

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, XINJIANG, HONG KONG, AND MACAU) 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

Reports on Hong Kong, Macau, Tibet, and Xinjiang are appended at the end of this report.

The constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which cites the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), states that citizens “enjoy freedom of religious belief” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities” without defining “normal.” CCP members and members of the armed forces are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. National law prohibits organizations or individuals from interfering with the state educational system for minors younger than the age of 18, effectively barring them from participating in most religious activities or receiving religious education. Some provinces have additional laws on minors' participation in religious activities. The government continued to assert control over religion and restrict the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents that it perceived as threatening state or CCP interests, according to religious groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international media reports. The government recognizes five official religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” representing these religions are permitted to register with the government and officially permitted to hold worship services. There continued to be reports of deaths in custody and that the government tortured, physically abused, arrested, detained, sentenced to prison, subjected to forced indoctrination in CCP ideology, or harassed adherents of both registered and unregistered religious groups for activities related to their religious beliefs and practices. According to *Minghui*, a Falun Gong publication, police arrested more than 6,600 Falun Gong practitioners during the year. According to the annual report of The Church of the Almighty God (CAG), authorities arrested more than 7,000 of its members and subjected them to physical abuse, including beatings, sleep deprivation, and being forced into stress positions. The CAG reported some individuals died in custody or as a result of police harassment. *Bitter Winter*, an online publication that tracks religious liberty and human rights abuses in the country, reported instances of individuals being held for extended periods of time in psychiatric hospitals for practicing their religious beliefs, where authorities beat them and forced them to take medication. Authorities detained and arrested religious leaders trying to hold services online. The government

continued its 2019-2024 campaign of “Sinicization” to bring all religious doctrine and practice in line with CCP doctrine, including by requiring clergy of all faiths to attend political indoctrination sessions, monitoring religious services, preapproving sermons, and altering religious texts, including, according to media, stories from the life of Jesus, to emphasize loyalty to the CCP and the State. In September, United Front Work Department (UFWD) vice head and State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) director general Wang Zuo’an announced foreign influence and control had been completely eliminated from Christianity in China. The government offered financial incentives to law enforcement to arrest religious practitioners and to citizens who reported “illegal religious activity.” The government continued its campaign against religious groups it characterized as “cults,” including the CAG, and maintained a ban on other groups, such as Falun Gong. From January to July, officials across the country shut down religious venues, including some that were affiliated with the authorized patriotic religious associations, in some but not all cases citing COVID restrictions. There were reports the government used the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to increase the surveillance and arrest of religious practitioners, including members of state-sanctioned groups, and to curtail private worship among religious groups. Authorities continued to restrict the printing and distribution of the Bible, Quran, and other religious literature, and penalized publishing and copying businesses that handled religious materials. Authorities censored online posts referencing Jesus or the Bible. There were numerous reports that authorities closed or destroyed Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, and Taoist houses of worship and destroyed public displays of religious symbols throughout the country. The government removed architectural features that identified churches and mosques as religious sites. It altered textbooks to delete references to religious holidays. Officials routinely made public statements denigrating the Dalai Lama. In October, the Holy See extended for another two years its 2018 provisional agreement with the government concerning the appointment of bishops. Critics stated the agreement did not alleviate government pressure on Catholic clergy to join the state-sponsored Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA).

Christians, Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and Falun Gong practitioners reported severe societal discrimination in employment, housing, and business opportunities. In Xinjiang and Tibet, authorities continued to suppress Uyghur and Tibetan language and culture, while promoting ethnic Han individuals in political, economic, and cultural life. Anti-Muslim speech in social media remained widespread.

In multiple public speeches, the U.S. Secretary of State criticized the government for curtailing religious freedom. In an October speech on tolerance given while visiting Indonesia, the Secretary said, “The gravest threat to the future of religious freedom is the Chinese Communist Party’s war against people of all faiths: Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Falun Gong practitioners alike.” The Ambassador and other U.S. embassy and consulate general officials met with a range of government officials to advocate for greater religious freedom and tolerance, and for the release of individuals imprisoned for religious reasons. The Ambassador and other embassy and consulate general officials met with members of registered and unregistered religious groups, family members of religious prisoners, NGOs, and others to reinforce U.S. support for religious freedom. The embassy continued to amplify Department of State religious freedom initiatives directly to Chinese citizens through outreach programs and social media.

On June 17, the President signed into law the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 authorizing the imposition of U.S. sanctions, including asset blocking and denial of visas, against Chinese officials responsible for the detention and persecution of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang. In July, the U.S. government imposed sanctions on four Chinese leaders and additional PRC entities pursuant to the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. During the year, the U.S. government added 20 PRC entities to the Department of Commerce’s Entity List that were implicated in human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The U.S. imposed visa restrictions on government and CCP officials for their responsibility for, or complicity in, human rights abuses in Xinjiang. When announcing the visa restrictions, the Secretary of State said, “The United States will not stand idly by as the CCP carries out human rights abuses targeting Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang, to include forced labor, arbitrary mass detention, and forced population control, and attempts to erase their culture and Muslim faith.” The U.S. also prohibited import of merchandise believed to have been produced in Xinjiang with forced labor. At the direction of the Secretary of State, U.S. government officials explored whether the PRC’s actions in Xinjiang constituted atrocities, namely crimes against humanity and genocide. The process was ongoing at year’s end.*

Since 1999, China has been designated as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. On December 2,

*On January 19, 2021, the then Secretary publicly announced his determination that since at least March 2017, the government has committed crimes against humanity and genocide against Uyghurs, who are predominantly Muslim, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang.

2020 the Secretary of State redesignated China as a CPC and identified the following sanction that accompanied the designation: the existing ongoing restriction on exports to China of crime control and detection instruments and equipment, under the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1990 and 1991 (Public Law 101-246), pursuant to section 402(c)(5) of the Act.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 1.4 billion (midyear 2020 estimate). According to the State Council Information Office (SCIO) report *Seeking Happiness for People: 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China*, published in September 2019, there are more than 200 million religious adherents in the country. An SCIO April 2018 white paper on religion in the country states there are approximately 5,500 religious groups.

Local and regional figures for the number of religious followers, including those belonging to the five officially recognized religions, are unclear. Local governments do not release these statistics, and even official religious organizations do not have accurate numbers. The Pew Research Center and other observers say the numbers of adherents of many religious groups often are underreported. The U.S. government estimates that Buddhists comprise 18.2 percent of the country's total population, Christians 5.1 percent, Muslims 1.8 percent, followers of folk religions 21.9 percent, and atheists or unaffiliated persons 52.2 percent, with Hindus, Jews, and Taoists comprising less than one percent. According to a February 2017 estimate by the U.S.-based NGO Freedom House, there are more than 350 million religious adherents in the country, including 185 to 250 million Chinese Buddhists, 60 to 80 million Protestants, 21 to 23 million Muslims, seven to 20 million Falun Gong practitioners, 12 million Catholics, six to eight million Tibetan Buddhists, and hundreds of millions who follow various folk traditions. According to the Christian advocacy NGO Open Doors USA's *World Watch List 2020* report, there are 97.2 million Christians. According to 2015 data from the World Jewish Congress, the country's Jewish population is 2,500, concentrated in Beijing, Shanghai, and Kaifeng.

The SCIO's April 2018 white paper found the number of Protestants to be 38 million. Among these, there are 20 million Protestants affiliated with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the state-sanctioned umbrella organization for all officially recognized Protestant churches, according to information on TSPM's website in March 2017. The SCIO report states there are six million Catholics, although media and international NGO estimates suggest there are 10-12 million,

approximately half of whom practice in churches not affiliated with the CCPA. Accurate estimates on the numbers of Catholics and Protestants as well as other faiths are difficult to calculate because many adherents practice exclusively at home or in churches that are not state sanctioned.

According to the 2018 SCIO white paper, there are 10 ethnic minority groups totaling more than 20 million persons for whom Islam is the majority religion. Other sources indicate almost all Muslims are Sunni. The two largest Muslim ethnic minorities are Hui and Uyghur, with Hui Muslims concentrated primarily in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and in Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan Provinces. The SARA, also referred to as the National Religious Affairs Administration, estimates the Muslim Hui population at 10.6 million. Most Uyghur Muslims are concentrated in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and, along with ethnic Kazakh, Hui, Kyrgyz, and members of other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups, number approximately 14.9 million residents, or 60 percent of the total population there.

While there is no reliable government breakdown of the Buddhist population by branch, the vast majority of Buddhists are adherents of Mahayana Buddhism, according to the Pew Research Center.

Prior to the government's 1999 ban on Falun Gong, the government estimated there were 70 million adherents. Falun Gong sources estimate tens of millions continue to practice privately, and Freedom House estimates there are seven to 20 million practitioners.

Some ethnic minorities follow traditional religions, such as Dongba among the Naxi people in Yunnan Province and Buluotuo among the Zhuang in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The central government classifies worship of Mazu, a folk deity with Taoist roots, as an expression of "cultural heritage" rather than religious practice.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution, which cites the leadership of the CCP and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping Thought, states citizens "enjoy freedom of religious belief," but it limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities" without defining normal. It says religion may not

be used to disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system. The constitution provides for the right to hold or not to hold a religious belief. It says state organs, public organizations, and individuals may not discriminate against citizens “who believe in or do not believe in any religion.” The constitution states, “Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.”

The law does not allow legal action to be taken against the government based on the religious freedom protections afforded by the constitution. Criminal law allows the state to sentence government officials to up to two years in prison if they violate a citizen’s religious freedom.

The CCP is responsible for creating religious regulations and oversees the UFWD, which in turn manages SARA’s functions and responsibilities. SARA is responsible for implementing the CCP’s religious regulations and administers the provincial and local bureaus of religious affairs.

CCP members and members of the armed forces are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practice. Members found to belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion, although these rules are not universally enforced. The vast majority of public office holders are CCP members, and membership is widely considered a prerequisite for success in a government career. These restrictions on religious belief and practice also apply to retired CCP members.

The law bans certain religious or spiritual groups. Criminal law defines banned groups as “cult organizations” and provides for criminal prosecution of individuals belonging to such groups and punishment of up to life in prison. There are no published criteria for determining or procedures for challenging such a designation. A national security law also explicitly bans cult organizations.

The CCP maintains an extralegal, party-run security apparatus to eliminate the Falun Gong movement and other organizations. The government continues to ban the Guanyin Method religious group (Guanyin Famen or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy) and Zhong Gong (a *qigong* exercise discipline). The government considers Falun Gong an “illegal organization.” The government also considers several Christian groups to be “cults,” including the Shouters, The Church of the Almighty God (CAG, also known as Eastern Lightning), Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), Full Scope Church (Quan Fanwei Jiaohui), Spirit Sect, New Testament Church, Three Grades of Servants (San Ban Puren), Association of

Disciples, Established King Church, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church), Family of Love, and South China Church.

The Counterterrorism Law describes “religious extremism” as the ideological basis of terrorism; it uses “distorted religious teachings or other means to incite hatred or discrimination, or advocate violence.”

The government recognizes five official religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Regulations require religious organizations to register with the government. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations are permitted to register, and only these organizations may legally hold worship services. The five associations, which operate under the direction of the CCP’s UFWD, are the Buddhist Association of China (BAC), the Chinese Taoist Association, the Islamic Association of China (IAC), the Three Self Patriotic Movement Church (TSPM), and the CCPA. Other religious groups, such as Protestant groups unaffiliated with the official TSPM or Catholics professing loyalty to the Holy See, are not permitted to register as legal entities. The law does not provide a mechanism for religious groups independent of the five official patriotic religious associations to obtain legal status.

According to regulations, religious organizations must submit information about the organization’s historical background, members, doctrines, key publications, minimum funding requirements, and government sponsor, which must be one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations. Registration information is only required once, but religious organizations must reregister if changes are made to the required documentation.

Under revisions to the civil code passed by the National People’s Congress in June, a religious institution established according to law may apply for the status of a “legal person” (nonprofit entity) under Article 92 of the civil code. The revisions formalized the ability of organizations to possess property, publish approved materials, train staff, and collect donations, thereby facilitating authorities’ ability to track and regulate religious institutions. Previously, bank accounts and real estate holdings were commonly held in the name of individual staff members, making it difficult in some cases for authorities to separate the financial matters of members from those of the religious institution.

Religious and other regulations permit official patriotic religious associations to engage in activities such as building places of worship, training religious leaders, publishing literature, and providing social services to local communities. The

CCP's UFWD, including SARA, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs provide policy guidance and supervision on the implementation of these regulations.

Revisions to the Regulations on Religious Affairs in 2018 increased restrictions on unregistered religious groups. Individuals who participate in unsanctioned religious activities are subject to criminal and administrative penalties. The regulations stipulate that any form of income from illegal activities or illegal properties shall be confiscated and a fine imposed of between one to three times the value of the illegal income or properties. If the illegal income or properties cannot be identified, a fine of less than 50,000 renminbi (RMB) (\$7,600) shall be imposed. Authorities may penalize property owners renting space to unregistered religious groups by confiscating properties and illegal incomes and levying fines between RMB 20,000 and 200,000 (\$3,100 and \$30,600).

Government policy allows religious groups to engage in charitable work, but regulations specifically prohibit faith-based organizations from proselytizing while conducting charitable activities. Authorities require faith-based charities, like all other charitable groups, to register with the government. Once they are registered as official charities, authorities allow them to raise funds publicly and to receive tax benefits. The government does not permit unregistered charitable groups to raise funds openly, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property. According to several unregistered religious groups, the government requires faith-based charities to obtain official cosponsorship of their registration application by the local official religious affairs bureau. Authorities often require these groups to affiliate with one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations.

Article 70 of the Regulations on Religious Affairs requires members of religious groups to seek approval to travel abroad for "religious training, conferences, pilgrimages, and other activities." Anyone found organizing such activities without approval may be fined between RMB 20,000 and 200,000 (\$3,100 and \$30,600). Illegally obtained income connected to the travel may be seized and "if the case constitutes a crime, criminal responsibility shall be investigated according to law."

