

**Written Testimony by Dr. Bob Fu
Founder and President of ChinaAid**

**Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs by the Subcommittee on Africa, Health,
Global Human Rights, and International Organizations**

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Subject: China's War on Christianity and Other Religious Faiths

**An overview of China's religious policy and religious persecution before and after the 19th
National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2017**

(Featuring Christianity and Christians)

**I. The overall circumstances and characteristics of religious policy and religious
persecution**

1. Two prominent changes to the church-and-state relations

**1).The change from “predominantly friends” to “either enemies or
friends” and “both enemies and friends”**

If 2016 marked the CCP's core principle for managing religious affairs changing from Jiang Zemin's “active guidance of religion and socialism to mutually adapt” to Xi Jinping's “persistently following the path of religious Sinicization,”—with the key word of religious policies changing from “socialism” to Sinicization—the new Regulations on Religious Affairs, promoted in 2017 by the State Council, are action plans to implement “religious Sinicization,” and the statements about the management of religion iterated in the report of the CCP's 19th National Congress clearly defined the CCP's political views about religion in Xi's era. These statements are placed in the congressional report's two sections about “the United Front” and “national security.” In the context of “solidifying and developing the Patriotic United Front” in the “United Front” section of the report, we see “comprehensively implementing CCP's basic principles about religious work, adhering to the Sinicization of religion in China and actively guiding religion to adapt to socialist society.” In the context of “effectively defending national security” in the “national security” section of the report, we see “imperviously preventing and resolutely attacking all kinds of religious extremism.” Since China often persecutes commonplace, peaceful religious activities as “religious extremism,” this indicates that the CCP has taken the importance of religious issues from the level of being a target of the “United Front” to the level of “national security” after the 19th National Congress. This changes communities from being “predominantly friends,” which originated in Deng Xiaoping's “Reform and Opening-up” era, to being “either enemies or friends” or “both enemies and friends.”

2). The CCP controls religion: ideology matches practice

In Deng Xiaoping's era, the CCP's management of religion was nominally conducted through the State Administration of Religious Affairs, which is affiliated with the State Council, although it was known to all that religion was actually controlled by the CCP. According to the CCP's Central Committee's Plan for Deepening the CCP's and the State's Organizational Reform, released after the Two Sessions (i.e. the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) in 2018, the State Administration of Religious Affairs, which was previously affiliated with the State Council, merged into the United Front Work Department. The department in charge of religious affairs being separated from the government's State Council and its direct subordination to the CCP's United Front Work Department indicate that the atheistic CCP has abandoned its previous way of managing religion from behind the scenes and has taken the front stage to control religion directly and openly.

2. The establishment of the National Joint Meeting of Religious Groups

On October 10, 2016, a meeting was held at the State Administration for Religious Affairs to announce the establishment of the National Joint Meeting of Religious Groups, which was intended to discuss and communicate about issues related to relationships between religions and to create an interfaith dialogue model with Chinese characteristics.

On May 31, 2018, the 5th conference of the National Joint Meeting of Religious Groups was held to study the amendments of the Constitution of China. At the conference, attendees were urged to relentlessly promote the Sinicization of religion and see "sincerely upholding the CCP's leadership, voluntarily accepting the CCP's leadership, and unwaveringly defending the CCP's leadership" as a necessary requirement and automatic behavior to show their reverence for the Constitution. The conference also emphasized closely uniting the leaders of religious communities and religious adherents around the CCP's leadership team, centered around Xi Jinping.

On July 31, 2018, the 6th conference of the National Joint Meeting of Religious Groups was held, at which the proposition was raised that China's national flag should be hung at religious activity sites.

3. Characteristics of religious policy and persecution through the lens of the new Regulations on Religious Affairs

Released on August 26, 2017, the new Regulations on Religious Affairs took effect on February 1, 2018.

The biggest change to the new Regulations is the public entry of the political and ideological term "socialism": the insertion of "actively guiding religion to adapt to socialist society" into Article 4, Part 1, and the insertion of "practicing the socialist core values" into Article 4, Part 2.

In comparing the old Regulations, the Draft for Approval, and the new Regulations, one can see that China's government's organizational involvement in the management of religion expanded from governments and agencies of a certain level to including nearly all levels of

government's involvement to various extents and nearly all agencies' involvement within their scope of responsibility.

Articles about the internet were added to the new Regulations for the first time. According to the new Regulations, online religious information services will be subject to two types of control of a different nature: on one hand, regular, industry-related management and coordination will be performed by the State Administration of Religious Affairs; on the other hand, more detailed and complicated approval/disapproval, administrative penalties, and criminal charges from law enforcement agencies will be implemented collaboratively by the CCP's Internet Security and Information Leadership Group Office (also known as National Internet Information Office) and state organs in charge of publication and electronic communications.

The scope of "outlawing and cracking down" has expanded from "proclaiming religious extremism" to "proclaiming, supporting and funding religious extremism."

To authorized religion, political favors are offered and the administrative control over personnel, money, and properties is used to tame it completely and turn it into the government's instrument.

Articles regarding administrative penalty in the new Regulations will be used as grounds to justify punishment for unauthorized religion, which will mostly be financial punishment, including confiscation of money, and fines. Criminal law articles regarding religion are nearly all customized for unauthorized religion.

