

## **Briefing on Modern-Day Persecution in China**

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Ladies and gentlemen, honored members of the United Nations,

Today, in one of the world's most influential nations, millions of people face religious persecution. The Chinese government, while growing in economic and global power, has been secretly arresting, torturing, and otherwise harassing people of faith and those who defend them.

For 17 years now, my organization, ChinaAid, has been documenting and analyzing what the Chinese Communist Party does not want you to see: a growing trend in persecution. In our 2018 Annual Persecution Report, we recorded around 1 million Christians who were persecuted for their faith in the year 2018, a 348% increase from the 223,200 oppressed Christians documented in our 2017 report. In 2018, 10,000 of those persecuted were church leaders, a 426% increase from the 1,900 leaders persecuted in 2017.

These numbers are staggering, but they only scratch the surface of the persecution. In data collected by ChinaAid in 2019, we noted sharp developments in numerous cases, framed by an overall desire of the Chinese Communist Party to bring religion under its control.

The case recorded in the quarterly reports include persecution unimaginable to those living in the free world. After a full year of nearly constant harassment, around 100 members of Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, Sichuan, were taken into police custody in just one night, and both Pastor Wang Yi and his wife, Jiang Rong, went missing, leaving their young son in the hands of his elderly grandparents for months, until Jiang was released on bail and able to reunite with him. Pastor Wang is still imprisoned, and both he and Jiang are facing a completely fabricated "inciting subversion of state power" charge.

An elder of the church, Li Yingqiang, was not allowed to see his wife and two children until he was released on bail eight months later.

Persecution is happening all across China. In Xinjiang, authorities are conducting an ethnic cleansing. Across the region, Uyghur and Kazakh people, are being seized and locked away in concentration camps, labeled "re-education" facilities by the Chinese government. Communist Party official claims these camps are educational, preparing inmates with vocational training they can take into their daily lives once they are released. However, numerous firsthand accounts have revealed stark horrors: people deprived of food, tortured until they pledge their allegiance

to the Communist Party, forced to labor for little or no pay, and made to study Chinese propaganda. Often, these people are taken from their families and disappear. Many have even died.

Since many of the prisoners come from Muslim backgrounds, Chinese officials often claim their actions “curb terrorism.” However, after covering these cases extensively, ChinaAid has yet to come across a case in which China has placed anyone within these facilities for having a legitimate connection to terrorism. Instead, China has proved again and again they are more interested in arbitrarily taking people into custody on the basis of their race. People from Uyghur and Kazakh backgrounds have been imprisoned regardless of their religious background.

In fact, six Uyghur Christians were taken into custody recently. The Christians are all charged with illegal preaching, gathering, and spreading of harmful books charge. Mehmet Abdulla has been sentenced to seven years in prison, and Huji Abdurehim, received a five-year sentence. Maimaiti Yimingjiang is also imprisoned for five years, as is a man only identified as Brother Adil. A Christian doctor, whose last name is Rakhman, is also serving a five-year prison term, and Adil Jan has received a seven-year jail verdict.

In fact, the Chinese government has shown hostility toward ethnic minority people who have converted to Christianity in the past. One of them, Alimujiang Yimiti, has been jailed for more than 11 years on falsified charges of “inciting separatism” and “unlawfully providing state secrets to overseas organizations.”

In addition, ethnic minority people have been forbidden to wear traditionally Muslim clothing or eat a halal diet, and those who disobey are subject to arrest. This arbitrary targeting of ethnic minorities who are only seeking to live out their lives in peace can only be described as a Chinese Communist Party version of Sharia Law.

China is absolutely desperate to maintain its chokehold on religion, so much so that they even persecute lawyers and other rights activists who attempt to defend religious practitioners legally. Gao Zhisheng, an attorney renowned in China for his fearless defense of rights despite experiencing multiple imprisonments, kidnappings, and torture, has been missing for two years. It is very likely that he is being tortured again, given his previous experiences in prison.

Other lawyers who have been imprisoned have reported being tortured and forced to take unknown medication, and many have returned home in poor physical health.

These are people. These people have families and dreams and the possibility for bright futures, if they are allowed to live them out in freedom. But most importantly, they have rights. Rights guaranteed by the Chinese Constitution that are not being respected, and rights enshrined in writings put forth by the United Nations and other international governing bodies, which China has signed but utterly fails to implement.

As such, it is our responsibility as the international community to hold them accountable. As such, I, on behalf of ChinaAid, request that the United Nations Human Rights Council create a Special Rapporteur for Chinese religious freedom, much like they have for Myanmar and North Korea. Furthermore, I ask that the Special Rapporteurs for religious freedom and arbitrary

detention request invitations from China to visit and investigate the abuses mentioned above and any other human rights violations occurring within the country of which the United Nations may become aware.

I sincerely thank all of you for your support and for taking the time to listen to these concerns. May we create a better, freer world together.