The regulations specify that no religious structure, including clergy housing, may be transferred, mortgaged, or utilized as investments. SARA regulations place restrictions on religious groups conducting business or making investments by stipulating the property and income of religious groups, schools, and venues must not be distributed and should be used for activities and charity befitting their

purposes; any individual or organization that donates funds to build religious venues is prohibited from owning the venues.

The regulations impose a limit on foreign donations to religious groups, stating such donations must be used for activities that authorities deem appropriate for the group and the site. Regulations ban donations from foreign groups and individuals if the donations come with any attached conditions, and they state that any donations exceeding RMB 100,000 (\$15,300) must be submitted to the local government for review and approval. Religious groups, religious schools, and “religious activity sites” may not accept donations from foreign sources that have conditions attached.

The regulations require that religious activity “must not harm national security” or support “religious extremism.” The regulations do not define “extremism.” Penalties for “harm to national security” may include suspending groups and canceling the credentials of clergy.

National laws allow each provincial administration to issue its own regulations concerning religious affairs, including penalties for violations. Many provinces updated their regulations after the national 2018 regulations came into effect. In addition to the five officially recognized religions, local governments, at their discretion, may permit followers of certain unregistered religions to carry out religious practices. In Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, and Guangdong Provinces, for example, local governments allow members of Orthodox Christian communities to participate in unregistered religious activities.

SARA states, in a policy posted on its website, that family and friends have the right to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study, without registering with the government. A provision states, however, that religious organizations should report the establishment of a religious site to the government for approval.

By law, prison inmates have the right to believe in a religion and maintain their religious faith while in custody. However, the PRC defines the right to religious faith differently than the right to religious activities, such as prayer facilities and access to clergy. Muslim prisoners are reportedly allowed to have meals with the “halal” label.

The law does not define what constitutes proselytizing. The constitution states that no state unit, social organization, or individual may force a citizen to believe or not

believe in a religion. Offenders are subject to administrative and criminal penalties.

An amendment to the criminal law and a judicial interpretation by the national Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Supreme People's Court published in 2016 criminalize the act of forcing others to wear "extremist" garments or symbols; doing so is punishable by up to three years' imprisonment, short-term detention or controlled release, and a concurrent fine. Neither the amendment nor the judicial interpretation defines what garments or symbols the law considers "extremist."

Publication and distribution of literature containing religious content must follow guidelines determined by the State Publishing Administration. Online activities ("online religious information services") of religious groups require prior approval from the provincial religious affairs bureau. Religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles, Qurans, and Buddhist and Taoist texts, may be confiscated, and unauthorized publishing houses closed.

The government offers some subsidies for the construction of state-sanctioned places of worship and religious schools.

To establish places of worship, religious organizations must first receive approval from the religious affairs department of the local government when the facility is proposed, and again before services are first held at that location. Religious organizations must submit dozens of documents to register during these approval processes, including detailed management plans of their religious activities, exhaustive financial records, and personal information on all staff members. Religious communities not going through the formal registration process may not legally have a set facility or worship meeting space. Therefore, every time such groups want to reserve a space for worship, such as by renting a hotel room or an apartment, they must seek a separate approval from government authorities for that specific service. Worshipping in a space without prior approval, gained either through the formal registration process or by seeking an approval for each service, is considered an illegal religious activity and is subject to criminal or administrative penalties.

By regulation, if a religious structure is to be demolished or relocated because of city planning or the construction of "key" projects, the party responsible for demolishing the structure must consult with its local bureau of religious affairs (guided by SARA) and the religious group using the structure. If all parties agree

to the demolition, the party conducting the demolition must agree to rebuild the structure or to provide compensation equal to its appraised market value.

The Regulations on Religious Affairs include registration requirements for schools that allow only the five state-sanctioned religious associations or their affiliates to form religious schools. Children younger than the age of 18 are prohibited from participating in religious activities and receiving religious education, even in schools run by religious organizations. Enforcement and implementation of these rules varied widely across and within regions. One regulation states that no individual may use religion to hinder the national education system and that no religious activities may be held in schools. The law mandates the teaching of atheism in schools, and a CCP directive provides guidance to universities on how to prevent foreign proselytizing of university students. The Regulations on Religious Affairs of the XUAR state, “Minors shall not participate in religious activities. No organization or individual may organize, induce or force minors to participate in religious activities.” Minors are also prohibited from entering religious venues. Multiple provinces send letters instructing parents that “teachers and parents should strictly enforce the principle of separation between education and religion and ensure that minors are not allowed to enter religious places, participate in religious activities, or to attend religious trainings.” Implementation of these rules, however, varies greatly across and within regions.

The law states job applicants shall not face discrimination in hiring based on religious belief.

On February 1, the Administrative Measures for Religious Groups went into effect. These measures comprise six chapters and 41 articles dealing with the organization, function, offices, supervision, projects, and economic administration of communities and groups at the national and local levels. The measures state that only registered groups may operate legally and stipulate that religious organizations must support the leadership of the CCP, adhere to the direction of Sinicization, and implement the values of socialism. Article 17 states that religious organizations shall “follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, abide by laws, regulations, rules, and policies, correctly handle the relationship between national law and canon, and enhance national awareness, awareness of the rule of law, and citizenship.”

The country is not a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). With respect to Macau, the central government notified the UN Secretary-General, in part, that residents of Macau shall not be restricted in the

rights and freedoms they are entitled to unless otherwise provided for by law, and in case of restrictions, the restrictions shall not contravene the ICCPR. With respect to Hong Kong, the central government notified the Secretary-General, in part, that the ICCPR would also apply to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Government Practices

Police continued to arrest and otherwise detain leaders and members of religious groups, often those connected with groups not registered with the state-sanctioned religious associations. There were reports police used violence and beatings during arrest and detention. Authorities reportedly used vague or insubstantial charges, sometimes in connection with religious activity, to convict and sentence leaders and members of religious groups to years in prison.

Sources continued to report deaths in custody, enforced disappearances, and organ harvesting in prison of individuals whom authorities had targeted based on their religious beliefs or affiliation. There were reports that authorities tortured detainees, including by depriving them of food, water, and sleep. NGOs reported that some previously detained individuals were denied freedom of movement even after their release.

The Political Prisoner Database (PPDB) maintained by the human rights NGO Dui Hua Foundation counted 3,492 individuals imprisoned for “organizing or using a ‘cult’ to undermine implementation of the law.”

In December, *Bitter Winter* reported that according to a government source, the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission issued a confidential document in September ordering a nationwide, three-year crackdown on the CAG. The campaign outlined three main goals: “To destroy the Church’s system domestically completely, to substantially downsize its membership by preventing church activities and blocking new members from joining, and to curb the development of the church abroad.” *Bitter Winter* reported increased arrests of Church members following the issuance of this document, including 71 arrests in Xuzhou City, Jiangsu Province, in September and 160 arrests in Nanyang City, Henan Province, on November 10 alone.

According to the annual report released by the CAG, during the year, at least 42,807 church members were directly persecuted by authorities, compared with 32,815 in 2019. The report stated that authorities harassed at least 35,752 church

members (at least 26,683 in 2019), arrested 7,055 (6,132 in 2019), detained 4,045 (4,161 in 2019), tortured or subjected to forced indoctrination 5,587 (3,824 in 2019), sentenced 1,098 (1,355 in 2019), and seized at least RMB 270 million (\$41.3 million) in church and personal assets. At least 21 church members died as a result of abuse or persecution (19 in 2019). The 21 included four who died as a result of physical abuse or forced labor, three who committed suicide as a result of authorities surveilling and pressuring them to renounce their faith, and four who died of medical complications during or following their detention.

According to the CAG annual report, in August, a woman named Qin Shiqin died in custody in Shandong Province 10 days after her arrest. Facial swelling and blood in the corners of her mouth could be seen on her remains. A 71-year-old woman identified as “Xiang Chen” died in prison in Sichuan Province while serving a three-year sentence because of her faith. Her remains appeared emaciated, her face was swollen and bruised, and a scar was visible under her nose. A man named Zou Jihuang died in custody in Hubei Province of liver cirrhosis. Zou had been arrested in 2017. During his imprisonment, he had developed a liver condition for which he was denied medical treatment, beaten, and forced to perform hard labor. In Shaanxi Province, a 77-year-old woman named Yang Fengying committed suicide after police went to her home multiple times over the course of three years to intimidate and threaten her.

According to the CAG annual report, at least 847 CAG members were arrested between February and April, many of whom were apprehended as a result of the CCP’s antipandemic household checks or at identity card checkpoints. Police extracted information on the church from these individuals through physical abuse, such as administering electric shocks and handcuffing them painfully, with one arm over a shoulder and one twisted up from below.

Media reported authorities used measures for preventing the spread of COVID-19, including facial recognition software and telephone tracking, to identify and arrest members of unregistered or banned religious groups. The government installed surveillance cameras outside unregistered churches during the pandemic. According to media reports, the government conducted door-to-door household inspections, during which they identified and arrested members of banned religious groups. One CAG member said she hid under the bed every time officials came for an inspection. A government employee in Shandong Province said his superiors ordered him to search for nonlocal tenants, particularly members of banned groups, such as the CAG and Falun Gong.

In May, *Bitter Winter* reported the political and legal affairs commission of a locality in northeastern China released a document stating the CCP had established “a stability maintenance mechanism” targeting religious groups, among other individuals and groups, that the government determined posed “a danger to social stability” during the pandemic.

Bitter Winter reported that between February and March, authorities used COVID-19-related mandatory identification checks and home inspections to arrest 325 CAG members. In February, authorities arrested two church members during an identification check, searched their home, and confiscated RMB 45,000 (\$6,900) of church valuables. During interrogation, officers reportedly placed a plastic bag over the head of one of the Church members and beat him. They also strapped him to a “tiger bench” with his body tied in a stress position and shocked him with an electric baton. According to *Bitter Winter*, another church member was arrested when a pandemic inspection team that included community representatives, health personnel, and police officers came to his home. During his interrogation, officers reportedly covered his mouth with a plastic bag and hit him on the face with a desk calendar, stepped on his feet, beat his calves with an iron rod, and forced him to hold a live electric baton.

According to *Minghui*, police arrested 6,659 Falun Gong practitioners and harassed 8,576 practitioners during the year for refusing to renounce their faith, compared with 6,109 arrested and 3,582 harassed in 2019. The arrests occurred throughout the country. Hebei, Heilongjiang, Shandong, Jilin, Sichuan, and Liaoning were the provinces where the highest number of practitioners were targeted. Those arrested included teachers, engineers, lawyers, journalists, authors, and dancers. *Minghui* stated individuals were tortured in custody. *Minghui* also reported that authorities sentenced 622 practitioners to prison throughout the country during the year. The sentences ranged from three months to 14 years, with the average sentence being three years and four months.

Minghui reported that during the year, 83 individuals from 20 provinces and centrally controlled municipalities died due to being persecuted for being Falun Gong practitioners. Some individuals died in custody as a result of physical abuse, including being deprived of sleep and food, forced into stress positions, and denied proper medical attention. Others died shortly after being released on medical parole. On May 13, authorities in Yuzhou City, Henan Province, arrested Zhang Zhiwen for distributing Falun Gong materials the previous August. Zheng’s husband attempted to bring her clothes and insulin for her diabetes, but authorities refused to accept the items, saying they would provide her medication. Zheng died

in custody on May 17 and authorities sent the body directly to a funeral home without notifying her husband. Falun Gong practitioner Li Ling of Dazhangjia Village, Penglai City, Shandong Province, died on July 13 after reportedly being severely beaten following her arrest on June 28. Village authorities forced her family to cremate her remains on the same day. According to her family, her face was deformed, and she was covered in bruises. The village's CCP secretary and a group of paramilitary soldiers took Li from her home on June 28 after a fellow villager reported seeing her with dozens of Falun Gong booklets.

According to *Minghui*, on September 22 and 23, authorities in Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province, arrested 27 Falun Gong practitioners and three family members who were not practitioners, and confiscated books, laptops, printers, money, photographs of Falun Gong's founder Li Hongzhi, and other personal items. Authorities harassed eight other practitioners within days of the arrests. One practitioner returned home to find police ransacking her home. They confiscated books on Falun Gong and arrested the woman along with her husband, who was not a practitioner. Following a group arrest of Falun Gong practitioners in Changchun City, Jilin Province, in July, police beat one practitioner, hit his head against the wall, and dragged him around on the concrete floor. He suffered severe injuries to his knees as a result.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on May 18, authorities assaulted several individuals who were protesting the demolition of a Buddhist temple in Shucheng County, Anhui Province, that authorities declared was "a dilapidated building." Police beat one woman for filming the scene. A witness said, "Three officers pressed her to the ground, hitting her collarbones until she lost consciousness, and the phone was destroyed." Police injured a monk in his 70s for waving his walking stick at authorities and accused him of "assaulting the police."

In March, the U.S.-based NGO Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (VOC) released a report, *Organ Procurement and Extrajudicial Execution in China: A Review of the Evidence*. In the report, VOC stated that Falun Gong practitioners and Uyghur Muslim prisoners of conscience were the most likely source of organs for sale in the country's organ-transplant market. A related series of articles published during the year examining the country's organ transplantation system questioned the plausibility of official government statistics about the sourcing of transplant organs, stating there was an overlap between medical personnel performing organ transplants and individuals involved in the anti-Falun Gong campaign.

On March 1, the China Tribunal, an independent tribunal established by the Australia-based NGO International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China, released its *Full Judgment* on the conditions of organ harvesting in the country. The report was a fuller account with appendices of the evidence the nongovernmental group had drawn on and methodology it had used to reach conclusions contained in its *Short Form Conclusions and Summary Judgment* report issued in June 2019. In the *Full Judgment* report, the group included accounts by individuals, including medical personnel, who stated they were eyewitnesses to abuses, including from medical personnel, and other evidence that documented what the NGO determined to be a decades-long and ongoing state-run program of forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience, principally Falun Gong practitioners. The *Full Judgment* report also contained eyewitness accounts from Falun Gong and Uyghur individuals of involuntary medical examinations, including x-rays, ultrasounds, blood tests, and DNA tests.

