

# Market Drayton Churches Together: Prayer for Persecuted Christians - 15 Jan 2020

## CHINA

### 30 Dec: Wang Yi receives nine-year sentence - ChinaAid

[www.chinaaid.org/2019/12/wang-yi-receives-nine-year-sentence.html](http://www.chinaaid.org/2019/12/wang-yi-receives-nine-year-sentence.html)

Chengdu authorities sentenced Pastor Wang Yi to nine years in prison this morning, days after his secret trial.

Wang, who is the pastor of Early Rain Covenant Church, was found guilty of “inciting subversion of state power” and “illegal business operations.” Both charges were given to him because of his position within the church.

Wang was taken into custody on Dec. 9, 2018, along with 100 other members of his church. On Dec. 26, 2019, he was tried suddenly and secretly. Today, officials handed him a nine-year sentence along with three years of denied political rights and a 50,000 yuan [£5,400] fine.

“This is a pure case of unjust religious persecution against a peaceful preacher of a Chinese reformed church,” ChinaAid Founder and President Dr. Bob Fu said. “This grave sentence demonstrates Xi’s regime is determined to be the enemy of universal values and religious freedom. We call upon the international community to stand up to the Chinese Communist Party and hold this evil regime accountable.”

Recently, many of the church’s members have been mandated to meet with public security officials five times a day.

### 3 Jan: Early Rain Covenant Church’s statement regarding Pastor Wang Yi’s severe sentence - ChinaAid

[www.chinaaid.org/2020/01/early-rain-covenant-churchs-statement.html](http://www.chinaaid.org/2020/01/early-rain-covenant-churchs-statement.html)

In Christ, we issue the following exhortation and protest against Pastor Wang Yi’s severe sentence. Do you government officials not know that this is a sin against God? Do you not know that this is an abuse of your authority (Rom. 13:3)? Even so, we do not hate you. On the contrary, our merciful and righteous God wants us to love you and to pray for you. We desire that those public officials and law enforcement officers who are involved in this case would quickly repent and believe in the Lord, that you would know the atonement and forgiveness of sins which the Lord Jesus extends to all through his suffering on the cross, and that you would obtain eternal life and hope.

We invite all sojourners throughout the world who belong to the universal church to pray fervently for Pastor Wang Yi and Elder Qin Defu, who are being imprisoned for the sake of Christ and of the gospel, as well as for their families. Pray for all of us. We will also pray for you. In this eschaton, which Jesus Christ brought about through his incarnation, through his perfect life, through his betrayal and trial, through his substitutionary death, through his resurrection and ascension, through his gift of the Holy Spirit—in this eschaton, may we testify, through our suffering, that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14:6) and that he is the light of the world.

We also invite churches who are currently being persecuted to fix their eyes together with us upon the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, may we be united to the King of Kings who ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, who is our eternal high priest and prophet of the last days. May we be strong in his grace as we keep on fighting despite repeated setbacks.

We do this to fulfil the Great Commission and to spread the gospel, that the glorious name of the triune God might be praised. May God help us and allow us to experience together the breadth, length, height, and depth of the love of God until the day we see him face-to-face. May blessing and honour and wisdom and wealth and glory and power and authority be to our

holy Father who is in heaven, to the Lord Jesus Christ who obtained our salvation, and to the Holy Spirit our Helper who continually helps us. Amen!

*Early Rain Covenant Church - December 30, 2019*

### 8 Jan: Pastor will not appeal sentence - ChinaAid

[www.chinaaid.org/2020/01/breaking-pastor-will-not-appeal-sentence.html](http://www.chinaaid.org/2020/01/breaking-pastor-will-not-appeal-sentence.html)

Early Rain Covenant Church Pastor Wang Yi has decided not to appeal his nine-year sentence.

Wang was taken into custody on Dec. 9, 2018, along with around 100 other members of his church. He received the charges of “illegal business operations” and “inciting subversion of state power.”

Officials tried him in secret on Dec. 26, 2019, and sentenced him to nine years behind bars on Dec. 30.

According to Chinese attorney Zhang Peihong, Wang does not plan to appeal his sentence.

