Jiang Rong, the wife of Early Rain Covenant Church Pastor Wang Yi, was released on bail in June after five months in detention, but authorities immediately placed her under house arrest and prohibited contact with all but family members. According to ChinaAid, while in detention authorities tortured Jiang, prohibited her from brushing her teeth for 50 days, and forced her to sit on a stool for long hours with her body bent at a 30 degree angle.

There continued to be reports of government officials, companies, and education authorities compelling members of house churches and other Christians to sign documents renouncing their Christian faith and church membership. ChinaAid, *Bitter Winter*, and other sources reported authorities pressured family members to encourage believers to renounce their faith, threatening to withdraw employment and educational opportunities from them and their family members, and to withhold social welfare benefits. According to ChinaAid, on January 31, Early Rain Covenant Church member Pan Fei was fired from his job at Yonghui Supermarket in Chengdu because he refused to stop attending church and renounce his faith.

The Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Religious Freedom reported that in April a long-time CCP member named Ms. Zhang committed suicide after the Sichuan Province CCP pressured her to renounce her faith and made multiple threats against her family. Zhang joined the TSPM True Jesus Church in 2011. The report stated that during the year, Zhang was subjected to a criticism session in front of 100 party officials, home visits from party leaders, and threats to remove social benefits from her children.

There continued to be no uniform procedures for registering religious adherents. The government continued to recognize as “lawful” only those religious activities it sanctioned and controlled through the state-sanctioned religious associations. Only government-accredited religious personnel could conduct such activities and only in government-approved places of religious activity.

UCA News reported that on December 30, the government approved the Administrative Measures for Religious Groups, scheduled to take effect on February 1, 2020. These measures comprise six chapters and 41 articles dealing with the organization, function, offices, supervision, projects, and economic administration of communities and groups at the national and local levels. The measures emphasize that only registered groups could operate legally and stipulate that religious organizations must adhere to the leadership of the CCP and implement the values of socialism. According to *UCA News*, if enforced, article 34, which governs money and finances, “will halt the activities of house churches, dissident Catholic communities, and other unregistered religious bodies.”

SARA continued to maintain statistics on registered religious groups. According to a 2014 SARA statistic, more than 5.7 million Catholics worshipped in sites registered by the CCPA. According to a SCIO report on religious policies and practice released in September 2017, there were 21 officially recognized Protestant seminaries, 57,000 clerical personnel, and 60,000 churches and other meeting places. This report stated there were 91 religious schools in the country approved by SARA, including nine Catholic schools, although students under 18 were barred from receiving religious instruction. This report also stated there were six national-level religious colleges. Although there were two CCPA seminaries in Beijing, civil society sources said they regarded one of these institutions to be primarily used as the CCPA’s propaganda for international visitors. The SCIO report also estimated there were 35,000 mosques, 57,000 imams, and 10 Quran institutes (religious seminaries under the auspices of the state-sanctioned IAC) in the country.

The government did not recognize religious groups not affiliated with the state-sanctioned religious associations, including unregistered Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and other groups, and continued to close down or hinder their activities. At times, authorities said the closures were because the group or its activities were unregistered and other times because the place of worship lacked necessary permits. Some local governments continued to restrict the growth of unregistered Protestant church networks and cross-congregational affiliations. Authorities allowed some unregistered groups to operate, but did not recognize them legally. In some cases, authorities required unregistered religious groups to disband, leaving congregants from these groups with the sole option of attending services under a state-sanctioned religious leader.

ChinaAid reported in June that authorities in Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province, shut down Dao'en Church, stating the Church had not registered with the government. Authorities had previously closed three of the Church's five branches and pressured landlords to not renew leases for the Church. ChinaAid earlier reported authorities had fined the pastor and another minister of Dao'en Church RMB 10,000 (\$1,400) and threatened to confiscate the Church's offerings.

The government kept Zion Church closed, one of Beijing's largest unregistered Protestant churches, led by Pastor Jin "Ezra" Mingzhi, saying it had broken rules by organizing mass gatherings without registering with authorities.

International media and NGOs reported the government continued a nationwide campaign to "Sinicize religion" across all faith traditions. On January 7, the government announced a formal five-year plan for this campaign.

From June 24 to 29, the Guangdong UFWD and Guangdong Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission jointly hosted a training session in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, on religious Sinicization. More than 70 individuals above the vice president level from provincial religious groups from the five officially recognized faiths attended. In his opening remarks, Deputy Director General of Guangdong Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission Huang Zhongxing said religious Sinicization taught socialist core values to religious professionals and believers. He urged participants to study in depth and implement "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," the eponymous 30-year doctrine developed by Chairman Xi and the CCP in their religious work.

Gospel Times reported that on July 8, the Sichuan Provincial Party Committee held training to promote the "Sinicization of Christianity" for 178 church leaders.

Lecture topics included how to implement Chairman Xi's goal of guiding religious adherents to adapt to socialist society and the importance of church leaders keeping church members "politically reliable." Similar events were held in other provinces.

Bitter Winter reported that in mid-July Liaoning provincial authorities launched a training course for TSPM church pastors at Shenyang Seminary. The director of the provincial religious affairs bureau was one of the instructors. A pastor who attended the mandatory training said the course focused on the Sinicization of Christianity. The pastor said authorities strongly emphasized the importance of wearing traditional Chinese clothing while delivering sermons; replacing European style church buildings with Chinese style buildings; and incorporating CCP policies and ideology into sermons. Training sessions on the Bible or Christian theology were not offered. Additionally, authorities reportedly told pastors their religious qualifications and preaching certificates would immediately be revoked if they preached that biblical teachings carried greater authority than CCP policies and ideology. One pastor told *Bitter Winter* that in Liaoyang City a police chief told a group of Christians at a local church, "We must regard the Party as God, just like God."

According to international media and the state-run news agency Xinhua, on November 26 in Beijing at a symposium of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, officials reaffirmed efforts to update religious texts to conform to "the core values of socialism." Xinhua reported participants stressed the need to gradually form a religious ideological system with Chinese characteristics. According to Xinhua, "Participants suggested conducting a systematic study of the thoughts of various religions, and making accurate and authoritative interpretations of classical doctrines to keep pace with the times, so as to effectively resist the erosion of extreme thoughts and heresy."

State media reported that in August Guangzhou's Guangxiao Buddhist Temple and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a government research institute and academic organization organized under the State Council, jointly established the "Buddhist Sinicization Research Base" in Guangzhou. At its inaugural meeting, multiple speakers said Buddhist philosophy and practice must be based on political identity and adapt to society and culture.

Media reported that in cities throughout Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in north-central China, home to a majority of Hui Muslims, as well as in Henan Province,

Inner Mongolia, and elsewhere, authorities replaced Islamic structures and symbols with traditional Chinese iconography as part of the nationwide “Sinicization” campaign. In the Ningxia Region authorities took down structures with “Arabic domes,” destroying minarets in the process, and replaced them with curving Chinese roofs. Sources told media that authorities prevented public calls to prayer and banned sales of the Quran. Authorities also prohibited news broadcasts from showing images of pedestrians walking about wearing skull caps or veils.

The five-year plan to promote the Sinicization of Christianity called for “incorporating the Chinese elements into church worship services, hymns and songs, clergy attire, and the architectural style of church buildings,” and proposed to “retranslate the Bible or rewrite biblical commentaries.” During the year, authorities reportedly pressured churches to display banners with messages of political ideology, recite the national anthem before singing Christian hymns, and engage in other acts demonstrating one’s loyalty to the CCP over the church.

Bitter Winter reported that at a church in Shenyang during the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC on October 1, authorities hung national flags throughout the church, covering religious paintings and images. Authorities forced congregants to sing patriotic songs such as “Without the Communist Party, There Would Be No New China.” During the event there were a total of 11 performances, most of which were secular programs promoting the CCP.

Bitter Winter and the website Aboluowang reported that on October 1, Buddhist monks at the Wanshan Temple in Lushan, Jiangxi Province, raised the national flag while fellow monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists waived small national flags and sang the national anthem. A Buddhist master led the group in shouting patriotic slogans such as “Long Live the motherland, Amitabha” and singing patriotic songs. One monk sang “My Chinese Heart,” and 16 nuns danced to the song “The Chinese Flag.” According to *Bitter Winter*, on September 26, the Jinxiang Temple in the Yindu District of Anyang, Henan Province, organized a National Day commemoration. An adherent asked to be allowed to sing a Buddhist song, but government officials told him “all Buddhist songs are forbidden, only songs advocating the Party are allowed.”

In October the website for the state-sponsored China Taoist Association reported its Sinicization efforts continued, promoting Taoism’s “advancing with the times” and “developing on the basis of maintaining its own Chinese characteristics.” Taoist ideology would, according to the website, use “new thinking, new ideas,

and new theories to answer contemporary social life issues of social concern, public concern, and believers' concerns, so that Taoism can better adapt to new society, serve the new era, and help push new developments.”

In October *Bitter Winter* reported the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau in Xiaoshan District in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, issued a “Scoring Form for the Standardized Management and Assessment of Buddhist and Taoist Activity Venues in Xiaoshan District.” Religious organizations could lose points for not promoting “core socialist values,” as well as for having religious publications that were not published by state-designated publishing houses. Groups could also lose points if they failed to raise the national flag, when video surveillance equipment inside the church did not work properly, or if clergy failed to give “Sinicized” sermons. According to *Bitter Winter*, a similar scoring plan went into effect in March in Henan Province. Under that plan, in addition to losing points, places of worship could gain points for “proactively reporting illegal religious activities” and “foreign infiltration.”

In September National Public Radio reported Hui residents of Tongxin said local officials offered rewards between \$700 and \$2,820 to those who reported suspicious religious behavior, such as proselytizing Islam or secretly teaching Islamic texts.

In August the pro-CCP media outlet *Global Times* stated 11,000 Uighur and other Muslims were expected to take part in the Hajj during the year, compared with 11,500 in 2018, although official statistics confirming this number was accurate were unavailable at year's end.

Bitter Winter reported in early February authorities in Suiyang District, Shangqiu City, Henan Province, convened a meeting at which government personnel were ordered to collect the times and locations of house church gatherings and record that information in a newly established database operating 24 hours a day. According to *Bitter Winter*, officials said government informants would be rewarded for passing on information.

Bitter Winter reported that on May 12 in Gulou District in Fuzhou City, the capital of Fujian Province, more than 30 government personnel stood guard outside a meeting venue for the Fuzhou Reformed House Church. More than 20 police officers disrupted the meeting and ordered all individuals in attendance to leave. Police confiscated more than 200 books, including Bibles and hymnals. The police took the church's elders into custody and threatened to arrest congregants who did

not leave. According to one source, an official from the Religious Affairs Bureau told the congregants, “You should change your boss [referring to God] and join the Communist Party.” Police later posted a sign on the entrance stating the church had been shut down.

According to the *South China Morning Post*, Guangzhou officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau in March announced a new policy offering financial rewards to people who reported “illegal religious activities,” in an ongoing crackdown on underground gatherings. The new policy would also allow members of the public to earn up to RMB 10,000 (\$1,400) for providing information leading to the arrest of a non-Chinese religious leader. Other payment incentives included RMB 3,000 to 5,000 (\$430-\$720) for tips about locally organized gatherings and their leaders. Some examples of “illegal religious activities” included building unauthorized temples and monasteries, organizing unauthorized pilgrimages, worshipping at unauthorized churches, and printing unauthorized religious publications. According to the solicitation, cash rewards for “whistleblowers” helped limit foreign infiltration through religion.

In July ChinaAid reported that in Guiyang City, the capital of Guizhou Province, officials announced cash awards for information related to illegal religious activity, missionary work, and foreign interference in religious affairs. Authorities placed posters advertising the program throughout the city, especially near Livingstone Church meeting locations. The program offered cash rewards of \$1,000.

Bitter Winter reported that according to a foreign Jehovah’s Witness missionary, Church members in Shandong Province worshipped in secret, holding gatherings in small groups at constantly changing venues. One of their meeting venues was in a residential building. They placed a surveillance camera at the entrance to watch for government authorities. The missionary said they drew the curtains and sang hymns quietly to avoid being heard, and spoke in code when making plans over the phone for meetings, among other measures taken to ensure secrecy.

Bitter Winter reported that in March the UFWD in multiple counties in Jiangxi Province issued documents calling for a sweeping crackdown on private Christian venues. The documents stated that high-level government officials would conduct random inspections and that low-level government officials who did not shut down enough venues would be held accountable. On May 19, the Religious Affairs Bureau shut down Xunsiding Church in Siming District, Xiamen City, Fujian Province. and fined the priest, Yang Xibo, RMB 25,000 (\$3,600). According to *Bitter Winter*, authorities also shut down government approved TSPM venues,

closing at least 14 in Yuangzhou District, Yichun City, Jiangxi Province, in March and April.

Members of the Early Rain Covenant Church said they experienced routine harassment and arbitrary detention in the wake of a violent raid conducted by police in December 2018. ChinaAid reported 15 members of the Chengdu-based house church were arrested while gathering at a home in January. Among those detained were three children aged two to seven. One church member detained in the house raid was allowed to return home to her children when authorities realized they had already detained her the week before. The woman, who had been arrested six times in 2018, said she was severely beaten by police during the December 2018 raid.

Bitter Winter reported that on February 24, local government officials closed a house church in the Xincheng Sub-district of Suiyang District, Henan Province. Officials told church members gatherings of three people or more were not permitted and that holding meetings in their home was against the law. According to sources, during the raid one official said, “What’s more, several children are present. Allowing minors to believe in God is also against the law.” An officer from the local security services told the preacher, “If we find people coming to your home again to worship God, you will be treated as a criminal.” Authorities registered the names and addresses of attendees and photographed them. The report also stated security officials destroyed all religious symbols in the home and confiscated Bibles, hymnals, and other religious texts. Officials additionally forced the house’s landlord to terminate the rental agreement with the pastor.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on March 6, the local Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Affairs in Zhengzhou City’s Erqi District accused the Panshi Church of setting up a meeting place in violation of the law and shut down the church. During their raid, officials confiscated church items valued at RMB 70,000 (\$10,100) and sealed off the venue with barricade tape. Government officials warned the landlord she would be fined RMB 200,000 (\$28,700) if she allowed the group to hold additional meetings there.

According to RFA, on March 23, Beijing authorities banned the Shouwang Church (one of the largest Beijing churches by number of congregants), stating the church’s unregistered activities had violated the Regulations of Religious Affairs and the Regulations of Registration Management of Social Groups. According to one announcement from the church after the government ban, more than 30 police, along with officers and staff from the district-level civil affairs bureau and the

Religious Affairs Bureau, interrupted Bible study class and other church activities at two sites in Beijing's Haidian District. RFA reported the church members at the two sites were taken to a school and instructed to sign a document promising to no longer participate in Shouwang Church activities, but refused to do so. Police released them after several hours. Local authorities also replaced the locks at the two church venues.

According to RFA, on May 12, officers from provincial religious affairs bureaus interrupted religious services in at least eight house churches across six jurisdictions (Xiamen, Fujian Province; Chengdu, Sichuan Province; Guiyang, Guizhou Province; Xiangtan, Hunan Province; Nanchang, Jiangxi Province; and Shanghai) and accused those present of gathering illegally. In Guiyang, police raided a meeting of the Guiyang Reform Church taking place in a hotel room, removed the cross from the room and confiscated computers for further investigation.

According to *Sound of Hope*, a radio station operated by Falun Gong practitioners in the United States, Xiamen authorities shut down more than 40 house churches in the city in a May-June campaign.

Bitter Winter reported that on May 12, 30 to 40 enforcement officers from the Guangzhou Religious Affairs Bureau and the Public Security Bureau entered the Enzhu Church during a service, and registered the identity of the pastor and 70 worshipers. On the same day, more than 10 law enforcement officers raided a house church in Foshan and confiscated more than RMB 600 (\$86) from the church's donation box, claiming the money was "illegally raised."

In May *Bitter Winter* reported that the government of Liaoning Province launched a campaign to intensify its crackdown on foreign religious activities as part of the national campaign to implement the "Work Plan for the Investigation and Handling of Special Actions and Activities of Overseas Christian Churches." The plan, issued by UFDW and the Ministry of Public Security, specifically identified some Christian churches in the United States and South Korea, including the Young Disciples of Jesus, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cru, the Bo'ai Church, the Loving Heart Church, and the Canaan Church. It also called for the further suppression of the Jehovah's Witnesses and some Korean Christian churches that authorities had previously targeted. The document stated the purposes of the plan included: "resolutely cracking down on foreign religious believers; resolutely destroying the religious activities of foreign religious groups in the local area; and resolutely preventing organizations from attending trainings in neighboring

countries and regions.” The plan also required supervision of foreign-related missions on the Internet, including social media apps QQ and WeChat. According to *Bitter Winter*, the plan called for cultivating foreigners and local individuals to act as informants.

Bitter Winter reported in August that provincial, city, and county officials in Jilin Province engaged in similar crackdowns on foreign churches and organizations. A confidential plan issued by Jilin government officials called for setting up an “Office for Resisting Infiltration by Foreign Christian Forces” to shut down meeting venues and underground seminaries founded by foreign religious groups, collect and analyze intelligence on foreign-related religious activities, surveil and control public opinion online, and monitor foreign-related religious activities at universities. A document issued by the UFWD called for launching a “Joint Alliance on Religious Work,” under which more than 20 government institutions would coordinate long-term control over religion, especially foreign-related religious activities. In addition to security services, the joint alliance would include government bodies such as the Civil Affairs Bureau, Women’s Federation, Bureau of Commerce, Hygiene and Health Committee, and customs enforcement.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in February authorities in the Huaiyin District of Huai’an, Jiangsu Province, reported they had installed surveillance equipment in 155 of the district’s 170 TSPM churches. Authorities said in the official report they had connected some of the cameras to the government’s public security system network. The cameras covered the gates, main entrance, worship halls, podium, and even the toilets of the churches. One of the church directors told *Bitter Winter*, “They can see every move in the church. If we didn’t follow their demands, the church would have to be shut down.”

According to religious community representatives, authorities continued to unofficially tolerate some members of foreign groups meeting for private religious celebrations. Churches attended by foreigners continued to receive heavy scrutiny, as authorities forced them to require passport checks and registration for members to prevent Chinese citizens from attending “foreigner” services.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in September the government in a city in Liaoning Province told the person in charge of a local TSPM church to stop allowing 80 African international students to participate in gatherings at the church as part of efforts at “preventing foreign infiltration through religion.”

The Catholic News Agency reported that in July and August authorities shut down at least five Catholic churches in Yujiang Diocese because of their refusal to join the state-approved CCPA. There were reports the government placed informants in CCPA churches to monitor the content of sermons and other Church activities.

According to *The Independent*, Hui Muslims feared the high levels of government surveillance and oppression in Xinjiang, primarily targeting Uighur and other Muslims – including some Hui Muslims living there – could spread to other parts of the country, including their own communities.

Bitter Winter reported that in February the Urban Management Bureau of Lushi County in Sanmenxia, Henan Province, issued a document entitled “Statement of Commitment for Consciously Resisting Illegal Religious Activities.” The document prohibited organizing celebrations with religious overtones in public places, including posting, hanging, or selling goods (such as couplets [paired banners with poetry], calligraphy, ceramic tiles, and murals) with religious themes. Authorities seized calendars with Christian symbols on them from churches and vendors. One vendor said authorities conducted rigorous inspections and shut down vendors who were caught selling items with religious content, and as a result, “In the entire market, no one dares to sell them.”

Bitter Winter reported during the Spring Festival some local governments required churches and private homes to replace Christian couplets with couplets advising citizens to “love the Party.” The fine for posting a Christian couplet was RMB 2,000 (\$290). The pastor of a TSPM church in Yongcheng City, Henan Province, said, “It is against our faith to post Spring Festival couplets that praise the Communist Party. But if we don’t post them, the CCP might use this as an excuse to seal off the church.” Authorities gave residents in Kaifeng City’s Weishi County couplets stating “love the Party” and wall calendars with portraits of Xi Jinping. Some officials personally posted the “love the Party” couplets in religious adherents’ homes.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on January 13, the leader of Enhui Church in Yanji town, Yongcheng City, Henan Province, attempted to distribute a calendar that included the image of a cross. Police demanded the church recover each of the 1,000 calendars it had distributed or the church would be shut down. The leader of Enhui Church and one of its clergy were detained by police and required to “study the policies of the CCP for one week.” The government reportedly also fined the church RMB 28,000 (\$4,000).

According to the NGO Tibet Watch, on May 13, local authorities informed leaders of the Anfu Buddhist Temple in Guangxi Province that the temple's main hall "violated Han Buddhist principles" and needed to be "rectified." The monastery is a pilgrimage site for Buddhists from neighboring provinces. Authorities threatened legal action if the temple did not remove its Tibetan-style prayer wheels and stupa within a week, and banned prayer flags, bells, and other traditional Tibetan Buddhist religious items. On May 23, the Weibin District Buddhist Association issued similar restrictions for monasteries in Shaanxi Province.

Reuters reported in July that as part of the government's expanded efforts to Sincize the country's Muslim population, authorities in Beijing ordered halal restaurants and food stalls to remove signs containing Arabic script and Islamic symbols such as the crescent moon. According to the manager of a local noodle shop, "They said this [the sign in Arabic over the shop reading 'halal'] is foreign culture and you should use more Chinese culture." Reuters reported several larger shops in Beijing had replaced Arabic signs with ones reading "*qing zhen*," the Chinese term for halal.

Bitter Winter reported that in January local government officials in Hebei Province issued a document entitled, "Notice on Comprehensively Investigating and Regulating Arabic Symbols and Religious Elements in Public Places and the Issue of 'Generalization of Halal.'" The document set forth a policy requiring central, provincial, and municipal governments to remove Arabic-language symbols and religious elements from public places. "Generalization of halal" practices such as the use of Arabic-language symbols at halal restaurants, in school canteens for Muslim students, on halal foods, and in Muslim households were also banned.

Bitter Winter reported that in January authorities demolished a large outdoor Buddha statue and 11 small Buddha statues located in the Xiantang Mountain Scenic Area of Xiangyuan County in Shanxi Province. Officials cited a prohibition on construction of large outdoor religious statues outside of temple and church grounds.