According to the *Epoch Times*, a Falun Gong-affiliated news organization, on August 2, authorities broke into the home of a Falun Gong practitioner, pinned her down, and forcibly took a sample of her blood, telling her it was “required by the state.” One officer shouted, “The law does not apply to you. We’re going to wipe you all out.” The *Epoch Times* stated that dozens of other practitioners across the country reported similar incidents. On July 22, authorities in Gaomi County, Shandong Province, arrested and took blood samples from 46 practitioners. An attorney familiar with the cases said the blood sampling did not appear to be a routine physical checkup but rather was illegally “collecting people’s biological samples.”

According to the CAG annual report, harassment of members included the collection of biological data, such as blood samples and hair.

In April, *Bitter Winter* reported instances in which individuals were held against their will in psychiatric hospitals for extended periods of time for practicing their religion. According to a staff member in a psychiatric hospital in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, it was hospital practice to begin “treatment” of CAG members as soon as they were brought in, without any tests or examination. According to a member of the Church from Tianmen City, Hubei Province, who spent 157 days in a psychiatric hospital, “A doctor told me that because of my faith, I was a mental patient, and there was no need for further tests.” Nurses threatened to tie her up if she refused to take medication. One former patient said two doctors pressed her down on a desk and shocked her on the back, hands, and feet with an electric baton to force her to take medication. During the month she

was in the hospital, doctors administered six electroshock treatments, causing her to suffer memory loss and numbness in her limbs. She said doctors threatened that her son's job would be negatively affected if she continued to practice her faith.

International religious media outlets and human rights groups reported that local authorities in several districts around the country continued to award compensation to police officers for arresting religious practitioners from certain groups or confiscating donation money. Conversely, local officials were allegedly disciplined if they did not meet a certain quota for arrests of religious practitioners each month. For example, a government employee from Sanmenxia City, Henan Province, told *Bitter Winter* the municipal government issued arrest quotas for CAG members to subordinate localities, leading to the arrest of 211 individuals. In Jiangxi Province, the police arrested 116 CAG members and confiscated RMB 378,000 (\$57,800) of church and personal assets. *Minghui* reported police received an unknown amount of bonus pay for each Falun Gong practitioner arrested.

According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), authorities raided the homes of and arrested at least eight members of the Early Rain Covenant Church (ERCC) during an online worship service on April 12, Easter Sunday. A pastor and a deputy deacon were among those arrested. According to the NGO International Christian Concern (ICC), authorities continued to harass members in the weeks following the raid. On April 24, authorities took Church member Ran Yunfei to a police station shortly before he was scheduled to speak in an online service. He returned home later that same day. The NGO ChinaAid reported police summoned Ran again in November in connection with his participation in another online religious seminar.

The ICC reported that on May 23, authorities arrested a pastor from the Nanjing Road Church in Wuhan, Hebei Province, during an online evangelism event in which he was taking part. They interrogated him for approximately five hours before releasing him.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in February, police arrested 13 members of the Born Again Movement, also called the All Sphere or All Range Church, in Huai'an City, Jiangsu Province. Five of the members arrested were elderly and suffered from various illnesses. Police released the five after protests from their relatives but forced them to sign statements promising to stop their church activities. Police also came to the home of another church member who hosted church gatherings at her home and threatened to arrest her if she did not stop doing so. They said three

generations of her descendants would be unable to take college entrance examinations, enroll in the army, or become public servants if she did not stop. The officers took samples of her blood and prints of her fingers and palms.

According to *AsiaNews.it*, on April 2, authorities took Zhao Huaiguo, founder and pastor of the Bethel Church in Cili County, Hunan Province, from his home and arrested him on a charge of “inciting subversion against state power.” Police returned to his apartment on April 15 to confiscate books, Bibles, and photocopies of books as evidence of “illegal trade” in books. His wife said he was likely arrested because he spoke to foreign news agencies about COVID-19 and had not affiliated his church with the TSPM church. ChinaAid reported the Zhangjiajie Intermediate Court tried Zhao in October for “inciting subversion of state power,” and prosecutors recommended an 18-month sentence.

In May, the ICC reported that authorities transferred Pastor Wang Yi of the ERCC from Chengdu City Detention Center to a prison in an unknown location. In December 2019, Wang had been sentenced to nine years in prison. According to the ICC, since his arrest, authorities had denied Wang’s parents the ability to visit him, either in person or virtually, despite their having the legal right to do so, and Wang’s wife and child were living in an unknown location under surveillance.

At year’s end, the whereabouts of Gao Zhisheng remained unknown, although media reported it was believed he remained in the custody of state security police. In September 2017, police had detained Gao, a human rights lawyer who had defended members of Christian groups, Falun Gong practitioners, and other groups. In September, the NGO Jubilee Campaign submitted a written statement to the 45th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council calling for the government to “release unconditionally and with immediate effect all political and religious prisoners of conscience, including lawyer Gao Zhisheng.” Gao’s daughter, Geng Ge, submitted a video statement to the council, stating, “As of today, I don’t know if he’s alive or not.”

In October, ChinaAid reported that since July, police in Zhaotong City, Yunnan Province, had threatened and harassed Pastor Wang Hai of the Trinity Church and his wife and detained other church leaders and members of Wang’s extended family. Wang said authorities had targeted the Church because its members belonged to the ethnic Miao minority and were Christian. He said that due to the ongoing harassment, church attendance had dropped from 100 worshippers to only a handful who attended Sunday services.

AsiaNews.it reported that on September 1, authorities from the Religious Affairs Bureau in Fujian Province arrested Rev. Liu Maochun, an underground priest of the Mindong Diocese, and held him incommunicado for 17 days to pressure him to join the CCPA. At least 20 underground priests in the region faced similar pressure from the religious affairs bureau, according to *AsiaNews.it*.

According to RFA, on April 19 and May 3, several dozen state security police and officials from the local religious affairs bureau raided worship services at Xingguang Church, an unregistered church in Xiamen City, Fujian Province. Church pastor Yang Xibo told RFA the congregation was targeted for refusing to join the state-sanctioned TSPM. According to multiple international press reports and mobile phone videos that Church members posted to Twitter, authorities forcibly entered a private residence in which Church members were holding a worship service, without a warrant or showing any form of identification. Authorities seized several congregants and tried to drag them out, injuring three; they detained at least nine members, releasing them approximately 12 hours later. According to RFA, authorities raided Xingguang Church again on June 11, taking away furniture and other church belongings, but did not arrest anyone. ChinaAid stated authorities broke into church members' homes on July 22, destroying and removing property.

In January, RFA reported that authorities in Jinan City, Shandong Province, arrested Hui Muslim poet Cui Haoxin, known by his pen name An Ran, for Twitter posts in which he criticized the government for the imprisonment, surveillance, and persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang and throughout the country. He was held on suspicion of "picking quarrels and stirring up trouble." According to RFA, this charge was "frequently leveled at peaceful critics of the ruling Chinese Communist Party."

The Falun Dafa Information Center, a Falun Gong rights advocacy group, reported authorities in Beijing detained at least 40 persons ahead of the annual meetings of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference on May 22. Sources said police also harassed practitioners and searched their homes and that police told the individuals they were taking the actions because of the upcoming political meetings. On April 21, police forcibly entered the home of Wang Yuling by prying open her window. They ransacked the house and confiscated books and printed materials related to Falun Gong, as well as a printer and computer. They took Wang and her daughter into custody. On April 27, authorities forcibly entered the home of Yang Yuliang, searched it,

and confiscated Falun Gong books and photographs of Falun Gong's founder. They held Yang and his daughter, Yang Dandan, in custody for three days.

There continued to be reports of government officials, companies, and education authorities pressuring members of house churches and other Christians to sign documents renouncing their Christian faith and church membership. Media reported the government threatened to withhold social welfare benefits and to retaliate against family members. The NGO CSW stated authorities instructed schools to report the religious beliefs of students and staff.

Bitter Winter reported that on November 1, the government began the seventh national population census, collecting a broad range of personal and household data, including individuals' identification numbers. According to several census takers, although there were no questions about religion on the census questionnaire, they were instructed when visiting people's homes to pay attention to religious materials and symbols and to ascertain if the home was being used as a private religious venue. In one case, when five census takers entered a home in Zhengzhou City, Henan Province, they saw a Bible and asked the residents if they were Christian. They determined the home was being used as a house church and ordered the residents to stop hosting gatherings. A census taker in Yantai City, Shandong Province, said local police told him and his colleagues to report any households with images associated with Falun Gong. A census taker in Heze City, Shandong Province, said he was ordered to report to police any person who did not allow him inside the home, because refusal might indicate the person held religious beliefs or hosted unauthorized religious gatherings.

According to the ICC, on October 11, police arrested Elder Li Yingqiang of the ERCC in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, just before the church began an online service. During the arrest, police also threatened Li's two young children. Police also arrested another church member, Jia Xuewei, and interrogated him for several hours about ERCC's recent spiritual retreat and the worship that was about to take place. Both were released later that day. An ERCC member told the ICC that authorities likely detained Li and Jia to prevent the online service from taking place. According to the source, police told Li he would be taken from his home every week and that they would target his children if he posted about his experience online.

According to *Bitter Winter*, during the year, authorities in several provinces investigated the personal backgrounds of civil servants, hospital staff, teachers, students, and the family members of each to determine their religious status. In

May, the Education Bureau of Jinan City, Shandong Province, required some primary and secondary schools to determine if any of their teachers, students, or their family members were religious.

There continued to be no uniform procedures for registering religious adherents. The government continued to recognize as “lawful” only those religious activities it sanctioned and controlled through the state-sanctioned religious associations. Only government-accredited religious personnel could conduct such activities, and only in government-approved places of religious activity.

SARA continued to maintain statistics on registered religious groups. According to 2014 SARA statistics (the latest available), more than 5.7 million Catholics worshipped in sites registered by the CCPA. The April 2018 white paper by the State Council Information Office (SCIO) stated there were approximately 144,000 places of worship registered for religious activities in the country, among which 33,500 were Buddhist temples (including 28,000 Han Buddhist temples, 3,800 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, and 1,700 Theravada Buddhist temples), 9,000 Taoist temples, 35,000 mosques, 6,000 CCPA churches and places of assembly spread across 98 dioceses, and 60,000 TSPM churches and places of assembly.

The 2018 SCIO white paper stated that by 2017, there were 91 religious schools in the country approved by SARA: 41 Buddhist, 10 Taoist, 10 Islamic, 9 Catholic, and 21 Protestant. Students younger than 18 were barred from receiving religious instruction. This report also stated there were six national-level religious colleges. Although there were two CCPA seminaries in Beijing, civil society sources said they regarded one of these institutions to be primarily used as CCPA propaganda for international visitors. The SCIO report also estimated there were more than 384,000 religious personnel in the country: 222,000 Buddhist, 40,000 Taoist, 57,000 Islamic, 57,000 Protestant, and 8,000 Catholic.

The government continued to close down or hinder the activities of religious groups not affiliated with the state-sanctioned religious associations, including unregistered Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and other groups. At times, authorities said the closures were because the group or its activities were unregistered or, at other times, because the place of worship lacked necessary permits. Some local governments continued to restrict the growth of unregistered Protestant church networks and cross-congregational affiliations. Authorities allowed some unregistered groups to operate but did not recognize them legally. In some cases, authorities required unregistered religious groups to disband, leaving congregants from these groups with the sole option of attending services under a state-

sanctioned religious leader. According to *Union of Catholic Asian (UCA) News*, Article 34 of the new Administrative Measures for Religious Groups regulation, which governs money and finances, if enforced, “will halt the activities of house churches, dissident Catholic communities, and other unregistered religious bodies.”

International media and NGOs reported the government continued to carry out its 2019-2024 five-year nationwide campaign to “Sinicize religion” by altering doctrines and practices across all faith traditions to conform to and bolster CCP ideology and emphasize loyalty to the CCP and the state. The CCP’s Administrative Measures for Religious Organizations, promulgated in February, further formalized the administrative procedures for Sinicizing all religions.

The five-year plan to promote the Sinicization of Christianity called for “incorporating Chinese elements into church worship services, hymns and songs, clerical attire, and the architectural style of church buildings,” and it proposed to “retranslate the Bible or rewrite biblical commentaries.” According to *Bitter Winter*, on April 13, the UFWD in Zibo City, Shandong Province, issued an order calling on religious groups and clergy to write essays on their “love for the country and the Communist Party.” A Catholic dean in Zibo said that on April 16, a religious affairs bureau official told him to study Xi Jinping Thought and the 19th National Congress of the CCP for an examination he would have to take later. On February 18, the Shenyang Religious Affairs Bureau in Liaoning Province issued a notice that the city’s religious groups should hold events to advance Xi Jinping’s policies. On April 14, the TSPM in Fujian Province issued a document stating, “Posters promoting the core socialist values shall be posted in prominent positions in all church venues. Clergy members should highlight the core socialist values in their sermons and use important festivals, major events, and other occasions to interpret and publicize the core socialist values, so that they are inserted into believers’ minds, their Sunday worship services, and daily lives.” Local government authorities reportedly threatened to close churches whose clergy refused to help spread government propaganda.

According to *Bitter Winter*, the government regularly pressured clergy to incorporate government messages into sermons. Following President Xi’s call in August to curb food waste in the country, two Chinese Christian Councils of Quanzhou, Fujian Province, demanded all TSPM churches integrate the president’s ideas into their sermons, so that “the policy reaches everyone in society.” In response, some clergy members reportedly integrated the president’s exhortation into the Biblical story about Jesus feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish.

Media reported that throughout the year, crackdowns on some churches with foreign ties intensified significantly throughout the country. Many religious groups faced comprehensive investigations that included checking their background, organizational setting, membership, online evangelism, and finances. Following investigations, authorities shut down hundreds of churches that were reportedly unregistered or whose registration had not been updated under the new regulations. In late 2019, the Jilin Province Religious Affairs Bureau issued a document calling for investigations of churches related to or funded by overseas religious groups and blocking their activities online, and it began implementing these measures during the year. In Shandong Province, national security officers interrogated a house church pastor in February for evangelical activities abroad.

The government media outlet *Xinhua* reported that in September, UFWD vice head and SARA director general Wang announced that in the previous 70 years, through the development of the TSPM, foreign influence and control had been completely eliminated from Christianity in the country.