### 31 Dec: Pastor Wang Yi Sentenced as Release adds China to Persecution Hotlist - Release International

[releaseinternational.org/pastor-wang-yi-sentenced-as-release-adds-china-to-persecution-hotlist](http://releaseinternational.org/pastor-wang-yi-sentenced-as-release-adds-china-to-persecution-hotlist)

This page features a statement by Andrew Boyd of Release International broadcast on Premier Radio about Wang Yi’s sentence.

It also provides the text of an essay Pastor Wang asked to be released 48 hours after his detention. It is entitled “**My Declaration of Faithful Disobedience**” and is a must read if you have not already seen it.

### 8 Jan: Christians imprisoned for collecting offering - ChinaAid

[www.chinaaid.org/2020/01/christians-imprisoned-for-collecting.html](http://www.chinaaid.org/2020/01/christians-imprisoned-for-collecting.html)

Hubei authorities have imprisoned three Christian women for “collecting offering.”

One of the women, Pastor Hao Zhiwei, could face more than 10 years in prison.

The other two are Hong Ying and Wan Yuanxiang. All three have been charged with fraud because their church took offerings. Officials accused the church of being illegal and its clergy of receiving illegal ordination.

### 11 Jan: Weifang honors areas for cracking down on religion - ChinaAid

[www.chinaaid.org/2020/01/weifang-honors-areas-for-cracking-down.html](http://www.chinaaid.org/2020/01/weifang-honors-areas-for-cracking-down.html)

The Weifang City Anti-Evil Religious Association Office has granted 10 subdistricts and 12 villages within the city the honorary titles of “Role Model Towns/ Communities of Science, Care, and Harmony” for their efforts in cracking down on religions.

In a notice obtained by ChinaAid, the Weifang municipal government applauds the work of the subdistricts and villages in preventing and resisting evil religions. It encourages the areas to continue “the fight against evil religious organizations, and make a critical contribution to building a modern, high-quality, ecological, open, vibrant, and delicate city.”

The Weifang government equates the persecution of religions as a means to promoting justice and eliminating evil. It alleges that these areas serve as role models for the entire city on how to restrict religions.

The announcement aligns with the growing rates of religious

**Dates of next meetings: 19 February, 18 March & 15 April 2020**

persecution in China since the revised Regulations on Religious Affairs went into effect on Feb. 1, 2018. The Chinese Communist Party has been targeting people of conscience under the process of “Sinicizing” religion, or forcing faiths to align with the ideals of the Communist Party. Since the Chinese government wrongly believes religions are an attempt by foreign powers to infiltrate China, they often restrict religious practice and expression.

### **8 Jan: All Religious Activities for Catholic Youth Prohibited - Bitter Winter**

[bitterwinter.org/all-religious-activities-for-catholic-youth-prohibited](http://bitterwinter.org/all-religious-activities-for-catholic-youth-prohibited)

The CCP is clamping down on anything religion-related for children – be it a kindergarten on church property, a Sunday school, or training of future clergy members.

Since the new Regulations on Religious Affairs came into force in February 2018, the CCP has been prohibiting all religious activities for minors, no matter who is organizing them: even state-approved churches are not allowed to have children in them. In the name of “separating religion from education,” authorities throughout China use an array of methods to ensure that children don’t have any contact with faith and are raised as obedient atheist followers of the Communist Party.

#### Kindergartens ordered to move from church property

In March 2019, the Religious Affairs Bureau and Education Bureau in Taiyuan, the capital of the northern province of Shanxi, demanded two kindergartens to move out of Shagou Catholic Church, which belongs to the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CPCA). Officials declared that the privately-owned kindergartens, called “Tongxin” and “Qihang,” cannot remain on the church property because this violates the national policy which prohibits minors from entering places of worship and doesn’t allow educational institutions to be associated with religions.

“The government doesn’t let kindergartens to be even near a temple or a church. If we don’t move out, Religious Affairs Bureau officials will scrutinize us every day, and we will not be able to enroll new students,” a teacher who works in Tongxin kindergarten told Bitter Winter. He believes that by removing educational institutions from church properties, even state-approved ones, the government wants to eliminate any chance for children to have any exposure to religion.