All in all, as far as the main content of the new Regulations goes, all religion, whether authorized or unauthorized, will be given certain labels by the Chinese government. For Islam, they are separatism, radicalism, or terrorism. For Tibetan Buddhism, it is separatism. For Christianity and Catholicism, it is infiltration. For Buddhism and Daoism, it is commercialization. Both authorized and unauthorized religious entities will face new dilemmas, though in different forms, but the prospects may be the same. The CCP intends to gain complete control over authorized religion and tame it while disuniting and dismantling unauthorized religion to gain control over it, or attacking and destroying it if it cannot be controlled.

1) Strictest controls ever regarding the registration of religious activity sites

Solely addressing religious activity sites, chapter 4 of the new Regulations on Religious Affairs is mainly concerned with government-sponsored (authorized) religions' "temples, churches, and other designated religious activity sites," and also mentions non-government-sponsored (unauthorized) religion.

A. Mainly concerned with government-sponsored (authorized) religions' "temples, churches and other fixed locations for religious activities"

The new Regulations prescribe the requirements for setting up religious activity sites.

To set up religious activity sites, religious groups are to submit an application to the religious affairs department of the county-level people's government. The establishment of temples and

churches must be reviewed and approved by the religious affairs department of the provincial, autonomous region, or directly-governed municipality people's government.

After religious activity sites have been approved for preparations and completed construction, they shall apply for registration with the religious affairs department of the county-level people's government for that area and receive a "Religious Activity Site Registration Certificate." Religious activity sites, meeting the requirements for legality, may register as legal with the civil affairs departments upon the after obtaining the consent of a local religious group and reporting to the religious affairs department of a county-level People's Government for review.

Religious activity sites will accept the guidance, supervision, and inspection of relevant departments of the local people's government regarding the management of personnel, finances, assets, accounting, security, fire protection, protection of relics, health and disease prevention, and so forth.

Religious affairs departments shall conduct oversight and inspections of religious activity sites' compliance with laws, regulations, and rules; the establishment and implementation of site management systems; the modification of registration matters, etc.

Reconstruction or construction of new buildings in religious activity sites shall be done after approval by the religious affairs department of a local people's government at the county level or above, and which will then handle plans, construction, and other formalities.

B. Management and control of temporary religious activity sites: interpretation of the latest "Management Methods for the Review and Approval of Temporary Religious Activity Sites"

Temporary religious activity sites are commonly perceived as targeting non-government-sponsored religion, particularly Christianity. In reality, the *Management Methods for the Review and Approval of Temporary Religious Activity Sites* intends to bring non-government-sponsored religion, especially Christian house churches, into the Three-Self Church system.

According to Article 35 of the new *Regulations on Religious Affairs*, "Where religious citizens need to regularly conduct collective religious activities, but don't possess the conditions for applying to set up religious activity sites, a representative of the religious citizens is to submit an application to the religious affairs department of the county-level people's government, and after the religious affairs department for the county-level people's government solicits the opinions of local religious groups and township-level people's governments, it may designate a temporary activity site for them." On Feb. 22, 2018, the State Administration for Religious Affairs issued the *Management Methods for the Review and Approval of Temporary Religious Activity Sites*, laying out specific regulations on the implementation agency, application conditions, paperwork required, application procedure, timeline for processing applications, the management of temporary religious activity sites, and so forth.

According to Article 5, a place applying for becoming a temporary religious activity site shall meet the following conditions:(1) There are a certain number of religious citizens that need to participate in collective religious activities on a regular basis;(2) There is no place for religious activities or temporary place for activities of the same religion in the surrounding area; (3) There

are religious citizen representatives in compliance with Article 4 of these Measures;(4) There is a legal house that satisfies the safety requirements and is suitable for carrying out collective religious activities;(5) It does not hinder the normal production, study, and life among other surrounding entities, schools, and residents. The “certain number” in clause 1 shall be decided by the religious affairs department of the provincial, autonomous region, or directly-governed municipality People’s Governments.

Article 6 requires applicants to fill out the Application Form for Temporary Religious Activity Sites (with the *Temporary Religious Site Application Form* attached) and also to submit the following paperwork: 1) Religious citizen representative’s ID and household registration certificate or residential permit; 2) A copy of the ID, residential address, and signature of religious citizens participating in collective religious activities; 3) Paperwork verifying property ownership or utilization rights for the designated temporary religious activity site, and paperwork verifying that the location satisfies the safety requirements; 4) A written statement signed by all believing citizen representatives to promise that activities at the temporary sites will comply with laws, regulations, and rules, will not hinder the normal production, study, and life among other surrounding entities, schools, and residents, and will accept management from the district’s and county people’s government’s religious affairs departments, as well as the township government and Villagers’/Residents’ Committee.

Article 6 also requires “believing citizen representatives to regularly update the township government on their activities and financial management.”

Article 13 states that “religious groups are obligated to supervise the activities at the religious activity sites, and activities at temporary activity sites are subject to the direction of religious groups.”

2) Controlling the selection and training methods of religious clergy

Chapter 5 of the new Regulations on Religious Affairs is about religious clergy. Article 36 states, “Upon affirmation by a religious group and reporting to the religious affairs department of a people’s government at the county level or above to be filed for the record, religious professionals may engage in professional religious activities ... Those who have not obtained or have lost religious professional credentials, must not engage in activity as religious professionals.”

Article 41 in Chapter VI says, “Non-religious groups, non-religious schools, non-religious activity sites, or non-designated temporary activity sites must not hold religious activities, must not accept religious donations. Non-religious groups, non-religious schools, and non-religious activity sites must not carry out religious training and must not organize citizens leaving the country to participate in religious training, meetings, activities and so forth.”