On May 29, the Hainan Buddhist Association held a training session for Buddhist professionals and monks across the province. The training included advising monks on how to implement religious Sinicization, Xi Jinping's remarks at the National Religious Work Conference, and the religious affairs regulations.

The BAC-affiliated Buddhist website *AmitufoCN.com* reported that on April 16, approximately 50 religious workers, including monks, pastors, imams, and other clergy from the five officially recognized religions, attended a mandatory training program organized by the Hainan Province UFWD, the Hainan Academy of Social Sciences, and the Hainan Party School. Participants studied the principles of the 19th National Congress of the CCP, Chairman Xi's April 13, 2018, speech commemorating the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Hainan Special Economic Zone, and the Regulations on Religious Affairs. Hainan UFWD deputy director general Liu Geng in his opening remarks told the religious professionals to "make full use of religion to promote social harmony." According to *AmitufoCN.com*, on May 29, the Hainan Buddhist Association organized another training session for clergy, teachers, and religious workers from various temples in the province. Song Xinghe, an official in the Hainan UFWD Religious Affairs Bureau, gave a lecture entitled, "Insistence on the Sinicization of Religion."

According to *Gospel Times*, a Chinese Christian news website, from July 15 to 17, the Guangdong TSPM held a training session for 98 clergy to study new regulations and promote Sinicization in Guangdong Province. An associate

professor from Jinling Union Theological Seminary gave a lecture on TSPM and the Sinicization of Christianity. Government officials also gave a lecture on “anticult” measures.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in some parts of the country, local authorities regularly reviewed sermons of TSPM pastors to ensure they were consistent with CCP ideology and contained praise for government leaders. The publication reported that on July 20, the Dandong City Religious Affairs Bureau in Liaoning Province required TSPM clergy to participate in a sermon competition on the Sinicization of religion. The clergy were told to prepare sermons by “looking for elements in the Bible that are relevant to the core socialist values and traditional Chinese culture,” in conformity with “the progress of the times.” One clergy member told *Bitter Winter* that only competition participants would pass the annual review to receive a clergy certificate.

In August, a conference to study the new civil code and volume three of *Xi Jinping on Governance* was held at the Guangxiao Buddhist Temple, organized by the Guangdong Buddhist Association. Approximately 800 leaders of all religious groups in Guangdong Province attended in-person and virtually.

The state-owned *China News Service* reported that on December 1, SARA director general Wang delivered remarks at the 10th National Congress of the BAC. Wang called on the BAC to “pursue political progress toward the adherence of Sinicization of Buddhism” to ensure Buddhist content was suitable for “contemporary social development.”

From August 10 to 16, the Gansu provincial UFWD held what it described as the first round of training for Gansu Province’s main Islamic clerics and the directors of temple management committees at the Lanzhou Islamic Institute. A UFWD press release stated the training was intended to direct the Sinicization of Islam, promote the statement of CCP principles, *Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*, and “increase political literacy, all while highlighting policies and regulations, history and culture, and national and provincial conditions through the lens of patriotic education.”

In November, *National Public Radio* (NPR) reported that an Islamic scholar in the northwestern part of the country said of Muslim community leaders, “There are no imams who dare to speak out. You can renounce your state-given imam certification and leave the mosque in order to speak out – but then you can be sure you will be constantly monitored.”

On October 13, the state-owned *China National Daily News* reported the Hubei Provincial Islamic Association released an outline for implementing the “five-year plan for Hubei Province to adhere to the Sinicization of Islam in China (2018-2022).” According to the article, measures to implement the plan included “strengthening political identity,” studying the works of Xi Jinping, studying the Regulations on Religious Affairs, and guiding imams to interpret the scriptures in accordance with “Chinese traditional culture and the core values of socialism.”

China News Service reported that on November 28, the 10th National Congress of the Chinese Taoist Association was held in Jurong, Jiangsu Province. In addition to passing a code of conduct for Taoist teachers, the congress elected Li Guangfu as the new Taoist Association chairman. Li stated that Taoism should “adhere to the guidance of *Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era*” and “adhere to the Sinicization of Taoism.”

Media reported in September that Catholics in the country protested the distorted retelling of a Bible story in a textbook the government-run University of Electronic Science and Technology Press published to teach “professional ethics and law” in secondary vocational schools. In the original biblical story from the Gospel of John, Jesus forgave the sins of a woman who committed adultery and prevented a crowd from stoning her to death. In the textbook, Jesus disperses the crowd, but he says to the woman, “I, too, am a sinner. But if the law could only be executed by men without blemish, the law would be dead,” and he then proceeds to stone her to death himself. According to *UCA News*, Catholic critics said the authors of the textbook “want to prove that the rule of law is supreme in China and such respect for law is essential for a smooth transfer to socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

Sources told media that authorities in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in north-central China, home to a majority of Hui Muslims, prevented public calls to prayer and banned sales of the Quran. Authorities also prohibited news broadcasts from showing images of pedestrians wearing skull caps or veils.

During the year, authorities reportedly pressured churches to display banners with messages of political ideology, recite the national anthem before singing Christian hymns, and engage in other acts demonstrating loyalty to the CCP over the church. In a press release on October 1, the anniversary of the founding of the PRC, Pastor Wang Qingwen, senior pastor of Jinghe New City, Shaanxi Province, called on six Christian churches in the city to “unswervingly adhere to the three-self patriotic principle of teaching and strive to promote the theological construction of the Sinicization of Christianity.” In the press release, Wang urged churches to

continue to adhere to the guidance of *Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*, and to “hold high the banner of patriotism.”

In December, the *Jerusalem Post* reported there were approximately 100 practicing Jews among the 1,000 individuals with Jewish ancestry in Kaifeng, Henan Province. Lacking access to the Torah, they used Christian Bibles containing the Old Testament. Members of the community said they worried about government crackdowns on religion and had to celebrate Hanukkah and hold other gatherings in secret. One community member said, “Every time we celebrate, we are scared.”

In December, *Bitter Winter* reported that authorities placed pastors of house churches and dissident Catholic priests under arrest to make sure they would not lead Christmas celebrations in churches or private homes. According to the publication, in Xiamen, Fujian Province, police stopped a group of Christians from singing Christmas songs at a mall, even though they had been invited to perform there. Authorities fined a Christian in Lushan County, Henan Province, RMB 160,000 (\$24,500) for gathering people to pray and sing Christmas songs. The NGO Human Rights Defenders reported there was pressure on schools across the country to teach children that Christmas should not be celebrated and that gifts should not be exchanged. According to the NGO, the government gave permission for “spontaneous” street demonstrations by people carrying banners reading “Christmas, Get out of China.”

The government labeled several religious groups as “cults” (*xie jiao* – literally “heterodox teachings”), including the CAG, the Shouters, the Association of Disciples, and the All Sphere Church. The government also continued to ban certain groups, such as Falun Gong, which it classified as an illegal organization. In July, *Bitter Winter* reported that several provinces had introduced measures that encouraged individuals to report on members of what it called “cults,” which carried a penalty of between three and seven years’ imprisonment. According to the CAG’s annual report, authorities harassed and threatened with imprisonment more than 8,400 Church members across the country who refused to sign statements renouncing their faith. In Shandong Province, those who reported on suspected “cult” members could receive up to a RMB 2,500 (\$380) award, while Hainan Province offered awards up to RMB 100,000 (\$15,300). Guangdong Province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and Nanjing City introduced similar measures. Actions by cults to be reported included using the internet to produce or disseminate religious materials; producing or disseminating religious leaflets, pictures, slogans, newspapers, and other publications; and hanging

religious banners and posters in public places. Sources told *Bitter Winter* the campaign against xie jiao was ubiquitous throughout the country. *Bitter Winter* posted photographs of a park in Yuchen County, Shangqiu City, Henan Province, that contained multiple large red banners with anti-xie jiao messages.

The government reportedly discriminated in employment against members of religious groups it labeled as cults and prevented government employees from participating in religious activities. *Faluninfo.net* reported that in June, a police supervisor in Yuzhou City, Henan Province, fired Falun Gong practitioner Zha Zhuolin from the force for refusing to write a statement denouncing the group. According to Zha, the supervisor, Xu Wang, said, “The first rule for a police officer is to be loyal to the [Chinese Communist] Party.”

Media reported that in Guangzhou, pandemic-control volunteers delivered anti-xie jiao brochures, along with facemasks and hand sanitizer, to residents at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, then broadcast anticult propaganda when an industrial park reopened in April.

According to media, police and local religious affairs bureau officials raided the Dongguan Branch of Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church on the evening of August 21 when more than 10 adherents were holding a Bible study session. Police accused the attendees of “spreading heterodox teachings” and detained three individuals. Two were released shortly, but the minister, Yang Jun, was detained until the next day on a fraud charge.

According to *Bitter Winter*, the government responded to protests against school reform in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region by blaming the unrest on banned religious groups, such as Falun Gong, or groups it labeled cults, such as the CAG. On August 28, the region’s Anticult Association launched “Prevention of Xie Jiao Propaganda Month.” Activities during the month included holding events, distributing brochures, and teaching “all ethnic groups in Inner Mongolia to guard against xie jiao.”

In October, CSW reported that some ethnic minority villages had established “village rules” to allow villagers to isolate and target Christians. According to CSW, in September, village authorities in Huang Fei Village, Yingjiang County, Yunnan Province, issued a notice stating that the traditional faith of the Dai community was Buddhism and that Christianity was an “evil cult.” The notice announced that anyone who violated the rules of the village “by believing in Jesus Christ and other sects” would have to pay a financial penalty to the community.

CSW stated that individuals on social media reported the Li community in Hainan Province had also imposed a financial penalty on persons believing in Christianity.

From January to June or July, the government closed venues throughout the country, including religious venues, and prohibited mass gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Bitter Winter* reported, however, that authorities allowed Taoist temples displaying Mao Zedong images to stay open throughout the lockdown. Sources told *Bitter Winter* that people worshiped at the Arhat Temple in Zhumadian City, Henan Province, throughout the lockdown because it had a Mao Zedong wall painting. The director of the Chinese National Ancestors' Temple in Shanqui City, Henan Province, said authorities allowed his temple to remain open during the pandemic because it had a Mao Zedong statue.

Media reported authorities tried to stop many religious groups congregating or holding services online during the COVID-19 lockdown. On February 23, Shandong Province's two state-run Christian organizations, the TSPM and the Chinese Christian Council, issued a notice prohibiting live streaming of religious services. A former TSPM pastor from Jiangxi Province told *Bitter Winter* that in early February, police shut down a chatroom he was using for a religious gathering. The ICC reported that on August 11, the local religious affairs bureau in Yunnan Province fined Zhang Wenli of the Chinese Christian Fellowship of Righteousness RMB 20,000 (\$3,100) for conducting unauthorized online Bible study. A TSPM pastor in Binzhou City, Shandong Province, told *Bitter Winter* in April that the government blocked the link he shared with his congregation on WeChat, a Chinese social media application. A house church director in Qingdao City, Shandong Province, live-streamed a church service on YY, a video-based social network, but the service was suspended less than half an hour into the broadcast. An imam in Shenyang City, Liaoning Province, reported that shortly after he discussed Islamic festivals on a social media platform, police blocked his account. A local government official in Liaoning Province was summoned by his superiors in March for attending an online service of a South Korean church. They forced him to uninstall the app that allowed him to join the service.

In June, *AsiaNews.it* reported that although the government had begun allowing churches to reopen, the bureaucratic process and conditions for reopening made doing so difficult. A priest in central China said these conditions included getting permission to reopen from the village, city, and provincial governments and meeting strict sanitation requirements. The priest said, "Religion does not seem to belong to us; it belongs to the [Chinese Communist] Party." The *Catholic News Service* reported authorities in Zhejiang Province issued a notice on May 29 stating

that priests were required to “preach on patriotism” as a condition for resuming in-person services. *Bitter Winter* reported in June that authorities in Zhejiang Province required churches to praise the government’s efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and to pray for “national economic and social development,” “attainment of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” and “promotion and realization of human destiny community,” all of which were President Xi Jinping’s political slogans.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in July, before the government had begun to lift lockdown restrictions and reopen religious venues in Nanyang City, Henan Province, the city’s religious affairs bureau ordered several folk religion temples to remove religious books and incense burners. Government authorities inspected the Taoist Jade Emperor Temple three times in August. As a condition for reopening the venue, officials ordered the temple to burn scriptures and expel a nun who lived on the premises. The temple remained closed, however, even after meeting these conditions.

In December, *Bitter Winter* reported that authorities, citing the COVID-19 pandemic, took measures to stop Christians from gathering for Christmas celebrations, although it allowed some musical, cultural, and political events to take place. On Christmas Day, riot police blocked the entrance to the Catholic Cathedral of the Savior in Beijing (also known as the Xishiku Church), saying religious gatherings were cancelled due to the pandemic. A large Christmas tree was used to block the entrance to St. Joseph’s Church in Beijing, and signs were also posted there saying gatherings were cancelled due to COVID-19.

According to *Bitter Winter*, officials placed arbitrary restrictions on Catholic churches affiliated with the CCPA, closed facilities, and merged others without the congregations’ consent. Government officials in Linyi used a point system to determine whether a congregation should be merged, considering such factors as whether the congregation had more than 10 members or the facility was equipped with a blackboard, audio system, desks, and chairs.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on January 10, the local religious affairs bureau and the security bureau ordered Father Liu Jiangdong, a Catholic priest from the Church of the Sacred Heart in Zhengzhou City, Henan Province, to leave the Zhengzhou Diocese, which was affiliated with the CCPA. A source told *Bitter Winter* that government authorities had previously accused Liu of financial improprieties, suspended his priesthood certificate, and imprisoned him from October 2018 to December 2019. The source said Liu had in fact been imprisoned

because he opposed removal of the cross from atop his church, formed a Catholic youth group, and allowed minors to attend religious services. A member of his congregation said that since Liu's release, authorities had surveilled him, monitored his telephone calls, and locked him out of his residence. A churchgoer said authorities threatened to fine members of Liu's former congregation up to RMB 200,000 (\$30,600) if they sheltered him or invited him to hold Mass in their homes.