“The investment to the kindergarten amounts to hundreds of thousands,” the teacher continued. “The owner has suffered huge financial losses because the number of newly-enrolled students is reducing.”

#### Young postulants forced to flee

“Every time government officials come for an inspection, we have to go into hiding. We have experienced this many times, too many to count,” a 16-year-old postulant in an unregistered Catholic “minor seminary” in the northern province of Hebei told Bitter Winter.

Although the seminary was set up by a church that belongs to the CPCA, it is still not allowed to involve minors in training activities. Therefore, the local authorities continuously monitor the seminary, making sure that no children are present there.

“When we were warned that provincial officials were coming for an inspection, we hurriedly packed our clothes and other belongings and had to flee to another church,” the postulant remembered. “Because of the speedy escape, we had to leave many things behind. In the new place, we lived in cold rooms without heating. On the fifth day after getting there, Religious Affairs Bureau officials discovered us. This time, a group of over 50 young postulants had to flee, covering on foot many

miles. It was an exhausting journey; we all had blisters on our feet.”

The young believers continue to live as fugitives. Every day they have to pack their clothes and bed linen, so they are ready to escape at any time. The postulant said that this way of life feels like “engaging in guerrilla warfare.”

“The CCP claims to the world that there is religious freedom in China. In reality, there is no freedom at all,” the postulant finished his story. Regardless, he treats the persecution as a test to his faith, which he is not willing to give up.

#### Sunday schools and youth clubs shut down

In July, a CPCA church in Hebei’s Xingtai city started a youth club, but it was closed by the government the same day. Even though the club was moved to another venue the next day, the church priest soon received threats from the city’s Religious Affairs Bureau, Public Security Bureau, and local government, demanding him to dismiss classes immediately. Attempting to intimidate the church and club members, the police stormed into the new venue and took photos of all who were present at the time. Consequently, the authorities criticized the priest and sent him for “ideological education.”

The same month, requested by congregation members, a state-approved church in the Diocese of Baoding in Hebei’s Laishui county organized a Bible study class for children during their summer holiday. However, before their 14-day course was finished, government officials discovered the class and dismissed it.

Congregation members from state-run Catholic churches in Hebei’s Xian county and Baoding city reported to Bitter Winter that several Sunday classes for children were closed down on orders from the local governments.

### **8 Jan: Christmas 'Sinicized' to Praise the Communist Party, Not God - Bitter Winter**

[bitterwinter.org/christmas-sinicized-to-praise-the-communist-party-not-god](http://bitterwinter.org/christmas-sinicized-to-praise-the-communist-party-not-god)

Amid bans on Christmas, state-run Protestant churches all over China were allowed to celebrate the birth of Jesus only by singing “red” songs and extolling the CCP.

Like in 2018, the CCP government also imposed bans on celebrating Christmas last year, deeming the holiday a part of Western values and prohibiting gatherings in public and at home, forbidding sales of Christmas merchandise. Places of worship were subjected to especially rigorous control during the season of the most widely celebrated Christian holiday.

According to a Three-Self preacher from Ningling county, administered by Shangqiu city in the central province of Henan, the president of the county’s Two Chinese Christian Councils announced on December 2, that strict restrictions had been imposed on Christmas services in the county’s Three-Self churches. Although some were allowed to hold them, the festivities were “sinicized” in form and content, turning Christmas into a formal, trivial event.

*Cont/... including videos of three such events*

### **6 Jan: What China Does Is Cultural Genocide - Bitter Winter**

[bitterwinter.org/opinion-what-china-does-is-cultural-genocide](http://bitterwinter.org/opinion-what-china-does-is-cultural-genocide)

The West loses dignity turning a blind eye to Beijing’s Orwellian human rights abuse.

Washington has acknowledged: “The pages of George Orwell’s 1984 are coming to life” in Xinjiang with Orwell’s foretelling of Beijing’s plot: The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.