During the year, authorities destroyed several Buddhist statues in Zhejiang Province. *Bitter Winter* reported in January authorities in Taizhou, Zhejiang, destroyed a 92-foot statue of the Bodhisattva Guanyin inside a local temple. In March Taizhou authorities demolished a 59-foot Guanyin statue. In May authorities in Linhai dismantled a 48-foot tall Guanyin statue. Authorities told the local abbot in Linhai that "religious statues cannot be located outdoors." In September authorities dismantled a 69-foot Guanyin statue at the Mingshan

Temple in Wenzhou stating that the statue was too tall and would obstruct the view of airplane pilots. In Ningbo authorities ordered a Buddhist abbot to dismantle 500 statues embedded in a mountain behind his temple.

According to a February ChinaAid article, authorities in Yancheng, Jiangsu Province, removed the cross of Chengdong Christian Church, a large TSPM church with approximately 3,000 worshippers.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on January 4, the government of Xiayi County in Henan Province sent 100 security officials to remove three crosses from the roof of the Wangzhai Church in Wangzhai Village. According to a local official, the Wangzhai Church crosses were the last remaining crosses to be destroyed under the CCP's years-long campaign to remove all public displays of crosses in the county. Eyewitnesses said authorities used a crane to remove the large cross atop the center of the roof. They also dismantled two small crosses on the left and right side of the church roof as well as 12 small crosses on the perimeter wall. They then used a bulldozer to tear down the church gate and sections of the perimeter wall. Officials also confiscated the church's donation box and pictures of the cross on display inside the church.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in April officials in Kaifeng City, Henan Province, entered the site of the Kaifeng Synagogue, the oldest Jewish cultural site in East Asia, now a Jewish learning center. They removed the name of the synagogue from the exterior door, and Stars of David and the Israeli flag from the windows. On the building's exterior, officials placed antireligious signs, including one that read, "Management of religious affairs should be in accordance with the principle of protecting the lawful and banning the unlawful, boycotting infiltration and fighting crime." Authorities installed a surveillance camera at the entrance as part of what one neighborhood resident said were efforts to monitor and discourage foreign visitors. *Bitter Winter* reported that in the summer, the government rented a house next to the site, where personnel assigned by the government monitored the activities in the site and the movements of passersby. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Persian Jews emigrated to Kaifeng in the 12th century and a Jewish synagogue has existed in that location since 1163; the current structure dates from 1653. In February *The Jewish Post* reported the community had approximately 1,000 members.

Bitter Winter and the website Abolouwang reported in November that authorities forced Buddhist temples in Henan Province to fly the national flag during the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. The government maintained 2018

directives mandating that the national flag be raised at religious venues during national holidays and during each religion's important festivals and celebrations.

In its annual report, ChinaAid stated authorities limited Christians' ability to celebrate Christmas. ChinaAid reported that SARA ordered Christmas Eve services held by churches in large cities be reserved for adherents with admission tickets only. Sources said in some municipalities they were told not to hold Christmas celebrations in November and December. One local source said his congregation held its Christmas celebration in October. On December 17, a property management company in Yunnan's Kunming Economic Development Zone issued a notice to local businesses and merchants banning any celebration of Christmas as well as Christmas-related messages and decorations, citing a police restriction. In Guizhou Province, the Qianxi County Education Bureau and the Science and Technology Bureau issued a notice banning celebrations of Christmas, Christmas Eve, and any "foreign holidays" among school students. Students were strictly prohibited from playing "angels" in church shows, joining church choirs, and singing hymns. Schools were also required to keep the parents of students from attending Christmas-related events.

During the year, there were reports of foreign missionaries being extensively surveilled, detained, and deported. On July 12, the government of Huaiying District, Huai' An City, Jiangsu Province, published a notice on its website about the establishment of a group in Sanshu Town "to carry out the special action of investigating and punishing overseas Christian infiltration in accordance with the law." The standing committee of Wenxi County, Yuncheng, Shanxi Province, published on its website information about action being taken to investigate and punish the infiltration of foreign Christianity. *Bitter Winter* reported that in April a municipality in Jilin Province issued "The Plan for Jointly Investigating Religious Infiltration Activities." According to *Bitter Winter*, on July 4, government officials in Dongfeng County of Liaoyuan, Jilin Province, held a meeting about the suppression of "foreign religious infiltration" from the United States and South Korea. More than 700 personnel – including officials from the local religious affairs bureau and the UFWD, as well as CCP secretaries from each township and village – attended the meeting "to coordinate the crackdown operation."

According to *Bitter Winter*, in August authorities in Jiangxi Province raided an apartment where two Taiwanese church leaders were holding a church meeting. The authorities arrested the leaders and nearly 30 Chinese Christians. The two leaders were subsequently deported.

Bitter Winter reported that in May authorities in Qingdao, Shandong Province, arrested and deported a foreign Jehovah's Witnesses elder. Also in May police in Jiangxi Province arrested a South Korean Jehovah's Witnesses missionary. They confiscated the woman's passport, religious books, and computer. Authorities then interrogated her and a local member of Jehovah's Witnesses for seven hours before releasing them. The missionary was deported soon after. According to Jehovah's Witnesses in the country, deported foreign missionaries may return after five years, but church elders are barred from the country for life.

Bitter Winter reported that in May two female Japanese Jehovah's Witnesses missionaries returned to Harbin, Heilongjiang Province after a short trip abroad. The day after they returned, police arrested them at their residence. The police interrogated them for 10 hours and gave them statements to sign promising not to return to preach in the country. The women refused to sign because the statement said, "I regret coming to China to preach." Authorities deported one of the missionaries that day, while the other was released and deported three days later.

Authorities continued to restrict the printing and distribution of the Bible, Quran, and other religious literature. The government continued to allow some foreign educational institutions to provide religious materials in Chinese, which were used by both registered and unregistered religious groups.

The government continued to allow only the national TSPM, China Christian Council (CCC), and CCPA to publish and sell Bibles legally. There were approximately 11 provincial TSPM Christian publishers. *Bitter Winter* reported, however, that according to local sources, between November 2018 and January 2019 authorities confiscated Bibles and other religious works at approximately 11 TSPM churches in multiple regions in northern Heilongjiang Province.

The government limited distribution of Bibles to CCPA and TSPM/Chinese Christian Council entities such as churches, church bookshops inside churches, and seminaries. Individuals could not order Bibles directly from publishing houses. Members of unregistered churches reported the supply and distribution of Bibles was inadequate, particularly in rural locations. According to reports, while there were no independent domestic Christian booksellers, publishers without a religious affiliation could publish Christian books. Approximately 20 distribution centers and bookstores were linked to the national TSPM. In addition, authorities reportedly allowed churches with more than 2,000 members to sell books at their church facilities. Approximately 700 churches had such bookstores. During the year, authorities continued to limit the number of Christian titles that could be

published annually, with draft manuscripts closely reviewed by the local religious affairs bureau.

Christian organizations seeking to use social media and smartphone apps to distribute Christian materials reported the government increased censorship of these materials. *World Magazine* reported in March online retailers such as Taobao and Jd.com stopped selling Bibles to the domestic market after authorities began enforcing the 2018 revisions to the Regulations on Religious Affairs. According to *World Magazine*, authorities restricted Christian channels on WeChat and other social networking apps and websites. In July government censors blocked domestic access to the Christian website WeDevote and scrubbed the WeDevote Bible app from most domestic app stores.

Bitter Winter reported Li Liang of the Anhui Provincial Church in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, remained under surveillance following his release from five years in prison for photocopying Bible chapters to distribute to individuals in his home. Li Wenqiang, librarian for the Seventh-day Adventist church in Shenzhen, also remained under surveillance. In 2017, authorities convicted Li of “conducting illegal business activities” when the library was found to have more than 200,000 copies of the Bible and other Christian books. Li was sentenced to three years in prison with a five-year suspension of the sentence, during which he was forbidden to leave the city.

Sources said the Nanping Culture and Tourism Administration in Fujian Province raided the library of the Nanping Christian Association in February and found the association had sold 253 copies of the Bible and gained a net profit of RMB 628 (\$90). On July 9, the administration confiscated the profits and fined the association RMB 10,000 (\$1,400) for selling publications without a license.

Bitter Winter reported that in April authorities fined the Fengyang Road Three-Self Great Church in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, RMB 10,000 (\$1,400) for having Bibles that were printed in South Korea. Authorities also prohibited the church from selling Bibles of any kind.

Media reported in August authorities investigated a printing house in Shenyang, for printing Buddhist materials. According to *Bitter Winter*, the printing house avoided government restrictions by bribing the officials.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in August authorities in Zhengzhou City, Henan Province, required the Fengzhuang Three-Self Church to display banners and

panels promoting the campaign to “eradicate pornography and illegal publications” in the church. In Hubei Province, the Chongyang County government issued an open letter stating “dark forces” and “pornography and illegal publications” are associated with religious belief.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in some parts of the country, local authorities regularly reviewed sermons for TSPM pastors to ensure they were consistent with CCP ideology and praised government leaders. In March local authorities in Shangqiu City, Henan Province, withheld approval of a TSPM pastor’s sermon, indicating it was too religious and did not contain enough CCP ideology.

In March one pastor told *Bitter Winter*, “There is a lot of pressure on us when giving sermons now. If we don’t say the right thing, personnel from the State Security Bureau can say we’re anti-government[.] All sermon topics must be submitted to the Religious Affairs Bureau for review...Chinese culture must be incorporated into the sermon as per the government’s requirements. At Three-Self churches, this is how we have to talk about the Bible, because there are CCP spies in the churches. As soon as they discover that the sermon’s content is not in line with national requirements, we will be severely punished. We might have our pastoral duties revoked for life, so that we cannot serve as pastors at any church.”

Bitter Winter reported destruction of religious structures and symbols was widespread throughout the country. According to the publication, in March authorities in Ji’an City, Jiangxi Province, initially sought to destroy a 16-meter (52 feet) wide 23-meter (75 feet) high statue of Lao-Tzu, the founder of Taoism, that was carved into the Wugong Mountain in the scenic area of Yangshimu in Anfu County. After local administrators objected that demolition would excessively damage the surroundings, authorities instead erected a large-scale plant-covered barrier in front of the sculpture to completely block it from view.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in April authorities in Dalian, Liaoning Province, sealed off a Taoist temple and forced the head of the temple to sign a statement saying he would not sell incense or hold Taoist ceremonies. In May authorities sealed off another Taoist temple in Dalian and destroyed the scriptures, calligraphy, and paintings inside.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on March 14, approximately 100 government officials and police officers in Henan Province, led by the secretary of Xianglushan Town, demolished a state-controlled TSPM church for allegedly violating building laws.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in June local officials dismantled and repurposed five churches as “cultural activity centers” in Xingyang County in Zhengzhou Prefecture, Henan Province. Local government officials threatened to demolish the churches if the congregation did not agree to let the government take possession of the property.

Bitter Winter reported that on March 1, local government officials demolished all but the main hall of Taoist Nainai Temple, located on Hou Mountain in Yi County, under the jurisdiction of Baoqing City, Hebei Province. Within 20 days, authorities also demolished 32 temples and at least 164 faith-related buildings in the surrounding area. Authorities hung signs along the path leading up to Hou Mountain, warning “illegal buildings will be demolished.”

According to *Bitter Winter*, in March authorities in Gaoyao, Jiangsu Province, destroyed nearly 6,000 Tudi temples dedicated to the local land god. Authorities from the Gaoyao Department of Land and Resources stated the temples were illegal buildings that occupied arable land or public spaces. In April authorities in Xianju, Zhejiang Province, destroyed 21 folk temples as part of a “rectification” campaign.

Bitter Winter reported that in August authorities in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, forcibly converted two Buddhist temples into elderly care activity centers. In one of the temples, which was 800 years old, authorities removed Bodhisattva statues and transformed rooms into areas to play chess, watch television, and read. In another temple, mahjong tables were placed in the prayer room that contained Bodhisattva statues.

The government continued limitations on religious education.

At the county level, religious affairs bureaus in provinces including Henan, Shandong, Guangxi, Hunan, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, and Guizhou released open letters during the year instructing parents not to take their children under 18 to religious activities or education. Media reported authorities increased pressure against churches to prevent children under 18 years old from studying the Bible.

Bitter Winter reported local UFWD and SARA officials in July raided a TSPM church in Weinan, Shaanxi Province, and found a notebook with Bible verses, including some transcribed by children. Authorities closed the church for 10 days for “rectification.” The city’s Education Bureau sent notices to primary schools and kindergartens stating that religion was dangerous for minors, and they were

prohibited from participating in any religion-related activities “so as to help them establish a correct worldview, outlook on life, and system of values and form a healthy mind.” One Sunday school teacher in Shenyang City, Liaoning Province, said as a result of the government’s strict control over minors in places of worship, the school held sessions in secret and the number of children attending the Sunday school had dropped from more than 100 to just over 20.

UCA News reported local authorities continued to issue warnings to Catholic dioceses throughout the country prohibiting summer camps designed as faith-building activities for school-age children. One diocese member said the government would not allow churches to organize educational activities for children. *Bitter Winter* reported police raids on church-run summer camps in Jiyuan City in Henan Province and Foshan City in Guangdong Province.

Bitter Winter reported in July that some primary schools’ curricula taught kindergarten and primary school children to resist religion as heterodox teaching. In late April a primary school in Xinzheng City, Henan Province, held a meeting to instruct students to be atheists and never believe in the existence of deities. “If your mom goes to church and believes in God, she doesn’t want you as her child anymore,” the teacher reportedly said. Another primary school teacher in Xinzheng City showed students an animated antireligion propaganda film depicting religious adherents as black monsters. The teacher reportedly told students religious people might hex them and they should report to the police any “believers” they encounter.

According to *AsiaNews*, authorities expunged words such as “God,” “Bible,” and “Christ” from textbooks for elementary school children. These words and any other reference to religion were removed from a fifth-grade textbook containing stories by foreign writers and classical Chinese authors printed by the government-linked Publishers for the Education of People. For example, in the original story *The Little Match Girl*, a girl’s dead grandmother appears to her in a vision and says, “When a star falls, a soul goes to be with God,” but in the textbook version the grandmother says, “When a star falls, a person leaves this world.”

Individuals seeking to enroll at an official seminary or other institution of religious learning continued to be required to obtain the support of the corresponding official state-sanctioned religious association. The government continued to require students to demonstrate “political reliability,” and political issues were included in examinations of graduates from religious schools. Both registered and

unregistered religious groups reported a shortage of trained clergy due in part to government controls on admission to seminaries.

Religious groups reported state-sanctioned religious associations continued to be subject to CCP interference in matters of doctrine, theology, and religious practice. They also closely monitored and sometimes blocked the ability of religious leaders to meet freely with foreigners.

National Public Radio reported in September that sources said imams in Henan and Ningxia Provinces were required to attend monthly training sessions in which they learned Communist ideology and state ethnic policy and discussed Chairman Xi's speeches. According to sources, imams had to pass an exam testing their ideological knowledge in order to renew their license each year.

In September *Bitter Winter* reported that, according to an imam in Qinghai Province, the CCP frequently required imams to undergo mandatory political training. University professors covered topics such as CCP history, policy, regulations, and international relations. An imam from Sanmenxia, Henan Province, said authorities required him to study prominent CCP historical figures. He said there were surveillance cameras in mosques to ensure he and other imams promoted CCP ideology during sermons. An imam in Manzhouli, Inner Mongolia, said, "Every day, we have to say, 'The Communist Party is good and great.' Otherwise, we'll get in trouble with the government!" According to a members of a congregation at a mosque in Xining, Qinghai Province, authorities closed the mosque because the community refused to accept a government-appointed imam, although authorities said the mosque was closed due to "inadequate fire-control measures."

Approximately 50 religious workers, including monks, pastors, imams, and other clergy from the five officially recognized religions, attended a mandatory training program organized on April 16 by the Hainan United Front Work Department, the Hainan Academy of Social Sciences, and the Hainan Party School on April 16. Participants studied the principles of the 19th Communist Party Congress, Chairman Xi's April 13, 2018, speech commemorating the 30th anniversary of the creating of the Hainan Special Economic Zone, and the 2018 revised Regulations on Religious Affairs Regulations. Deputy Director General Liu Geng of the Hainan UFWD in his opening remarks requested the religious professionals "make full use of religion to promote social harmony."

A number of Catholic churches and bishops appointed by the pope remained unable or unwilling to register with the CCPA. The government and the Holy See remained without diplomatic relations, and the Holy See had no official representative in the country.

In March the *Catholic Herald* wrote that, in his blog, retired Archbishop of Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun continued his criticisms of the September 2018 two-year provisional agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Holy See that addressed a decades-long dispute concerning the authority to appoint bishops, stating it gave too much power to government and CCP authorities. Similar to the previous year, neither side provided details of the provisional agreement, such as how the Holy See and the government would make decisions regarding appointment of bishops. The existing government regulation on the election and consecration of PRC-appointed bishops required candidates to publicly pledge to support the CCP. To also be accepted by the Holy See, these bishops normally would later seek “reconciliation” with the pope. Under the provisional agreement, however, the Holy See agreed to recognize seven bishops who had been previously ordained by the PRC without papal recognition. The seven were granted this reconciliation and joint approval in the 2018 provisional agreement, an irregular occurrence within the Catholic Church.

In August the Holy See appointed its first two bishops in the country who were not among the seven individuals named in the 2018 provisional agreement. Monsignor Antonio Yao Shun took up his position in Ulanqab, Inner Mongolia, and Monsignor Stefano Xu Hongwei took up his position in Hanzhong, Shaanxi Province.

At year’s end, Bishop Vincenzo Guo Xijin, an underground bishop recognized by the Holy See, remained in a subordinate position under Bishop Zhan Silu, who was originally ordained without Holy See approval. The Holy See had previously excommunicated Zhan, a member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, but in December 2018 allowed him to replace Guo as bishop of the Mindong Diocese in Fujian Province. Zhan was one of the seven individuals whom the Holy See recognized as bishops under the 2018 provisional agreement. Police had detained Guo, who had been appointed by the Holy See, earlier in 2018 for his refusal to jointly lead Easter services with Zhan, who at the time was not recognized by the Holy See. Cardinal Zen criticized the Holy See for agreeing to compel Guo and one other bishop to step aside to make room for state-approved bishops.

According to *Bitter Winter*, the government-run CCPA attempted to force 57 underground Catholic priests from Mindong Diocese to join the organization. As of June, 25 complied, three resigned in protest, and one was driven out of the diocese. The local authorities continued to pressure the remaining 28 priests.

The government reportedly discriminated in employment against members of religious groups it identified as “cults” and prevented government employees from participating in religious activities.

Bitter Winter reported in March on a leaked notice from 2018 in which officials instructed a military unit in Shandong Province to investigate the religious status of all military personnel “to resist political infiltration, prevent political sabotage, and purify the political ecosystem.” The notice included strict instructions to check the religious status of each individual, including those omitted from previous investigations, such as new recruits, retirees, or those on vacation or hospitalized. All results of the probe were to be entered into the “military personnel religious status registration system.”

In March *Bitter Winter* reported teachers in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region who belonged to religious groups faced extra scrutiny from education authorities compared to nonreligious teachers. Party members were assigned to “assist” these teachers to ensure they taught in a way that conformed to CCP ideology. Authorities required teachers to fill out a document that read, in part, “[I must] align my thinking with Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism [with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era]...No person or organization is allowed to promote religious ideology on campus.”

In August *Bitter Winter* reported religious adherents faced official discrimination when receiving medical treatment. Residents in Hebei, Heilongjiang, Shandong, Henan, and other provinces reported being asked questions about religious beliefs before being admitted seeing a doctor. Hospital staff stated the government required them to ask about their patients’ religious status. Religious adherents were not allowed to pray with ill relatives who had been admitted to the hospital.

Multiple provincial governments included their work against religions and “cults” in their annual work reports. At a meeting of the 13th People’s Congress of Guizhou Province on January 27, leaders extolled the provincial government’s efforts to “strike down on illegal religious and cult activities” and to increase public safety through social control, supervision, and surveillance.

Media reported that on September 17, Chongqing authorities held a ceremony to mark the 20th year of the municipality's "cult prevention propaganda" program. Senior party leaders spoke at the event, pointing to the program's success at helping "the broad masses of cadres to recognize, prevent, and reject evil," in addition to raising "awareness of conformity" for people in the city.

Media reported that on September 19, the Guangdong Political and Legal Affairs Commission and Guangdong Anti-Cult Association jointly hosted an anticult event in Foshan City, Guangdong Province. More than 700 residents, including students, attended. At the event, awards were given for top anticult propaganda posters.

Media reported the Political and Legal Affairs Commission, United Front Work Department, and Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau of Huidong County, Guangdong Province, hosted a program on April 13 at the Qingyun Temple to "strengthen management of religious venues and resist penetration by the occult." Religious community representatives read aloud a "Letter of Advocacy on the Work of Anticult," and more than 100 religious adherents signed a "Say No to Cult" declaration. More than 200 copies of anticult leaflets were distributed at the event.

There were reports that government-run hospitals in Xinyu, Jiangxi Province continued to post banners and notices characterizing religious beliefs as cults.

AsiaNews reported that from July 21-27, the Central Institute of Socialism in Fujian Province organized a course on the work of the Catholic Church in the province. Thirty-three priests, all members of the CCPA, and more than 20 religious affairs officials participated. The lessons and activities centered on the theme of "guiding the Catholic Church to follow a path conforming to socialist society." *AsiaNews* noted the course seemed to focus almost entirely on political doctrine with very little mention of Christian teachings.

According to the Catholic News Agency, Catholics on the mainland faced increased harassment and abuse as a result of the role Catholics played in Hong Kong protests during the year, which reportedly raised concerns with mainland authorities that Catholics there would inspire similar protests in other parts of the country. Authorities reportedly banned some Catholics from traveling to Hong Kong.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because the government and individuals closely link religion, culture, and ethnicity, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on religious identity.

In December the *Journal of Comparative Economics* published the results of a study done in 2017, in which the researchers submitted over 4,000 resumes of fictitious male candidates to job advertisements for accounting and administrative positions posted by private firms, state-owned firms, and foreign firms. The results showed that a Muslim job seeker was more than 50 percent less likely to receive a callback than a non-Muslim Han job seeker, even when the Muslim applicant had higher academic credentials. The study found “state-owned enterprises are equally likely to discriminate against Muslim job seekers, despite their political mandate to increase diversity.”