On June 11, 2018, citing Article 36, the Chang’an District Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau in Shijiazhuang, Hebei, sent a letter to the Shijiazhuang parish and the local Catholic Patriotic Commission to propose removing Priest Sun Linghui from his position on the grounds that, as the chief priest of Tangu Catholic Church in Shijiazhuang’s Chang’an district, Sun took believers on a pilgrimage across the provincial border and went to Shanxi province.

4. The CCP’s Central Committee’s No.1 Document mentions “religion” for the first time.

On Feb. 4, 2018, the CCP's Central Committee's No. 1 Document mentions "intensifying the attack on illegal religious activities and the infiltration of overseas forces in rural areas and preventing the utilization of religion to interfere with public affairs in rural areas."

II. Policy about Christianity and persecution methods

1. Align Christianity with the CCP's ideology, assimilate and alienate Christianity in the name of "Sinicization"

1) Develop and launch "The Five-Year Plan about the Sinicization of Christianity"

On July 13, 2017, the TSPM and CCC held a seminary on "The Five-Year Plan about the Sinicization of Christianity" and how to promote Sinicization.

On March 27-28, 2018, the TSPM and CCC held a meeting in Nanjing, Jiangsu, to launch the "Plan Outline of the Five-Year Plan (2018-2022) on Promoting the Sinicization of Christianity" and the preaching team for theological construction. The "Plan Outline" is composed of four parts, i.e. Overview, Main Tasks, Plan for the Crucial Work, and Organization and Implementation, and proposes "cultivating and implementing the socialist core values; championing the Sinicization of Christianity." The "Plan Outline" made it clear that the "Sinicization of Christianity" means to change "Christianity in China" into "Chinese Christianity," emphasizing that "the heart and soul of Christianity's Sinicization is to Sinicize the Christian theology," and even proposing to "re-translate the Bible or re-write biblical commentaries." The "Plan Outline" also advocates for "incorporating the Chinese elements into church worship services, hymns and songs, clergy attire, and the architectural style of church buildings." This includes "editing and publishing worship songs with Chinese characteristics and promoting the Sinicization of worship music", "using uniquely Chinese art forms, such as Chinese painting, calligraphy, inscription, and paper-cutting to express the Christian faith", and "encouraging churches to blend in style with Chinese architecture or local architectural style", etc. The "Plan Outline" was submitted by the chairman and president of the TSPM and CCC to the national TSPM and CCC's Standing Committee meeting for consideration. The national religious affairs bureau will supervise it, the national TSPM and CCC will organize and implement it, and every province, autonomous region, and municipality's TSPM and CCC, seminaries, and churches will cooperate with it.

2). Emphasizing religious schools' adherence to the path of operating schools with Chinese characteristics

In early December 2017, the State Administration of Religious Affairs held a seminar in Nanjing, Jiangsu, with religious schools and institutes to make action plans for the operation of religious schools and institutes. At this meeting, agencies in charge of religious, work as well as religious schools and institutes of all levels, were required to carefully study and implement the key messages of the CCP's 19th National Congress, implement Xi Jinping's speech in religious work, implement in detail the central government's policies and action plans for religious work, implement the new Regulations on Religious Affairs, adhere to the path of operating schools with Chinese characteristics, and take measures to improve the skills of managing religious schools and institutes in the "new era."

The meeting also emphasized “adhering to the Sinicization of religion, cultivating a team of faculty members in religious schools who are politically reliable, academically established, morally acclaimed, and can step up to play a role in critical times; strengthening the construction of textbooks, faculty and funding, and curriculum to foster intellectuals and talents who can actively guide religion to adapt to socialism.”

3) Christian logos and symbols removed across the nation; campaigns of “inserting socialist core values and knowledge of law into classrooms” conducted to promote the transformation of “belief in religion” into “belief in the CCP”

Activities include: demolishing the cross and replacing it with the national flag, campaigning to bring core socialist values into churches, hanging posters about core socialist values and Xi Jinping’s portrait, setting up the CCP organization in churches and having the congregation sing revolutionary songs, and putting up the sign at the church entrance that says “Obey the Party, Follow the Party.”

In 2017, Three-Self Churches in Anhui, Shandong, and Zhejiang launched activities to bring core socialist values and knowledge of law into classrooms. In late March 2017, a church in Gaozuo Town, Suining, Jiangsu, started the movement of “bringing newspapers into churches,” offering newspaper racks to the five churches in the administrative region for the display of *Suining Today* (weekend edition) and other CCP newspapers and publications to propagandize the CCP’s policies and core socialist values. In November 2017, in the name of “assisting religion,” the local government in Yugan County, Shangrao, Jiangxi province, forced Christians to remove the Christian folk artwork hanging on the walls of their homes and replace them with Xi Jinping’s portraits, thereby promoting the transformation of “belief in religion” into “belief in the CCP.”

Since February 2018, many prefectures and townships in Henan province received a notice banning Chinese New Year door banners with Christian messages. According to believers from Luogang Prefecture, Ninling County, Shangqiu, Henan province, the posters and banners proclaiming Christian messages on their doors were removed or painted over with black paint by village officials.

On the wall of the annex building of Jesus Church in Shanghai’s Pudong District, the content of “core socialist values” was written.