*Cont/... with an update of the persecution of Xinjiang’s Muslim Uyghurs*

## Other Countries

### NIGERIA

#### **10 Jan: Muslim Fulani Herdsmen Kill 13 Christians, Wound Three in Central Nigeria - Morningstar News**

[morningstarnews.org/2020/01/muslim-fulani-herdsmen-kill-13-christians-wound-three-in-central-nigeria](https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/muslim-fulani-herdsmen-kill-13-christians-wound-three-in-central-nigeria)

Armed Muslim Fulani herdsmen killed 13 Christians in Plateau state, Nigeria on Wednesday (Jan. 8), the same day four students were kidnapped from a Catholic seminary in Kaduna state.

About 20 herdsmen attacked the predominantly Christian village of Kulben, in Plateau state's Mangu County, at about 8 p.m., area residents told Morning Star News. The 13 dead were all members of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), as were three people wounded in the assault, they said.

"They were shooting with guns in all directions, forcing the villagers to scamper into surrounding bushes," area resident Michael Mutding, 40, told Morning Star News in a text message. "Corpses of those killed have been evacuated by soldiers and police to the mortuary of Mangu Cottage Hospital; and all the victims are members of COCIN."

Bala Fwengje, a legislator representing the area in the Plateau State House of Assembly, said in a statement that the attacks came in spite of efforts by security agencies.

"This attack on my people by these herdsmen comes as a rude shock to us, as efforts have been made by security agencies to curtail such incessant attacks on our people," Fwengje said. "It is a sad thing that these attacks are still being carried out by the herdsmen on our people without provocation."

Audu Tetmut, a 60-year-old area leader of the Christian community, said there had never been any problem between his people and herdsmen living in the area.

"Our community had lived peacefully with the herdsmen without any issues of dispute with them," Tetmut told Morning Star News. "So we are surprised that they attacked us." *Cont/...*

#### **6 Jan: Nigerian church leader kidnapped in Boko Haram raid - Open Doors USA**

[www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/urgent-nigerian-church-leader-kidnapped-in-boko-haram-raid](http://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/urgent-nigerian-church-leader-kidnapped-in-boko-haram-raid)

A senior member of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Pastor Lawan Andimi, has been kidnapped by the Islamic extremist group Boko Haram.

The pastor was taken during a January 3 raid on Michika, a key town on the Cameroon border. Soon after, Boko Haram released a video of Pastor Lawan calling authorities to secure his release. In the six-minute video, the pastor told his family not to "sorrow for him, since God's will must be respected."

"By the grace of God, I will be together with my wife and children and colleagues... don't cry, don't worry, but thank God for everything."

Boko Haram fighters entered Michika on Sunday in a convoy of vehicles. A military jet circled over the town, causing the militants to hide in people's homes, they said.

There was confusion as people ran into the bush fleeing gunfire, residents told the BBC.

Who fired first is unclear, residents said, because Boko Haram insurgents often disguise themselves in uniforms similar to Nigerian soldiers.

#### **7 Jan: Boko Haram Kidnaps Christian Leader in Attacks in Northeast Nigeria - Morningstar News**

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/boko-haram-kidnaps-christian-leader-in-attacks-in-northeast-nigeria>

*Longer article about the above kidnapping.*

#### **7 Jan: Standing Strong - Release International**

<https://releaseinternational.org/standing-strong>

Attacks by terrorists in north east Nigeria have forced thousands of Christians to flee for their lives. Release's Kenneth Harrod recently spoke to some of those displaced – and saw first-hand how your support is helping believers stay strong in their faith.

When Boko Haram terrorists attacked his village in northern Borno State Rev Danjuma saw many of his congregation flee. But he remained.

'I stayed with my people. To the last drop of my blood I can't run away – I am their pastor,' he told me. 'Only God sustains my life.'

Over the past decade once strong Christian communities in the northeast of Nigeria have been decimated by the Islamist terrorist group. Churches have been destroyed and many Christians have fled, either further south or into the Borno capital of Maiduguri, which offers a measure of protection.

In Maiduguri many Christians live difficult lives in camps set up for internally displaced people, where they rely on support from various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for life's necessities.