Despite labor law provisions against discrimination in hiring based on religious belief, some employers continued to discriminate against religious believers. In April the Hong Kong-based NGO China Labor Bulletin wrote, “Ethnic and religious minorities routinely face discrimination in the service sector, especially in low-level retail and restaurant positions where employers prefer to hire staff who appear more ‘familiar’ and less ‘threatening’ to Han customers. Very often minorities are effectively restricted to working within their own communities or in ethnically-themed restaurants.” Religious minorities continued to report employers terminated their employment due to their current or prior religious activities. *Bitter Winter* reported in September that police pressured the employer of a woman identified as “Ms. Yu” to dismiss her from her job in the northern part of the country because 13 years prior she had participated in a gathering of The Church of Almighty God.

Anti-Muslim speech in social media remained widespread, despite the government’s announcement in September 2017 that it would censor some anti-Muslim expression on the internet. *Columbia Journalism Review* reported that following the March attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, anti-Muslim postings increased on Weibo and WeChat. Some users expressed support for the shooter. One user on WeChat likened Muslims to “cancer cells.” Many Weibo users, however, posted rebuttals, and some wrote articles decrying anti-Muslim sentiment.

In some instances, landlords discriminated against potential or current tenants based on their religious beliefs. Falun Gong practitioners reported having continued difficulty finding landlords who would rent them apartments.

In May a Hui Muslim said on social media she and her sister were not given jobs because of their religion. The post attracted commentators who defended employers for rejecting Hui job applicants. A job recruitment agency in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, expressly excluded ethnic minority jobseekers, including Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists, from applying, according to media reports.

There were reports that Uighur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and other religious minorities continued to face difficulty in finding accommodation when they traveled. *Wired Magazine* reported in May that it found 35 individual Airbnb listings throughout the country with clauses expressly barring religious minorities from renting rooms. One listing for a two-bedroom apartment in the city of Chongqing said, “We do not have the permission of the police [to host Uighurs] please do not book.” A listing for a condominium rental in Chengdu stated in English that Uighur and Tibetan guests were not allowed “[d]ue to local regulation.” Other listings also said Hui Muslims and ethnic Kazakhs should not apply.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Vice President, Secretary of State, Ambassador, and other embassy and consulate representatives repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns about abuses of religious freedom. The President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Deputy Secretary of State, and the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom met with survivors of religiously motivated persecution or their family members from the Uighur Muslim, Tibetan Buddhist, Protestant, and Falun Gong communities at the second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C., from July 16 to 18. Muslim, Buddhist, Protestant, and Falun Gong survivors of religious persecution gave presentations at the ministerial and some met the President during a visit to the White House. At the ministerial there was a general session with government officials from around the world on “Religious Freedom Challenges in China.” On July 18 at the ministerial, the Vice President said, “[T]he American people will always stand in solidarity with the people of all faiths in the People’s Republic of China.” In addressing the ministerial, the Secretary said the human rights crisis in Xinjiang “is truly the stain of the century.” At the ministerial, the United States and other countries issued a statement that read, in part: “As representatives of the international community, we are deeply concerned about China’s escalating, widespread, and undue restrictions on religious freedom, and call on the Chinese government to respect

the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals. Many members of religious groups in China – including ethnic Uighur, Kazakh and other Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, and Falun Gong – face severe repression and discrimination because of their religious beliefs. These communities regularly report incidents in which authorities have tortured, physically abused, sexually abused, arbitrarily arrested, detained, and tried and sentenced without legal safeguards adherents of both registered and unregistered religious groups for activities related to their religious beliefs, affiliations, and peaceful practices.” In a September 23 speech at the UN General Assembly session, the Vice President said, “The Communist Party in China has arrested Christian pastors, banned the sale of Bibles, demolished churches, and imprisoned more than one million Muslim Uighurs.” On September 24 the United States co-sponsored a panel discussion on the human rights crisis in Xinjiang during the United Nations General Assembly session, hosted by the Deputy Secretary of State.

In March the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom gave remarks on religious freedom in China at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club in Hong Kong. He also met with local religious leaders, members of faith communities, and cultural and religious studies students and faculty to discuss efforts to advance religious freedom. He also visited Taiwan and delivered keynote remarks at the 2019 Regional Religious Freedom Forum: A Civil Society Dialogue on Securing Religious Freedom in the Indo-Pacific Region.

Embassy and consulate officials met regularly with a range of government officials managing religious affairs to obtain more information on government policies and to advocate for greater religious freedom and tolerance. Embassy and consulate officials, including the Ambassador and Consuls General, urged government officials at the central, provincial, and local levels, including those at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries, to implement stronger protections for religious freedom and release prisoners of conscience. The Ambassador highlighted religious freedom in meetings with senior officials. The Department of State, embassy, and consulates general regularly called upon the government to release prisoners of conscience, including individual cases of persons imprisoned for religious reasons.

The Ambassador, Consuls General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Wuhan, and other embassy and consulate general officials met with religious groups as well as academics, NGOs, members of registered and unregistered religious groups, and family members of religious prisoners to reinforce U.S. support for religious freedom. The Consul General in Chengdu met with Tibetan

and Muslim leaders in Sichuan Province to emphasize support for freedom of religion or belief. Embassy and consulate general officials hosted events around religious holidays and conducted roundtable discussions with religious leaders to convey the importance of religious pluralism in society and learn about issues facing religious communities. Embassy officials met with visiting members of U.S. religious groups to discuss how these groups were engaging with local communities.

Throughout the year, the embassy and consulates general reached large local audiences with messages promoting respect, understanding, and tolerance for religious diversity. The Embassy and consulate generals organized a series of lectures by American academics and U.S. government officials to engage audiences on a number of religious freedom topics. In August the Consulate General in Shanghai hosted a public discussion on freedom of religion, including the U.S. government's efforts to promote religious freedom and tolerance. The embassy hosted multiple events at the Beijing American Center for the general public and target audiences of professors, students, and lawyers to highlight religious freedom in the United States. Through events that included legal analysis of the separation of religion and state, presentations on Jewish-American identity, discussions of citizen-responsive governance, and screening films containing religious themes, the embassy spurred dynamic conversations among the public about topics that were otherwise difficult to address.

The embassy continued to amplify Department of State religious freedom initiatives directly to local audiences through postings to the embassy website and to Weibo, WeChat, and Twitter accounts. Over the course of the year, the embassy published more than 100 messages promoting religious freedom, including videos, statements, images, and infographics. More than 100,000 citizens engaged with these social media posts, participating in online discussions with embassy officials – including the Ambassador – and with each other. For example, for International Religious Freedom Day on October 27, the Ambassador published on the embassy website a statement supporting respect for religious freedom, which the embassy then shared via Weibo and WeChat social media platforms, where the statement garnered 750,000 views and more than 5,000 engagements. In the week surrounding the second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in July, more than two million social media users viewed the embassy's dissemination of the Secretary of State's remarks, with 17,600 choosing to engage on the topic. The embassy also shared religious holiday greetings from the President, Secretary of State, and Ambassador. These included well wishes on the occasion of special religious days for Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Tibetan Buddhists. Millions of

social media users viewed these messages, often sparking further comments and questions such as, “Respecting different religious beliefs is for the good of all mankind,” and “Is there a religious department in the United States that manages religion?” During the course of the year, the embassy and consulates general regularly addressed questions of religious tolerance raised by some of the millions of online followers, offering them uniquely U.S. perspectives on religious freedom and tolerance.

Authorities continually harassed and intimidated religious leaders to dissuade them from speaking with U.S. officials. Authorities prevented diplomats in Chengdu from meeting with state-authorized religious leaders, including the Abbot of Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute and the Catholic Bishop of Chengdu. Authorities regularly prevented members of religious communities from attending events at the embassy and consulates general, and security services questioned individuals who did attend.

On October 7, the Bureau of Industry and Security of the U.S. Department of Commerce announced it would add the Xinjiang Public Security Bureau, 18 of its subordinate public security bureaus and one other subordinate institute, and eight Chinese companies to the Entity List for engaging in or enabling activities contrary to U.S. foreign policy interests. This action constricts the export of items subject to the Export Administration Regulations to entities that have been implicated in human rights violations and abuses in the country’s campaign targeting Uighurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang.

On October 8, the Secretary of State imposed visa restrictions on PRC government and CCP officials who are believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, the detention or abuse of Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, or other members of Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang. Family members of such persons may also be subject to these restrictions. In making his announcement, the Secretary said, “The Chinese government has instituted a highly repressive campaign against Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other members of Muslim minority groups in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region that includes mass detentions in internment camps; pervasive, high-tech surveillance; draconian controls of expressions of cultural and religious identities; and coercion of individuals to return from abroad to an often perilous fate in China... The United States calls on the People’s Republic of China to immediately end its campaign of repression in Xinjiang, release all those arbitrarily detained, and cease efforts to coerce members of Chinese Muslim minority groups residing abroad to return to China to face an uncertain fate.”

Since 1999, China has been designated as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. On December 18, the Secretary of State redesignated China as a CPC and identified the following sanction that accompanied the designation: the existing ongoing restriction on exports to China of crime control and detection instruments and equipment, under the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1990 and 1991 (Public Law 101-246), pursuant to section 402(c)(5) of the Act.

TIBET 2019 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which cites the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, states that citizens “enjoy freedom of religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities” without defining “normal.” Central government regulations control all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools. They stipulate religious activity “must not harm national security.” Regulations prohibit “accepting domination by external forces,” which authorities said included Tibetans in exile, particularly the Dalai Lama. In the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and other Tibetan areas there were reports of forced disappearances, arrests, torture, physical abuse, including sexual abuse, and prolonged detentions without trial of individuals due to their religious practices. Former detainees reported being beaten until they lost consciousness and being shocked with electric batons. There were reports that monks and nuns were forced to wear military clothing and undergo political indoctrination in detention centers. The nongovernment organization (NGO) Free Tibet and local sources reported that on November 26, a 24-year-old former monk from the Kirti Monastery set himself on fire in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP), Sichuan Province, and died of his injuries on the same day. Media sources reported local officials in Tibetan areas explicitly stated supporters of the Dalai Lama and other religious leaders could be arrested under the government's nationwide anti-organized crime program and that Tibetans were told to inform on anyone who “links up with the Dalai clique.” The government continued to restrict the size of Buddhist monasteries and other institutions and to implement a campaign begun in 2016 to evict monks and nuns from monasteries and prohibit them from practicing elsewhere. While exact numbers were difficult to ascertain, according to multiple sources, since 2016 authorities evicted between 6,000 and 17,000 Tibetan and Han Chinese monks and nuns from Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes. Satellite imagery showed thousands of dwellings at these locations had been destroyed since 2018. Authorities continued to engage in widespread interference in religious practices, especially in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries, including by appointing government and CCP personnel and government-approved monks to manage religious institutions. “Sinicization” policies, which aimed to interpret religious ideas in accordance with CCP ideology and to emphasize loyalty to the CCP and the state, were pursued more intensely. Media reported that on January 7, the government announced a formal five-year

plan to Sinicize all religions in the country, including Tibetan Buddhism. Despite a decree by President Xi Jinping, chairman of the CCP, that all members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) must be “unyielding Marxist atheists,” the government continued to control the selection of Tibetan Buddhist lamas and supervised their religious and political education. Authorities forced monasteries to display portraits of CCP leaders and the national flag, and in some cases went door to door insisting laypersons replace images of the Dalai Lama and other lamas in their home shrines with those of CCP leaders, including Chairman Xi and Chairman Mao Zedong. Travel restrictions hindered monastics and laypersons from engaging in traditional religious practices and pilgrimages. Repression, including arbitrary surveillance, increased around politically sensitive events, religious anniversaries, and the Dalai Lama’s birthday. Sources reported local authorities increased scrutiny of social media postings regarding religious belief. Authorities restricted children from participating in many traditional religious festivals and from receiving religious education. The government continued to force monks and nuns to undergo political training in state ideology. Religious leaders and government employees were often required to denounce the Dalai Lama and express allegiance to the government-recognized Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu. Authorities continued in state media to justify interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by associating the monasteries with “separatism” and pro-independence activities. Officials routinely made public statements denigrating the Dalai Lama. In a July interview, Wang Neng Shang, vice minister of the TAR and director general of the People’s Government Information Office, said the selection of the next Dalai Lama was not the current Dalai Lama’s decision to make, and instead must be recognized by the central government in Beijing, adding, “The centrality of the central government must be recognized.”

Some Tibetans continued to encounter societal discrimination when seeking employment, engaging in business, and traveling for pilgrimage, according to multiple sources.

While diplomatic access to the TAR remained tightly controlled, officials from the U.S. embassy and consulate general in Chengdu made five visits there during the year, during which they met with both government and religious leaders and emphasized the importance of respecting religious freedom in Tibet. The Ambassador visited the TAR in May, the first U.S. ambassador to do so since 2015. While there, he visited several religious sites and met with local leaders, religious figures, and students. In July the Vice President told attendees at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C., “China’s oppression of Tibetan Buddhists goes back decades... [T]he American people will

always stand in solidarity with the people of all faiths in the People’s Republic of China.” At the U.S. government’s invitation, Tibetan exile and survivor of religious persecution Nyima Lhamo met with the President and addressed the ministerial, describing how the harsh treatment by government authorities of her uncle, Lama Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, led to his 2015 death in captivity. The U.S. government repeatedly urged the Chinese government to end policies that threaten Tibet’s distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity, including the continuing demolition campaigns at Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes. U.S. officials underscored that decisions on the succession of the Dalai Lama should be made solely by faith leaders and also raised concerns about the continued disappearance of the Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. The embassy and consulates used social media to deliver direct messaging about religious freedom in Tibet to millions of citizens.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to official data from China’s most recent census in November 2010, 2,716,400 Tibetans make up 90 percent of the TAR’s total population. Han Chinese make up approximately 8 percent. Other ethnicities comprise the remainder. Some experts, however, believe the number of Han Chinese and other non-Tibetans living there is significantly underreported. Outside the TAR, official census data show Tibetans constitute 24.4 percent of the total population in Qinghai Province, 2.1 percent in Sichuan Province, 1.8 percent in Gansu Province, and 0.3 percent in Yunnan Province, although the percentage of Tibetans is much higher within prefectures and counties of these provinces designated as autonomous for Tibetans.

Most ethnic Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority practices Bon, a pre-Buddhist indigenous religion. Small minorities practice Islam, Catholicism, or Protestantism. Some scholars estimate there are as many as 400,000 Bon followers across the Tibetan Plateau, some of whom also follow the Dalai Lama and consider themselves also to be Tibetan Buddhists. Scholars estimate there are up to 5,000 Tibetan Muslims and 700 Tibetan Catholics in the TAR. Other residents of traditionally Tibetan areas include Han Chinese, many of whom practice Buddhism (including Tibetan Buddhism), Taoism, Confucianism, or traditional folk religions, or profess atheism, as well as Hui Muslims and non-Tibetan Catholics and Protestants.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The United States recognizes the TAR, TAPs, and counties in other provinces to be part of the PRC. The constitution, which cites the leadership of the CCP and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, states that citizens enjoy “freedom of religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities” without defining “normal.” The constitution bans the state, public organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion. It says religion may not be used to disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system. The constitution states religious bodies and affairs are not to be “subject to any foreign control.” The government recognizes five official religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Only religious groups belonging to one of five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” representing these religions are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services or other religious ceremonies and activities.

Central government regulations regarding religion are issued by the CCP’s United Front Work Department (UFWD). The UFWD’s Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Work manages religious affairs through the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA). While technically a state agency, SARA was subsumed into the UFWD under the State Council’s 2018 revisions to the Regulations on Religious Affairs.

The UFWD controls the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including lamas. Regulations stipulate that, depending on the perceived geographic area of influence of the lama, relevant administrative entities may deny permission for a lama to be recognized as reincarnated and these administrative entities must approve reincarnations. The State Council has the right to deny the recognition of reincarnations of high lamas of “especially great influence.” The regulations also state no foreign organization or individual may interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas, and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within China. The government maintains a registry of officially recognized reincarnate lamas.

Regulations issued by the UFWD assert state control over all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools. Through local regulations issued under the framework of the national-level Management Regulation of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries, governments of the TAR and other autonomous Tibetan areas control the registration of monasteries, nunneries, and other Tibetan Buddhist religious centers. The regulations also give the government

formal control over building and managing religious structures, and require monasteries to obtain official permission to hold large-scale religious events or gatherings.

The central government's Regulations on Religious Affairs require religious groups to register with the government, impose fines on landlords for providing facilities for unauthorized religious activities, and restrict contact with overseas religious institutions, including requirements for religious groups to seek approval to travel abroad and a prohibition on "accepting domination by external forces." The regulations submit religious schools to the same oversight as places of worship and impose restrictions on religious groups conducting business or investments, including placing limits on the amount of donations they may receive, thereby constraining property ownership and development. Publication of religious material must conform to guidelines determined by the State Publishing Administration.

The regulations also require that religious activity "must not harm national security." While the regulations stipulate the obligations of religious groups to abide by the law, safeguard national unity, and respond to "religious extremism," the term "extremism" is undefined. Measures to safeguard unity and respond to "religious extremism" include monitoring groups, individuals, and institutions, and recommending penalties such as suspending groups and canceling clergy credentials. The regulations stipulate that the online activities of religious groups be approved by the provincial Religious Affairs Bureau.

A government policy introduced in 2018 requires Tibetan monks and nuns to undergo political training in state ideology. Monks and nuns must demonstrate – in addition to competence in religious studies – "political reliability," "moral integrity capable of impressing the public," and a willingness to "play an active role at critical moments."

Self-immolation is considered homicide, and family members, teachers, and religious leaders may be charged as accessories to homicide if a relative, pupil, or follower chooses to self-immolate.

To establish formal places of worship, religious organizations must receive approval from the religious affairs department of the relevant local government both when the facility is proposed and again prior to the first time any services are held at that location. Religious organizations must submit dozens of documents in order to register during these approval processes, including detailed management

plans of their religious activities, exhaustive financial records, and personal information on all staff members. Religious communities not going through the formal registration process may not legally have an established facility or worship meeting space; they must seek a separate approval from government authorities each time they want to reserve a space for worship, such as by renting a hotel or an apartment. Worshipping in a space without prior approval, either through the formal registration process or by seeking an approval for each service, is considered an illegal religious activity that may be criminally or administratively punished.

Individuals must apply to take up religious orders and the TAR CCP Committee may deny any application. Regulations also require monks and nuns to obtain permission from officials in both the originating and receiving counties before traveling to other prefectures or “county-level cities” within the TAR to “practice their religion,” engage in religious activities, study, or teach. TAPs outside the TAR have similar regulations.

At the central government level, the CCP Central Committee’s Central Tibet Work Coordination Group and the UFWD are responsible for developing and implementing religious management policies, which are carried out with support from the five state-sanctioned patriotic religious associations – Three-Self Patriotic Movement (Protestant), Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Taoist Association, the Islamic Association of China, and the Buddhist Association of China (BAC). At local levels, party leaders and branches of the UFWD, SARA, and the BAC are required to coordinate implementation of religious policies in monasteries.

CCP members, including Tibetans and retired officials, are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. CCP members who belong to religious organizations are subject to various types of punishment, including termination of their employment and expulsion from the CCP.

Government Practices

There was one reported case of a Tibetan self-immolating as a means of protesting against government policies, compared to four individuals in 2018. According to the NGO International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), from 2009 to December, 156 Tibetans had set themselves on fire in protest against what they said was the occupation of Tibet and abuses of Tibetans’ religion and culture under PRC rule. The NGO Free Tibet and media reported that on November 26, a 24-year-old man

identified as Yonten set himself on fire in Ngaba TAP, Sichuan Province. He died of his injuries on the same day. According to Free Tibet, Yonten had previously been a monk in the Kirti Monastery and left the monastery sometime prior to his self-immolation. Radio Free Asia reported that shortly after his death, authorities detained family members for questioning and kept them isolated from outside contact for a period of time. Some experts and local sources attributed the decrease in the number of self-immolations to tighter control measures by authorities and the fear that family members and associates of self-immolators might be punished, including by being charged as accessories to homicide.

The whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama and most Tibetan Buddhists, remained unknown since his 1995 forced disappearance by Chinese authorities. Nyima was six years old at the time he and his parents were reportedly abducted. Authorities did not provide information on his whereabouts, and stated previously that he was “living a normal life” and did “not wish to be disturbed.” The Panchen Lama is considered by the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism to be the second-most-prominent leader after the Dalai Lama. On April 25, Tibetans in exile marked the occasion of Nyima’s 30th birthday. Advocacy groups called on the government to release him and allow him to resume his religious duties.

In August the ICT reported that in late July authorities sentenced Buddhist monk Lobsang Thapke, from Kirti Monastery, Ngaba TAP, Sichuan Province, to four years in prison. As of year’s end, the location of his incarceration and the details of his charges remained unknown. According to the ICT, on September 3, authorities sentenced Lobsang Dorje, also a monk from Kirti Monastery, to three years in prison on unknown charges. Fellow monks said he may have been arrested for having contact with persons outside Tibet. Prior to the sentencing, Dorje had been held incommunicado for more than a year.

The whereabouts and condition of Sangay (also spelled Sanggye) Gyatso remained unknown throughout the year. Sources said police beat and arrested Sangay, a monk at the Kirti Monastery, in December 2018 after he demonstrated for Tibetan freedom on the anniversary of the Dalai Lama’s receiving the Nobel Peace Prize.

The location and condition of many other Tibetans detained in 2018 remained unknown, including Karma, a village leader in the TAR who refused to allow local authorities to conduct mining activities near the sacred Sebra Zagyen mountain, and Gangye, a man from Sog (Suoxian) County, Nagchu (Nagqu) Prefecture, TAR, detained in May 2018 for possessing religious books written by the Dalai Lama

and CDs featuring the religious leader's teachings. Sources reported the whereabouts of several monks also remained unknown, including Dorje Rabten, who in September 2018 protested against government policies restricting young people from becoming monks; Tenzin Gelek, who protested Dorje's detention; Lobsant Thamke, who was arrested in 2018 and sentenced on July 30 to four years in prison on unknown charges; Lobsang Dorje, who was arrested sometime in August 2018; and Thubpa, whom police took from the Trotsik Monastery in Ngaba TAP, Sichuan Province, sometime toward the end of 2017.