On March 31, the Pingdingshan’s Lushan County Religious Affairs Bureau’s personnel gathered church evangelists to study the new Regulations on Religious Affairs, demanding all churches in the county to hang the national flag, and they established the “religion office” in every prefecture and township to manage religion, even down to the villages.

Since May 2018, portraits of Jesus have been forbidden in Jiangxi and Henan provinces, and even the word “Immanuel” on the walls of some Christians’ homes was removed.

In mid-August 2018, priests in Cangzhou Parish questioned the authorities in an open letter about their practice of posting the CCP’s rules and regulations in churches without consulting with the parish’s bishops, priests, and church congregations, and the practice of setting up an “in-church instruction team” in churches.

At a church concert held on August 11 in Yueqing, Zhejiang, many revolutionary songs were performed.

4) House churches required to join Three-Self Churches

In July 2017, the religious affairs departments in Nanyang, Henan, asked more than 20,000 house church members registered with the government to join Three-Self Churches.

According to some believers, Tanghe is a pilot site in Henan province, and starting from February 1 of this year, the Tanghe County government has asked all house church members to register with the Three-Self Churches and disband all house churches.

2. Systematic investigation of Christian house churches to pave the way for outlawing house churches entirely

In some regions, door-by-door investigation and onsite visits from neighborhood to neighborhood and from village to village were conducted to screen privately set-up Christian meeting places.

2017

In May, the person responsible for the computerized management of Fenghuang Community in Langya District, Chuzhou, Anhui province, conducted a thorough investigation of the house church gathering places in the community and these churches' core members' activities, and registered in great detail all the information requested by the authorities.

In early June, by conducting a thorough investigation of the privately set-up Christian gathering places, the He County government in Anhui province signed a contract of responsibility, titled "Written Promises of the Person Responsible for Privately Set-up Christian Gathering Places," with the leaders of each church. These leaders had to fill out the "Survey on Privately Set-up Christian Gathering Places" and "Registration Form for Core Leaders of Privately Set-up Christian Gathering Places," agreeing to not receive evangelists from the outside world or host foreign believers and agreeing to keep churches' finances transparent.

Between July 24 and 26, Anhui's United Front Department and the provincial religious affairs bureau formed a "joint investigation team" to supervise province-administered cities and directly-administered counties, including the organization and development of trainings on policies, laws, and regulations centered around "separating education and religion"; making sure trainings have covered all religious clergy and sites for religious activities; investigating and gathering information about Christian gathering places; and outlawing gathering places that fail to meet the government's requirements.

On August 1, the Nanjing Municipal Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau held an all-city special meeting for the directors of the bureau to orchestrate the reform of religious work, demanding effective research and investigation of religious issues. Topics pertaining to Christianity discussed at the meeting include: making full use of the Nanjing Municipal Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau's Coordination Team for Privately Set-Up Christian Meeting Places, conducting featured research on Christianity in the rural areas, targeting management on privately set-up Christian meeting places in the rural areas according to the law, increasing the outlawing of and cracking down on illegal Christian activities, preventing the erosion caused by heresy and cults

[Editor's note: The Chinese government uses the term "cults" more broadly than most Western countries. While officially only supposed to apply to fringe religious organizations, everyone from Christians to Falun Gong members--who are often murdered in prison for their faith--and actual cult members have been arrested cult charges], as well as the infiltration of overseas forces into Christianity, and strictly preventing the emergence of privately set-up Christian gathering places.

In early September, Xuzhou and some other cities in Jiangsu province started to investigate house churches, collecting data on every single Christian house church and registering information about their core leaders. According to the principle of management by jurisdiction, investigation was conducted on every house church by looking into its gathering place, leader, evangelists (core members), number of attendees, sources of funding, interactions with the outside world *[Editor's note: China views religious institutions' interactions with non-Chinese people/organizations as extremely suspect, since it incorrectly presumes foreign powers are using religion to infiltrate China and overthrow the government. This has led to the unlawful persecution of Christians across the country and more than 1 million ethnic minority Muslims in Xinjiang]*, and future development. Data was collected and submitted in a timely manner. The report also indicated that, based on the data-collecting results, government agents will follow the principle of "combining the methods of channeling and blocking, differentiating, categorizing and incorporating [churches] into management" to handle privately set-up Christian gathering places according to their specific conditions and will "register a batch, combine a batch, transition a batch, and outlaw a batch" to manage existing privately set-up Christian gathering places.

On September 9, the Information Registration Form for Core Leaders of Christian House Churches, used by Yitang Town in Xuzhou's jurisdiction, included name, birth date, church's name, job title, ID number, attitude towards the government, and "Information on main family members" which includes name, age, occupation, religion, and residence. In the "description" section of the form, it asks whether the church is part of an illegal organization, has a criminal record, and whether or not it is willing to leave its previous affiliated organization and join the Three-Self Church. According to some local Christians, house church leaders from other towns were also required to fill out this form.

In early December, the United Front Department of Tianjin University of Finance and Economics's Communist Party Commission issued a notice titled "Regarding the Designated Research on Christianity in Tianjin University of Finance and Economics," demanding all grassroots Communist Party Commission departments and the directly affiliated Party Secretary to fully carry out the guidelines given at the CCP's 19th National Congress; diligently implement the guidelines given by Xi Jinping in his speech at the National Conference on Religious Work; and conduct data-collection and an investigation about Christianity on the school's campus according to the "CCP State Council's Opinion Regarding Reinforcing and Improving Religious Work Under the New Circumstances", "The Opinion of the Central Government's United Front Department and the State Administration of Religious Affairs about Reinforcing the Work in Religion Under the New Circumstances," and the requirements of the Tianjin government and the Tianjin Education Commission. The scope of the required investigation includes whether students from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan and foreign students and teachers are Christians or not; the number of believers as well as their names; whether or not evangelism occurs on the school campus and in what way it is conducted; and whether there are Christian gathering places, their locations, and the number of attendees. This notice also required grassroots Communist Party Commission departments to submit their investigation results to the Party Commission's United Front Department before Dec. 13.