Media and human rights organizations reported that SARA issued a new requirement in October that only the IAC was permitted to organize Muslims' pilgrimage trips. The new regulations stated that those who applied to join the Hajj must be "patriotic, law-abiding, and have good conduct," have never before participated in the Hajj, and be in sound physical and mental health. They also had to be able to completely pay the costs associated with going on the Hajj and must oppose religious extremism. The new administrative measure was reportedly intended to "preserve religious freedom and the continued Sinicization of religion in the PRC."

According to *Bitter Winter*, the municipal government of a city in Zhejiang Province issued a document in April that required authorities to increase "counterterrorism and stability maintenance measures" during Ramadan. The document instructed police to intensify surveillance of local Hui and other Muslims, especially during Friday prayers, the daily breaking of the fast, and other important Ramadan activities. It also instructed police to surveil ethnic minority visitors from Xinjiang by checking their documents and luggage, determining their whereabouts while in the city, and acquiring other information.

NPR reported in November that in the spring, police detained 14 men in Yiwu City, Central Zhejiang Province, because they had purchased Islamic books. They were subjected to weeks of questioning about their political views and online correspondence with Muslim intellectuals and Chinese Muslims overseas. According to a friend of one of the men detained, "The police had printed out the text records everyone had on WeChat with writers and publishers...Now the police say every time they travel, they have to report to [the police] beforehand when they are leaving and where they are going."

Sources reported churches attended by foreigners continued to receive heavy scrutiny, as authorities forced them to require passport checks and registration for members to prevent Chinese citizens from attending "foreigner" services.

Bitter Winter reported that in April, authorities placed surveillance equipment, including facial recognition cameras, in at least 40 religious venues in Zhongwei City, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Authorities also installed surveillance cameras in all Protestant and Catholic churches in Jinxiang County, Jinin City, Shandong Province. A deacon at one TSPM Church in Henan Province, where authorities had installed a surveillance camera in December 2019, said, “[Government officials] always know how many congregation members are in the church and what is said during sermons. We have to speak with caution at any time. If we disobey the government, our church will be shut down.” In March and April, authorities in a city in Zhejiang Province placed surveillance cameras outside the entrances of homes of seven members of the CAG. One church member reported she was told this was done for “theft prevention.”

In October, *Bitter Winter* reported that authorities in Jiangxi Province’s Poyang County, which has a large population of Christians, issued orders to install RMB one million (\$153,000) in facial recognition cameras in all state-approved places of worship. According to the report, authorities installed approximately 200 cameras in more than 50 TSPM churches from July to September, and nearly 50 in 16 Buddhist and Taoist temples. A police officer stated the cameras were installed to monitor church members and sermons.

A Catholic source in the northeast part of the country told *AsiaNews.it* in July that government staff attended Sunday services to monitor activities and ensure children who were 18 or younger did not attend. The Grand Mosque in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, displayed signs prohibiting children who were 18 and younger from participating in religious activity. According to one worshipper at the mosque, authorities said this was to allow young people to focus on their secular education.

Minghui reported that police in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, intensely surveilled Falun Gong practitioner Ma Zhenyu, who had been released from Suzhou Prison on September 19 after completing his three-year sentence. While monitoring Ma, authorities intimidated his mother and other practitioners.

The Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) reported in September that authorities in Sanya City, in the island province of Hainan, took measures against the predominantly Muslim Utsul ethnic minority, which comprised approximately 10,000 members. They banned girls from wearing traditional dress, including hijabs and long skirts, in school. An Utsul community worker said the ban prompted fierce protests by students and their families and that it was

temporarily lifted after hundreds of students wore hijabs in public and boycotted classes. Photographs and videos circulated on social media showed girls wearing hijabs and reading from textbooks outside their primary school while surrounded by police officers. According to the SCMP, Utsuls working in government or CCP bodies were told the hijab was “disorderly.” The restrictions followed a 2019 government-issued document, *Working Document Regarding the Strengthening of Overall Governance over Huixin and Huihui Neighborhoods*, which referred to the only two predominantly Utsul neighborhoods on the island. The document called for the demolition of mosques displaying “Arabic” features, the removal of shop signs saying in Chinese characters the words “Islamic” or “Halal,” and increased surveillance over the Utsul population.

According to *Bitter Winter*, from March to May, Islamic symbols and writings in Arabic were painted over or covered on signboards of 70 Hui-run businesses in Chuxiong, the capital of the Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province. According to some shop owners, officials from various state institutions, among them the public security bureau, urban management, and religious affairs bureaus, ordered them to remove the symbols from their signboards or replace them entirely. Otherwise, their business licenses would be revoked. A baker from the prefecture’s Lufeng County said that from December to May, Islamic symbols were removed from the signboards of 62 halal shops in the county. “The state is out of control, like during the Cultural Revolution...Hui men are not allowed to wear white caps and women, headscarves. Hui Muslims will disappear in two or three generations.” Local officials told shop owners that the order came from the central government and that the signboard-removal campaign was nationwide. According to one local resident in Songming County, Kunming Province, signboards on 176 Hui businesses were “Sinicized” between December 2019 and May. A restaurant owner said, “If we Hui people tried to argue with officials, they would call us rioters and arrest us on any trumped-up charge.”

The SCMP reported in September that new foreign teachers coming to the country had to attend a mandatory 20-hour training course of what the news source characterized as “political indoctrination covering China’s development, laws, professional ethics, and education policies.” According to the newspaper, the Hainan provincial public security bureau offered rewards up to RMB 100,000 (\$15,300) for tips on foreigners who “engaged in religious activities without permission,” including teaching religion and evangelizing. One teacher said authorities installed a surveillance camera in his classroom to monitor his lessons.

The SCMP reported in September that many foreign missionaries were not allowed to return to the country after it partially lifted COVID-19 travel restrictions for foreign national residents. According to the Voice of America (VOA), in November, the Ministry of Justice published draft regulations requiring foreign worshippers wanting to host religious activities to apply for a permit and to demonstrate their groups were “friendly to China” in their country of origin. The regulations would ban Chinese citizens from attending any services organized by foreigners and would require those organizing religious activities to provide the names, nationalities, and visa status of those who would attend as well as a detailed program of the service, including which texts would be read, before authorities would grant permission. According to VOA, authorities said the new regulations were intended to stop foreigners from spreading “religious extremism” or using religion “to undermine China’s national and ethnic unity.” The draft regulation specified it would also apply to individuals from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau.

Authorities continued to restrict the printing and distribution of the Bible, Quran, and other religious literature. The government continued to allow some foreign educational institutions to provide religious materials in Chinese, which were used by both registered and unregistered religious groups. During the year, however, many provinces conducted campaigns cracking down on “illegal religious publications” from unofficial distribution channels. The government-affiliated news outlet *Meipian.com* reported that in January, law enforcement officers inspected publication wholesale and retail locations, farmer’s markets, and “urban-rural junctions within their jurisdictions” looking for “illegal religious publications and illegal training courses of a religious nature.” The ICC reported that on March 24, the Zhongshan No. 1 District People’s Procuratorate in Guangdong Province charged Christians Liang Rurui and Zhu Guoqing with conducting illegal business operations that “seriously disrupted market order.” According to the ICC, authorities in Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province, had arrested them in November and December 2019, respectively, for printing 7,000 children’s Bibles. According to the human rights blog *Weiquanwang* (Rights Protection Network), on July 2, authorities arrested four Christians from the Life Tree Culture Communications Co., Ltd. – Fu Xuanjuan, Deng Tianyong, Han Li, and Feng Qunhao – on charges of “illegal business operations” for selling electronic audio Bible players, small handheld devices that allow the user to listen to (as opposed to read) Biblical text. According to *Weiquanwang*, the company had been legally established in 2011 in Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province.

Bitter Winter reported that on September 14, the education and environmental protection bureaus in Luoyang City, Henan Province, inspected a local printing

house to determine whether it was publishing banned religious materials. The printing house manager said, “They checked my storehouse, scrutinized all records, and even looked at paper sheets on the floor, to see if they have prohibited content. If any such content is found, I’ll be fined, or worse, my business will be closed.” According to *Bitter Winter*, similar bans applied to photocopying businesses. One photocopy employee said, “I was told to report anyone who comes to copy religious materials.” Another said, “If we are not sure if a text is religious, we must keep its copy and report it to authorities.”

The ICC reported in September that the People’s Court of Linhai City in Zhejiang Province sentenced online Christian bookseller Chen Yu to seven years in prison and fined him for “illegal business operations,” allegedly for selling unapproved religious publications. Authorities first detained him in September 2019.

In July, *Bitter Winter* reported government restrictions on printing, copying, and mailing nonapproved Buddhist literature increased throughout the country. A source in Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, said authorities confiscated thousands of Buddhist books and compact discs from at least 20 stores in the region. One store owner said authorities confiscated more than 2,000 Buddhist books and materials from the store. Another shop owner said, “In the past, people would send me books and materials they printed themselves to distribute them for free, but nobody dares to do this now.” In March, police in Zhejiang Province forbade printing houses from fulfilling orders from venues not approved by the government. In June, authorities in Hulunbuir City, Inner Mongolia, banned copy centers from printing Buddhist and Christian materials. One copy shop owner said, “Government officials come every day to inspect computers and copy machines. If they discover that religious materials have been copied, I could be held legally accountable.”

Bitter Winter reported that in early September, police arrested a person in Jinan City, Shandong Province, who attempted to mail compact discs of sermons by Shenpo Sodargye, a Tibetan Buddhist master, to the more than 100 individuals in Weihai City, Shandong Province, who had ordered them online. The names of the buyers were forwarded to local Weihai police, who summoned them for questioning.

According to *Bitter Winter*, during a meeting on Buddhism organized on July 31 by the Fuzhou City Religious Affairs Bureau in Jiangxi Province, authorities banned all temples in the city from keeping religious books from Hong Kong and Taiwan in the name of “preventing foreign infiltration.” The director of a Buddhist

temple said, “The government controls all books on Buddhism; nothing that does not comply with the CCP ideology is allowed and is considered illegal. Only religious materials promoting the Party are permitted to be circulated.”

According to *Bitter Winter*, local authorities throughout the country continued to ban the sale and display of religious couplets (banners with poetry) traditionally displayed during Chinese New Year. Local authorities threatened to fine or imprison anyone caught selling them. One merchant in Luhe County, Guangdong Province, said, “We don’t carry religious couplets. Even if we had them, we wouldn’t dare sell them.” On January 19, three officials from Poyang County, Jiangxi Province, entered a TSPM church, took photos, and registered the personal information of those in the church. The officials distributed couplets praising the CCP and demanded they be posted. A government employee in Xinmi City, Henan Province, told *Bitter Winter* that in early March, municipal authorities ordered all town and township governments to conduct door-to-door inspections of households and shops looking for religious couplets. Inspectors were instructed to remove the couplets and cooperate with the public security bureau to ascertain where they had been produced. One shopkeeper said authorities threatened to close his business if he posted Christian couplets again.

Christian organizations seeking to use social media and smartphone apps to distribute Christian materials reported the government increased censorship of these materials. According to VOA, in October, ChinaAid stated that online censors removed the words “Christ” (*jidu*), “Jesus” (*Yesu*), and “Bible” (*shengjing*) from social media posts and replaced them with the initials “JD,” “YS,” and “SJ.” The word Christianity was replaced with “JD religion.” According to some scholars, Christians were replacing the words in texts themselves to avoid online censors who might block the posts.

In May, *Bitter Winter* reported authorities continued to dismantle Islamic architectural features and remove Islamic symbols from mosques throughout the country, and it published photographs from multiple locations showing construction workers taking down domes and minarets as well as before-and-after pictures. In Weizhou City, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, many of the more than 4,000 mosques in the city were remodeled or destroyed between 2018 and February 2020 as part of the government’s “de-Arabization and de-Saudization” campaign. Before-and-after photographs of the Weizhou Grand Mosque and other mosques showed that Chinese-style pagodas had replaced minarets and crescent moon symbols had been removed.

In late March, authorities removed the domes and star-and-crescent symbols from 17 mosques in Pingliang City, Gansu Province. A local imam said that before the removals, authorities forced imams to study “de-Arabization and de-Saudization policies as well as the promotion of religion ‘Sinicization.’” The imam said authorities threatened to revoke the credentials of imams who did not cooperate with removal of the symbols. Many mosques visible from major highways in Qinghai Province in September had replaced traditional Islamic minarets with more Chinese-looking structures or appeared to be in the process of doing so. Mosques with more traditional Han Chinese architecture, such as the Grand Mosque in Xining, Qinghai Province, remained unchanged and were highlighted in public tours by imams and other mosque representatives.

According to *Bitter Winter*, in January, authorities removed domes and star-and-crescent symbols from at least 10 mosques in Pingdingshan City, Henan Province. On March 18, amid the coronavirus lockdown, government-hired workers remodeled the roof of the Gongmazhuang Mosque in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, to make it look “more Chinese.” Authorities had removed domes and star-and-crescent symbols from the mosque in November 2019. In late March, the government ordered the removal of domes and star-and-crescent symbols from a mosque in Xiaoma Village, Henan Province. In mid-November, authorities removed the dome and star-and-crescent symbols from a mosque in Qinghua Town, Henan Province, and hung banners reading, “Resolutely resist religious infiltration and combat religious extremism” at the mosque’s entrance. In Maying Village, Henan Province, after the government ordered the removal of symbols from the local mosque, one resident said, “We have to listen to what Xi Jinping says and what state policies indicate. No one dares to challenge the state.”

In December, *Bitter Winter* published before-and-after photographs of numerous churches in multiple provinces, including churches affiliated with the TSPM, that showed that exterior crosses had been removed and facades altered to eliminate Western-style features that identified them as Christian worship venues. Authorities removed crosses from at least 900 TSPM churches in Anhui Province between January and July. In April, *UCA News* reported the removal of crosses from several Catholic churches, including from Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Anhui Diocese on April 18. A priest said dioceses normally cooperated with authorities on the removal of crosses in the hopes that they would not demolish the entire building. On June 6, all crosses, other religious symbols, and pews were removed from the Wangdangjia village church in Linyi County. The “Catholic Church” signboard above its entrance was covered with wooden boards.