Human rights groups stated individuals arrested in the 2008 protests reportedly experienced ongoing physical and mental health problems related to abusive treatment in prison. Free Tibet reported that on May 1, activist Yeshe Gyatso died. According to the NGO Tibet Watch, he suffered frequent and severe beatings, torture, and interrogation during his time in prison from 2008 to 2018 that led to persistent mental and physical ailments after his release. According to Free Tibet, Buddhist monk Thapkey Gyatso was arrested in 2008, reportedly for taking a leading role in 2008 protests in Sangchu (Xiahe) County, Gansu Province, and became partially paralyzed as a result of being beaten during an interrogation soon after his arrest. His condition subsequently deteriorated and during the year he was being held at a prison medical facility in a condition of "half paralysis" and with damage in both eyes. Sources told Free Tibet that Buddhist monk Tsultrim Gyatso, arrested in 2008, suffered permanent eye damage and trauma after being beaten severely during prison interrogations, and that he was transferred to a hospital for emergency surgery.

In May the Voice of America Tibetan Service reported on a journal it obtained from a former inmate of the Sog County "reform through re-education center" in Nagchu Prefecture, TAR. The former inmate wrote, "Those whom officials didn't like would be captured and tortured with electric devices. When they became unconscious, [the torturers] would splash water on their faces until their victims regained consciousness. After doing that for a long time, they would use a black rubber tube as well as an electric baton to torture people."

In July Radio Free Asia's Tibetan Service reported that between May and July authorities removed approximately 3,500 monks and nuns from Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute in Sichuan Province to undergo political indoctrination at detention centers in their home counties in the TAR. A Tibetan exile told the news service some nuns were being held in Jomda (Jiangda) County, Chamdo (Changdu) Prefecture, TAR, where they learned and performed patriotic songs and dances praising the CCP and watched propaganda films each day. Authorities

forced the nuns to wear military clothing. If the nuns wept, authorities considered it evidence of disloyalty to the state and subjected them to severe punishments, including beatings, extending their confinement in the detention centers, and refusing permission for the nuns to receive gifts of food or clothing from visiting family members.

According to Radio Free Asia, Ngawang Gyaltsen, a monk from Sog County, Nagchu Prefecture, TAR, was released from prison in March. Local sources reported Ngawang, arrested in 2015, was repeatedly beaten and deprived of sleep and food while incarcerated on unknown charges. Following his release, he was forbidden to return to his monastery.

Nuns who had been released from detention told the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy there were instances in which authorities subjected nuns who had been forcibly removed from Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute to sexual assault and sexual violence. Voice of America reported that in a journal it obtained from a former inmate of the Sog County detention center in Nagchu Prefecture, TAR, the writer wrote that officers fondled the breasts of nuns who had fainted during military training and lay in the nuns' cells "pressing unconscious nuns underneath."

Limited access to information made it difficult to ascertain the exact number of individuals imprisoned because of their religious beliefs or affiliation, or to determine the charges brought against them or assess the extent and severity of abuses they suffered. The Congressional-Executive Commission on China examined publicly available information and, as of November 7, its Political Prisoner Database (PPD) contained 273 records of Tibetans known or believed to be currently detained or imprisoned by authorities in violation of international human rights standards. Of those, 122 were reported to be current or former monks, nuns, or lamas. Of the 115 cases for which there was information on sentencing, punishments ranged from one year and three months to life imprisonment. Observers, including commission staff, stated they believed the actual number of Tibetan political prisoners and detainees to be much higher, but the lack of access to prisoners and prisons, as well as the lack of reliable official statistics, made a precise determination difficult. Authorities continued to hold an unknown number of persons in pretrial detention facilities and in "reeducation centers" rather than prisons. Human rights groups reported extensions of pretrial detention periods were common for Tibetans accused of engaging in prohibited political activities and on national security grounds, resulting in suspects spending long periods of time in jail without being formally charged or brought to trial.

Security officials could confine citizens to reeducation centers without formal legal procedures. Local sources said stays in reeducation centers could last more than one year.

Media sources reported local officials in Tibetan areas explicitly stated supporters of the Dalai Lama and other religious leaders could be arrested under the government's nationwide anti-organized crime program, and that Tibetans were told to inform on anyone who "links up with the Dalai clique." In September a Tibetan living in exile told Radio Free Asia that authorities in Qinghai Province had expanded the government's "anti-gang" campaign to include wider suppression of political activities by Tibetans.

According to the ICT, Choekyi, a monk from Phugu Monastery in Kardze (Ganzi) TAP, Sichuan Province, was released on January 18, five months before the end of his four-year sentence, due to poor health. During his imprisonment, authorities reportedly subjected Choekyi to hard labor and solitary confinement and denied him healthcare. Choekyi was arrested in 2015 for wearing a t-shirt with Tibetan writing celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday and posting birthday wishes on social media, and charged with conducting "separatist activities." According to local sources, following his release, authorities allowed him to receive medical treatment but kept him under surveillance and barred him from returning to his monastery.

The Indian news outlet *The Print* reported on February 12 that satellite imagery from September, October, and November 2018 showed what it said were three large-scale reeducation centers under construction in the TAR. The report said that the imagery showed that these centers included high walls, double-wire fencing, guard posts, and large barracks-style buildings.

According to Radio Free Asia, authorities detained a Tibetan man identified as Wangchen on April 29 after he recited prayers and shouted slogans calling for the release of the 11th Panchen Lama. Wangchen was accused of making "a conspicuous protest in public" and sentenced to four years and six months in prison. In addition, Wangchen's aunt, Acha Dolkar, was sentenced to 15 months in prison for helping to share news of Wangchen's protest with contacts outside the region, while two other Tibetans identified as Lobsang and Yonten were each fined renminbi (RMB) 15,000 (\$2,200) and ordered to attend political reeducation classes on "issues of national security" for six months.

According to Free Tibet, authorities sentenced Lodoe Gyatso (also spelled Gyamtso) to 18 years in prison in March for praising the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach during a protest in Lhasa in 2018. The Middle Way Approach is the Dalai Lama's proposal that Tibet remain part of the PRC while giving Tibetans what the Dalai Lama described as "a means to achieve a genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet within the framework of the People's Republic of China." Free Tibet reported that Lodoe, who was sentenced in a secret trial after being held in pretrial detention for 15 months, had previously served a total of 23 years in prison for two previous convictions related to dissident activities. His wife, who filmed the protest, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

In July sources told Radio Free Asia that approximately 70 monks and nuns who had been evicted from Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute during the year were being held in a detention center in Jomda County, Chamdo Prefecture, TAR, where they were "undergoing thorough political reeducation." The sources said, "As soon as they are brought to the detention centers, their cellphones are confiscated, rendering them incommunicado with the outside world... The monks and nuns are forced to wear the clothes of laypersons at the detention center and the Chinese authorities make them denounce the Dalai Lama on a daily basis, as well as memorize political propaganda, which they are later tested on."

The government continued to place restrictions on the size of Buddhist monasteries and other institutions and to implement a campaign begun in 2016 to evict monks and nuns from monasteries. While exact numbers were difficult to ascertain, human rights groups and local sources said that since 2016 authorities evicted between 6,000 and 17,000 Tibetan and Han Chinese monks and nuns from Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes, both in Kardze TAP, Sichuan Province. Monastics expelled from Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes were specifically prohibited from transferring to other monasteries to continue their religious education.

According to the NGO Human Rights Watch and local sources, since 2016, the government evicted approximately three-quarters of the 20,000 Tibetan and Han Chinese monks and nuns who lived at Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute, the world's largest Tibetan Buddhist institute. Radio Free Asia reported that since 2001, authorities have demolished an estimated 7,000 residences in what the government reportedly stated were efforts to prevent fires and promote crowd control. According to the online media source Buddhistdoor Global, in June 2017, a senior abbot at Larung Gar said 4,725 monastic dwellings had been torn down

over the course of one year. Local sources stated the destruction was to clear the way for tourist infrastructure and to prevent nuns, monks, and laypersons, particularly ethnic Han Chinese, from studying at the institute. Reportedly, in hopes of saving the institute, Larung Gar's monastic leadership continued to advise residents not to protest the demolitions and urged them to "behave appropriately in their actions and their speech."

The government continued its program of evicting residents and destroying dwellings at Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute. In July Radio Free Asia reported that according to one source, "The Chinese authorities have ordered that the number of monks and nuns staying at Yachen Gar not exceed more than 4,700, and because of that many monks and nuns have been evicted from the institute." Local sources estimated that 3,500 monastics were removed in May and an additional 3,600 removed by July. Another source said, "Those monks and nuns who were forcefully returned to their birthplaces have now been rounded up by local Chinese police and made to attend political re-education classes [at detention centers] in their hometowns." Local sources reported authorities prohibited monks and nuns expelled from Yachen Gar from joining any other monastery or nunnery in the area or participating in any public religious practices.

Exact figures of the extent of destruction could not be obtained because authorities denied visitors, including foreign diplomats, access to the Yachen Gar complex. Satellite images taken August 24 obtained by Free Tibet and photos from local sources obtained by Radio Free Asia both showed nearly half the residences of Yachen Gar destroyed since previous images were taken in April 2018. A local source told Radio Free Asia that starting on July 19, within a few days authorities demolished at least 100 dwellings that had previously housed nuns.

The government continued its policy of resettling previously nomadic Tibetans in government-subsidized housing units. In many areas, these were located near township and county government seats or along major roads, and had no nearby monasteries where resettled villagers could worship. The government prohibited construction of new temples in these areas without prior approval. Traditionally, Tibetan villages were clustered around monasteries, which provided religious and other services to members of the community. Many Tibetans reportedly continued to view such measures as CCP and government efforts to dilute religious belief and weaken the ties between monasteries and communities. According to Tibetan author Tsering Woesser, the absence of "temples, stupas, or resident monks in these 'modern' settlements prevents Tibetans from overcoming their feelings of emptiness and dislocation following resettlement."

Media and human rights groups reported that on January 7, the government announced a formal five-year plan to continue to “Sinicize” all religious groups in China by emphasizing loyalty to the CCP and the state. This plan includes Tibetan Buddhism, with the involvement of the state-run BAC. ICT president Matteo Mecacci said in July, “The five-year campaign to ‘Sinicize’ Buddhism is a much more systematic imposition of Communist Party priorities than we have seen before, striking at the very core of a religious philosophy based on moral, compassionate values. Sinicization not only targets the trappings of religious practice, such as large teachings, but also represents a far-reaching intrusion into people’s inner lives by a repressive government, contracting the space for genuine religious practice and freedom.”

The government continued a policy introduced in 2018 requiring Tibetan monks and nuns to undergo political training in state ideology. Monks and nuns were required to demonstrate – in addition to competence in religious studies – “political reliability,” “moral integrity capable of impressing the public,” and willingness to “play an active role at critical moments.” Since the policy’s inception, many major monasteries and religious institutes implemented political training programs.

Local authorities invoked regulations concerning safeguarding national unity and responding to “religious extremism” to monitor individuals, groups, and institutions, and to punish adherents of religious leaders such as the Dalai Lama.

One local source told the ICT the Sinicization campaign had intensified in recent years and was “unbearable” for monks and nuns. The source said, “It is now much stronger and penetrates religious life more deeply, bring[ing] immense difficulties for the religious community, for instance the legal education exams that involve thousands of monks and nuns, and which involve study and questions, and a whole process.”

The government continued to control the selection of Tibetan Buddhist lamas and supervision of their religious and political education. According to media and NGO reports, the CCP maintained a list of state-approved “living buddhas.” Such individuals reportedly continued to undergo training on patriotism and the CCP’s socialist political system. In 2018 the BAC announced its database contained 1,311 “living buddhas” that it deemed “authentic.” In September a Tibetan academic told *The Irish Times* that to be included in the database, monks were required to go through an indoctrination process in which they were trained to promote love of the CCP and social harmony, and fight against the Dalai Lama and

other “splittists.” In 2018 the BAC announced its database of 1,311 “living buddhas” that it deemed “authentic” was nearly complete. The Dalai Lama was reportedly not on the list.

According to one Tibetan source, “every single individual now on the official reincarnation database has to go through an entire political procedure, entirely separate to a religious training, in which they are advised about the need for their career and role in the religious community to motivate religious believers to love the party, love the country and social stability maintenance work, as well as fight against ‘separatism’ and the Dalai Lama. . . . This means that now the Tibetan reincarnations are becoming Communist-trained talents rather than religious leaders.” Religious leaders continued to report that authorities were incentivizing lamas and monks to leave monastic life voluntarily by emphasizing the attributes of secular life as compared to the more disciplined and austere religious life. Monastery leaders cited continued revisions to education policies, religion regulations, and government control of monastery management as reasons for declining numbers of young monks. Religious leaders and scholars said these and other means of interference continued to cause them concern about the ability of religious traditions to survive for successive generations.

Multiple sources reported open veneration of the Dalai Lama, including the display of his photograph, remained prohibited in almost all areas. The government continued also to ban pictures of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama and nearly all Tibetan Buddhists recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama. In certain counties of the TAR, punishments for displaying images of the Dalai Lama included expulsion from monasteries. In October the India-based Tibetan magazine *Contact* reported authorities routinely detained individuals for possessing a photo of the Dalai Lama.

The TAR CCP committee and the government required all monasteries to display prominently the Chinese flag and the portraits of five CCP chairmen, from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping. Local sources told Radio Free Asia that officials from government bureaus monitoring religious practice visited Tibetan schools and warned teachers and students not to keep or display photos of the Dalai Lama.

According to Free Tibet, following a January 9-13 meeting of the People’s Congress of the TAR, officials ordered citizens to place shrines to Chairman Xi and other CCP leaders in their homes, replacing altars venerating religious figures, and also required them to prostrate themselves in front of those portraits.

Authorities reportedly told Tibetans government subsidies and aid – including money for school fees and groceries – would cease if they failed to comply.

According to Tibet Watch and local sources, while households in more remote areas had previously generally been able to circumvent the prohibition against displaying the Dalai Lama's portrait, authorities were increasingly demanding they replace it with portraits of Chairman Xi and Chairman Mao as part of the Sinicization drive. According to Tibet Watch, "In certain areas, officials go house to house to check that [the CCP portraits] are on the altar." In January Free Tibet reproduced photographs originally posted on state media of home shrines displaying portraits of CCP leaders. One photograph showed a Tibetan family smiling in their home in front of a shrine to CCP leaders. Another showed a Tibetan man holding up a *khata* (prayer scarf) before a home shrine displaying CCP leaders, including Chairman Xi and Chairman Mao.

A Tibetan living in exile told Radio Free Asia in June that in Arte village in Tsolho (Hainan) TAP, Qinghai Province, authorities promised RMB 6,000 (\$860) to more than 30 families to hang Chairman Xi's portrait in a prominent place in their homes. According to the source, Xi's portrait must be placed as high as any picture of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, the traditional winter home of the Dalai Lama. The source said, "The families are choosing to do this because they need the money to survive, but they regret this immensely."

NGO groups and other sources reported that in August TAR government officials hung a banner outside Shalu Temple in Shigatse (Xigaze) Prefecture, TAR, prohibiting CCP members and all persons under age 18 from entering. Officials also required the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa to hang a banner wishing the CCP to last 10,000 years. A Tibetan exile living in Great Britain posted a photograph of the banner on Twitter on September 16. Monasteries and schools throughout the region were required to display additional Chinese flags and patriotic banners throughout the year.

Chinese official state media released a video on September 22 showing monks at Jambaling Monastery in Chamdo Prefecture, TAR, participating in a choreographed ceremony celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the CCP. In the video, the monks and worshipers waived Chinese flags and sang patriotic songs praising the CCP. The video showed monks hoisting a Chinese flag on the rooftop of the monastery and hanging *thangkas* (devotional wall hangings) with images of five Chinese leaders on the monastery wall. According to Free Tibet, at an event marking the release of the video, Tsering Norbu, Secretary of the

Party Committee of Jambaling Monastery's Management Committee, said all monks "should be grateful, feel the party, listen to the party, and go with the party," in addition to adhering to the socialist system and the party's vision for Tibetan Buddhism. Free Tibet reported that at the same event, Tsunglo-Shamba Khedu, Vice Chairman of the TAR and abbot of the Jambaling Monastery, told the monks present "they should bravely stand up and expose the 14th Dalai Lama's reactionary thoughts," and that monks should be a model of patriotism and love for the party. Students and monks across Tibetan areas were instructed to participate in national day events praising the CCP. NGOs reported at least five Tibetans were arrested for refusing to take part in official National Day events.

The CCP continued to forbid its members from participating in religious activities of any kind, despite reports that many local government officials and CCP members held religious beliefs. The TAR regional government punished CCP members who followed the Dalai Lama, secretly harbored religious beliefs, made pilgrimages to India, or sent their children to study with exiled Tibetans.

In accordance with official guidelines for monastery management, the leadership of and membership in committees and working groups remained restricted to individuals the guidelines described as "politically reliable, patriotic, and devoted monks, nuns, and party and government officials." General administrative affairs in TAR monasteries, which monks traditionally managed, were instead overseen by monastery management committees and monastic government working groups, both of which were composed primarily of government officials and CCP members, in addition to a few government-approved monks. Since 2011, the government has established such groups in all monasteries in the TAR and in many major monasteries in other Tibetan areas.

The traditional monastic system reportedly continued to decline as many senior Buddhist teachers remained in exile or died in India or elsewhere. The heads of most major schools of Tibetan Buddhism – including the Dalai Lama, Karmapa, Sakya Trizin, and Khatok Getse Rinpoche, as well as Bon leader Kyabje Menr Trizin – all continued to reside in exile. The government also banned India-trained Tibetan monks, most of whom received their education from the Dalai Lama or those with ties to him, from teaching in Tibetan monasteries in China, although there were reportedly rare exceptions made for pro-government monks.

As in previous years, senior monks at some monasteries continued to report informal agreements with local officials whereby resident monks would not stage

protests or commit self-immolations as long as the government adopted a hands-off approach to the management of their monasteries.

Sources said authorities monitored all financial transactions involving monasteries inside Tibet and entities abroad.

The government continued to insist that Gyaltzen Norbu, whom it selected in 1995, was the Panchen Lama's true reincarnation, and not Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, whom authorities had disappeared that same year. Norbu remained the vice president of, and highest ranking Tibetan in, the government-affiliated BAC. The state media outlet Xinhua News Agency reported that on June 22, Norbu was elected president of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Branch of the BAC. According to numerous Tibetan Buddhist monks and scholars, SARA and provincial religious affairs bureau officials frequently pressured monks and laypersons, including government officials, to attend religious study sessions presided over by Gyaltzen Norbu.

The pro-government media outlet *Global Times* reported that in August in Lhasa approximately 100 monks from 73 monasteries attended a training session on reincarnation of a living Buddha, presided over by Norbu and organized by the government-sponsored TAR branch of the BAC, the Institute of Socialism, and regional authorities in charge of religious affairs. According to *Global Times*, at the session, Suolang Renzeng, deputy chief of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee, told trainees the reincarnation system "is never a religious-only issue or a living Buddha's personal right," but an important representation of the CCP's strategies and policies in the region. Bianba Lamu (Tibetan: Pempa Lhamo), head of the South Asia Institute of the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences, told *Global Times* the training could educate key figures in Tibetan Buddhism to lead the religion in the direction of better compatibility with socialist society. The ICT said the training was part of the government's efforts to control the succession of the Dalai Lama.

Reuters reported that in March foreign ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said, "[R]eincarnations, including that of the Dalai Lama, should observe the country's laws and regulations and follow the rituals and history of religion." In a July interview with the India-based media outlet Daily News and Analysis, Wang Neng Shang, vice minister of the TAR and director general of the People's Government Information Office, said the selection of the next Dalai Lama was not the current Dalai Lama's to make, but must be recognized by the central government in Beijing, adding, "The centrality of the central government must be recognized."

Human rights groups said these comments reflected the CCP's continued efforts to interfere with the succession of the Dalai Lama.

Sources continued to report that while authorities permitted some traditional religious ceremonies and practices, they continued to exercise control over the activities of religious leaders and religious gatherings of laypersons, confining many such activities to officially designated places of worship, restricting or canceling religious festivals, and preventing monks from traveling to villages for politically sensitive events and religious ceremonies. Sources said clergy could not travel freely between monasteries or go on pilgrimages.

Local sources said the government continued to suppress religious activities it viewed as vehicles for political dissent. There were reports that local authorities again ordered many monasteries and laypersons not to celebrate or organize any public gatherings to celebrate the Dalai Lama's 84th birthday on July 6, or to commemorate the anniversary of the March 10, 1959, Tibetan uprising or the March 14, 2008, outbreak of unrest across the Tibetan Plateau. TAR authorities banned monks and nuns from leaving their monasteries and nunneries during such times, and pilgrimage sites were heavily policed. According to local sources, Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu provincial authorities warned major monasteries in Tibetan areas, including Labrang, Amchok, and Bora Monasteries, that those holding special events or celebrations would face unspecified "severe consequences." Local sources reported that in July religious affairs officials instructed senior monks at Kirti, Karzde, Draggo, and Tawu Monasteries in Kardze TAP, Sichuan Province, not to celebrate the Dalai Lama's birthday. As a result, the monks did not organize any public celebrations. One source told Radio Free Asia that authorities forced students to attend classes on March 10, a Sunday, and on July 6, a Saturday, as part of efforts to keep them from marking these anniversaries. The source said, "Preventing Tibetan students from visiting places of worship and from taking part in religious festivals is a deliberate attempt by the Chinese government to separate them from the influence of Tibetan religion and culture[.] This is an effort to Sinicize young Tibetans at an early age."

According to local sources, authorities deployed the military to monitor pilgrims and worshipers at prayer festivals in the TAR and other Tibetan areas. A man told Radio Free Asia the presence of armed, uniformed police and plain-clothes officers during sensitive political and religious anniversaries was so pervasive that Tibetans considered it "a part of their daily lives." During Lunar New Year celebrations in February, multiple local sources reported authorities again deployed military forces at prayer ceremonies at Drepung, Sera, and Gandan Monasteries in the TAR, and

at Draggo, Kirti, and Tawu Monasteries in Sichuan Province. In August the government again banned the annual Dechen Shedrub prayer festival from occurring at Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute. As they did in 2018, authorities cited overcrowding, unfinished reconstruction of the partially demolished site, and fire safety concerns as reasons for the ban. The ban marked the fourth consecutive year the government prohibited the 22-year-old festival from taking place.

Radio Free Asia reported that authorities in Lhasa banned students, schools officials, and government employees from taking part in the Ganden Ngachoe festival on December 20-21. The festival commemorated the 600th anniversary of the death of Tsongkhapa, the 14th century founder of the Gelugpa school of Buddhism, of which the Dalai Lama is now the leader. One source told Radio Free Asia parents were being held responsible for their children's compliance with the ban.