2018

The religious affairs departments in Shandong, Henan, Beijing, etc., screened and investigated religious activities through schools and grassroots governments, and required citizens to fill out “The Religious Belief Information Form.”

In March, the government in Hultao, Liaoning, launched a campaign called “Comprehensively Purifying the Whole City’s Social and Cultural Environment in the Religious Domain and Resisting the Harmful Cultural Infiltration by Overseas Forces,” during which 64 copying and printing businesses, 15 printing factories, 41 bookstores, 3 magazine and newspaper booths, 7 used books stands, and 4 churches were inspected.

On March 16, Beijing’s Chaoyang District Ethnic and Religious Work Leadership Office issued a notice, labeling house churches as “privately set-up Christian gathering places” and requiring each street to screen and investigate Christian house churches in their jurisdiction, and write up reports to pave the way for “special task management.”

On April 4, the Residential Committee of Pingyang Neighborhood in Anyang, Henan required people with religious beliefs to register with the Residential Committee. A local Christian believed that this requirement was meant to target Christianity because the government banned house church gatherings but put no restrictions on other religions.

On May 22, house church leaders in China’s Henan and Anhui provinces consecutively received the “Application Form for Registered Religious Activity Sites,” which required the person registering the church to check “V” on items that apply to the church’s condition. Applicants were required to fill out this form in three copies and submit them to the management agency to be kept by the provincial, municipal, and county-level government’s religious affairs departments. Information required on this form includes name of the religious activity site, type of religion, address, name of the person in charge, number of clergymen, date of birth, secular occupations, and so forth.

The governments in Wenzhou and Shaoxing, Zhejiang, conducted various inspections on religious activity sites and believers’ identification. Many schools in Wenzhou started to collect information on students’ religious beliefs, which involves three steps: 1) identify the students whose parents are Catholics or Christians; 2) identify the parents’ names, home addresses, and where they are employed; 3) visit these parents at their homes to ask them to give up their religious beliefs. Some [authorities] pressured the parents to give up their religious beliefs through using their employers. The Zhongxin Elementary School in Pingyang County, Wenzhou, screened students about their religious beliefs, asking parents to reveal their religious beliefs.

On July 4, the Haidian District Ethnic and Religious Affairs Office in Beijing issued “Notice about Investigating Christian Gathering Places,” requiring every street affairs office and township government to conduct “special task management work” on Christianity, launch a “thorough investigation,” and establish a mobile work station and management system with the help of the public security bureaus, police stations, and national security protection departments. The Investigation Form about Christian Gathering Places requested information about the names of the gathering places, their addresses, information about the site, residence, landlord’s name, contact information, as well information about the church’s pastors, evangelists, and members. In the column of church members’ information, government agents conducting the research must fill in the age range of the members, including “over 60 years old”, “40-60 years of age,”

and “20-40 years of age,” and provide the ratio of local residents to non-local residents. The form also asks whether this church is a religious activity site registered according to the law, whether it is willing to accept the government’s and the Three-Self Church’s management, whether it is not willing to accept either the Three-Self Church’s management or the government’s management, or whether it is not willing to accept the management of both the government or the Three-Self Church.

On June 14, a screening/investigation form about religious belief used in China’s northeast region listed “reformed churches” as a “cult and heresy.”

3. A new wave of forced demolitions of churches and crosses following those in Zhejiang province

2017

During July and August, the government departments of many places in Jiangxi province ordered the forced demolition of church crosses and walls, and there was enough evidence that this campaign occurred across the province.

On Sept. 20, the cross of Sheng’en Church (a church registered with the government) in Henan province’s Tanghe County was demolished by the local government.

2018

Since February 1, the local governments across Henan province have been aggressively asking churches to demolish their crosses, including government-sponsored Three-Self Churches. A church leader from Yucheng County, Shangqiu, who asked to be an anonymous source of information, revealed that the government in Mangzhongqiao Prefecture, Yucheng County, summoned the leaders of seven churches for a meeting on February 8, stating that their superiors ordered that all churches’ crosses should be removed. By May 2018, nearly all the churches’ crosses in Ningling County, Henan, had been removed. On August 21, the cross of Tian’en Church in Qibing district, Hebi city, Henan province, was demolished by force. The cross of a Christian church in Luoyang, Henan, was removed and replaced with the national flag.

4. The installation of surveillance cameras at religious activity sites expanded to the whole nation

In early 2017, the Zhejiang provincial government’s religious affairs departments sent a notice to all county-level departments in charge of managing religion, requesting that surveillance cameras be installed in Catholic churches, Protestant churches and other sites for religious activities. In 2017, nearly all the government-sponsored churches in Zhejiang province had surveillance cameras installed. In 2018, the governments in Beijing and Henan province also requested local churches to install surveillance cameras.