According to *Bitter Winter*, between March 2019 and January 2020, authorities removed crosses from approximately 70 Christian churches, including TSPM churches, in Linyi City, Shandong Province. Authorities said the crosses were “too close to the national highway,” “too tall,” or might seem “unpleasant” to visiting provincial government superiors. They threatened to demolish the buildings if the crosses remained. On January 8, the provincial government ordered a TSPM Church near the high-speed rail line in Lanshan District, Shandong Province, to remove its exterior cross because it was “too eye-catching.” The Chinese characters for “love” and “Christian Church” were also removed. Authorities removed crosses from at least 900 TSPM Churches in Anhui Province between January and July.

According to *Bitter Winter*, officials in Fuzhou City, Fujian Province, pressured the abbot of the Buddhist Yuantong Temple to remove an 11-meter (36-foot)-high statue of Guanyin for being “too tall.” According to sources, authorities threatened to close the temple if the abbot did not comply. On March 9, workers dismantled the statue, and photographs accompanying the *Bitter Winter* article showed it lying in pieces on the ground.

Media reported authorities continued to destroy religious sites, including those affiliated with the TSPM and CCPA. Throughout the year, *Bitter Winter* published numerous before-and-after photographs showing churches, temples, and other religious structures that had been reduced in whole or in part to rubble. *Bitter Winter* reported that on March 10, authorities demolished a TSPM Church in Shangqiu, Henan Province. A source told *Bitter Winter* that on March 10 at 4:00 a.m., more than 200 government personnel and police came to demolish a TSPM Church in Xiazhuang Village, Shangqiu City, Henan Province. According to the source, police kicked in the door and forcibly removed a member of the congregation who was guarding the church, fracturing two of his ribs. The contents of the church were buried under the rubble.

On April 20, the government of Shangrao County in Shangrao City, Jiangxi Prefecture, demolished a TSPM Church, saying the structure was “unlicensed and dilapidated.” Sources said local officials told the congregation higher-level officials had ordered the demolition because “the government doesn’t allow belief in Jesus.” A church member told *Bitter Winter* the structure was in fact sound and was also registered with the local religious affairs bureau. The church member said that, contrary to law, authorities did not compensate the congregation for destroying the building. Accompanying the article were photographs showing the church before demolition and a pile of rubble following the demolition. According

to another church member, following the demolition, congregants began practicing separately at home but had to be cautious. “The government arrests anyone in unauthorized religious gatherings. When they find two or three of us meeting, they can charge us with any crime at will, saying we are against the CCP.”

The ICC reported that on September 12, authorities in the town of Xiezhou in Yanhu District, Yucheng City, Shangxi Province, demolished the tombstones of more than 20 Swedish missionaries who had performed missionary work in the country in the early 1900s. They threatened to arrest anyone who photographed or videotaped the incident. Authorities planted vegetation over the gravesites.

Local sources reported authorities continued to close Christian venues or repurpose them into secular spaces. According to *Bitter Winter*, in April, the government of Qingshui Township in Shangrao City, Jiangxi Province, closed a TSPM Church for being “unlicensed and too eye-catching.” Officials destroyed religious symbols inside the church and posted a closure notice at the entrance. In May, officials converted the church into an activity center for the elderly, placing a ping-pong table, Chinese chess boards, and secular books inside.

Bitter Winter reported that on January 1, six local government officials and police officers raided a Catholic nursing home in Fuzhou City, Jiangxi Province. They confiscated 30 religious publications, a cross, and other religious symbols, sculptures, and paintings. A photograph accompanying the article showed that a mural of Jesus that had been displayed behind the altar was replaced with a landscape painting and an outdoor sculpture of Jesus was covered with a shed. Authorities pressured the church’s priest to sign an application to join the CCPA, but he refused. According to *Bitter Winter*, authorities also targeted the Benevolence Home, a nursing home operated by nuns in Saiqi Village, Fujian Province. On January 12, nearly 50 local government officials and police officers raided the nursing home where more than 30 persons lived, some of whom were from impoverished households or disabled. Authorities forced the elderly residents out and cut off the building’s electricity and water supply.

In July, a Catholic source in southeast China told *AsiaNews.it* that the local government denied permits to construct new Catholic churches and halted construction that was already underway. In January, *AsiaNews.it* reported that in at least five parishes in Mindong Diocese, Fujian Province, including Fuan, Saiqi, and Suanfeng, authorities cut off power and water to prevent churches from being used, citing “fire safety” measures.

Bitter Winter reported that government and law enforcement personnel destroyed the Great Hall of Strength, a Buddhist temple in Handan City, Hubei Province, on March 6. A local Buddhist said authorities demolished it because it “lacked a religious-activity venue-registration certificate.” The temple director said he was never approached about obtaining such a certificate. The local Buddhist said, “The government just wanted to demolish the temple...People cannot argue with authorities; they will accuse us of breaking the law as they please.”

According to *Bitter Winter*, authorities demolished the Buddhist Phoenix Temple in Qitang Town, Chongqing Municipality, on January 3. In March, authorities ordered eight Buddhist temples in Yongchuan District, Chongqing Municipality, to close and brick up their entrances, rendering the buildings unusable. Authorities demolished the Longhua Temple in Ma’anshan City, Anhui Province, on April 1.

Sources told *Bitter Winter* that on May 18, more than 20 officials and police in Shucheng County, Anhui Province, destroyed a Buddhist temple that authorities had declared “a dilapidated building.” When a protester attempted to film the scene, police officers pressed her to the ground and hit her in the collarbone until she lost consciousness. Police then destroyed her mobile phone.

Bitter Winter reported several cases of authorities destroying folk religion sites throughout the country. From April 14 to 19, authorities demolished three buildings in the Yangfu Temple in Taizhou, Zhejiang Province. On April 22, authorities demolished 18 statues in two folk religion temples in Linzhou, Henan Province. From April to June, authorities demolished 85 small folk religion temples in Handan, Hebei Province. On May 1, authorities demolished an ancestral hall in Ganzhou, Jiangxi Province.

Bitter Winter reported that on July 2 in Dangtu County, Ma’anshan City, Anhui Prefecture, more than 100 police officers destroyed a village folk temple. One villager said police first cordoned off the area to prevent anyone from approaching. The witness said, “They then smashed the lock to get inside and demolished the temple after dragging out the eight elderly believers protecting it.” The online magazine posted a video on social media that showed a large number of police standing guard while a bulldozer knocked down the structure.

Bitter Winter reported in July that authorities had not yet reopened the Cao’an Manichean temple in Quanzhou, Fujian Province, which had been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Police were seen periodically patrolling the temple.

Before its closure, authorities ordered the construction of a flagpole for the national flag and placed government propaganda slogans inside the temple.

Religious education for minors remained banned, but enforcement and implementation of the prohibition varied widely across and within regions.

AsiaNews.it reported authorities sent a directive to Xilinhaote Middle School Number 6 in Xilinhaote, Inner Mongolia dated March 25 forbidding students from taking part in religious activities in or outside of school. The directive reportedly prohibited parents from teaching their children about religion and religious organizations from operating in schools. Students and teachers found disobeying the restrictions faced expulsion and dismissal.

In November, *Bitter Winter* reported that a fifth-grade teacher in a Liaoning Province primary school told the online magazine any mention of religious holidays had been purged from English-language textbooks. The teacher said a text originally entitled “Easter Party” had been replaced with “English Party” and descriptive passages such as “You will meet the Easter Bunny” with “You will meet Robin the Robot.”

In January, *AsiaNews.it*, reported the government had closed down several Tibetan Buddhist centers in Sichuan Province because, authorities said, “Illegal activities” were carried out in the centers. The NGO International Campaign for Tibet said the government’s actual purpose was to limit the influence of Khenpo Sodargye, a Buddhist monk who founded these centers. The centers were associated with the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute, from which authorities had expelled more than 15,000 Buddhist monks and nuns since 2016 and destroyed significant portions of the property.

Individuals seeking to enroll at an official seminary or other institution of religious learning continued to be required to obtain the support of the corresponding official state-sanctioned religious association. The government continued to require students to demonstrate “political reliability,” and political issues were included in examinations of graduates from religious schools. Both registered and unregistered religious groups reported a shortage of trained clergy due in part to government controls on admission to seminaries.

Religious groups reported state-sanctioned religious associations continued to be subject to CCP interference in matters of doctrine, theology, and religious practice.

The associations also closely monitored and sometimes blocked the ability of religious leaders to meet freely with foreigners.

National regulations required Muslim clerics to meet the following requirements: “Uphold the leadership of the CCP; love Islam and serve Muslims; possess a degree in or receive formal training in Islamic scriptural education; have graduated from junior high school or above, in addition to attaining competency in Arabic; and be at least 22-years-old.” According to sources, imams had to pass an exam testing their ideological knowledge to renew their license each year.

The government and the Holy See remained without formal diplomatic relations and the Holy See had no official representative to the country. On October 22, the Holy See and the PRC announced they had agreed to extend a provisional agreement on the appointment of bishops for another two years. The two parties signed the original agreement in 2018. The precise terms of the agreement were not made public, but according to *Catholic News Agency (CNA)* and *Vatican News*, it was a “pastoral” effort to help unify members of the underground Catholic Church in China – which had remained in communion with the Holy See – with Catholics belonging to the CCPA. *Vatican News* stated the agreement “does not directly concern diplomatic relations between the Holy See and China, nor the legal status of the Chinese Catholic Church or relations between the clergy and the authorities of the country. The Provisional Agreement concerns exclusively the process of nomination of bishops...” Following the signing of the agreement, seven CCPA-affiliated bishops appointed without papal mandate were brought into full communion with the Holy See; an eighth bishop was posthumously recognized. *AsiaNews.it* reported that on November 23, Reverend Thomas Chen Tianhao became the third new bishop without a prior affiliation with the CCPA to be ordained under the agreement, assuming the position of Bishop of Qingdao in Qingdao City, Shandong Province. *UCA News* reported that on December 22, a fourth bishop, Peter Liu Genzhu, was ordained bishop of Hongdong in Linfen City, Shanxi Province.

Commentators, human rights groups, and some Catholic leaders criticized the agreement as doing little to protect freedom of religion or belief for Catholics in China. On November 17, the *America Jesuit Review* published an article discussing 30 bishops who belonged to the underground Catholic Church and refused to join the CCPA. “The situation of these bishops has become more difficult since the agreement as, contrary to what Rome expected, Chinese authorities have used it to pressure underground bishops and priests to submit to the state’s religious policies.” Retired Cardinal Joseph Zen of Hong Kong in his

online blog of October 7 said the agreement was lopsided, with the CCP nominating bishops for the Pope to approve, and that persecution of the underground Catholic Church had increased since 2018.

Catholic clergy and laypersons told media the situation of both registered and unregistered Catholic communities worsened during the year. A number of Catholic churches and bishops appointed by the Pope remained unable or unwilling to register with the CCPA. According to *Bitter Winter*, the Catholic Diocese of Mindong in Fujian Province suffered severe persecution from the CCP after most of its priests refused to join the CCPA. Authorities closed five parishes in January. *Bitter Winter* reported multiple instances of authorities pressuring Catholic leaders to join the CCPA and, in some cases, arresting and physically abusing Catholic leaders who refused. According to *Bitter Winter*, during the first half of the year, the CCPA attempted to force 57 unregistered Catholic priests from the Mindong Diocese to join the organization. As of June, 25 had complied, three had resigned in protest, and one was driven out of the diocese. Local authorities continued to pressure the remaining 28 priests to join.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on April 2, officials detained Father Huang Jintong, a priest from the Mindong Diocese's parish in Saiqi Village in Fuan City, Fujian Province. Police deprived the priest of sleep for four days before he signed a document saying he would join the CCPA. According to *AsiaNews.it*, on September 1, the local religious affairs bureau detained another priest of the Mindong Diocese, Father Liu Maochun, for at least 17 days for refusing to join the CCPA.

Sources told *Reuters News Agency* that in May, two Catholic nuns serving at the Holy See's Study Mission to China in Kowloon (Hong Kong) were arrested by mainland authorities when they traveled to Hebei Province to visit their families. The nuns were detained in Hebei for three weeks before being released into house arrest without being charged. They remained under house arrest as of year's end, and their families' homes were under surveillance. The nuns were reportedly allowed to attend Mass but were not permitted to leave mainland China.

In July, *AsiaNews.it* reported that a priest said authorities often gathered priests in order to "brainwash" them, congregation members were no longer able to host Mass in their homes, and bishops of underground dioceses were increasingly arrested since the 2018 signing of the provisional agreement between the Holy See and China. One lay member said there were more restrictions on the number of individuals allowed to attend religious gatherings, children younger than 18 were

forbidden from entering the church, and government authorities often sat in on church meetings to surveil the church.

CNA reported that on October 4, Vincenzo Guo Xijin, the auxiliary bishop of the Mindong Diocese in Fujian Province, announced he would no longer preside over public masses or receive any tithes and said that all administrative matters associated with the diocese should be referred to Bishop Vincent Zhan Silu. In 2006, the Holy See excommunicated Zhan, a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, but in December 2018 allowed him to replace Guo as bishop of the Mindong Diocese while Guo stepped into the subordinate position. Zhan was one of seven individuals appointed without papal mandate whom the Holy See recognized as bishops under the 2018 provisional agreement. The government did not recognize Guo, who was not a member of the CCPA, in his role as auxiliary bishop. In an open letter announcing his withdrawal from public religious duties, Guo stated, "The sacraments celebrated by those who sign [a document joining the CCPA] and those who do not sign are legitimate."

In June, CNA reported that authorities detained underground Catholic bishop Cui Tai in Zhangjiakou Municipality, Hebei Province. According to *AsiaNews.it*, authorities in the past had repeatedly placed Cui under house arrest or sent him to forced-labor camps for engaging in evangelization activities without official government permission and for criticizing the CCPA. As of year's end, it was unclear whether he had been released from detention.