The TAR government reportedly maintained tight control over the use of Tibetan Buddhist religious relics and declared them, religious buildings, and religious institutions to be state property.

According to Human Rights Watch, the department under the TAR party committee in charge of overseeing retired government employees issued an official notice requiring TAR party and government officials, including nonparty members, to submit a list by August 18 of any retired personnel performing the *kora*, a Tibetan practice of circumambulating a sacred site or temple while reciting prayers or mantras. The practice is a standard form of religious devotion among Tibetan Buddhists, particularly the elderly, for whom it is often a daily religious practice as well as a form of exercise. Those named faced potential loss of pensions and social benefits.

According to sources, security forces continued to block access to and from important monasteries during politically sensitive events and religious anniversaries. Radio Free Asia reported police maintained heavy security during the Shoton festival held from August 30 through September 5 in Lhasa. There were large numbers of uniformed and plain-clothes police monitoring crowds of worshippers. Officials delivered speeches at the festival denouncing the Dalai Lama and urging attendees to be loyal to the CCP.

On February 15, Tibet Watch reported authorities in Serthar County, Sichuan Province, and Markham County, Chamdo Prefecture, TAR, as well as in Lhasa,

denied government employees time off to celebrate Losar, the Tibetan New Year festival typically celebrated with visits to temples and pilgrimages, and prohibited them from visiting monasteries during the event. Some major temples were closed for much of the 15-day Losar holiday, while other religious sites had a marked increase in military presence. Tibet Watch said in Markham County and Chamdo Prefecture, TAR, police and military personnel were stationed in the streets. The NGO posted a photo on its website showing police blocking the gate of the Lhasa Tsuklakhang Shrine, also known as the Jokhang Shrine, Tibet's holiest shrine, during Losar.

There were reports that party leaders and branches of the UFWD, SARA, and the state-controlled BAC continued to station party and government officials, including security agents, in monasteries in Tibetan areas. Provincial, prefectural, county, and local governments continued to establish police stations or security offices adjacent to or on the premises of many monasteries and nunneries. While no updated statistics were available, sources estimated that in 2018 more than 15,000 government employees were working in approximately 3,000 Tibetan monasteries. One source told Radio Free Asia approximately 600 Chinese officials were permanently stationed at Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute to “maintain a tight watch” over the monks and nuns who remained and check all outside visitors. The source said authorities strictly monitored and restricted travel to and from the institute.

According to human rights groups and local sources, authorities continued to install overt camera surveillance systems at monasteries. On July 12, the ICT posted on its website an image of surveillance cameras in a control room in Kirti Monastery in Ngaba TAP, Sichuan Province. The image showed 35 separate monitors displaying different areas of the compound and the roads surrounding it.

A local source told Radio Free Asia that during the year, authorities built walls around large sections of Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute and put in place three checkpoints to prevent unauthorized entry. According to the source, “The arrivals and departures of monks and nuns are closely monitored, and they are kept under strict surveillance around the clock.” The source told Radio Free Asia that in a speech to monks and nuns at the institute on April 16, senior teacher Khenpo Tsultrim Lodroe said, “Almost any kind of problem may be encountered if we don't exercise necessary caution and care.”

According to many sources in Ngaba TAP, Sichuan Province, officials continued to maintain a security watch list of family members, relatives, and close friends of

self-immolators to prevent them from meeting and communicating with international visitors and, in some cases, deprived them of public benefits.

Sources stated that during the year, local authorities increased scrutiny of social media postings. A local source told Radio Free Asia, “Chinese authorities are closely monitoring discussions on WeChat, and are quick to intervene.” The source told Radio Free Asia that in July authorities detained Rinso, a Tibetan from Thangkor Township, Sichuan, after he posted a photo of the Dalai Lama on WeChat.

Multiple Tibetan rights advocacy NGOs reported that in February, TAR officials issued guidance to monks entitled “The 20 Prohibitions” forbidding monks from using social media to “incite subversion, defame or insult others, assist extremist religious groups, provide undisclosed information of the state to domestic or foreign individuals or organizations, or receive or release illegal information.” TAR government offices also announced that those who misused social media could be imprisoned for up to eight years. In August Tsering Tsomo, director of the India-based Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, told Radio Free Asia the TAR government also increased its cash awards from RMB 1,000 (\$140) in 2018 to RMB 300,000 (\$43,100) for information about social media users “advocating extremism,” including those who expressed support for the Dalai Lama’s Middle Way policy.

Free Tibet reported that on March 13, during a press conference, Tsetan Dorjee, abbot of Sera Monastery, told an audience of 320 monks, monastic party members, and public security officials connected to the monastery to comply with the “20 Prohibitions.” According to Free Tibet, members of the monastery’s management committee emphasized the need for all monks to show gratitude to the CCP and reject separatism.

Free Tibet reported the government continued to interfere in the religious education of laypersons. Authorities in Nangchen (Nangqen) County, Yushu (Yuxu) TAP, Qinghai Province, required monks to stop all classes with children, warning that monks and parents would be punished if classes continued. Authorities stated such classes were harmful, saying the government must oversee “ideological education for children and youth, firmly upholding the leading role of the party and government in education.” According to *Contact*, “For many Tibetan students, Buddhism can only be studied in a language that is not Tibetan.” According to Tibet Watch and *Global Times*, during the summer, schools in Gyantse (Gyangze) County, Shigatse Prefecture, TAR, began using a new textbook

which characterized life under the Dalai Lama's pre-1959 leadership as oppressive. Tibet Watch criticized the textbook as a tool of "greater suppression in Tibet."

Media reported that during the year, provincial officials in the TAR and in Qinghai Province again banned all underage students from participating in religious activities during school holidays. School officials required students to sign an agreement stating they would not participate in any form of religious activity during the summer.

According to the ICT, on December 31, at the start of the two-month winter break, the Lhasa Chengguan Haicheng Elementary School sent a directive to parents stating, "Students are not allowed to participate in any form of religious activity during the break, and in principle long-distance travel with students is not allowed." Tibetan rights advocates interpreted the prohibition on travel as an effort by authorities to stop parents from taking their children to visit temples outside the capital during the break. The directive stated, "In the event of an accident, all consequences are the responsibility of the parents." According to ICT, this was the third year in a row Lhasa school authorities had imposed the ban. There were reports that similar directives were issued elsewhere in Tibet.

According to NGO reports, authorities continued "patriotic reeducation" campaigns at many monasteries and nunneries across the Tibetan Plateau. All monks and nuns were required to participate in several sessions of "legal education" per year, during which they were required to denounce the Dalai Lama, express allegiance to the government-recognized Panchen Lama, study Xi Jinping's speeches, learn Mandarin, and hear lectures praising the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system.

In April, as part of a five-year training program initiated in 2018, 179 religious figures from the TAR attended a training session at the Regional Socialist College. According to the TAR office of the UFWD, during the session, participants were called upon to improve their political awareness and show loyalty to the CCP. The training program used specially developed curricula to reinforce government religious policies. On May 6, government officials conducted an eight-day training session for 100 monks and nuns in Driru (Biru) County, Nagchu Prefecture, TAR. The training's stated purpose was to strengthen participants' "recognition of the party and understanding of socialist values."

Free Tibet reported in May that approximately 30,000 Tibetan monks and nuns at Sera, Ganden, and Drepung Monasteries in Lhasa, as well as at other locations in

the TAR, were required to take tests on Chinese law that included questions on religious affairs, national security, and anti-terrorism laws. The program, run by the UFWD, also included training on how to resist the Dalai Lama and Tibetan separatism. According to Free Tibet, individuals were threatened with detention and other penalties if they did not participate. Senior officials, including Deputy Director of the District People's Congress Xu Xueguang, conducted inspections of the monasteries while exams were underway.

Authorities banned minors under age 18 from participating in any monastic training. Multiple sources reported authorities forced underage monks and nuns to leave their monasteries and Buddhist schools to receive "patriotic education." Journalists reported that some underage monks who refused to cooperate were arrested and, in some cases, beaten by police, and that parents and other family members were also threatened with loss of social benefits if underage monks did not comply. In May Sichuan provincial law enforcement officials announced police would forcibly remove all underage monks and nuns from all monasteries in the province.

According to Radio Free Asia, a local source said that in April authorities notified senior monks at Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute that no new enrollments would be allowed and ordered no new residents be admitted to live and study there. The source said, "If the institute learns that any new residents have been admitted, those enrollees are to be turned away immediately." The source said authorities warned that failure to comply with government orders would lead to harsh policies being imposed.

Radio Free Asia reported that authorities forced Tibetan college graduates seeking government jobs to denounce the Dalai Lama and display loyalty to the CCP in order to be considered for government positions.

Government officials regularly denigrated the Dalai Lama publicly and accused the "Dalai clique" and other "outside forces" of instigating Tibetan protests, stating such acts were attempts to "split" China. In May Zhu Weiqun, the former head of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said government took the position that it was impossible to talk to the Dalai Lama without preconditions. Zhu criticized the Dalai Lama for being a "loyal instrument of international anti-China forces." In official statements, government officials often likened supporters of the Dalai Lama to terrorists and gang members. In March the TAR Communist Party Committee published a series of articles criticizing the Dalai Lama and accusing him of being

a “loyal instrument of anti-Chinese forces” who was instigating violence within Tibet.

The state media outlet Xinhua News Agency reported that from May 25 to 27, Wang Yang, the fourth-highest ranking member of the Politburo Standing Committee and head of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, visited Kardze TAP, Sichuan Province, where he told a symposium it was necessary to comprehensively implement the CCP’s basic guidelines for religious work and to guide the religious community to consciously support the CCP and patriotism. Wang also said it was necessary to defend against “the infiltration of foreign hostile forces,” which the ICT said was a reference to the Dalai Lama and Tibetans outside Tibet.

In April TAR CCP Secretary Wu Yingjie instructed party members to “eliminate the negative impact from the Dalai Lama on religion and effectively guide the monks, nuns, and religious followers to rally around the party.”

Authorities continued in state media to justify interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by associating the monasteries with “separatism” and pro-independence activities. During an inspection tour of the TAR in June, former director of the UFWD Zhu Weiqun stated the government would “strongly oppose and resolutely crack down on any separatist force in the name of ethnicity or religion, which are mainly organized by the Dalai clique.”

According to local sources, authorities continued to hinder Tibetan Buddhist monasteries from carrying out environmental protection activities, an important part of traditional Tibetan Buddhist practices, due to fear such activities could create a sense of pride among Tibetans, particularly children, and an awareness of their distinctness from Chinese culture.

In October the PRC and the government of Nepal signed the Boundary Management System Agreement, which contained a provision that would require both countries to hand over citizens who have illegally crossed the Nepal-China border. Tibetan advocacy groups said they were concerned this provision could be used to return long-staying Tibetan refugees to the PRC from Nepal, and the groups also stated that the provision was potentially in conflict with Nepal’s international commitments under the Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well the so-called “gentlemen’s agreement” with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and India.

Religious figures and laypersons frequently reported continued difficulty traveling to monasteries outside their home region, both within the TAR and in other parts of China. Travelers said they encountered an increased number of roadblocks and police checkpoints surrounding major monasteries, with security personnel often checking their identity cards and refusing entry to nonresidents. Tibetans wishing to visit family members residing in monasteries noted frequent refusals or limits on their ability to visit. A senior monk visiting relatives in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, was forced to remain in his hotel room for the entirety of his trip. Other local sources reported similar restrictions on their movements and said checkpoints and fear of detention prevented them from visiting monasteries and participating in religious events. Many monks expelled from their TAR monasteries after the 2008 Lhasa riots and from Kirti Monastery after a series of self-immolations from 2009 to 2015 had not returned, some because of government prohibitions.

Many Tibetans, including monks, nuns, and laypersons, reported difficulties traveling to India for religious training, meetings with religious leaders, or to visit family members living within monasteries. In many cases, Public Security Bureau officials refused to approve their passport applications. In other cases, prospective travelers were able to obtain passports only after paying bribes to local officials. Some individuals seeking to travel elsewhere said they could only obtain passports after promising not to travel to India or to criticize government policies in Tibetan areas while overseas. In some cases family members were required to sign a guarantee that passport applicants would return from their overseas travel. Sichuan Province and TAR officials continued to require religious travelers returning from India to attend political training sessions. According to sources, these restrictions had prevented thousands of Tibetans from attending religious training in India. One senior Tibetan leader in India estimating “only a handful” of Chinese Tibetans visited India during the year, down from over 10,000 per year prior to 2014. According to local sources, numerous Tibetans in Gansu, Qinghai, and Sichuan Provinces waited up to 10 years to receive a passport, often without any explanation for the delay. There were also instances of authorities confiscating and canceling previously issued passports, reportedly as a way of preventing Tibetans from participating in religious events involving the Dalai Lama in India.

Restrictions remained in place for monks and nuns living in exile, particularly those in India, which made it difficult or impossible for them to travel into Tibetan areas. Tibetans who returned from India reported facing difficulties finding employment or receiving religious or secular education. Returning Tibetans were not allowed to study at Chinese monasteries and most were denied admission to secular schools because they did not have education certificates recognized by the

government. Local sources said they were subject to additional government scrutiny as a result of having relatives at religious institutions in India.

According to sources, authorities in some areas continued to enforce special restrictions on Tibetans staying at hotels inside and outside the TAR. Police regulations forbade some hotels and guesthouses in the TAR from accepting Tibetan guests, particularly monks and nuns, and required other hotels to notify police departments when Tibetan guests checked in.

On March 7, *Time Magazine* published a profile of the Dalai Lama and world leaders in which it said the government was attempting to exert political and economic pressure on foreign governments to avoid meeting with him. Media reported government officials canceled several exchange programs and criticized the mayor of Prague, Zdenek Hrib, after he flew a Tibetan flag above city hall and hosted Central Tibetan Administration President Lobsang Sangay in March.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because expressions of Tibetan identity and religion are often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents as being solely based on religion. Tibetans, particularly those who wore traditional and religious attire, regularly reported incidents in which they were denied hotel rooms, avoided by taxis, and discriminated against in employment or in business transactions.

Media reported that on September 30, 15 Tibetan monks from Golok (Guoluo) TAP, Qinghai Province, attempted to check in to a hotel in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, but the management told them ethnic minorities were not allowed to stay in hotels downtown and summoned the police, who checked their IDs, and ordered them to go to the Tibetan area of Chengdu immediately.

Many Han Buddhists continued to demonstrate interest in Tibetan Buddhism and donated money to Tibetan monasteries and nunneries, according to local sources in such monasteries and nunneries. Tibetan Buddhist monks frequently visited Chinese cities to provide religious instruction to Han Buddhists. In addition, a growing number of Han Buddhists visited Tibetan monasteries, although officials sometimes imposed restrictions that made it difficult for Han Buddhists to conduct long-term study at many monasteries in Tibetan areas.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

U.S. officials repeatedly raised concerns about religious freedom in Tibet with Chinese government counterparts at multiple levels. U.S. officials, including the Vice President, Secretary of State, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, the Ambassador to China, the Consul General in Chengdu, and other officers in both the consulate general in Chengdu and the embassy in Beijing continued sustained and concerted efforts to advocate for the rights of Tibetans to preserve, practice, teach, and develop their religious traditions and language without interference from the government. U.S. embassy and consulate officials regularly expressed concerns to the Chinese government at senior levels, including central government and provincial leaders, regarding severe restrictions imposed on Tibetans' ability to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including religious freedom and cultural rights. The Ambassador pressed TAR officials on the government's refusal to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama; the Consul General in Chengdu raised concerns about the ongoing demolition campaigns at Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes. U.S. officials continued to underscore that only the Dalai Lama and other faith leaders can decide the succession of the Dalai Lama, and also raised concerns about the continued disappearance of the Panchen Lama. In addition to raising systemic issues such as impediments to passport issuance to Tibetans, U.S. officials expressed concern and sought further information about individual cases and incidents of religious persecution and discrimination, and sought increased access to the TAR for U.S. officials, journalists, and tourists, including religious pilgrims and those traveling for religious purposes.

Although diplomatic access to the TAR remained tightly controlled, U.S. officials obtained limited access during the year. The Ambassador visited the TAR in May, the first U.S. ambassador to do so since 2015. While in Lhasa, he met with local leaders, religious figures, and students, and visited several important religious sites. In these forums, he encouraged substantive dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama and greater openness for foreigners to visit Tibetan areas. He also reiterated that the succession of the Dalai Lama is a religious process that should not be interfered with by any government.

During the year, authorities also granted permission for four official visits to the TAR by the Consul General in Chengdu and other officials from the embassy and the consulate general in Chengdu in March, April, October, and December. U.S. officials emphasized to TAR officials during their visits the importance of respecting religious freedom in Tibet.

During the year the Consul General in Chengdu submitted three requests to Sichuan provincial authorities to visit Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes, but all were denied. While limited tourist access was possible at Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute, no foreign officials or foreign media were allowed to visit. No visitors were allowed to Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute during the year.

In October the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom traveled to Dharamsala, India, where he met with the Dalai Lama. While there, he delivered remarks at the 60th anniversary celebration of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts focused on religious freedom, including the right of Tibetan Buddhists to select and venerate their own leaders, including the Dalai Lama.

On July 16-18 during the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C., the Vice President and Secretary of State highlighted the severe repression and discrimination Tibetan Buddhists faced due to their beliefs. The Vice President told ministerial attendees, “China’s oppression of Tibetan Buddhists goes back decades... [T]he American people will always stand in solidarity with the people of all faiths in the People’s Republic of China.” At the U.S. government’s invitation, Tibetan exile and survivor of religious persecution Nyima Lhamo, who fled China in 2016, addressed ministerial attendees. She spoke of the detention, sentencing, and death in prison of her uncle, Lama Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, and the treatment of Tibetan monks and nuns within China. She also called for greater religious freedom and foreign access to Tibetan areas. On July 17, Lhamo and other survivors of religious persecution met with the President.

The Office of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues continued to coordinate U.S. government efforts to preserve Tibet’s distinct religious, linguistic, and cultural identity as well as efforts to promote dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama. On February 8, it organized a Losar New Year celebration at the Department of State for Tibetan Americans, diplomats, NGOs, and media. The Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Ngodup Tsering, the Dalai Lama’s representative for North America, addressed attendees.

U.S. officials maintained contact with a wide range of religious leaders and practitioners, as well as NGOs in Tibetan areas, to monitor the status of religious freedom, although travel and other restrictions made it difficult to visit and communicate with these individuals.

The embassy and consulates delivered direct messaging to the public about religious freedom in Tibet through social media posts on PRC-controlled Weibo and WeChat platforms, on Twitter, and on the embassy's official website, which is required to be hosted on a PRC server and registered in an official PRC domain. In addition to more than 100 general messages promoting religious freedom, over the course of the year the embassy and consulates published many social media messages about Tibet that directly and indirectly promoted the religious freedom of the Tibetan people. For example, in amplifying information about the Ambassador's trip to Tibet in May, the embassy and consulates emphasized his visits to monasteries and his discussions with Tibetan leaders, and quoted his direct statements in support of religious freedom for the people of Tibet, including his call for the Chinese government not to interfere with the succession of the Dalai Lama. During the July ministerial in Washington, the embassy emphasized participants' statements supporting religious freedom for the people of Tibet. Over the course of the year, statements from the Ambassador and others supporting religious freedom for Tibetans reached millions of Chinese social media users.

XINJIANG 2019 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

This separate section on the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is included given the scope and severity of reported religious freedom violations specific to the region this year.

The U.S. government estimated the People's Republic of China (PRC) government detained more than one million Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and members of other Muslim groups, as well as some Uighur Christians, in specially built internment camps or converted detention facilities in Xinjiang and subjected them to forced disappearance, political indoctrination, torture, psychological and physical and psychological abuse, including forced sterilization and sexual abuse, forced labor, and prolonged detention without trial because of their religion and ethnicity. Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) estimated the number being interred was higher. The whereabouts of hundreds of prominent Uighur intellectuals, doctors, journalists, artists, academics, and other professionals, in addition to many other citizens, who were arrested or detained remained unknown. There were reports of individuals dying as a result of injuries sustained during interrogations. In November the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and *The New York Times* reported on leaked internal PRC documents that describing the government's mass internment and surveillance programs, including a manual for operating internment camps with instructions on how to prevent escapes, how to maintain total secrecy about the camps' existence, and methods of forced indoctrination. A third document, the "Karakax List," originally leaked in November and later made public, presented evidence the government initially interned or extended the internment of individuals on religious grounds in four reeducation centers in Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture. Media reported that in 2018 courts sentenced 143,000 individuals to prison or other punishments, compared with 87,000 in 2017. During the year, the government continued to restrict access to and destroyed or desecrated mosques and other religious sites. Authorities maintained extensive and invasive security and surveillance, in part to gain information regarding individuals' religious adherence and practices. This surveillance included behavioral profiling, and forcing Uighurs to accept government officials and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members living in their homes and to install mandatory mobile spyware applications on their phones. The government continued to cite what it called the "three evils" of "ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism" as its justification to enact and enforce restrictions on religious practices of Muslims and non-Muslim

religious minorities. The government intensified use of detentions in furtherance of implementing a Xinjiang counterextremism regulation that identifies “extremist” behaviors (including growing beards, wearing headscarves, and abstaining from alcohol) and the National Counterterrorism Law, which addresses “religious extremism.” Authorities in Xinjiang punished individuals, including imams, for praying or studying the Quran, and donating to mosques; authorities demanded individuals remove religious symbols from their homes, and barred youths from participating in religious activities. Authorities barred many categories of persons from fasting, during Ramadan, including students, and considered observing the Ramadan fast and participating in the Hajj to be suspicious behavior. Satellite imagery and other sources indicated the government destroyed numerous mosques and other religious sites, and surveilled others. *The New York Times* reported that according to a 2017 policy document posted on the Ministry of Education’s website, nearly 40 percent of all elementary and middle school students – approximately half a million children – were separated from their families and placed in boarding schools where they studied ethnic Han culture, the Mandarin language, and CCP ideology. The government sought the forcible repatriation from foreign countries of Uighur and other Muslim citizens and detained some of those who returned. The government harassed, interrogated, and detained the family members of Uighur and other Muslim activists who criticized its treatment of religious and ethnic minorities in Xinjiang.