Many are farmers – but farming on land just a few kilometres outside of Maiduguri is impossible because of the risk of attack. Yakubu, a pastor, told me: 'Many Christians are struggling because of poverty and fear of death, because no one is farming. If you try to farm you might be killed. We want to go back to our area, but Boko Haram wants no Christians in the place. But by God's grace, we still hope to go back.'

Rev Daniel is one person who has been living in a camp for several years. Originally from the Gwoza area of Borno State, he was forced to flee when Boko Haram attacked his community. More than 150 people were killed in the attack, said Daniel, most of whom were men.

Three of his children, aged between 7 and 14, were shot dead. His father was beheaded. His wife was kidnapped and forcibly married to a Muslim.

I could see a deep sadness in his eyes – and yet a Christian resilience in everything he told me. 'Life is not easy in the camp. When the NGOs come we all survive,' he said. 'But I have surrendered my life to Christ.' *Cont/...*

#### **2 Jan: Eleven Christians Reportedly Killed - The Voice of the Martyrs Canada**

[www.vomcanada.com/ng-2020-01-02.htm](http://www.vomcanada.com/ng-2020-01-02.htm)

In a video released on December 26th, ISIS shows the murder of eleven Christians, claiming that it was committed in retaliation for the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ISIS leader who died during a raid in Syria by U.S. special forces in October.

In the video, which had Arabic subtitles, eleven men with their heads covered are shown. The first is shot to death, followed by the beheadings of the other ten. The producers of the video claim that all of the slain victims had been captured in Nigeria's Borno State in recent weeks. The voice-over commentary contained the following announcement: "This message is to the Christians in the world. Those you see are Christians and we will shed their blood as revenge."

A previously recorded video was also recently released featuring eleven Christians who had been taken captive, leading to speculation that these may be the same men. In the earlier video, the men pled for intervention by the Nigerian government and the Christian Association of Nigeria. At the time, they claimed that Leah Sharibu was still alive and with them

## IRAN

### **10 Jan: The Revolutionary Guards, Iran's chief instrument of repression – Article 18**

[articleeighteen.com/analysis/5315](http://articleeighteen.com/analysis/5315)

In the wake of the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani, Article 18 explains how his Revolutionary Guard Corps became one of the chief instruments of the regime's ongoing repression of ordinary Iranians, including Christians.

It all changed on 19 October 2010, when Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, listed the spread of house-churches among the "critical threats" facing the Islamic republic.

In that moment, the Supreme Leader had given the green light to his "guardians of the revolution" that here was another threat to be eliminated, in whatever way they saw fit.

Khamenei's speech ushered in a decade of violent raids on house-churches across the country – the first taking place just two months later – as hundreds of new Christians were rounded up and taken in for questioning.

Why had they converted? Who was behind it? Were they working with America, or Israel?

The charges arrested Christians faced suddenly changed. They were now "actors against national security" and could be sentenced accordingly to up to ten years in prison. Many were, and continue to be. *Cont/...*

### **9 Jan: Iran bulldozes grave of pastor executed for apostasy – Article 18**

[articleeighteen.com/news/5297](http://articleeighteen.com/news/5297)

The grave of the only Iranian Christian to have been executed on official charges of apostasy has been demolished.

The body of Rev. Hussein Soodmand was buried on the edge of the Beheshte-Reza cemetery in Mashhad after his execution nearly 30 years ago, in December 1990.

In all the years since, the only sign that anyone was buried there was a concrete slab. Now, even that has been removed. All that remains is soil. *Cont/...*

### **6 Jan: Pastor's son summoned to begin jail sentence – Article 18**

[articleeighteen.com/news/5285](http://articleeighteen.com/news/5285)

The son of an Assyrian-Iranian couple facing years in prison for their Christian activities has been summoned to serve his own four-month sentence for "actions against national security".

Ramiel Bet-Tamraz, who is 35 years old, is the son of pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz and Shamiram Issavi, who are facing ten and five years in prison, respectively.

He must submit himself to Tehran's Evin Prison by tomorrow. Ramiel's sister, Dabrina Bet-Tamraz, who now lives outside Iran, has been an outspoken advocate on behalf of her family and other Iranian Christians.