5. Henan government’s “Nine Prohibitions” for Christians

In March 2018, the TSPM of Henan province’s Xichuan County imposed 9 prohibitions on Christians, including: prohibiting minors under 18 years of age from entering church; prohibiting the CCP members from entering church unless it’s required by work; prohibiting churches from

hosting preachers from [other countries] without approval by the TSPM and CCC; prohibiting conducting religious activities at religious activity sites; prohibiting conducting activities at unapproved religious activity sites; prohibiting illegally spreading religious content and pictures on the internet; prohibiting displaying signs with religious messages on the street or roadside; and prohibiting hosting trainings without obtaining the government's approval.

6. Other policies and measures

1) The Christian faith contained among citizens

Prohibitions against citizens from being Christians expanded from the CCP members and civil servants, such as soldiers, to non-CCP members and ordinary citizens, and from government institutions to non-government agencies. In August 2018, it circulated on the internet that governments in Anyang, Henan, and Ma'anshan, Anhui, forced Christians to sign a written promise to abandon their religious beliefs.

2) Limiting and resisting the spread of Christianity

Since the CCP's 19th National Congress in 2017, information about Christianity on China's major websites has all been removed, including videos and audio recordings, books, and merchandize carrying Christian messages.

In late March 2018, China's major online stores received the notice that starting from March 30, 2018, Taobao, Jingdong, and WeChat were to stop selling the Bible.

On June 15, 2018, the Good News Theaters and Gospel video websites were notified by cultural affairs departments that they would be fined and shut down.

3) Nationwide intensifying suppression of Christmas activities in 2017

Anhui: According to a notice published on December 21 by the Anqing Municipal Public Security Bureau in Anhui province, "All special and public places are not allowed to celebrate Christmas. Even creating a Christmas atmosphere—such as putting up Christmas trees, Santa Claus, wearing Christmas hats, and all other items related to Christmas—is severely restricted, and all Christmas-related activities are required to be cancelled." Anhui province's Youth League posted on its WeChat page that Christmas should be viewed as a "holiday of humiliation" by the Chinese people, because of the Western powers' historic invasion of China [*Editor's note: This refers to China's unfounded fear that Western countries are trying to infiltrate the country via religion*].

Gansu: The city of Zhangye's municipal government, administrative management office of industry and commerce, and joint law enforcement squad prohibited the display of Christmas trees in stores and shopping malls. Some stores had to put away their Christmas trees in their warehouses.

Shanghai: Elements related to Christmas were forbidden in TV shows and commercials.

Inner Mongolia: On December 22, the Education Department of Jining No. 1 Middle School issued a notice to forbid all activities related to Christmas. Christmas presents were to be confiscated upon discovery and points subsequently deducted from the character evaluation scores of the class and individual students. Appreciation of Chairman Mao Zedong's poetry was incorporated into the so-called "morality cultivation class."

Hunan: On December 11, the CCP's Hengyang Municipal Disciplinary Commission issued a warning to "prohibit CCP members and government officials from attending Christmas Eve and Christmas celebrations and parties" or having dinner parties or social gatherings on Christmas Eve and threatened "consequences" for those violating the rule. Per a notice by the Hengyang Municipal Public Security Bureau, whoever goes through the city center during Christmas time must carry an ID card. It also said that public security departments will increase manpower to inspect and patrol, and those who sell or shoot up manmade snowflakes will be subjected to heavy fines.

Liaoning: On December 11, the Youth League Committee of Liaoning province's Shenyang University of Pharmaceutical Medicine issued a "Notice Regarding Forbidding Student Organizations Across Campus from Hosting Activities Related to Christmas Eve, Christmas, and Other Western Religious Holidays," prohibiting student organizations across campus from hosting Christmas Eve or Christmas celebrations and activities.

4) House church pastors and Bible teachers disqualified from evangelistic activities

The ethnic and religious affairs office of Xining's Chengbei District ruled that the clergy running Huoquan Christian Church had not been registered through legal procedures, and the church's evangelists were not government-approved or state-ordained. As a result, Li Mutian, the pastor of the church, as well as other clergy members, were suspended from presiding over corporate religious activities.

5) House churches harassed, interrupted and shut down

Since February 2018, house churches in China have faced a new circumstance. Churches in Beijing, Shanghai, Sichuan, Guangdong, and Henan have experienced pressures from various sources, church meetings have been randomly interrupted, and believers' normal religious practices were violated and banned, which caused increasingly escalated social conflicts. On February 1, 2018, when the new Regulations on Religious Affairs took effect, local governments across Henan province began to outlaw house churches extensively and impose restrictions on Three-Self Churches, which includes installing surveillance cameras at church entrances and inside churches. On March 8, house church believers in Henan's Zhumadian, Zhoukou, and Sheqi, Nanyang, received notices consecutively from the local government officials, ordering them to stop their gatherings immediately.

House churches that refused to join the government-sponsored Three-Self Churches were harassed by the local authorities through forcing landlords to stop renting their properties to house churches, ordering believers to leave an area, or harassing and preventing believers from gathering in the name of inspecting fire control equipment.

The shutting down of house church gathering places was often conducted by multiple government departments collaboratively, which cited the reasons of "fire protection equipment

not meeting safety standards” or “neighbors’ complaints about noise.” Other reasons for suspending a gathering or shutting it down permanently included “the church has not registered with the government” and “it is illegal to meet in unapproved sites for religious activities.”

In May, some house churches in Fujian, Jiangxi, and Guizhou received a notice from the government, ordering them to stop gathering. Since February 2018, many house churches’ gathering locations in the prefectures and townships of Jinxian County, Jiangxi, were shut down, with government officials threatening believers with police custody should they continue to meet.