Uighur Muslims reported severe societal discrimination in employment and business opportunities. In Xinjiang, tension between Uighur Muslims and Han Chinese continued in parallel with the authorities’ suppression of Uighur language, culture, and religious practices while promoting the Han majority in political, economic, and cultural life.

At the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C. in July, the United States and other governments issued a statement on China that included the following: “We call for an end to China’s mass detentions and its repressive controls on the cultural and religious practices and identities of members of religious and ethnic minority groups.” In November the Secretary of State said, “We call on the Chinese government to immediately release all those who are arbitrarily detained and to end its draconian policies that have terrorized its own citizens in Xinjiang.” Embassy officials met with national government officials regarding the treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. The embassy and consulates general delivered direct messaging about religious freedom in Xinjiang through social media posts, and promoted online engagement on the issue of religious freedom for Muslims, and, in particular, for Xinjiang’s ethnic minority

Muslim populations. The embassy continued in its engagement with the PRC government to draw attention to specific cases of repression in Xinjiang.

Section I. Religious Demography

A 2015 report on Xinjiang issued by the State Council Information Office (SCIO) estimates the total population was 23.2 million in 2014. The report states Uighur, Kazakh, Hui, Kyrgyz, and members of other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities constitute approximately 14.6 million residents in Xinjiang, or 63 percent of the total Xinjiang population. The largest segment of the remaining population is Han Chinese, with additional groups including Mongols, Tibetans, and others. Uighur Muslims live primarily in Xinjiang. *The Globe and Mail* reported in September that according to sources in the region, Christians likely number in the thousands.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The national constitution states citizens enjoy “freedom of religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities” without defining “normal.” The constitution also stipulates the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. The government recognizes five official religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Only religious groups belonging to one of five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” (the Buddhist Association of China, the Chinese Taoist Association, the Islamic Association of China, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association) representing these religions are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services or other religious ceremonies and activities.

Xinjiang has its own counterterrorism law containing similar provisions to the national law regarding “religious extremism.” The law bans the wearing of long beards, full-face coverings, expanding halal practice beyond food, and “interfering” with family planning, weddings, funerals, or inheritance, among other provisions.

Regional regulations passed in 2018 to implement the national counterterrorism law permit the establishment of “vocational skill education training centers” (which the government also calls “education centers” and “education and

transformation establishments”) to “carry out anti-extremist ideological education.” The regulations stipulate, “Institutions such as vocational skill education training centers should carry out training sessions on the common national language, laws and regulations, and vocational skills, and carry out anti-extremist ideological education, and psychological and behavioral correction to promote thought transformation of trainees, and help them return to the society and family.”

Regulations in Xinjiang’s capital Urumqi prohibit veils that cover the face, homeschooling children, and “abnormal beards.” A separate regulation bans the practice of religion in government buildings and the wearing of clothes associated with “religious extremism.” Similar regulations are in effect in other parts of Xinjiang.

Authorities in Xinjiang have defined 26 religious activities, including some practices of Islam, Christianity, and Tibetan Buddhism, as illegal without government authorization. Regional regulations stipulate no classes, scripture study groups, or religious studies courses may be offered by any group or institution without prior government approval. No religious group is permitted to carry out any religious activities, including preaching, missionary work, proselytizing, and ordaining clergy, without government approval. Regional regulations also ban editing, translation, publication, printing, reproduction, production, distribution, sale, and dissemination of religious publications and audiovisual products without authorization.

Xinjiang officials require minors to complete nine years of compulsory education before they may receive religious education outside of school. Xinjiang regulations also forbid minors from participating in religious activities and impose penalties on organizations and individuals who “organize, entice, or force” minors to participate in religious activities. According to press reports, a regulation in effect since 2016 further bans any form of religious activity in Xinjiang schools and stipulates parents or guardians who “organize, lure, or force minors into religious activities” may be stopped by anyone and reported to police. Xinjiang’s regional version of the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency Law states children affected by ethnic separatism, extremism and terrorism, and/or committing offenses that seriously endanger the society but do not warrant a criminal punishment may be sent to “specialized schools for correction” at the request of their parents, guardians, or school.

Government Practices

According to media and NGO reports, the central government and regional authorities in Xinjiang continued to cite what it called the “three evils” of “ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism” as its justification to enact and enforce restrictions on religious practices of Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and members of other Muslim and non-Muslim religious groups. Police raids and the government’s restrictions on Islamic practices as part of “strike hard” campaigns, the latest iteration of which began in 2014, continued throughout the year. Local observers said many incidents related to abuses or pressure on Uighurs and other Muslims went unreported to international media or NGOs due to government restrictions.

There were several reports of individuals dying as a result of abuse suffered during interrogation and detentions.

Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported in July that Uighur Alimjan Emet from Kashgar (Chinese: Kashi) Prefecture was beaten to death in an internment camp in Kashgar’s Yengixahar (Shule) County because he denied praying in secret. Emet had previously been fired from his job at a loan office in his home township of Ermudan for allegedly praying in secret. An official familiar with Emet’s death said he did not appear to suffer from any medical problems before authorities detained him at the internment camp.

RFA reported in June that in November 2018 Uighur Qaharjan Qawul, a chauffeur, became unconscious during an interrogation while detained in an internment camp in Aksu (Akesu) City and subsequently died, according to local officials and a Uighur exile group. Authorities arrested Qawul in 2017 and accused him of making phone calls to “blacklisted” families.

In June RFA reported that in June 2018 a Uighur woman, Aytursun Eli, died while being questioned in custody, according to an interview her mother gave to the official Xinjiang Women’s Federation that was obtained by the Washington-based International Uyghur Human Rights and Democracy Foundation. According to Eli’s mother, Patigul Yasin, authorities took Eli, a tour director at Hua An Tourism Company in Kashgar Prefecture, into custody after she returned from a work trip to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, a country to which the government does not allow Uighurs to travel. Following her daughter’s death, authorities insisted Eli had a heart condition which rendered her “unable to cope with being questioned.” Yasin denied that her daughter had a heart condition.

The New York Times, RFA, and the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) reported on the continued disappearance of hundreds of Uyghur intellectuals, doctors, journalists, artists, academics, and university administrators. In May the UHRP issued a list of 435 “Uyghur and other Turkic intellectuals detained, imprisoned, or disappeared,” including students, university and secondary school instructors, media professionals such as journalists, medical professionals, and entertainers and performers. In January *The New York Times* reported, “The mass detention of some of China’s most accomplished Uyghurs has become an alarming symbol of the Communist Party’s most intense social-engineering drive in decades, according to scholars, human rights advocates and exiled Uyghurs...The Chinese government has described the detentions as a job training program aimed at providing employment opportunities for some of the country’s poorest people. But a list of more than 100 detained Uyghur scholars compiled by exiles includes many prominent poets and writers, university heads and professors of everything from anthropology to Uyghur history.”

In October Yusup Sulayman, a Uyghur musician living in exile, told the *PBS Newshour*, “[The authorities] are disappearing our famous artists, composers, and songwriters before anyone else. They’re disappearing our intellectuals.” Sulayman said his extended family were being held in camps and he had not heard from any of them for more than two years. Sulayman said, “The absolute worst thing is that I don’t know if they are dead or alive. Our communication is completely cut off.”

In January RFA reported authorities sentenced Dina Eganbayurt, a prominent ethnic Kazakh artist and graduate of the Xinjiang Arts Institute, in a secret trial in April 2018 to three years’ imprisonment in an internment camp. Authorities did not notify her family of the charges against her, sources in the region said.

According to media reports and other sources, prominent Uyghurs who remained in detention or whose whereabouts were unknown as of year’s end included: Rahile Dawut, an anthropologist at Xinjiang University who studied Islamic shrines, traditional songs, and folklore; Uyghur literature professors Abdukerim Rahman, Azat Sultan, and Gheyretjan Osman; language professor Arslan Abdulla; poet Abdulqadir Jaleddin; Kashgar University administrators Erkin Omer and Muhter Abdughopur; Kashgar University professors Qurban Osman and Gulnar Obul; and Qurban Mamut, former editor in chief of Xinjiang Civilization, a CCP-controlled Uyghur journal.

At year's end the whereabouts and welfare of Tashpolat Tiyp, former president of Xinjiang University, remained unknown, following his disappearance in 2017. International media reported in 2018 that Tiyp had been sentenced to death, with the sentence suspended for two years. On September 10, Amnesty International wrote on its website, "Fears are mounting that the Chinese authorities will imminently carry out the execution of Tashpolat Tiyp, a prominent Uyghur academic who was convicted in a secret and grossly unfair trial." On December 26, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement stating that human rights experts "expressed alarm" about Tiyp's situation. The statement quoted human rights experts as saying, "The experts reiterate their recommendation that information about his current place of detention be made public and that his family should be allowed to visit him." It continued, "Incommunicado detention, enforced disappearances, and secret trials have no place in a country governed by the rule of law. The rule by law is not the rule of law. Such practices go against the spirit of the ICCPR, which China has signed in 1998[.]"

Authorities continued to disappear less high-profile individuals. In April RFA reported a relative of Ilyas Memet, a successful Uighur property developer and father of five, said Memet was arrested at his office in Ghulja (Yining) City in Ili Kazakh (Yili Hasake) Autonomous Prefecture in March 2018. The relative said it was unclear why authorities arrested him or whether he had been tried. Sources close to his family suggested Memet may have been arrested because he had visited several countries to which authorities banned Uighurs from traveling due to the perceived threat of religious extremism, including Turkey.

In November RFA reported that Ibrahim Kurban, a Uighur trader from Terim Township, Yopurgha (Yuepuhu) County, Kashgar Prefecture, disappeared in May 2016, just prior to taking a business trip to Turkey. Three years later, a friend learned he had died in custody. An officer in the Yopurgha County Police Department told RFA that sometime during that period Kurban was detained and interrogated, and that he had become sick and was taken to the hospital, where he died under police supervision." The officer did not say why Kurban was taken into custody.

There were numerous reports of authorities subjecting detained individuals to severe physical abuse, including sexual abuse.

In October *The Independent* reported Sayragul Sauytbay, whom authorities detained in an internment camp in November 2017, said inmates were subjected to

torture and medical experiments, and forced to eat pork. She said women in the camp were systematically raped by guards and that other women were forced to watch. Sauytbay said, “People who turned their head or closed their eyes, and those who looked angry or shocked, were taken away and we never saw them again.” Sauytbay said, “There were almost 20 people in a room of 16 square meters [172 square feet]... There were cameras in their rooms, too, and also in the corridor.”

In March *The Globe and Mail* reported Gulzira Auelhan, an ethnic Kazakh from Xinjiang who had been living in Kazakhstan, was arrested in 2017 while visiting her ill father. Auelhan said she was detained for 437 days, either under house arrest with relatives or in one of five different facilities, including a factory and a middle school converted into a center for political indoctrination and technical instruction. Auelhan said an official told her at the time of her arrest that she would be detained for 15 days and attend training classes, but she was held for more than 14 months and attended classes for only one week during that time. During her detention, Auelhan was forced to work in a garment factory. She said during her detention authorities shocked her with a stun gun to the head for spending more than the allotted two minutes in the toilet, and handcuffed her for 24 hours because guards accused her of letting another woman participate in religious ablutions.

In October RFA reported women in detention camps were involuntarily sterilized. Female detainees reportedly were routinely forced to take medication affecting their reproductive cycles. During separate incidents of internment totaling nine months between April 2017 and December 2018, Tursunay Ziyawudun, a Uighur woman from Kunes (Xinyuan) County, in the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, said camp authorities regularly “took women to the hospital and operated on them so that they no longer could have children” or “forced them to take medicine.” Many women stopped menstruating. She said she was spared the procedure because she already had health complications. Ziyawudun also described torture: tying inmates to a metal chair during interrogations, cutting hair by first pulling it through the cell bars, shackling inmates, and denying food. She reported that guards denied inmates treatment for health problems.

In August *The Independent* reported Uighur Muslim women were being sterilized in internment camps, according to former detainees. “They injected us from time to time,” said Gulbahar Jalilova, a Uighur living in exile, who was held for more than a year in an internment camp. Jalilova said as of result of the injections women stopped menstruating. She said she spent most of her time with up to 50

persons in a cell measuring 10 feet by 20 feet (3 meters by 6 meters), adding “It’s like we were just piece[s] of meat.” *The Independent* also reported Mihrigul Tursun, a Uighur living in exile, told an audience at an Amnesty International event that she had been given unknown drugs and injections while being held in an internment camp in 2017. According to Tursun, doctors in the United States later told her she had been sterilized.

The U.S. government estimated the PRC government detained more than one million Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kyrgyz, Hui, and members of other Muslim groups in detention camps. Many NGOs estimated the number being interred was higher. *The Globe and Mail* reported in September that some Uighur Christians were also being held. In 2018 the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) analyzed 28 camps detaining Xinjiang residents. ASPI reported, “Estimates of the total number vary, but recent media reports have identified roughly 180 facilities and some estimates range as high as 1,200 across the region. Since early 2016 there has been a 465 percent growth in the size of the 28 camps identified in this report.” In November RFA reported that Adrian Zenz, a German researcher, estimated the number of camps may exceed 1,000. In October *PBS Newshour* broadcast a segment on Xinjiang that showed video of a camp under construction. The entrance to the building had an iron gate, the rooms looked like prison cells, and there were bars on the windows.

In April *The New York Times* reported an internment camp on the outskirts of Kashgar City occupied 639,764 square feet (195,000 square meters) with a capacity to hold approximately 20,000 individuals.

In October RFA reported that according to official sources in the Kuchar County Police Department, between June and December 2018 at least 150 persons died in No. 1 Internment Camp in the Yengisher District of the county seat, approximately 10 kilometers (six miles) from Kuchar City in Aksu (Akesu) Prefecture.

On November 16 and November 24, *The New York Times* reported on the leak of 403 pages of internal government and CCP documents describing the government’s mass internment program in Xinjiang; these leaked documents were later called “The Xinjiang Papers.” The documents included nearly 200 pages of speeches by Chairman Xi and other government officials, and more than 150 pages of directives and reports on the surveillance and control of the Uighur population in the region. The documents revealed that authorities set numeric targets for Uighur detentions in the region. There were also references to plans to extend restrictions on Muslims to other parts of the country. *The New York Times* was one

of 17 media outlets to partner with the ICIJ regarding release of the leaked documents.

The leaked documents included speeches by Chairman Xi in which he called for strong action to eradicate what he called “radical Islam” in the region. In one speech he compared Islamic extremism to a virus and a dangerously addictive drug and said, referring to what he called Islamic extremists, “We must be as harsh as them and show absolutely no mercy.” *The New York Times* reported that before Xi’s presidency, the CCP often described attacks in Xinjiang as the work of a few fanatics inspired by foreign groups, but that Chairman Xi argued extremism had become commonplace in the region.

The leaked documents also included talking points for officials to use to respond to questions from students who had been sent to study in other parts of the country and returned home for summer break only to find that their families had been sent to internment camps. One prescribed response was to say their family members were in “a training school set up by the government,” and also, “I’m sure that you will support them, because this is for their own good, and also for your own good.” In response to requests for contact with their relatives, authorities were to tell the students, “If you want to see them, we can arrange for you to have a video meeting.” The talking points included increasingly firm responses if questions continued, including that the person’s relatives had been “infected” by the “virus” of Islamic radicalism and needed to be cured. If asked whether their relatives had committed a crime, the authorities were to respond, “It is just that their thinking has been infected by unhealthy thought.”

According to *The New York Times*, the documents revealed that authorities punished thousands of officials in Xinjiang for “resisting or failing to carry out the crackdown with sufficient zeal.” Ethnic Han official Wang Yongzhi, leader of the Yarkand County area, had built two large detention facilities, one as big as 50 basketball courts, and interned 20,000 persons in them. He sharply increased funding for security forces in 2017, doubling outlays for checkpoints and surveillance to renminbi (RMB) 1.37 billion (\$196 million); however, Wang also ordered the release of more than 7,000 camp inmates. According to one academic, Wang released the individuals not due to his conscience but because he was concerned about achieving economic development goals with so much of the labor force locked up. Later in 2017 authorities removed Wang from his position, prosecuted him “for gravely disobeying the party central leadership’s strategy for governing Xinjiang,” and forced him to sign a 15-page confession in which he admitted he believed “rounding up so many people would knowingly fan conflict

and deep resentment.” Wang wrote in his confession, “Without approval and on my own initiative I broke the rules.” According to *The New York Times*, the documents showed Uighur officials were also accused of protecting fellow Uighurs, and were removed from their positions.

Days after *The New York Times* published its two reports, the ICIJ reported on an additional 24 leaked government and CCP documents. Later referred to as the “China Cables,” the leaked documents included details from a 2018 court case in which authorities in Xinjiang arrested a man in September 2017 and sentenced him to a prison term of 10 years for “inciting extreme thoughts” after he reportedly encouraged his coworkers to pray.

The leaked documents obtained by the ICIJ included a CCP manual, called a “telegram,” for operating internment camps, which it referred to as “vocational skill education training centers.” According to the ICIJ, this manual “instructs camp personnel on such matters as how to prevent escapes, how to maintain total secrecy about the camps’ existence, methods of forced indoctrination, how to control disease outbreaks, and when to let detainees see relatives or even use the toilet.” The ICIJ continued, “The document, dated to 2017, lays bare a behavior-modification ‘points’ system to mete out punishments and rewards to inmates” and to determine when to release them. Authorities were instructed to tell those asking about their relatives that their behavior could hurt their relatives’ scores. The ICIJ stated, “The manual reveals the minimum duration of detention: one year – though accounts from ex-detainees suggest that some are released sooner.” A third document, the “Karakax List,” originally leaked in November and later made public, presented evidence the government initially interned or extended the internment of individuals on religious grounds in four reeducation centers in Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture. It showed that “religion-related reasons,” including behaviors considered “untrustworthy” such as men wearing beards, women wearing veils, and attending the Hajj were the third most common reason for internment, and violations of “birth control policies,” was the most common reason.

In June German researcher Adrian Zenz published a paper in the *Journal of Political Risk* that described how in July 2017 authorities in Karakax (Qaraqash) County, Hotan (Hetian) Prefecture, commissioned a large internment camp with multiple buildings, including a “transformation for education center” and a 2,074 square meter (22,324 square foot) armed police forces facility. According to Zenz, a district in Urumqi published a construction bid for a 36,000 square meter (387,500 square foot) vocational training compound with a surrounding wall,

fences, a 500 square meter (5,400 square foot) police station, a surveillance and monitoring system, and “equipment for visiting family members.”

In October 2018 ChinaAid reported first-hand accounts of a three-phased system to which Uighurs were subjected in several detention facilities. According to local residents, each camp consisted of areas A, B, and C. Guards first placed “newcomers and Muslims” in area C, the worst area, where guards deprived them of food or water for 24 hours. Guards shackled their hands and feet, beat them, and screamed insults at them until they repeatedly expressed gratitude to the CCP and Chairman Xi. Then the guards transferred them to area B, where they ate poor quality food and were permitted to use the bathroom. They went outside for 15 minutes every day to sing the national anthem. Guards then moved those considered successfully re-educated in CCP beliefs to area A, where the conditions were better.

In October CNN released a video taken via drone showing hundreds of men being led from a train by dozens of police in riot gear. Most of the men were wearing vests with the words “Kashgar Detention Center.” The men were all wearing blindfolds, had shaved heads, and had their hands tied behind their backs. In a statement responding to the video, Xinjiang authorities said cracking down on crime and transporting prisoners was lawful, adding, “Xinjiang’s crackdown on crimes has never been linked to ethnicities or religions.”

RFA reported in April that as many as 1,200 Uighurs were being detained in a prison in Gansu Province after being secretly transferred under the cover of night from internment camps in Xinjiang, according to prison officials. Those officials said in the months prior, detainees had been sent to prisons in Shandong, Shaanxi, and Gansu Provinces, although they were unable to provide specific numbers or dates for when they had been transferred. In July *Bitter Winter* reported several sources confirmed some Xinjiang detainees were transferred to two prisons in Henan Province. The detainees were isolated from other prisoners, with many held in solitary confinement and beaten.

The September 2018 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report titled *Eradicating Ideological Viruses* contained accounts from former Xinjiang detainees of interrogations and physical abuse, including beatings, being hanged from ceilings and walls, and prolonged shackling. Detainees also reported being kept in spaces so overcrowded there was no room for all to sleep. In October Uighur exile Gulbahar Jalilova told *PBS Newhour* that guards handcuffed and shackled inmates, placed hoods over their heads, and beat them during interrogations. Abdusalam

Muhammad, another Uighur living in exile, told *PBS Newshour*, “There is unimaginable oppression inside [the detention centers]. Every day they’d toss us a little bread and water so that we didn’t die. And every day they would interrogate 15 or 20 of us with unbearable brutality.” Muhammad said lecturers would teach propaganda for 10 hours each day. “The goal was to change our minds, our faith, our beliefs. It was a plot to force us to renounce our religion.”

In a March interview with *Hong Kong Free Press*, Omir Bekali, an ethnic Kazakh living in exile, described conditions in an internment camp in Karamay in which he spent several weeks. Bekali said detainees of all ages were obliged to sing patriotic songs, participate in sessions of self-criticism, and eat pork on Fridays. He said “students” – as officials called them – were forbidden to speak a language other than Mandarin and to pray or grow a beard, which authorities interpreted as signs of religious radicalization. Bekali said the camps had only one objective – to strip detainees of their religious belief.

In June RFA reported that the granddaughter of Uighur author Nurmuhemmet Tohti posted on Facebook that he died on May 31, shortly after being released from an internment camp. His granddaughter, living in exile in Canada, wrote that during his internment, authorities denied Tohti, aged 70, treatment for diabetes and heart disease, and only released him to his family after he became incapacitated due to his medical condition.

A source told RFA that in March a Uighur man who regularly traveled for business to neighboring Kyrgyzstan, Yaqup Rozi, died after suffering a heart attack while detained in a political “re-education camp” in Xinjiang. Authorities ordered Rozi to return to his home near Atush, (Atushi) City in Kizilsu Kirghiz (Kezileisu Keerkezi) Autonomous Prefecture in early 2017 and then confiscated his passport. A month later, local police summoned Rozi for interrogation, but then released him. A month after that, police raided his home in the middle of the night and took him away with a black hood over his head, according to the source. After Rozi died, authorities refused to release his remains to his family members, who were only allowed to observe as a state-appointed religious cleric washed his body and prepared it for burial according to Islamic tradition.