She told Article 18 her brother was "staying strong for everybody" but that his three months in prison – Ramiel has already spent one month in detention, which will be deducted from his sentence – will be hard for him and for the rest of the family, and particularly for his wife, Ninebra. *Cont/...*

### **27 Dec: Converts begin six-month jail sentences – Article 18**

<https://articleeighteen.com/news/5264>

### **23 Dec: Iranian Christian activist kicked out of university – Article 18**

[articleeighteen.com/news/5254](http://articleeighteen.com/news/5254)

## IRAQ

### **7 Jan: Iraqi Christians Set to Flee - Release International**

[releaseinternational.org/iraqi-christians-set-to-flee](http://releaseinternational.org/iraqi-christians-set-to-flee)

Renewed conflict in Syria and insecurity in Iraq may force another exodus of Iraqi Christians, warns partner Jamal.

Only around 300,000 Christians remain in Iraq from a peak of 1.8 million in the year 2000. They've been driven out by conflict and insecurity. And many more are now anxious to leave, says Release's partner Jamal.

'Most of the Christians have lost hope,' he says. 'Many of them are applying to leave the country, and if they can, they will.'

Jamal provides help to Iraqis who have fled to Erbil, the principal city of Kurdistan, in northern Iraq. He fears that the recent Turkish incursion into neighbouring Syria is threatening to drive a new wave of refugees into the region.

'The Kurdistan government are preparing for between 100,000 and 200,000 refugees,' he recently told Release. 'They're preparing for a big number to come.'

The US decision to take their troops out of the north has left many Kurds feeling betrayed.

### **23 Dec: Islamic State Recovering Ground in Iraq - Release International**

[releaseinternational.org/falsely-accused-radio-report-copy](http://releaseinternational.org/falsely-accused-radio-report-copy)

*Features one hour radio interview.*

## INDIA

### **6 Jan: Police in Uttar Pradesh, India, Most Harsh on Christians, Sources Say - Morningstar News**

[morningstarnews.org/2020/01/police-in-uttar-pradesh-india-most-harsh-on-christians-sources-say](http://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/police-in-uttar-pradesh-india-most-harsh-on-christians-sources-say)

### **2 Jan: Christians in India Spend Christmas in Jail, Accused of Illegally Practicing Medicine - Morningstar News**

[morningstarnews.org/2020/01/christians-in-india-spend-christmas-in-jail-accused-of-illegally-practicing-medicine](http://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/christians-in-india-spend-christmas-in-jail-accused-of-illegally-practicing-medicine)

### **11 Jan: Persecution Church Leaders in India Speak Out Against New Citizenship Law - ICC**

[www.persecution.org/2020/01/11/church-leaders-india-speak-new-citizenship-law](http://www.persecution.org/2020/01/11/church-leaders-india-speak-new-citizenship-law)

### **10 Jan: Persecution India's Christians See Challenges Ahead in 2020 - ICC**

[www.persecution.org/2020/01/10/indias-christians-see-challenges-ahead-2020](http://www.persecution.org/2020/01/10/indias-christians-see-challenges-ahead-2020)

## BURKINA FASO

### **Persecution Extremists Responsible For 250 Deaths in Burkina Faso - ICC**

[www.persecution.org/2020/01/11/extremists-responsible-250-deaths-burkina-faso](http://www.persecution.org/2020/01/11/extremists-responsible-250-deaths-burkina-faso)

## UGANDA

### **Christian Mother in Uganda Loses Marriage for Turning to Christ - Morningstar News**

[morningstarnews.org/2019/12/christian-mother-in-uganda-loses-marriage-for-turning-to-christ](http://morningstarnews.org/2019/12/christian-mother-in-uganda-loses-marriage-for-turning-to-christ)

## EGYPT

### **Egypt: Muslim extremists burn Christians' homes, attack church on New Year's Eve - Open Doors USA**

[www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/egypt-muslim-extremists-burn-christians-homes-attack-church-on-new-years-eve](http://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/egypt-muslim-extremists-burn-christians-homes-attack-church-on-new-years-eve)

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