Sources told *Bitter Winter* the government threatened to retaliate against family members if clergy in the Mindong Diocese did not join the CCPA. Authorities forced Father Feng from Xiyin Village, Fuan City, to sign an application to join the CCPA by threatening to dismiss his younger brother and sister-in-law from public employment. After another priest refused to join, authorities confiscated the vehicle his brother used for business and shut down his nephew's travel agency.

The ICC reported in July that a member of the ERCC said authorities threatened to send the children of church members to "reeducation camps" and take adopted children away from their parents. The source said authorities had already taken four adopted children from one church family and returned them to their biological parents or found them other homes.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because the government and individuals closely link religion, culture, and ethnicity, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on religious identity.

Despite labor law provisions against discrimination in hiring based on religious belief, some employers continued to discriminate against religious believers. Religious minorities continued to report employers terminated their employment due to their current or prior religious activities. *Minghui* reported cases of Falun Gong practitioners losing their jobs due to their beliefs.

Bitter Winter reported that in June, a sanitation worker in Henan Province was fired for reading the Bible while on a work break. The director of the Environmental Sanitation Bureau fired her after publicly criticizing her earlier in the day. Thereafter, the Environmental Sanitation Bureau required that new workers show a “certificate of no faith” issued by police in the area of their permanent residence registration and stated that “one who believes in the Lord is not allowed.” A man in Shaanxi Province told *Bitter Winter* that he was required to provide a “certificate of no faith” to each of the multiple hotels he had worked at over the course of his career. A man working in the public security sector in Shandong Province said he lost his job because his father was a member of the CAG.

Discrimination against potential or current tenants based on their religious beliefs continued. Since 2017 and 2018 when articles in the 2005 Public Security Administration Punishment Law related to “suspicious activity” began to be enforced in earnest, Falun Gong practitioners reported ongoing difficulty finding landlords who would rent them apartments. Sources stated the enforcement of this law continued to move the PRC further away from informal discriminatory practices by individual landlords towards a more formalized enforcement of codified discriminatory legislation.

Sources told *Bitter Winter* that government propaganda portraying Uyghurs as radicals, extremists, and terrorists had created societal hostility towards that group. Anti-Muslim speech in social media remained widespread. *Bitter Winter* reported that in March, police in Xiamen City, Fujian Province, sent notices to many rental and real estate agencies forbidding them to rent apartments or shop spaces to Uyghurs. One property owner said police fined him RMB 500 (\$76) for renting to Uyghurs and demanded he send police identification information and photographs of all Uyghur tenants. One Uyghur man said his family had, after some difficulty, found an apartment to rent, but on the condition that the family report to a local

police station three times a week. The man said, “Three days after we signed the rental contract, police officers installed a surveillance camera at our building entrance.” One man in Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province, said owners preferred to keep their properties empty rather than to rent to Uyghurs. A Uyghur man said he had to use his friend’s bank card because local banks refused to issue him one. Uyghur grocery store and restaurant owners said constant police visits had a severe negative impact on their businesses. A Han businessman told *Bitter Winter*, “The government tries every means possible to deprive Uyghurs of their rights, prohibiting them from renting, doing business, and staying in hotels. The goal is to drive them away and cut off all their sources of survival, forcing them back to Xinjiang to be locked in ‘transformation-through-education’ camps.”

According to *Bitter Winter*, several college students stated college administrators encouraged students to report on fellow students who appeared to engage in religious activities. One Christian student in Inner Mongolia said she had been reported and that school administrators investigated her, frequently summoned her, and forced her to write self-criticism statements. A university professor who was a member of the TSPM Church was demoted from her teaching position after mentioning the Bible in class and was subsequently investigated by the State Security Bureau.

There were reports that Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and other religious minorities continued to face difficulties in finding accommodation when they traveled.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Secretary of State, Ambassador, and other senior State Department officials and embassy and consulate general representatives repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns about abuses of religious freedom. On September 30, at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See’s Symposium on Advancing and Defending Religious Freedom Through Diplomacy in Rome, Italy, the Secretary gave a speech on the restrictions of religious freedom in China. The Secretary said the CCP “has battered every religious community in China: Protestant house churches, Tibetan Buddhists, Falun Gong devotees, and more. Nor, of course, have Catholics been spared this wave of repression.” In an October speech on tolerance while visiting Indonesia, the Secretary said, “The gravest threat to the future of religious freedom is the Chinese Communist Party’s war against people of all faiths: Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Falun Gong practitioners alike.”

Embassy and consulate officials regularly sought meetings with a range of government officials managing religious affairs to obtain more information on government policies and to advocate for greater religious freedom and tolerance. Embassy and consulate officials, including the Ambassador and Consuls General, urged government officials at the central, provincial, and local levels, including those at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries, to implement stronger protections for religious freedom and to release prisoners of conscience. The Ambassador highlighted religious freedom in meetings with senior officials. The Department of State, embassy, and consulates general regularly called upon the government to release prisoners of conscience and advocated on behalf of individual cases of persons imprisoned for religious reasons.

The Ambassador, Consuls General in Chengdu (prior to its closure by the Chinese government in retaliation for the closure of PRC Consulate Houston), Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Wuhan, and other embassy and consulate general officials met with religious groups as well as academics, NGOs, members of registered and unregistered religious groups, and family members of religious prisoners to reinforce U.S. support for religious freedom. The Consul General in Chengdu (prior to its closure) met with Tibetan and Muslim leaders in Sichuan Province to emphasize support for freedom of religion or belief. Embassy and consulate general officials hosted events around religious holidays and conducted roundtable discussions with religious leaders to convey the importance of religious pluralism in society and learn about issues facing religious communities. Embassy officials met with visiting members of U.S. religious groups to discuss how these groups were engaging with local communities.

The embassy continued to amplify Department of State religious freedom initiatives directly to local audiences through postings to the embassy website and to its Weibo, WeChat, and Twitter accounts. Over the course of the year, the embassy published more than 120 messages promoting religious freedom, including videos, statements, images, and infographics. More than 250,000 social media users engaged with these social media posts, participating in online discussions with embassy staff and with each other. The embassy also highlighted the Secretary's visit to the Vatican to emphasize U.S. support on religious freedom.

The embassy also shared religious holiday greetings from the President, Secretary of State, and Ambassador. These included well wishes on the occasion of special religious days for Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Tibetan Buddhists. Millions of social media users viewed these messages, often sparking further comments, such as "Countries that respect religious freedom will be respected," "Freedom of

religion is a prerequisite for building a civil society,” and “The essence of religion is to lead people to the good. As a democratic power, the United States has guaranteed religious freedom.” For International Religious Freedom Day on October 27, the embassy published the Secretary’s message supporting respect for religious freedom as well as information describing the Chinese government’s continuing control over religion and restrictions on the activities of religious adherents. These posts on Weibo, WeChat, and Twitter social media platforms garnered more than 750,000 views and approximately 10,000 engagements.

In January, the Consulate General in Guangzhou submitted comments to the Guangdong People’s Congress and Guangdong Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission regarding the new draft of Guangdong Religious Affairs Regulations. The government stated the new regulations would “protect citizens’ freedom of religious belief, maintain religious harmony and social harmony, standardize the management of religious affairs, and improve the level of legalization of religious work.” In December, the embassy submitted comments and recommendations on the central government’s draft Rules for the Implementation of the Provisions on the Administration of Foreign Religious Activities, which proposed burdensome preapproval procedures for almost all religious activities. The draft rules also limited activities of unregistered religious groups and conflated peaceful religious practice with “terrorism.”

On May 22, the Bureau of Industry and Security of the U.S. Department of Commerce announced it would add China’s Ministry of Public Security Institute of Forensic Science and eight commercial entities to the list of entities subject to specific license requirements for export, reexport, and/or transfer in-country of specific items (the “Entity List”) for being complicit in human rights violations and abuses committed in China’s campaign of repression, mass arbitrary detention, forced labor, and high-technology surveillance against Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other members of Muslim minority groups in the XUAR. On July 20, the Bureau of Industry and Security announced it would add an additional 11 commercial entities to the list for the same reasons, bring the total number of entities added to the Entity List during the year to 20. These actions constrict the export of items subject to the Export Administration Regulations to entities that have been implicated in human rights violations and abuses in the country’s campaign targeting Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang.

On July 1, the Departments of State, Treasury, Commerce, and Homeland Security issued a business advisory to caution businesses about the economic, legal, and

reputational risks of supply chain links to entities that engage in human rights abuses, including forced labor, in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China.

On July 7, the Secretary of State announced the United States was imposing visa restrictions on PRC government and CCP officials determined to be “substantially involved in the formulation or execution of policies related to access for foreigners to Tibetan areas,” pursuant to the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018.

On July 9, the Secretary of State imposed visa restrictions on three senior CCP officials for their involvement in gross violations of human rights in Xinjiang: Chen Quanguo, the party secretary of the XUAR; Zhu Hailun, party secretary of the Xinjiang Political and Legal Committee; and Wang Mingshan, the party secretary of the Xinjiang Public Security Bureau (XPSB). They and their immediate family members became ineligible for entry into the United States. In making the announcement, the Secretary said the United States “will not stand idly by as the CCP carries out human rights abuses targeting Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang, to include forced labor, arbitrary mass detention, and forced population control, and attempts to erase their culture and Muslim faith.” Also on July 9, the Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on Chen, Zhu, Wang, and Huo Liujun, former party secretary of the XPSB, as well as the XPSB organization, pursuant to Executive Order 13818, which builds on the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. In response, the Chinese government on July 13 imposed sanctions on the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, three members of Congress, and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China.

On June 17, the President signed into law the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, authorizing the imposition of U.S. sanctions, including asset blocking and denial of visas, against Chinese officials responsible for the detention and persecution of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

On July 31, the Department of the Treasury imposed a second round of sanctions pursuant to the Executive Order on one government entity and two current or former government officials, in connection with serious rights abuses against ethnic minorities in Xinjiang: the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), Sun Jinlong, a former political commissar of the XPCC, and Peng Jiarui, the deputy party secretary and commander of the XPCC.

On December 10, the Secretary of State imposed visa restrictions on Huang Yuanxiong, chief of the Xiamen Public Security Bureau Wucun police station “for

his involvement in gross violations of human rights in Xiamen, China.” In his statement, the Secretary said, “Huang is associated with particularly severe violations of religious freedom of Falun Gong practitioners, namely his involvement in the detention and interrogation of Falun Gong practitioners for practicing their beliefs.” The action also applied to Mr. Huang’s spouse.

On May 1, June 17, September 14, and December 2, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency prohibited imports of specified merchandise, including hair products, apparel, cotton, and computer parts, produced by eight companies that operated in Xinjiang, based on information that reasonably indicated the use of prison labor and forced labor of Uyghurs and other minority groups in Xinjiang being held in internment camps.

On December 27, the President signed into law the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020. The law states in part that decisions regarding the selection, education, and veneration of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders are exclusively spiritual matters that should be made by the appropriate religious authorities.

PRC authorities consistently harassed and intimidated religious leaders to dissuade them from speaking with U.S. officials. Authorities regularly prevented members of religious communities from attending events at the embassy and consulates general, and security services questioned individuals who did attend. Authorities routinely declined to approve or postponed U.S. officials’ requests to visit religious sites and meet with religious leaders.

At the direction of the Secretary of State, U.S. government officials explored whether the PRC’s actions in Xinjiang constituted atrocities, namely crimes against humanity and genocide. The process was ongoing at year’s end.*

Since 1999, China has been designated as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. On December 2, 2020 the Secretary of State redesignated China as a CPC and identified the following sanction that accompanied the designation: the existing ongoing restriction on exports to China of crime control and detection instruments and equipment, under the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1990 and 1991 (Public Law 101-246), pursuant to section 402(c)(5) of the Act.

*On January 19, 2021, the then Secretary publicly announced his determination that since at least March 2017, the government has committed crimes against humanity and genocide against Uyghurs, who are predominantly Muslim, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang.

TIBET 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), which cites the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), states that citizens “enjoy freedom of religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities,” without defining “normal.” CCP regulations allow only Chinese citizens to take part in officially approved religious practices and stipulate religious activity “must not harm national security.” CCP regulations control all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools, and prohibit “accepting domination by external forces,” which authorities said included Tibetans in exile, particularly the Dalai Lama. The CCP continued to promote “Sinicization” policies that aimed to interpret religious ideas in accordance with CCP ideology and to emphasize loyalty to the CCP and the state. The CCP’s Administrative Measures for Religious Organizations regulation, released in February, further formalized the administrative procedures for Sinicizing all religions, including Tibetan Buddhism. In the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and other Tibetan areas there were reports of forced disappearances, arrests, torture, physical abuse, and prolonged detentions without trial of individuals due to their religious practices. There were reports of individuals dying in custody after being beaten, and one nun in a detention facility committed suicide. There were multiple reports of individuals who had been released from detention dying as a result of long-term illnesses and injuries suffered following beatings and mistreatment during incarceration. According to nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and academic research, the PRC government undertook a large-scale and aggressive campaign of “reeducation” or “vocational training” in military-style camps to conduct forced political indoctrination and to transform traditional farmers and herders into laborers in other industries; the vocational training process required “diluting the negative influence of religion.” In some cases, this program involved transferring Tibetans away from their home districts as part of so-called labor transfer programs. Authorities arrested multiple writers, singers, and artists for promoting Tibetan language and culture. Media and human rights groups reported that local officials in Tibetan areas explicitly stated supporters of the Dalai Lama and other religious leaders could be arrested under the government’s nationwide anti-organized-crime program and that Tibetans were told to inform security officials of anyone who “links up with the Dalai clique.” The PRC government continued to restrict the size of Buddhist monasteries and other institutions and to implement a campaign begun in 2016 to evict monks and nuns from monasteries and prohibit them from practicing elsewhere. While exact

numbers were difficult to ascertain because access to Tibetan areas remained restricted, according to multiple sources, between 2016 and 2019, authorities evicted between 6,000 and 17,000 Tibetan and Han Chinese monks and nuns from Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes. Satellite imagery and photographs showed that thousands of dwellings at these locations had been destroyed since 2018. PRC authorities continued to restrict the religious practices of monks, nuns, and laypersons. Travel and other restrictions hindered monastics and laypersons from engaging in traditional religious practices and pilgrimages. Repression, including arbitrary surveillance, increased around politically sensitive events, religious anniversaries, and the Dalai Lama's birthday. The government canceled some religious festivals, citing COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, although some sources stated this was a pretext. The government surveilled religious sites, encouraged families to inform on their neighbors, and attempted to control access to social media. It continued to force monasteries to display portraits of CCP leaders and the national flag and required Tibetans to replace images of the Dalai Lama and other lamas with portraits of prominent CCP leaders, including Chairman Mao and General Secretary and PRC President Xi Jinping, in their homes. Media and NGOs reported that authorities erected two Chinese-style pagodas in front of the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site generally considered to be the most sacred temple in Tibet, and closed the square in front of the temple to worshippers. PRC authorities continued to restrict children from participating in many traditional religious festivals and from receiving religious education. As part of efforts to Sinicize the population, schools in some areas required instruction in Mandarin, and some students were sent to other parts of the country to expose them to Han culture. Authorities continued to engage in widespread interference in monastic practices, including by appointing government and CCP personnel and government-approved monks to manage religious institutions. The government continued to control the selection of Tibetan Buddhist lamas and supervised their religious and political education. It continued to force monks and nuns to undergo political training in state ideology. Religious leaders and government employees were often required to denounce the Dalai Lama and express allegiance to the government-recognized Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu. Officials routinely made public statements denigrating the Dalai Lama and promoting the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism. In a statement issued in December, the Standing Committee of the Tibetan People's Congress stated reincarnations of lamas were to take place in accordance with state laws regulating religious affairs and the reincarnation of living buddhas. The statement said the 14th Dalai Lama's own selection had been reported to the government for approval. Authorities continued in state media to justify interference with Tibetan

Buddhist monasteries by associating the monasteries with “separatism” and pro-independence activities.