NGOs and international media reported arrests and detentions of Muslims in Xinjiang for “untrustworthy behavior” such as attending religious education courses, possessing books about religion and Uighur culture, wearing clothing with Islamic symbols, and traveling to certain counties.

The Economist reported in 2018 that authorities in Xinjiang used detailed information to rank citizens' "trustworthiness" using various criteria. Officials deemed individuals as trustworthy, average, or untrustworthy depending on how they fit into the following categories: were 15 to 55 years old (i.e., of military age); were Uighur; were unemployed; had religious knowledge; prayed five times a day; had a passport; had visited one of 26 "sensitive countries"; had ever overstayed a visa; had family members living abroad; and homeschooled their children (which was prohibited throughout the country). *The Economist* said "...the catalogue is explicitly racist: people are suspected merely on account of their ethnicity." Being labelled "untrustworthy" could lead to being detained by authorities. HRW reported the 26 "sensitive countries" were Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

In July 2018 the NGO China Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) published a report saying that based on Chinese government data, criminal arrests in Xinjiang accounted for 21 percent of all arrests in China in 2017, while the population of Xinjiang comprised less than 2 percent of China's overall population. CHRD reported that "...criminal punishment would disproportionately target the Uyghur Muslim group based on their percentage of the population." *The New York Times* reported in August that in 2018 courts in Xinjiang sentenced 143,000 individuals to prison or other punishment, compared with 87,000 in 2017, which was itself 10 times more than in 2016.

National Public Radio reported in October that Nurzhada Zhumakhan, a 65-year-old Uighur woman, was sentenced to 20 years in prison in June for "illegally using superstition to break the rule of law" and "gathering chaos to disrupt the social order."

The Diplomat reported Zulhumar Isaac, a Uighur living in exile in Sweden whose family had attempted to assimilate into Han Chinese culture, said she learned in November 2018 that her mother had been sent to a detention camp. Shortly thereafter, her father also disappeared. Isaac said, "All our lives we have lived as 'model Chinese citizens.' We studied Mandarin, my mother was a civil servant for decades, and I'd married a Han Chinese man. And yet it has happened to us. Why?"

In April *The New York Times* reported one Uighur living in exile identified as Dilnur said, “In the kindergarten, they would ask little children, ‘Do your parents read the Quran?’ My daughter had a classmate who said, ‘My mom teaches me the Quran.’ The next day, they are gone.”

According to an SCIO white paper issued in March entitled, “The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang,” authorities continued to prevent any “illegal” religious activities in Xinjiang and to prioritize Chinese language and culture over Uighur language and culture, which the government said was necessary to promote “ethnic unity.” Authorities promoted loyalty to the CCP as the most important value. Reportedly, authorities forced thousands of Uighurs to participate in ceremonies where they wore traditional Han Chinese clothing, performed tai chi, and sang the national anthem. In November on the *PBS Newshour*, Yasin Zunun, a Uighur living in exile, showed a video he found online of his wife, who lived in Xinjiang, and other Uighur women dressed in traditional Han Chinese makeup and clothing performing a Han Chinese dance.

On May 10, in an interview with CBC/Radio Canada, Alim Seytoff, the director of RFA’s Uyghur Services, said, “At the moment, it has become impossible for the Uighur people to even say ‘as-salamu alaykum,’ even [to] give their babies names such as Mohamed [or] Fatima.”

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to deny international media reports that authorities banned Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang from Ramadan fasting, and said the constitution provided for religious freedom for Uighurs. Reports published in 2018 on the official websites of local governments in Xinjiang, however, indicated authorities restricted or banned certain groups of Uighur Muslims from observing Ramadan, including CCP members, their relatives, students, and employees of state-owned enterprises and state-run organizations. In May Dolkun Isa, a Uighur living in exile and the head of the Germany-based international NGO World Uyghur Congress, told *Voice of America* Uighurs who worked in the public sector and students had to appear daily at canteens during lunch or they would be accused of secretly fasting and hiding “extremist” tendencies. Isa said, “The restrictions on Ramadan have been in place every year since 2016, but they are especially hard this year.” According to World Uyghur Congress spokesperson Dilshat Rishit, Uighur households were told to keep an eye on one another and threatened with collective punishment if any of them was found to be fasting.

There were independent reports of authorities continuing to prohibit students from the middle school level through to the university level from fasting during

Ramadan. In his interview with CBC/Radio Canada on May 10, RFA Uyghur Services director Seytoff said teachers gave elementary and middle school students snacks and water to make sure they were not fasting, and asked them to report if their parents were fasting or praying at home.

In October NPR reported that according to family members, courts handed down prison sentences of up to 20 years to religious students, imams, or people who prayed regularly.

The government continued to administer mosques and restrict access to houses of worship, requiring worshipers to apply for mosque entry permits. In April *The New York Times* reported that at the Idh Kha Mosque, the largest mosque in Kashgar and a pilgrimage destination, worshipers had to register and go through a security check. Inside the mosque there were surveillance cameras. *The Economist* reported in May 2018 that in Hotan City authorities closed neighborhood mosques, leaving a handful of large mosques open. According to the article, at the entrance to the Idh Kha Mosque in Kashgar two policemen sat underneath a banner reading “Love the party, love the country.” Inside, a member of the mosque’s staff held classes for local traders on how to be good Communists. The article stated in Urumqi authorities knocked down minarets and Islamic crescents on the mosques that were permitted to remain open.

HRW reported in May that making donations to local mosques was considered suspicious behavior.

Local CCP propaganda in Kashgar said the state was protecting adherents from extremism by improving mosque facilities over recent years, ensuring telecommunications and computer access, and installing other amenities such as flushing toilets and electricity.

RFA also reported rapid construction of crematoria in Xinjiang, and said that Uighur religious and cultural funeral traditions did not traditionally include cremation. According to the report, a Han Chinese staff member at a crematorium stated that ethnic minority corpses brought there were those who had died in “political re-education camps.” CCP officials also reportedly forbade Uighurs from performing traditional burial rites.

The government facilitated participation in the Hajj, and Muslims applied online or through local official Islamic associations. However, according to allegedly leaked government documents from Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture, authorities

considered individuals to be suspicious or potentially dangerous if they had participated in the Hajj, regardless of whether the individual participated as part of a government-approved tour group or otherwise. In August the pro-CCP media outlet *Global Times* stated 11,000 Uighur and other Muslims were expected to make take part in the Hajj during the year, compared with 11,500 in 2018, although official statistics confirming this number was accurate were unavailable at year's end.

Witnesses and former prisoners stated authorities forced Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and others to renounce Islam, criticize their own Islamic beliefs and those of fellow inmates, and recite Communist Party propaganda in the internment camps.

International media reported the government continued to instruct officials to look out for 75 “signs” or behaviors that signified religious extremism. These signs and behaviors included growing a beard, praying in public outside of mosques, wearing veils and headscarves, and abstaining from smoking or drinking alcohol.

According to human rights groups and international media, authorities in Xinjiang continued to maintain extensive and invasive security and surveillance, reportedly in part to gain information regarding individuals' religious adherence and practices. Human rights groups said surveillance was more severe in parts of the country where religious minorities predominated, including Xinjiang, compared to other parts of the country with ethnic Han Chinese majorities, due in part to the connection between religion and the ethnic and cultural identities of these groups.

In April *The New York Times* reported one Uighur living in exile identified as Dilnur said authorities often searched private homes. “They don't care if it's morning or night, they would come in every time they want.”

As reported in media, according to leaked documents obtained by the ICIJ in November, authorities used tools including closed circuit television cameras, mobile phone spyware apps, and “Wi-Fi sniffers” (akin to wiretaps on internet traffic) which monitored all network devices in range. Authorities used artificial intelligence to create predictive models of behavior to flag individuals whom the government deemed suspicious. *The New York Times* stated in May that these measures targeted ethnic minorities while largely ignoring ethnic Han Chinese in the region. There were reports authorities used facial recognition technology to target Uighurs and members of other citizens who did not have typical Han Chinese features.

In May HRW reported the government continued to require all individuals in Xinjiang to have a spyware app on their mobile phone because the government considered “web cleansing” necessary to prevent access to “terrorist” information. Failing to install the app, which could identify whom people called, track online activity, and record social media use, was deemed a punishable offense. The report stated Wi-Fi sniffers in public places monitored all networked devices in range.

The police used the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), the Xinjiang policing program to aggregate data about people and flag those deemed potentially threatening. According to an HRW report published in May, “Analysis of the IJOP app reveals that authorities are collecting massive amounts of personal information – from the color of a person’s car to their height down to the precise centimeter – and feeding it into the IJOP central system, linking that data to the person’s national identification card number.” The IJOP also flagged what authorities considered suspicious behavior such as using “excessive” electricity, using a cell phone that was not registered to that person, or entering and exiting the home via the back door instead of the front door. According to HRW’s analysis, based on the kinds of information collected, the IJOP app “demonstrates that Chinese authorities consider certain peaceful religious activities as suspicious, such as donating to mosques or preaching the Quran without authorization.”

In February a security researcher at the Dutch NGO GDI Foundation discovered a publicly accessible database containing personal information such as ethnicity and GPS tracking data of 2.6 million people in Xinjiang. Other publications reported on DNA collection, voice collection, and facial recognition collection to track individuals living in Xinjiang.

A former Xinjiang resident told HRW that a week after he was released from arbitrary detention he entered a mall and an orange alarm went off. Police took him to a police station but released him with the warning, “Just don’t go to any public places.”

The People’s High Court, Public Security Bureau, Bureau of Culture, and Bureau of Industry and Commerce in Xinjiang continued to implement restrictions on video and audio recordings the government defined as promoting terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism. Authorities prohibited dissemination of such materials on the internet, social media, and in online marketplaces. Multiple media outlets reported that tourists at the border were required to install spyware on their mobile devices prior to entering Xinjiang.

In July National Public Radio, Vox News, and other sources reported on authorities' efforts to collect DNA and other biometrics such as blood types, as well as fingerprints, which appeared to be done in an effort to distinguish ethnic groups. Sources believed authorities in Xinjiang collected this medical information, at least in part, to forcibly harvest Uighurs' organs. According to research by Australian academic Matthew P. Robertson and others about the PRC government's falsification of organ donation data, blood typing is part of the organ procurement process. Some Xinjiang internment camp survivors reported healthy young men would be spared the physical abuse that other detainees suffered and underwent health screenings, including DNA sampling, before disappearing, raising these survivors' concerns that organ harvesting from detainees was taking place in the camps.

In December *The Hill* reported the surveillance system in Xinjiang included more than 10,000 "convenient police stations" and government task teams stationed in 8,921 villages. In a May report, HRW stated these police stations were the "hallmark of Xinjiang's mass surveillance infrastructure." Witnesses told *The Hill* in every town "each traffic light junction is guarded by two SWAT team members. Every 50 yards or so along the streets, there is a convenient police station, guarded 24/7 by either SWAT, regular police or assistant police, who constantly check passers-by, including searching their smartphones for banned apps and 'sensitive' information." In 2017 The Jamestown Foundation examined civil service, public service, and other public job announcements and found the number of job announcements for police officers in Xinjiang increased from 30,000 in 2016 to 60,000 from January to August 2017.

In April *The New York Times* reported that in Kashgar City, Kashgar Prefecture, surveillance cameras were prevalent in streets, shops, doorways, and mosques. "Every 100 yards or so, the police stand at checkpoints with guns, shields and clubs. Many are Uighurs. The surveillance couldn't work without them. Uighurs line up, stone-faced, to swipe their official identity cards. At big checkpoints, they lift their chins while a machine takes their photos, and wait to be notified if they can go on. The police sometimes take Uighurs' phones and check to make sure they have installed compulsory software that monitors calls and messages."

In April *Bitter Winter* published an account of a Han Chinese man who traveled to Hotan City in 2018. The man said, "Checkpoints were at every intersection, each guarded by at least five officers and soldiers, some heavily armed, and, at larger intersections, heavier weapons were placed. At a checkpoint, every ethnic

minority person was forced to undergo a body search, and those carrying a cellphone required to turn it on for inspection...In contrast, Han Chinese were allowed to pass through after simply flashing their ID card.”

There were numerous reports of government travel restrictions within the region. According to a September 2018 HRW report, individuals had to apply to the police for permission and proceed through numerous checkpoints to go from one town to the next. HRW also reported authorities recalled passports from persons in the region and prohibited communication with individuals outside the country, including relatives. In November NBC – one of ICIJ’s media partners in the release of the China Cables – reported that in March 2018 authorities confiscated Zumrat Dawut’s passport after she was instructed to report to a police station. She was interrogated, shackled, and sent to an internment camp. Ethnoreligious minorities also reported increased screening at airport, train station, and roadside security checkpoints. In 2018 *The Economist* described police activities at a large checkpoint on the edge of Hotan City, where a police officer ordered all the passengers off a bus. The passengers (all Uighurs) took turns in a booth, where officials scanned identity cards, took photographs and fingerprints, used iris-recognition technology, and forced women to take off their headscarves. The officials also forced young Uighurs to give authorities access to their phones in order to download their smart phone contents for later analysis.

According to media, authorities continued to have more than one million CCP officials from other parts of the country live part-time with local families in Xinjiang. The government instituted these home stays (the “Pair Up and Become a Family” program) to target farmer households in southern Xinjiang. The government said the program was part of efforts to combat “terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism.” The government required families to provide detailed information on their personal lives and political views during the officials’ visits to their homes. Authorities also subjected families to political indoctrination from the live-in officials. The program started in 2014, according to a CNN report from 2018. RFA reported in October that according to HRW, the government extended the “Pair Up and Become a Family” home stay program in early 2018 and CCP members spent at least five days every two months in the families’ homes. According to *Bitter Winter*, authorities in some locations mandated Han Chinese “relatives” stay at least one week per month. In November on *PBS Newshour*, Uighur exile Abliz Ablikim showed a photo taken in his uncle’s home in Xinjiang with a Han Chinese man posing with members of the family, Ablikim’s infant cousin on his lap.

RFA's Uyghur Service reported one CCP official in Yengisar (Yingjisha) County, Kashgar Prefecture, said many Han Chinese "relatives" stayed in homes where no male relatives were present because they were in detention. The official said he had never heard of any situations in which male officials had attempted to take sexual advantage of women in the household, but said it was "normal for females to sleep on the same platform with their paired male 'relatives'." Other sources said those who protested hosting CCP officials were subject to additional restrictions and possible detention in an internment camp. Dolkun Isa, president of the World Uyghur Congress, said the campaign has "turned Uyghurs' homes into prisons from which there is no escape."

RFA reported in October that a village secretary in Hotan Prefecture said Han Chinese who stayed in Uighur households as part of the "Pair Up and Become a Family" program brought alcohol and meat, including pork, into the home and expected those they stayed with to consume them, in violation of halal principles. According to the village secretary, "We are not so insane as to tell them that we are Muslim, so we cannot eat the things they eat." NGOs and media reported that officials forced Uighur women to marry Han men under threat of arrest or imprisonment of the women and their families.

The leaked documents obtained by the ICIJ in November included explicit directives to arrest Uighurs with foreign citizenship.

ChinaAid reported that in June authorities indicted 17 Jehovah's Witnesses in the Korla Municipal People's Court on charges of using an "evil religious organization" to incite the obstruction of law enforcement, and indicted an additional 18th individual for "obstructing law enforcement by organizing and using an evil religious organization." The indictment stated the group violated religion management laws "by establishing the Korla congregation, recruiting 63 people, fraudulently using Christianity, deifying 'Jehovah,' spreading superstition and heresy, agitating and inciting people not to join the Chinese Communist Party or the Communist Youth League, serve the military, raise the national flag, salute the national flag, sing the national anthem, and participate in elections, and they connected with overseas people, controlled believers by taking the most of regular meetings, and took advantage of each opportunity to accumulate wealth, so they have affected peoples' normal religious faith, severely disturbed social order, and obstructed law enforcement."

Xinjiang authorities had discretion to label giving children any name with an Islamic connotation as a manifestation of “extremist thought” or “illegal religious behavior.”

A Xinjiang government statement online in 2018 indicated officials had to inspect the homes in which they were staying for any religious elements or symbols and instructed the officials to confiscate such items if found.

In July RFA reported Xinjiang authorities removed traditional ethnic Uighur and Islamic architectural features used for prayers at home as part of a bid to root out “religious extremism.” The report said villagers in Ghulja (Yining) City in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture were forced to remove Islamic ornamentation from buildings in the area. Officials in Kashgar and Hotan Prefectures said authorities forced Muslims to carve away *mihirabs* (ornate domed niches that indicate the direction of Mecca), or to fill them in completely. If they refused, they could face punishment that could include detention in an internment camp. The director of a neighborhood women’s committee in Kashgar told RFA the government and CCP conducted training courses on the correct aesthetics for households. A village party secretary in Hotan Prefecture said teams of five or six persons that included police officers, party members, and government officials “walked around inspecting neighborhood homes” to ensure they met “requirements.” In cases where homeowners were unable to reshape the *mihirabs* in their walls, or where *mihirabs* were carved into a home’s supporting beams, workers demolished the building. One official said, “In Hotan city, all of the buildings had been cleared of these items completely...At present, no buildings considered to exemplify classic ethnic characteristics have been left untouched.”

A preacher from Manas County, Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang, said his sermons were written in advance by the local Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee and sent to him via WeChat messaging app. He said police officers on guard at the church’s entrance were familiar with the sermon and supervised the preacher. One preacher told *Bitter Winter* the goal of the state was to get rid of “the pure truth from the source,” i.e., the Bible. “In the future, preachers will be unable to tell whether what they are preaching is right or wrong,” he said. “On the surface, the government allows you to have belief and hold gatherings, but what you believe in might not be Christianity at all, but rather the Party religion.”

Media sources reported authorities did not comply with national regulations that stipulate if a religious structure is to be demolished or relocated because of city planning or construction of key projects, the party conducting the demolition must

agree to rebuild the structure or provide compensation equal to its appraised market value. On June 7, RFA reported that authorities bulldozed a church in Tang County, Henan Province, and forced the church members to pay for the demolition. Local Christians said two weeks prior, the government told the congregation to “donate” the church building to the government but they refused.

Satellite imagery analysis released by Bellingcat and *The Guardian* in May revealed large-scale destruction of Islamic holy sites and mosques in Xinjiang. Among 91 sites analyzed, 31 mosques and two major shrines, including the Imam Asim complex, a major pilgrimage site, suffered significant structural damage between 2016 and 2018. In June Agency France Presse (AFP) reported satellite images reviewed by that media outlet and visual analysis by the NGO Earthrise Alliance showed 36 mosques and religious sites had been torn down or had their domes and corner spires removed since 2017. NGOs and other media also reported widespread destruction of Uighur mosques and shrines during the year. In October the UHRP estimated at least 100 mosques in the region were fully or partially destroyed or had an architectural element removed as part of the government campaign of mosque demolition, which accelerated in 2016. According to Bellingcat, satellite imagery appeared to show that in 2018 authorities destroyed the gatehouse of the 800-year-old Keriya Aitiki Mosque in Hotan Prefecture and replaced it with a parking lot. Also in 2018, authorities demolished structures around the Kargilik Mosque in Kargilik County, Kashgar Prefecture.

According to AFP and Earthwise Alliance analysis of satellite imagery, the government exhumed and flattened at least 30 Uighur cemeteries since 2017, in some cases reintering remains in standardized secular graves and in others repurposing the sites. In October *The Guardian* published satellite imagery that appeared to show authorities had demolished several Islamic cemeteries. The graveyard in Aksu Prefecture, where Uighur poet Lutpulla Mutellip was buried, was replaced with an area called Happiness Park. The Sultanim Cemetery in Hotan City was replaced with a parking lot.

According to *The New York Times*, the curriculum in Xinjiang schools emphasized “Chinese language, patriotism, and loyalty to the CCP.” *The New York Times* reported a sign outside a kindergarten in Hotan City invited parents to report teachers who made “irresponsible remarks” or participated in unauthorized religious worship.

In December *The New York Times* reported that according to a 2017 policy document posted on the Ministry of Education’s website, nearly 40 percent of all elementary and middle school students – approximately half a million children – had been separated from their families and placed in boarding schools in Xinjiang. According to the document, the children were to be immersed in Han culture and only allowed to visit their families once every week or two, in order to “break the impact of the religious atmosphere on children at home.” Without specifying Islam by name, the document characterized religion as a pernicious influence on children and stated having students live at boarding schools would “reduce the shock of going back and forth between learning science in the classroom and listening to scripture at home.”

In July German researcher Adrian Zenz published a paper in *The Journal of Political Risk* examining government documents that indicated there were large numbers of children with one or both parents in some form of internment. The documents indicated this was a major social issue. Zenz wrote, “From early 2018, the state began to issue urgent directives on how to deal with the virtually orphaned children of single or ‘double-detained’ parents, be it through special care institutions or the regular education system. Local governments began to require schools to provide one-on-one ‘psychological counseling’ and to proactively scan the state of mind of students with parents in detention in order to preempt trouble.” There were also reports of authorities holding children in orphanages or centers for special needs children after their parents were taken to internment camps. According to a BBC report, Xinjiang authorities’ increased efforts to care full-time for large numbers of children occurred at the same time as the building of the internment camps.

In the paper he published in *The Journal of Political Risk* in July, Zenz quoted the Xinjiang government and educational websites as stating, “Vocational Skills Training Centers wash clean the brains of people who became bewitched by the extreme religious ideologies of the ‘three forces’[.]” In 2018 Xinjiang regional governor Shohrat Zakir told Xinhua news agency the three forces, also called the “three evil forces” or the “three evils,” were terrorism, separatism, and extremism.

In December at a press conference in Canberra, PRC Ambassador to Australia Cheng Jingye said reports that one million Uighurs were being held in detention were “utterly fake news” and said the mass detentions in Xinjiang had “nothing to do with human rights, nothing to do with religion” and was “no different” from other countries’ counter-terrorism measures.”

In August the CCP responded to a statement issued by 22 countries at the United Nations Human Rights Council urging the CCP to release members of the Muslim population from internment camps. Foreign ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said the statement “disregarded the facts, slandered and attacked China with unwarranted accusations, flagrantly politicized human rights issues, and grossly interfered in China’s internal affairs.” The CCP also stated its actions in Xinjiang were necessary for national security.

At a press conference in August, Xinjiang regional governor Zakir stated authorities released the majority of persons held in internment camps in the region, and that those still in facilities were able to go home regularly and practice their faith. The World Uyghur Congress urged the international community to be “deeply skeptical” of the governor’s statements.

