



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Forty-third session

24 February–20 March 2020

Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

### **Written statement\* submitted by Jubilee Campaign, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[03 February 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

GE.20-02541(E)



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## Crackdown on freedom of religion or belief in China

Jubilee Campaign seeks to draw the Council's attention to the increasingly desperate religious freedom conditions occurring in China, which have deteriorated as the Chinese Communist Party seeks to combat religious beliefs that they perceive are an obstacle to the power and supremacy of the Party. In particular, those religious groups that face the most persecution and discrimination in China include the Uyghur Muslims, Christians, Catholics, and Falun Gong practitioners. In addition to providing information on the situation of Chinese religious persecution, we would like to provide recommendations to both the Chinese Communist Party and the United Nations Human Rights Council.

### Persecution of Muslims

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has repeatedly imprisoned approximately two million Muslims in the western Xinjiang Province, the majority of which are the ethnic and linguistic minority group of Uyghurs. It is difficult to obtain timely and corroborated evidence regarding the situation, as the Chinese Communist Party maintains a tight control of the media; however, through publicly leaked documents and reports it is affirmed that these massive prisons are not the "vocational training centers" that they claim they are.<sup>1</sup>

Among those Muslims that are routinely detained are also Kazakh and Uzbek Muslims, often being detained under no formal charges, their only crimes being their religious practice of Islam, visiting mosques to worship, accessing the Qur'an on their mobile phones, and simply being Muslim.<sup>2</sup> According to Jewher Ilham, daughter of imprisoned Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti, the detainments have a deeper cause than a simply religious or ethnic issue, it is an issue of being different, or having beliefs that differ from those of the Han majority or the CCP itself.

Many Muslims in China, notably the Uyghurs, have been using covert mobile applications such as Zappya or Kuaiya to share the Qur'an and other religious texts with their Muslim peers; however, the use of this app has been hijacked by the CCP, which now hold checkpoints where they investigate Uyghur phones and arrest individuals who have downloaded it. Through a campaign of "predictive policing," the Integrated Joint Operations Platform "aggregates data about individuals – often without their knowledge – and flags for authorities those it deems potentially threatening."<sup>3</sup>

What these Muslims face in the detention centers is even more egregious. Former prisoners who have sought asylum in other nations have reported that unmitigated surveillance, forced sleep deprivation, physical torture, sexual violence, coerced abortions or birth control are all common treatments that are suffered by the Muslim prisoners.<sup>4</sup> English translations of recent documents leaked from a Chinese government officials outlines instructions for how to operate these prison camps, using phrases such as "prevent escapes," "increase discipline and punishment," "strict secrecy," "may not contact the outside world," "full video surveillance," and "psychological correction education."<sup>5</sup> The prisons are required to implement a point system by which a student's test scores on ideological indoctrination affect their punishments and ability to contact their family members.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/background/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/background/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.icij.org/investigations/china-cables/how-china-targets-uyghurs-one-by-one-for-using-a-mobile-app/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/background/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6558510-China-Cables-Telegram-English.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6558510-China-Cables-Telegram-English.html>

## Persecution of Falun Gong Practitioners

The Falun Gong faith centers around meditation and breathing exercises for the purpose of spiritual salvation through “truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance”<sup>7</sup> and the Chinese Communist Party has, since July 20, 1999, effectively banned the religion, deeming it an “evil cult.” Those who continue to practice this faith are rounded up and placed in prisons, where they endured physical torture.<sup>8</sup> Over the past decade, a new type of persecution has increasingly occurred in China towards Falun Gong practitioners: organ harvesting.

In June 2019, the Independent Tribunal Into Forced Harvesting from Prisoners of Conscience in China confirmed, “beyond reasonable doubt” that forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience has been practiced for a substantial period of time in China.<sup>9</sup> Dr. Zhiyuan Wang who has researched the practice of forced organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners also found that 165 death row inmates were executed between July 2013 to September 2014, at a time period when 1000 organ transplants were officially recorded and voluntary and legal transplants were few.<sup>10</sup>

In 2019, 96 Falun Gong practitioners were confirmed to have died as a result of torture and other mistreatments faced in detention.<sup>11</sup> Mr. He Lifang, is an example of one such case. He was a resident of Qingdao City, Shandong Province who died in custody on July 2, 2019. Mr. He’s family suspected psychiatric abuse and physical abuse following a visit in May 2019, as guards had to carry Mr. He out on a stretcher and he showed an inability to speak only 17 days after his detention. Mr. He’s family suspect that his organs were harvested after they noticed a sewn-up incision on his chest and an open incision on his back. The police first claimed that the incisions were a result of an autopsy, before changing their story to say that a medical examiner would come shortly, however no coroner ever showed up.