According to reports by believers from Luogang Prefecture in Henan province, since February 2018, the township government has banned minors under 18 years of age from attending church, gatherings of more than five people, and gatherings without a certificate issued by the government. The township government also hired people to guard the entrance of churches to prevent believers from meeting. Since February 2018, at least 100 house churches in Ningling County, Henan, were banned from gathering.

On August 1, 2018, 48 Beijing-based churches published “A joint declaration by house churches in Beijing” to proclaim their “willingness to pay any price for their Christian faith.” The 48 churches are: Chengjiu Church, Shengshan Church, Anhua Church, Zaidao Church, Zion Church, Xiangquan Church, Wanmin Church, Zhongyang Church, Yanling Church, Yinuo Church, Xinshu Church, Hejia Church, Enzai Church, Guomen Church, Chenxing Church, Desheng Church, Zhongdao Church, Shangxing Church, Sheng’en Church, Hongmin Church, Putaoyuan Church, Xiluoya Church, Zonglushu Church, Shengxie’ai Church, Aizhizhou Church, Boliheng Church, Haoshoucheng Church, Aijiabei Church, Jiecaizhong Church, Xiangbaishu Church, Guoshulin Church, Ganlanshu Church, Hemujia Church, Xi’anshan Church, Shengminghe Church, Jialili Gospel Church, Dadisongge Church, Changping Baihe Church, Mingguang Zion Church, Shamojianghe Church, Shunyi Huoshui Church, Yage Gospel Church, Huaxia Christian Church, Chinese Blind People’s Gospel Church, Migrant Workers’ Fuxing Church, Shangshan Enlin Church, Yonglezhijia Church, and Beijing City Fuxing Church, all located in Beijing.

6) Charges not given or fabricated to arrest and try church leaders and lay believers

Criminal charges, like “deliberately divulging state secrets”, “illegal business operations”, “gathering a crowd to disturb social order”, “organizing and utilizing cult organizations and superstition to undermine law enforcement”, the “suspected crime of organizing and funding illegal gatherings” ,and “fraud” are often applied on top of imposing a fine.

7) Church leaders forbidden to travel overseas to attend religious activities

Many house church leaders were denied the issuance of a residential permit, passport, or travel permit to Hong Kong and Macau because of [supposed] non-compliance with the government’s requests.

8) Harassing and restricting overseas churches’ ministry in mainland China

Christians coming from overseas for ministry were taken into police custody for engaging in religious activities and illegal gatherings, asked to write a confession, asked to go to the National Security Bureau to be interrogated, and ordered to leave China right away. From May 5-15, 2018, 21 Japanese people were taken into police custody in multiple provinces, including Chongqing, Hebei, Henan, and Guizhou, and all of them were deported to Japan on June 1.

9) Using social policies to discriminate against Christians

The 31st and 32nd Regiment of XPCC's 2nd Division threatened to suspend retirement pensions, low-income subsidies, and mortgage loans should Christians refuse to forfeit their faith. Christians are also denied subsidies for home purchases. The XPCC's Comprehensive Management Office also demanded Christians sign a guarantee to promise "not to participate in illegal religious activities" and threatened them with the stoppage of water and electricity should they refuse to sign.

Believers reported that in August 2018, the government in Xinyu, Jiangxi, made the regulation that "low-income people will lose their low-income subsidies should they attend Christian gatherings."

III. Conclusion

The new Regulations on Religious Affairs shows a substantial regression in the Chinese government's administrative policies regarding the management of religious affairs. The CCP's policies and principles for the management of religious affairs are returning to those evident in Mao's era. Different from Mao's era, in which the goal was to "eradicate religion" organizationally, or even corporeally, through "socialist reform," the current Sinicization in order to bring religion in line with the CCP's ideology aims to eradicate the mind and soul of religion. Driven by the so-called "defense of national security" agenda, Xi's administration intends to construct a "trinitarian" model of "orientation towards political decision, all-around administrative control, and suppression with harsh laws." This is a comprehensive control system that aligns religion with socialism and the CCP's ideology in the name of Sinicization via mobilizing all governmental and political departments as well as civil groups. More specifically, the Sinicization of Christianity has advanced from the construction of theological ideas to blatant plans for Sinicization--from mere theoretic construction to the release and implementation of various policy methods.

Appendix: some persecution cases

1) Forced demolition of churches

Henan, Jiangsu, Shandong, Shanxi, and Hebei province in 2017

Before and after the Chinese New Year, multiple churches in the suburbs of Zhengzhou, Henan, were forcibly demolished, including Dali Christian Church in Zhengzhou's High-Tech District, Zhangzhou-based Zhanghuqiao Church, and a church under construction in Shuangmiao Village, Shangqiu, Henan province.

The gathering place of a Christian house church in Xinwei Village, Suzhou, Jiangsu province, was forcibly demolished.

The walled fence of the “Century Church,” a Jiaozhou-based Christian house church affiliate in Shandong province, were forcibly demolished.

The annex buildings of a more-than-a-century-old Catholic church in Wang Village, Changzhi, Shanxi province, were forcibly demolished.

After receiving a “Notice about Stopping the Illegal Practice of Appropriating Land Designated for Railroads” issued by the Railroad Bureau’s station in Bazhou, a Bazhou Christian church in Hebei province was forcibly demolished.

The Catholic Church in Zhifang Village, Xi’an, Shaanxi province, was forcibly demolished.

