

# Market Drayton Churches Together: IDOP - 17 November 2018

## CHINA

**13 Nov: ChinaAid**

### **Catholic churches across China targeted in wake of Vatican-China agreement**

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/11/catholic-churches-across-china-targeted.html>

Ever since China and the Vatican reached a deal that allowed the Holy See to have increased influence over China's appointment of bishops, the persecution of Catholics in the country has escalated.

For instance, urban management and law enforcement officials in Anlong County, Guizhou, Mount Notre Dame Catholic Church. Last week, authorities required the church members to demolish the building by Oct. 20, otherwise, the government threatened to send people to forcibly demolish it.

Another church, located in Taiyuan, Shanxi, had its statues, angels, and crosses forcibly removed on Oct. 24 via a crane. The government alleged that the number of statues and crosses on the church exceeded regulations and ordered them demolished.

In late September, China and the Vatican thawed a previously frozen relationship that allowed them to co-appoint Catholic clergy. Previously, the Chinese government refused to recognize church leaders ordained by the Vatican, and the Vatican would not approve bishops appointed by the Communist Party. As a result, churches loyal to the Pope were often not considered legal by the Chinese government and gathered at great risk to the freedom of the parishioners.

While the two sides were in the midst of negotiations, several Catholic clergymen recognized by the Vatican were forced to step down in favor of their government-recognized counterparts.

One Catholic said, "The consequence of the Vatican's compromise with the Chinese Communist Party is that religious freedom in China has deteriorated. The government has forcibly demolished holy [places], so we feel hopeless."

Also see: **26 Oct: Catholic Herald**

### **Cardinal Zen: The Vatican is badly mishandling China situation**

<http://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2018/10/26/cardinal-zen-the-vatican-is-badly-mishandling-china-situation>

The recent agreement between the Vatican and China is a step towards the "annihilation" of the Catholic Church in China, Cardinal Joseph Zen, former bishop of Hong Kong, wrote in a New York Times op-ed published on Wednesday.

Zen, who has been openly critical of Vatican's approach towards China in the past, did not hold back in his assessment of Pope Francis' new deal and in offering his views on communist governments.

A Sept. 22 agreement between the Holy See and Beijing was intended to normalize the situation of China's Catholics. The Church in China has been split between the "underground" Church, in full communion with Rome, and the state-run Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CPCA), which was not. The Chinese government appointed bishops of the CPCA.

The September agreement was designed to unify those groups, by approving a formula through which Pope Francis would approve bishops nominated by Beijing.

But Zen's op-ed said the distinction between the underground Church and the CCPA has not been eradicated.

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**9th Nov: ChinaAid**

### **Changsha church harassed repeatedly**

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/11/changsha-church-harassed-repeatedly.html>

Authorities in China's southern Hunan province repeatedly harassed a local church, interrupting services and questioning the pastor about a joint letter.

The joint letter called on authorities to stop persecuting churches, stating that many churches have had their crosses demolished and were forced to hang the national flag and sing praises to the Communist Party. The statement also emphasizes that the Christians plan to adhere to the separation of church and state and stand firm in their belief that Christ is in charge of the church.

On Oct. 28, more than 20 police officers and community officials went to Huoxing Church, located in Changsha, Hunan, after the Christians had left the Sunday service. When the church members returned to the church later that night, they found that a sign on the door was destroyed.

Three days later, the staff of the National Religious Affairs Bureau and the local national security force returned to the church and insisted on meeting with its pastor, Zhang Ganghua. They spoke with him for nearly four hours, questioning his beliefs and asking him in detail about his signing of the joint letter. They asked if he still agreed with its contents, and said he now had an opportunity to say he disagreed with its contents, but Zhang replied, "I will not change my position."

The officials then warned him that if the church does not join the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), one of two official Christian organizations overseen by the Chinese government, it will be considered illegal and banned. Churches belonging to the TSPM must submit their sermons to the authorities for censoring, are often monitored by officials, and are forced to preach Chinese propaganda. As a result, many churches refuse to join.

After the authorities left, church attendees discovered that the lock on one of the church's doors had been broken, and they had to replace it. The next evening, two locks were damaged. When they reported this incident to the police, they were told that the officers had "no solution," and the police station recommended that they contact the landlord and property management to solve the problem.

Last Sunday night, many officials pounded on the church's door and, when prompted to show their identification, refused. Because the Christians could not confirm their identities, they refused to let them in. When the service ended and the congregants opened the doors to leave, five policemen seized the opportunity to enter.

A Christian said, "They asked us what we were doing there. They asked us to show our identification cards. We also asked them to show their identification cards and to present the legal basis for checking ours. They refused and insisted that the police have the right to check identification cards at any time."

The confrontation lasted about 30 minutes. During that time, the police tried to physically take one man away, saying they were going to check his identification, but Christians pulled him back. The police left at about 10:00 p.m.

In response to this harassment, the church released a statement, saying that their right to public worship is "authorized by God in the Bible and granted by the [Chinese] Constitution to its citizens" and urged other churches to pray for China and its persecuted churches.