## Persecution of Catholics and Christians

Over the past two years, the government of China has repeatedly repressed Christianity and attempting to “Sinicize” religion to make it more Chinese and more compatible with the politics of the Party.<sup>12</sup> In late 2018, the Chinese police began to detain Christian members of the Early Rain Covenant Church, shut down house churches, demolish crosses and religious symbols on buildings, restricting anyone under the age of 18 from attending services, and erecting Chinese flags on the buildings.<sup>13</sup> Chinese police detained Pastor Wang Yi, the founder of the church, who along with some hundreds of church members.<sup>14</sup> While most individuals who were detained were eventually released, Pastor Wang spent nearly a year in prison and was sentenced to nine years in prison in December 2019, along with his assets being confiscated and his rights being withheld.<sup>15</sup> Following this another church, the Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church, was forcibly closed by CCP officials, and in several provinces, Bibles and the observance of Christmas are strictly prohibited, leaving church networks no choice but to operate covertly to worship and remain active.<sup>16</sup>

In December 2019 the Chinese authorities introduced new Administrative Measures for Religious Groups, enforceable from February 1 2020, to monitor all aspects of religious practice and make sure religious organizations, “adhere to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, observe the constitution, laws, regulations, ordinances and policies.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falun\\_Gong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falun_Gong)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-i-learned-to-stop-hating-falun-gong-11563490711>

<sup>9</sup> <https://chinatribunal.com/interim-judgement/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBtjRJXEzIQ>

<sup>11</sup> <http://en.minghui.org/html/articles/2020/1/8/182085.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/13/china-christians-religious-persecution-translation-bible>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/13/china-christians-religious-persecution-translation-bible>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/30/world/asia/china-wang-yi-christian-sentence.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/30/world/asia/china-wang-yi-christian-sentence.html>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/13/china-christians-religious-persecution-translation-bible>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/china-announces-new-crackdown-on-religious-freedom-41248>, Article 5 of the

Other articles require religious groups to publicly promote the Party and its platform and train new workers and volunteers to do so, to pre-apply to hold religious activities, and to eradicate all “underground operations.”<sup>18</sup>

The Chinese Communist Party continue to pressure smaller, informal Catholic groups and organizations to assimilate with the state-approved Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, offering threats to those that refuse to do so; Catholic churches in Fuzhou and Fuqing have been shut down and routinely monitored by police officials.<sup>19</sup> Government approved churches, part of the Three-Self Church, have also faced closure. In December 2019, Donghu Church received a formal notice requesting immediate closure and that the church will be demolished on January 2, 2020.

## **Recommendations to China**

### **Jubilee Campaign calls upon the People’s Republic of China to:**

- Eliminate the practice of arbitrary prolonged detention of individuals for their religious beliefs.
- Release all religious prisoners of conscience.
- Take measures to eliminate all forms and instances of torture within detention centers.
- Put an end to forced organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners and all other victims.
- Stop demolishing and vandalizing houses of worship.
- Remove all restrictions on religious practice and meet international standards of freedom of religion or belief.
- Cease all acts of surveillance and invasion of privacy in accordance with Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## **Recommendations to the Human Rights Council**

### **Jubilee Campaign calls upon the Human Rights Council to:**

- Hold the authorities of China accountable for crimes against humanity and all forms of torture occurring within detention centers in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Torture.
- Hold the authorities of China accountable for all acts of arbitrary detention in accordance with Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Take measures to encourage or require China to meet its reporting and religious freedom obligations as a member of the Human Rights Council.

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Administrative Measures for Religious Groups.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/china-announces-new-crackdown-on-religious-freedom-41248>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/china-announces-new-crackdown-on-religious-freedom-41248>