In April the SCIO published a white paper on the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), a paramilitary organization that administers prisons and engages in commercial activity in the region, stating the focus of XPCC’s work in border security was the threat posed by “separatist, religious extremist, and terrorist forces and their sabotage activities.”

In July the government published a white paper that defined “external separatist forces for...the creation of ‘East Turkestan’” as an acute threat to national security and stated the People’s Armed Police, a national paramilitary organization, had assisted the Xinjiang regional government in “taking out 1,588 violent terrorist gangs and capturing 12,995 terrorists” since 2014.

In July the SCIO released a white paper on religion and culture in Xinjiang that stated Islam was “neither an indigenous nor the sole belief system” of the Uighurs, that Uighurs were forcibly converted to Islam, and that the government in Xinjiang “fully respects and protects” religious freedom according to the national constitution.

In March, July, and August the SCIO published white papers on counterterrorism and human rights that stated the government’s political re-education camps were intended to combat “violent extremism” and “religious extremism.” The white papers also stated individuals held in camps could not organize or participate in any religious activities.

In May Voice of America reported that Zhao Lijian, deputy chief of mission of the Chinese embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, said Beijing had put partial restrictions

on Ramadan activities, but fasting was not totally banned. Zhao said Xinjiang residents were free to fast during Ramadan and restrictions were limited to those with official responsibilities to ensure their religious practices did not interfere with their public duties. He also said, “Restrictions are with the Communist Party members, who are atheists; government officials, who shall discharge their duties; and students who are with compulsory education and hard learning tasks.”

The leaked documents revealed by the ICIJ in November included explicit directives to track Xinjiang Uighurs living abroad. China’s embassies and consulates took part in these efforts. The documents described the government’s policy of urging foreign governments to repatriate Uighurs. The ICIJ stated, “Bulletin No. 2” (dated June 16, 2017) “categorizes Chinese Uighurs living abroad by their home regions within Xinjiang and instructs officials to collect personal information about them. The purpose of this effort, the bulletin says, is to identify ‘those still outside the country for whom suspected terrorism cannot be ruled out.’ It declares that such people ‘should be placed into concentrated education and training’ immediately upon their return to China.”

The government also reportedly sought to intimidate or forcibly repatriate Uighur and other Muslims abroad. In August *The Atlantic* reported, “Conversations with Uighurs in Belgium, Finland, and the Netherlands reveal a systematic effort by China to silence Uighurs overseas with brazen tactics of surveillance, blackmail, and intimidation.” The article described Chinese authorities monitoring Uighurs abroad by surveilling their contacts and family members in Xinjiang via phone or social media, and pressuring them to cease advocacy efforts on behalf of Uighur rights. In April BuzzFeed News reported Uighur-American Ferhat Jawdat’s aunt and her husband were transferred from an internment camp in Xinjiang to a prison elsewhere in the region after Jawdat met with the U.S. Secretary of State on March 27.

Many Uighurs abroad reported the government denied their passport renewals and instead offered a one-way travel document back to China. Some of these individuals also reported authorities threatened to put family members of Uighurs living abroad into detention centers if they did not return. *The Wall Street Journal* reported in August 2018 that Chinese security officials told Uighurs living abroad to collect information on other Uighurs.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because the government and individuals closely link religion, culture, and ethnicity, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on religious identity. Tension between Uighur Muslims and Han Chinese continued in parallel with the authorities' suppression of Uighur language, culture, and religion and the promotion of the Han majority in political, economic, and cultural life. Muslims in Xinjiang faced discrimination in hiring and in retaining their positions.

On November 25, a Council on Foreign Relations report stated human rights organizations "have observed that the economic benefits of resource extraction and development are often disproportionately enjoyed by Han Chinese, and Uighur people are increasingly marginalized."

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

At the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C., on July 16-18, the United States and other governments issued a statement that included the following: "We call for an end to China's mass detentions and its repressive controls on the cultural and religious practices and identities of members of religious and ethnic minority groups." In November the Secretary of State said of the leaked CCP papers on the detention of Uighurs and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang, "We call on the Chinese government to immediately release all those who are arbitrarily detained and to end its draconian policies that have terrorized its own citizens in Xinjiang."

Embassy officials routinely raised concerns over the treatment of Uighur Muslims and members of other Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang with government officials. During the year, embassy officials could travel to Xinjiang without requesting prior permission, but access to schools, re-education centers, and residences was denied or impeded by local governments.

The embassy and consulates general delivered direct messaging about religious freedom in Xinjiang through social media posts on Weibo and WeChat, as well as on the embassy's official website. In July the embassy promoted the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington through social media posts advocating for religious freedom. These posts stimulated online debate regarding the situation of Muslims and other members of religious and ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. The embassy and consulates general created messages for Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr featuring the Ambassador, and promoted Islamic holiday messages from the White House, the Secretary of State, and others. These messages sparked online

engagement on the issue of religious freedom for Muslims, and, in particular, for Xinjiang's ethnic Muslim population. For example, a video of the Ambassador offering Ramadan greetings to the country's Muslim community received 280,000 views and prompted an active online discussion by hundreds of citizens. The embassy and consulates general created weekly social media content promoting tolerance for religious and ethnic diversity, generally by using examples from the United States to inspire discussion about religious freedom in China, including Xinjiang. The embassy continued to draw attention to specific cases of repression in Xinjiang, and while government censors often blocked such posts on Weibo and WeChat, the discussion continued on Twitter. The embassy's Twitter followers regularly engaged in open, Chinese-language discussions that were related to Xinjiang or that were critical of official government positions.

HONG KONG 2019 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), as well as other laws and policies, states that residents have freedom of conscience; freedom of religious belief; and freedom to preach, conduct, and participate in religious activities in public. The Bill of Rights Ordinance incorporates the religious freedom protections of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In February, the SAR government introduced a bill that would have allowed for extradition of SAR residents to other jurisdictions worldwide, including mainland China. Protests against this bill took place regularly throughout the latter half of the year. Some Christian groups used the broader protest movement to highlight what they stated was the high degree of religious freedom in Hong Kong, contrasted with the lack of religious freedom in mainland China and strongly supported the SAR government's eventual withdrawal of the extradition bill. While Christian sources did not express concern about Hong Kong's current level of religious freedom, foreign-based religious freedom advocates expressed fears for the potential future of religious freedom in Hong Kong if the mainland government further encroached on Hong Kong's autonomy. Falun Gong practitioners reported harassment from groups they said were connected to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and difficulty renting venues for large events, including from the SAR government. Falun Gong practitioners held a rally in July with the stated purpose of raising awareness of 20 years of CCP persecution of the Falun Gong in mainland China.

In September two assailants attacked a Falun Gong practitioner after she met with police to discuss a planned Falun Gong demonstration. In November a printing warehouse for the *Epoch Times Hong Kong Edition*, a Falun Gong-associated media outlet, was subject to an arson attack by four masked assailants armed with batons. According to media reports, some Hong Kong Christian churches reduced their physical assistance to counterparts in mainland China for fear of endangering those counterparts but continued to travel there to dine and pray with them. Christian media sources reported that Christian protesters received anonymous messages threatening them and their families with physical violence if they did not stop speaking out against the government. Other sources stated that many other people on both sides of Hong Kong's political divide received similar messages.

The U.S. consulate general affirmed U.S. government support for protecting freedom of religion and belief in meetings with the government. The Consul

General and consulate general officials met regularly with religious leaders and community representatives to promote religious equality. The Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom visited Hong Kong in March to meet with religious leaders and promote religious freedom in China.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 7.2 million (midyear 2019 estimate). According to SAR government statistics, there are more than one million followers of Taoism and approximately one million followers of Buddhism; 500,000 Protestants; 389,000 Roman Catholics (The Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong recognizes the pope and maintains links to the Vatican.); 100,000 Hindus; and 12,000 Sikhs. According to the World Jewish Congress, approximately 2,500 Jews live in Hong Kong. According to a 2017 *South China Morning Post* article, there are approximately 25,000 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. SAR government statistics estimate there are approximately 300,000 Muslims. Small communities of Baha'is and Zoroastrians also reside in the SAR. Confucianism is widespread, and in some cases, elements of Confucianism are practiced in conjunction with other belief systems. The Falun Gong estimates there are approximately 500 Falun Gong practitioners.

There are dozens of Protestant denominations, including Anglican, Baptist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Church of Christ in China, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, and Seventh-day Adventists.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The Basic Law states that residents have freedom of conscience; freedom of religious belief; and freedom to preach, conduct, and participate in religious activities in public. The Basic Law also states the government may not interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations or restrict religious activities that do not contravene other laws. The Basic Law calls for ties between the region's religious groups and their mainland counterparts based on "nonsubordination, noninterference, and mutual respect." The Basic Law states that religious organizations "may maintain and develop their relations with religious organizations and believers elsewhere."

The Bill of Rights Ordinance incorporates the religious freedom protections of the ICCPR, which include the right to manifest religious belief individually or in community with others, in public or private, and through worship, observance, practice, and teaching. The Bill of Rights Ordinance states persons belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture, profess and practice their own religion, and use their own language. The ordinance also protects the right of parents or legal guardians to “ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.” These rights may be limited when an emergency is proclaimed and “manifestation” of religious beliefs may be limited by law when necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals, or the rights of others. Such limitations may not discriminate solely on the basis of religion.

Religious groups are not legally required to register with the government. They must, however, register to receive government benefits such as tax-exempt status, rent subsidies, government or other professional development training, the use of government facilities, or a grant to provide social services. To qualify for such benefits, a group must prove to the satisfaction of the government that it is established solely for religious, charitable, social, or recreational reasons. Registrants must provide the name and purpose of the organization, identify its office holders, and confirm the address of the principal place of business and any other premises owned or occupied by the organization. If a religious group registers with the government, it enters the registry of all nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but the government makes no adjudication on the validity of any registered groups. Religious groups may register as a society and/or tax-exempt organization as long as they have at least three members who hold valid SAR identity documents; the registration process normally takes approximately 12 working days. The Falun Gong is registered as a society rather than a religious group; as a society, it is able to establish offices, collect dues from members, and have legal status.

The Basic Law allows private schools to provide religious education. The government offers subsidies to schools that are built and run by religious groups. Government-subsidized schools must adhere to government curriculum standards and may not bar students based on religion, but they may provide nonmandatory religious instruction as part of their curriculum. Teachers may not discriminate against students because of their religious beliefs. The public school curriculum mandates coursework on ethics and religious studies, with a focus on religious tolerance; the government curriculum also includes elective modules on different world religions.

Religious groups may apply to the government to lease land on concessional terms through Home Affairs Bureau sponsorship. Religious groups may apply to develop or use facilities in accordance with local legislation.

The Chinese Temples Committee, led by the secretary for home affairs, has a direct role in managing the affairs of some temples. The SAR chief executive appoints its members. The committee oversees the management and logistical operations of 24 of the region's 600 temples and gives grants to other charitable organizations. The committee provides grants to the Home Affairs Bureau for disbursement, in the form of financial assistance to needy ethnic Chinese citizens. The colonial-era law does not require new temples to register to be eligible for Temples Committee assistance.

An approximately 1,200-member Election Committee elects Hong Kong's chief executive. The Basic Law stipulates that the Election Committee's members shall be "broadly representative." Committee members come from four sectors, divided into 38 subsectors, representing various trades, professions, and social services groups. The religious subsector is comprised of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, the Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association, the Hong Kong Christian Council, the Hong Kong Taoist Association, the Confucian Academy, and the Hong Kong Buddhist Association. These six bodies are each entitled to 10 of the 60 seats for the religious subsector on the Election Committee. The religious subsector is not required to hold elections under the Chief Executive Election Ordinance. Instead, each religious organization selects its electors in its own fashion. Each of the six designated religious groups is also a member of the Hong Kong Colloquium of Religious Leaders.

Government Practices

Protests, including several with over a million participants, took place regularly throughout the latter half of the year. The protests began in response to the SAR government's introduction of a bill in February that would have allowed for extradition of SAR residents to other jurisdictions worldwide, including mainland China. Participants included a wide variety of civic groups, including some religious groups. Observers said that while the protesters did not highlight religious issues and the majority of the protesters did not claim affiliation to any religious groups, some Christian advocates used the protest movement to highlight what they stated was the high degree of religious freedom in Hong Kong, which they contrasted with the lack of religious freedom in mainland China, also

expressing strong support for the SAR government's eventual withdrawal of the extradition bill. While Christian activists did not express concern about Hong Kong's current level of religious freedom, foreign based religious freedom advocates expressed fears for the potential future of religious freedom in Hong Kong if the mainland government further encroached on Hong Kong's autonomy.

During the year, Falun Gong practitioners reported generally being able to operate openly and engage in behavior that remained prohibited in mainland China, including distributing literature and conducting public exhibitions. A court in November heard the government's appeal of a 2018 decision overturning the government's confiscation of Falun Gong banners based on a requirement to obtain prior government approval for such displays. The court's decision remained pending at year's end. Falun Gong practitioners continued to state they suspected the CCP funded private groups that harassed them at public events. Practitioners also reported continuing difficulties renting venues for large meetings and cultural events from both government and private businesses. According to Falun Gong practitioners, the SAR government, which controls a significant number of large venues in the city, denied Falun Gong members' applications to rent venues, often telling practitioners that the venues were fully booked. In April a private camping ground agreed to rent space for a Falun Gong conference with more than 1200 participants, of which 800 had planned to stay at the campsite; however, two days before the event, the private venue cancelled.

Falun Gong practitioners held a rally in July with the stated purpose of raising awareness of 20 years of CCP persecution of the Falun Gong in mainland China.

In October police sprayed the front of a mosque with blue dye using a water cannon during a police response to protest activity in the vicinity of the mosque. Government officials, including the chief executive and chief of police, apologized for the incident.

In December Hong Kong police pepper-sprayed prodemocracy protestors who demonstrated in support of Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other Muslim minority groups in mainland China. The police said the protesters assaulted police officers and threw hard objects at police officers.

Senior government leaders often participated in large-scale events held by religious organizations. The SAR government and Legislative Council representatives participated in Confucian and Buddhist commemorative activities, Taoist festivals, and other religious events throughout the year.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

In September two assailants attacked a Falun Gong practitioner after she met with police to discuss a planned Falun Gong demonstration.

In November a printing warehouse for the *Epoch Times Hong Kong Edition*, a Falun Gong-associated media outlet, was subject to an arson attack by four masked assailants armed with batons. The fire was extinguished with no casualties reported, but a printing press was damaged.

Christian media sources reported that more than 40 Christian protestors received anonymous messages on their WhatsApp accounts threatening them and their families with physical violence if they did not stop speaking out against the government. One of these messages reportedly said, “If you don’t stop voicing your opinion, all the members of your family will die,” and another, “your limbs will be chopped off.” One Christian who received the messages said the anonymous sender or senders knew a great deal of personal information about those to whom they sent the messages. He said he and other recipients did not report the messages to the police because they have lost confidence in the police due to what they perceived as brutality against protestors throughout the year. During the year, many protestors and police officers were anonymously threatened or had their personal information posted online. It was difficult to categorize these incidents as being solely or primarily based on religious identity, as opposed to political activity.

Media reported that Christian churches in Hong Kong provided underground churches in mainland China with monetary support, Bibles, blacklisted Christian literature, theological training, and assistance in founding new churches. Under new regulations in mainland China, however, many Hong Kong pastors were suspending or canceling their work in the mainland to avoid endangering contacts there, according to media reports. Some churches continued to provide support by sending members to dine and pray with Christians across the border, rather than providing more tangible assistance.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

Consulate general officials, including the Consul General, stressed the importance of religious freedom and interfaith dialogue in meetings with government officials, religious leaders, NGOs, and community representatives. The Consul General and

other consulate officials met with Buddhist, Catholic, Taoist, Jewish, Muslim, and Protestant religious leaders and adherents to emphasize the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and to receive reports about the status of religious freedom both in Hong Kong and in the mainland.

The Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom visited Hong Kong in March where he spoke at the Foreign Correspondents' Club to discuss religious freedom abuses in mainland China. In his remarks, the Ambassador stated that persons in mainland China do not enjoy religious freedom in the way that the people of Hong Kong do, noting that "the Chinese government is at war with faith...It is a war they will not win." During his visit to Hong Kong, he met with religious leaders, NGO representatives, and religious and cultural studies students and faculty.

Throughout the year, consulate general officials promoted respect for religious traditions by marking traditional religious holidays and visiting local Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist temples. The Consul General hosted an annual iftar at his residence. Consulate officers participated in other festival celebrations with the Buddhist, Confucian, and Muslim communities. At all these events, consulate general officials stressed in public and private remarks the importance of religious freedom, tolerance, and diversity.

MACAU 2019 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The Basic Law of the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) grants residents freedom of religious belief, freedom to preach and participate in religious activities in public, and freedom to pursue religious education. The law protects the right of religious assembly and the rights of religious organizations to administer schools, hospitals, and welfare institutions and to provide other social services. The law states the government does not recognize a state religion and explicitly states all religious denominations are equal before the law. The law stipulates religious groups may develop and maintain relations with religious groups abroad. Falun Gong practitioners continued to hold rallies and protests against Chinese Communist Party (CCP) treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in mainland China. According to Asia News, from September 29 to October 1, the Government Tourism Office projected a slideshow of CCP symbols onto the Ruins of Saint Paul's facade to mark the 70th anniversary of communist rule in China. In response, the Catholic Diocese of Macau stated concerns over the government's use of historically religious sites for secular purposes.

In September the Catholic diocese opened the Redemptoris Mater College for Evangelization to train new seminary students from the region.

In meetings with religious leaders and civil society representatives, representatives from the U.S. Consulate General stressed the importance of religious freedom and tolerance for all religious groups and discussed religious communities' relations with their coreligionists on the mainland and in Hong Kong.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 611,000 (midyear 2019 estimate). According to a Pew Research Center 2010 estimate, 58.9 percent of the population are folk religionists, 17.3 percent Buddhist, 7.2 percent Christian, 1.2 percent other religions (including Hindus, Muslims, and Jews), and 15.4 percent unaffiliated. The SAR Government Information Bureau 2019 yearbook does not provide an estimate for Buddhists but states they are numerous and that individuals often practice a mixture of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Chinese folk religions. According to the yearbook, the majority of the population practices Buddhism or Chinese folk religions. The SAR Government Information Bureau estimates 5.2 percent of the population (approximately 31,700 individuals) are Roman Catholics,

of whom more than half are foreign domestic workers and other expatriates, and 1.3 percent of the population (more than 8,000 individuals) are Protestants. Protestant denominations include the Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, and Presbyterian Churches. Evangelical Christian and independent local nondenominational churches, some of which are affiliated with mainland churches, are also present. Various reports estimate the Muslim population at 5,000 to 10,000. Smaller religious groups include Baha'is, who estimate their membership at more than 2,000, and Falun Gong practitioners, who estimate their numbers at 20 to 50 persons.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The Basic Law states residents have freedom of religious belief and the freedom to publicly preach as well as conduct and participate in religious activities. These rights may be limited in extreme situations for national security reasons. The Basic Law further stipulates the government shall not interfere in the internal affairs of religious groups or in their relations with their counterparts outside Macau. It bars the government from restricting religious activities that do not contravene the laws of the SAR.

Under the Basic Law, the SAR government, rather than the central government of the People's Republic of China (PRC), safeguards religious freedom in the SAR.

The law states there is no official religion in the SAR and stipulates all religious denominations are equal before the law. The law provides for freedom of religion, including privacy of religious belief, freedom of religious assembly, freedom to hold religious processions, and freedom of religious education.

Religious groups are not required to register to conduct religious activities, but registration enables them to benefit from legal status. Benefits include exemption from taxation (such as property tax, stamp duty, complementary tax (profit tax), and industrial tax) and financial assistance from the government. Religious groups register with the Identification Bureau, providing the name of an individual applicant and that person's position in the group, identification card number, and contact information, as well as the group's name and a copy of the group's charter. Registered charities receive the same benefits as registered religious groups. Religious groups need to be registered as a charity under a similar or different name in order to provide charitable services.

The law guarantees religious organizations may run seminaries and schools, hospitals, and welfare institutions and provide other social services.

Most public schools do not require religious education. Nonreligious public schools do not offer religious or world religion courses. A small number of religious organizations receive public funding for schools, and under the law, these schools may require religious education. Students may not opt out of taking a religious class if they attend a public institution that has it in the required curriculum.

By law, religious groups may develop and maintain relations with religious groups abroad.

Government Practices

Falun Gong practitioners continued to hold rallies and set up informational sites at public venues without incident. According to the Falun Gong website Minghui.org, in April outside the Ruins of St. Paul's, Falun Gong practitioners set up message boards with information about the history of the group and used megaphones to play recorded messages about persecution of practitioners on the mainland. On July 19, Falun Gong practitioners held a rally and a candlelight vigil to mark the 20th anniversary of the CCP's ban on Falun Gong.

Some religious groups continued to report they retained their ability to conduct charitable activities on the mainland by working through official channels and officially recognized churches.

According to Asia News, from September 29 to October 1, the Government Tourism Office projected a slideshow of CCP symbols onto the Ruins of Saint Paul's facade to mark the 70th anniversary of communist rule in China. In response, the diocese issued a declaration that "the use of historical monuments ought to correspond to its intended character." According to the article, while the Catholic Church no longer owns the ruins, St. Paul's remains a symbol of Catholic faith in the country for the Church and Catholic believers. In December, during the week prior to the 20th anniversary of the transfer of sovereignty from Portugal to the PRC, the government projected a light show onto the facade, which drew no reaction from the diocese.

The government continued to provide financial support, regardless of religious affiliation, to religious groups to establish schools, child-care centers, clinics, homes for the elderly, rehabilitation centers, and vocational training centers. The government also continued to refer victims of human trafficking to religious organizations for the provision of support services.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

The Catholic Church in Macau, in communion with the Holy See, continued to recognize the pope as its head. The Vatican appointed the bishop for the diocese.

The Catholic Diocese of Macau continued to run many educational institutions. In September Redemptoris Mater College for Evangelization in Asia opened. According to Vatican media outlets, the college has a mandate to train new seminary students from all over the region, including from the mainland.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

U.S. Consulate General representatives in Hong Kong, including the Consul General, stressed the importance of religious diversity and discussed religious communities' relations with their coreligionists on the mainland. They raised these points in meetings with civil society representatives, religious leaders, and nongovernmental organizations.