## 8th Nov: ChinaAid

### Fujian church experiences multiple raids

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/11/fujian-church-experiences-multiple-raids.html>

A church in the capital of China's southeastern Fujian province has been harassed relentlessly by authorities over the past few months.

Yongfu Church, located in Fuzhou, has been raided eight times in the past two months. When the church refused to make modifications to their building in order to fit the Communist Party's agenda, 40-50 city management officers went to a Christian's home and threatened those there. He asked how the evil of cracking down on Christianity could be ignored by the central government. His father was taken to the police station, even though he had been through two bypass heart surgeries and a cerebral hemorrhage.

"Our lives and property have both been threatened and jeopardized," his son said. "... Please pass the word along and pray for us. I hope this country will get better and better."

Every time the church was raided, a crowd of police officers stood near the building as plainclothes officials and personnel from the local United Front Work Department provoked the Christians.

The authorities also went to the church on Oct. 14 and 21 and ordered the Christians to no longer attend services there. They were reportedly very rude, and one of them bullied those gathered for the service. When they left both times, they said they would be back next week.

Their electricity and water have also been cut off.

Despite this mistreatment, one of the church members said, "We love this land and the people, but we will never surrender to darkness and evil. We are grateful for the prayers and support of churches everywhere, as well as our united witness to our faith."

## 6th Nov: ChinaAid

### Officials interrupt Guangdong Bible study, close church

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/11/officials-interrupt-guangdong-bible.html>

Government personnel in Zhanjiang, Guangdong, closed a church in China's southern Guangdong province on Oct. 24, notifying the landlord that the property should not be used for church activities.

On that evening, the members of Renew Church said they had gathered to study the Bible when local officials broke in, ordering them to stop and prohibiting them from walking around and taking pictures and videos. Director Wang from the Xiashan District Religious Affairs Bureau said his government department had decided to close the church and that it must immediately cancel all events. The church members were also told they had no right to appeal.

Renew Church's pastor, Ruan Dawei, requested that the officials show their ID and a written version of the bureau's decision, but the authorities refused.

When some church members took pictures, police confiscated their cell phones. The conflict got physical.

The officers demanded that all of the congregated Christians to write down their names and phone numbers. Additionally, they ordered the landlord not to rent property to the church.

Similarly, churches across China are facing persecution. One of the congregations located in Chizhou, Anhui, received a pledge that the government required them to sign. It stipulates that "non-local Christians should not preach at this venue", "elementary schoolers and middle schoolers should not participate in [church] service activities", and even "The number of Christians should be controlled."

The authorities claim that the purpose of the pledge is to help religious groups in following regulations as they organize events and carry out various management measures as well as assure all events happening at churches do not break the law. Religious institutions will be punished if they fail to fulfill the pledge.

## 26th Oct: ChinaAid

### Guangfu Church shut down

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/10/guangfu-church-shut-down.html>

Guangzhou police shut down a serially persecuted church on Oct. 16 and gave it a notice that referred to it as an "unqualified venue."

Ma Ke, a pastor of Guangfu Church, said the church wasn't hosting services at the time it was shut down.

"The property management office messaged us via WeChat," he said.

The notice received by the church said that the measures executed against them were to "examine six items [Editor's note: At this time, ChinaAid has been unable to ascertain what the referenced six items are] and close the unqualified venue" according to the rules of dealing with criminal administrative cases as set by the Baiyun District Public Security Bureau in Guangzhou. Churches refusing to submit to the Chinese government's surveillance and become state-run churches are often labeled as "unqualified" or "illegal" and closed in the same manner.

The local public security bureau also requested to meet with the leaders of Guangfu Church on Oct. 17. ChinaAid does not currently know the outcome of that meeting.

The Guangzhou Municipal Religious Affairs Bureau also met with Ma last July, ordering the church to join the state-run network of churches known as the Three-Self Patriotic Movement [TSPM]. To do so, the church would have to agree to censorship and government-imposed rules. It refused to join, and officials then said that non-TSPM churches should "be overseen by the government."

According to the local Christians, being "overseen by the government" often has multiple layers, including the church undergoing fire and venue safety evaluations, during which churches are sometimes arbitrarily closed, and not allowing people from foreign countries to preach in keeping with a baseless paranoia that religions are agents of foreign governments intent on overthrowing Communist Party rule.

Persecution also occurs in other areas of China, such as Wenzhou, a city in China's coastal Zhejiang province, where authorities once raged a years-long cross demolition campaign. Even now, local officials struck a deal with a church, which then removed its own cross in secret, afraid of retribution from the congregation. A Christian woman who was on the scene called the removal "Satanic."

**Links to the full reports featured on this sheet, along with information about other relevant articles are available on the Market Drayton Churches Together website, linked from the P4PC section as "Recent Reports"**

[churchestogether-marketdrayton.org.uk/p4pc](http://churchestogether-marketdrayton.org.uk/p4pc)

**Next P4PC Session - Thursday 6th December at Wollerton URC**