2018

On Jan. 9, Linfen-based Golden Lampstand Church in Shanxi province was destroyed with dynamite.

On April 28, a Christian church in Lushan Town, Henan province, faced demolition.

By July 2018, 300 year-old Catholic churches in Shandong province, which possessed legal papers and were registered with government’s religious affairs departments, were demolished in the name of “city planning”: Jinan-based Liangwang Catholic Church, the Catholic Church in Qianwang Village, and the Jinan-based Shilihe Catholic Church.

2) Outlawing and shutting-down churches

2017

On March 23, Huoquan Church in Xining’s Chengbei District was outlawed and shut down.

On March 29, two house churches in Shangzhi, Harbin, were outlawed and shut down.

In April, a house church in Buji, Shenzhen, Guangdong province, was outlawed and shut down.

On April 23, a house church in Shanggan Town, Jiangxi province, was outlawed and shut down.

In May, a house church in Song Village, Zhumadian, Henan province, was outlawed and shut down.

On May 21, a church in Yangzi, Chuzhou, Anhui province, was outlawed and shut down.

On May 23, a church in Xijian, Chuzhou, Anhui province, was outlawed and shut down.

On November 8, a church in Longguang Village, Hefei, Anhui province, was outlawed and shut down.

In early December, the gathering place of Xinnanli Church in Jiangmen, Guangdong province, was outlawed and shut down.

On December 8, two gathering places, respectively located in Changjiang East Road, Shangqiu, and Pingtai Town, Shangqiu, where about 200 Christian college students met to worship, were outlawed and shut down.

On December 19, Donghu Church in Xining's Chengxi District was outlawed and shut down.

Before Christmas, the Shuizhong County Religious Affairs Bureau in Liaoning province shut down a house church meeting place in Jingou Village, Shahe Town.

2018

Within one week in March, authorities in Yahegong District, Nanyang, Henan, shut down 31 church gathering places. From February to March, Nanyang shut down more than 100 house churches.

On March 12, Jiamei Church, based in Xinjiang's capital city, Ürümqi, was shut down.

In mid-April, religious affairs departments in Zoucheng, Shandong, launched a city-wide raid, shutting down at least five house church gathering places. On May 13, a Christian named Yan Hengping in Guizhou province's Dafang County was banned from attending church gatherings.

At least 15 churches' crosses were demolished in Henan province, which took the brunt of the persecution. 40 churches in Xinyu, Jiangxi, alone were shut down and had their crosses demolished. Nearly 50 churches in Beijing were driven out of or forced to relocate from their gathering places, and some were even outlawed.

Gansu province: Lanzhou-based Xinming Church was shut down on August 17. Lanzhou-based Huoshui Church was shut down on May 27. From March to May, at least four Lanzhou-based churches were outlawed, and up to five churches were shut down by the authorities.

On May 22, Zhengzhou-based Gusui Church was outlawed as an "illegal religious activity site."

Based on numbers provided by believers, from June to August 2018, religious persecution occurred in a dozen of provinces and directly-administered municipalities, including Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu, Fujian, Shanxi, Jiangxi, Gansu, Guangdong, Sichuan, Liaoning, Beijing, Shanghai, and Chongqing, victimizing some famous churches such as Zion Church in Beijing, Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, Guangzhou's Bible Reformed Church, and Xiamen's Shangli Church and Maizhong Private School.

On August 23, the main campus of Zion Church, Beijing's biggest house church, and its six subsidiary locations were shut down due to being forced to relocate by the government.

Zhongxin Church in Siyang County, Suqian, Jiangsu province, released a prayer letter to the public on August 23, revealing that the church was facing forced demolition.

On August 24, a Christian gathering place in Room 1206 of the Xiandai Building in Nanjing's Qinhuai District was shut down. On the same day, a house church in Guangcheng District, Zhengzhou, Henan, was shut down.

3) Cases of arrest and sentencing

Pastor Cao “John” Sanqiang was sentenced to seven-years’ imprisonment [*Editor’s note: Pastor Cao is a legal resident of North Carolina whose wife and children are American citizens. He was arrested on a fabricated “organizing illegal border crossings” charge.*]

In the Yunnan Religious Case, about 10 Christians were sentenced to prison terms, with the longest being 13 years.

Pastor Su Tianfu of the Guiyang-based Huoshi Church in Guizhou province was sentenced to one year in prison with two years’ reprieve, and a six-month residential surveillance.

Chen Shixin, a house church pastor in Anhui province, was sentenced to three years in prison.

Cui Tai, Assistant Bishop of the Catholic Church’s Xuanhua Parish in Zhangjiakou, Hebei, was secretly detained.

On March 26, 2018, Bishop Guo Xijin of Mindong Parish in Fujian province was taken into police custody, as well as Priest Xu, who was the secretary of the parish.

Recommendations:

1. Besides the current prisoners of conscience list, U.S. Congress and the Administration should set up a “Religious Persecutors Watch List” for sanction candidates.
2. Members of Congress should target a particular persecutor in corresponding to his or her adopted name of the POC.
3. The DOS and the Treasury Department should list more names of high rank officials responsible for severe and systematic religious persecution, as defined by the USCIRF, for sanctions.
4. The U.S. should consider incremental sanctions against those provinces or cities where the most serious persecution has been occurring.
5. U.S. businesses with ties in China should be encouraged to take measures to adopt policies for its social and ethical responsibilities of advancing religious freedom instead of enabling the persecutors.