Some Tibetans continued to encounter societal discrimination when seeking employment, engaging in business, and traveling for pilgrimage, according to multiple sources.

The PRC continued to tightly restrict diplomatic access to the TAR and deny the U.S. embassy in Beijing and the then-open consulate in Chengdu requests to visit the area. No U.S. diplomats were allowed to visit the TAR during the year. The outbreak of COVID-19 in January led to country-wide restrictions on travel within the PRC and entry into the PRC, which also affected the ability of foreign diplomats, journalists, and tourists to travel to the TAR and other Tibetan areas. U.S. officials repeatedly raised concerns about religious freedom in Tibet with Chinese government counterparts at multiple levels. U.S. officials, including the Secretary of State, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Ambassador to China, and other embassy officers continued sustained and concerted efforts to advocate for the rights of Tibetans to preserve, practice, teach, and develop their religious traditions and language without interference from the government. U.S. officials underscored that decisions on the succession of the Dalai Lama should be made solely by faith leaders and raised concerns about the continued disappearance of Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, missing since 1995. On July 7, the Secretary of State announced the United States was imposing visa restrictions on PRC government and CCP officials that it had determined to be “substantially involved in the formulation or execution of policies related to access for foreigners to Tibetan areas,” pursuant to the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018. In November, Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) President Lobsang Sangay met in Washington, D.C. with the U.S. Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. On December 27, the President signed into law the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020. The law states in part that decisions regarding the selection, education, and veneration of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders are exclusively spiritual matters that should be made by the appropriate religious authorities. The embassy and consulates used social media to deliver direct messaging about religious freedom in Tibet to millions of Chinese citizens.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to official data from the 2018 estimate of the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the total population of the TAR is 3,371,500, of which Tibetans

make up approximately 90 percent. Han Chinese make up approximately 8 percent. Other ethnicities comprise the remainder. Some experts, however, believe the number of Han Chinese and other non-Tibetans living there is significantly underreported. Outside the TAR, official census data show Tibetans constitute 24.4 percent of the total population in Qinghai Province, 2.1 percent in Sichuan Province, 1.8 percent in Gansu Province, and 0.3 percent in Yunnan Province, although the percentage of Tibetans is much higher within prefectures and counties of these provinces designated as autonomous for Tibetans.

Most ethnic Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority practices Bon, a pre-Buddhist indigenous religion. Small minorities practice Islam, Catholicism, or Protestantism. Some scholars estimate there are as many as 400,000 Bon followers across the Tibetan Plateau, most of whom also follow the Dalai Lama and consider themselves also to be Tibetan Buddhists. Scholars estimate there are up to 5,000 Tibetan Muslims and 700 Tibetan Catholics in the TAR. Other residents of traditionally Tibetan areas include Han Chinese, many of whom practice Buddhism (including Tibetan Buddhism), Taoism, Confucianism, or traditional folk religions, or profess atheism, as well as Hui Muslims and non-Tibetan Catholics and Protestants.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The majority of ethnic Tibetans in the People's Republic of China live in the TAR, Tibetan autonomous prefectures (TAPs), and counties in Sichuan, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Gansu provinces. The PRC constitution, which cites the leadership of the CCP and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping Thought, states that citizens “enjoy freedom of religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities” without defining “normal.” The constitution bans the state, public organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion. It says religion may not be used to disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system. The constitution states religious bodies and affairs are not to be “subject to any foreign control.” The government recognizes five official religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” representing these religions are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services or other religious ceremonies and activities.

CCP regulations regarding religion are issued by the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFD). The UFD's Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Work manages religious affairs through the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA).

The UFD controls the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including lamas. Regulations stipulate that, depending on the perceived geographic area of influence of the lama, relevant administrative entities may deny permission for a lama to be recognized as reincarnated (a tenet of Tibetan Buddhism), and that these administrative entities must approve reincarnations. The UFD claims the right to deny the recognition of reincarnations of high lamas of "especially great influence." The regulations also state no foreign organization or individual may interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas, and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within China. The CCP maintains a registry of officially recognized reincarnate lamas.

Regulations issued by the UFD allow only Chinese citizens to take part in officially approved religious practices; these regulations assert CCP control over all aspects of religions, including religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools. Through local regulations issued under the framework of the national-level Management Regulation of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries, governments of the TAR and other autonomous Tibetan areas control the registration of monasteries, nunneries, and other Tibetan Buddhist religious centers. The regulations also give the CCP formal control over building and managing religious structures and require monasteries to obtain official permission to hold large-scale religious events or gatherings.

The central government's Regulations on Religious Affairs require religious groups to register with the government, impose fines on landlords who provide facilities for unauthorized religious activities, and restrict contact with overseas religious institutions. The regulations require religious groups to seek approval to travel abroad and prohibit "accepting domination by external forces," which authorities say include Tibetans in exile, particularly the Dalai Lama. The regulations submit religious schools to the same oversight as places of worship and impose restrictions on religious groups conducting business or investments, including placing limits on the amount of donations they may receive, thereby constraining property ownership and development. Publication of religious material must conform to guidelines determined by the Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee.

The regulations also require that religious activity “must not harm national security.” While the regulations stipulate that religious groups must abide by the law, safeguard national unity, and respond to “religious extremism,” the term “extremism” is undefined. Measures to safeguard unity and respond to “religious extremism” include monitoring groups, individuals, and institutions, and recommending penalties such as suspending groups and canceling clergy credentials. The regulations stipulate that the online activities of religious groups must be approved by the provincial UFWD.

Children younger than the age of 18 are prohibited from participating in religious activities and receiving religious education, even in schools run by religious organizations. Enforcement and implementation of these rules vary widely across and within regions. One regulation states that no individual may use religion to hinder the national education system and that no religious activities may be held in schools. These regulations have effectively barred Tibetan youth from entering monasteries prior to reaching 18 years of age.

On January 11, the government adopted the “Regulations on the Establishment of a Model Area for Ethnic Unity and Progress in the Tibet Autonomous Region.” These require “equal opportunities” for non-Tibetan ethnic groups at all levels of government and in schools, private business companies, religious centers and the military in the TAR.

A government policy introduced in 2018 requires Tibetan monks and nuns to undergo political training in CCP ideology. Monks and nuns must not only demonstrate competence in religious studies, but they must also show “political reliability,” “moral integrity capable of impressing the public,” and a willingness to “play an active role at critical moments.”

Self-immolation (setting oneself on fire as a form of protest) is considered homicide, and family members, teachers, and religious leaders may be charged as accessories to homicide if a relative, pupil, or follower chooses to self-immolate.

To establish formal places of worship, religious organizations must receive approval from the local UFWD, both when the facility is proposed and again prior to the first time any services are held at that location. Religious organizations must submit dozens of documents to register during these approval processes, including detailed management plans of their religious activities, exhaustive financial records, and personal information on all staff members. Religious communities not going through the formal registration process may not legally have an

established facility or worship meeting space; they must seek a separate approval from CCP authorities each time they want to reserve a space for worship, such as by renting a hotel or an apartment. Worshipping in a space without prior approval, either through the formal registration process or by seeking an approval for each service, is considered an illegal religious activity that may be criminally or administratively punished.

Individuals must apply to the TAR CCP Committee to take up religious orders and the committee may deny any application. Regulations also require monks and nuns to obtain permission from officials in both the originating and receiving counties before traveling to other prefectures or county-level cities within the TAR to “practice their religion,” engage in religious activities, study, or teach. TAPs outside the TAR have similar regulations.

At the central level, the CCP Central Committee’s Central Tibet Work Coordination Group and the UFWD are responsible for developing and implementing religious management policies, which are carried out with support from the five state-sanctioned patriotic religious associations: The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (Protestant), the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Taoist Association, the Islamic Association of China, and the Buddhist Association of China (BAC). At local levels, party leaders and branches of the UFWD, SARA, and the BAC are required to coordinate implementation of religious policies in monasteries.

CCP members and retired government officials, including Tibetans, are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. CCP members who are found to belong to religious organizations are subject to various types of punishment, including termination of their employment and expulsion from the CCP.

Government Practices

The government continued carrying out its 2019-2024 five-year plan to Sinicize all religious groups in China by emphasizing loyalty to the CCP and the state. The plan included Tibetan Buddhism, with the involvement of the state-run BAC. The CCP’s Administrative Measures for Religious Organizations regulation, released in February, further formalized the administrative procedures for Sinicizing all religions, including Tibetan Buddhism. Article 17 stated that religious organizations shall “follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, abide by laws, regulations, rules and policies, correctly handle the relationship

between national law and canon, and enhance national awareness, awareness of the rule of law, and citizenship.”

Human rights groups and media reported that during a high-level meeting in Beijing held August 29-30, President Xi announced plans to intensify efforts to Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism and the “reeducation” of Tibetans. According to the government media outlet *Xinhua*, “Xi stressed that patriotism should be incorporated into the whole process of education in all schools. He called for continuous efforts to enhance recognition of the great motherland, the Chinese nation, the Chinese culture, the [CCP], and socialism with Chinese characteristics by people of all ethnic groups. Tibetan Buddhism should be guided in adapting to the socialist society and should be developed in the Chinese context, Xi said.”

During President Xi’s remarks at the Seventh Tibet Work Forum in September, he stressed the PRC should help guide Tibetan Buddhism “to adapt to the socialist society and promote the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism.” Many Tibetan organizations condemned Xi’s remarks, including the NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW), which said, “Xi’s campaign of Sinicization is a model of anti-rights policies, especially as far as religious freedom is concerned.”

Human rights groups stated authorities used the “Regulations on the Establishment of a Model Area for Ethnic Unity and Progress in the Tibet Autonomous Region” that were adopted in January to further impose central government control and Han culture on the Tibetan population and to encourage Tibetans to become informants on each other. The NGO International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) stated, “The regulations reflect the culmination of Chinese Chairman Xi Jinping’s focus on consolidating power in the party and eliminating threats, as well as the ideas of a new generation of ethnic policy thinkers who advocate for the dilution of ethnic difference. These thinkers seek to force the assimilation of Tibetans and therefore further undermine Tibetans’ inherent freedom to preserve their unique culture, religion and way of life.”

On September 28, the NGO Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF) published a report entitled *In Prison for their Faith 2020*. In the report, HRWF stated, “Due to [the] strong link to the Dalai Lama, the CCP considers religious beliefs in Tibet to be intrinsically opposed to socialism and the Chinese state. As a result, the CCP suppresses their Tibetan Buddhist religious identity, including any association with the Dalai Lama. Instead, the aim is to establish Buddhism with so-called Chinese characteristics and without Tibetan characteristics, in line with Chinese socialism. The religious laws in place allow for this state intervention into religious affairs

since religious activities must align with political goals to safeguard ethnic unity and preserve socialism.” HRWF stated the CCP “seeks to gain maximum control over every aspect of societal activities that it considers a threat to its legitimacy, by using any means possible. Although the Chinese Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the CCP’s objective is to control the lives of all Buddhists, their temples and their institutions.” According to HRWF, every monastery and nunnery had an official state-imposed management committee that was involved in the internal decision-making process of that institution. In its report, HRWF stated, “It is the politicisation of Buddhism that drives the persecution of Buddhists in Tibet.”

In October, HRW reported a herder named Lhamo from Driru County, Nagchu Prefecture, died in August in a hospital where police sent her for treatment of injuries she suffered while in police custody. Sources said police detained Lhamo and her cousin, Tenzin Tharpa, in June on charges of sending money to family members and other Tibetans in India. According to HRW, Lhamo was in good health prior to her arrest, but when family members were summoned to the hospital, they found her badly bruised and unable to speak. Konchog Rinchen, a Tibetan living in exile, told *Radio Free Asia* (RFA), “Her family believes her death was caused by severe torture she suffered in custody.” Rinchen said the family wanted to perform traditional funeral ceremonies, but authorities forced them to cremate the body immediately. HRW noted the cremation also prevented Lhamo’s family from obtaining an autopsy.

There were no reported cases during the year of Tibetans self-immolating as a means of protesting against government policies, compared with one individual in 2019. According to the ICT, from 2009 to December 2019, 156 Tibetans set themselves on fire in protest against what they said was the occupation of Tibet and abuses of Tibetans’ religion and culture under PRC rule. Some experts and local sources attributed the decrease in the number of self-immolations to tighter control measures by authorities and the fear that family members and associates of self-immolators might be punished, including by being charged as accessories to homicide.

The whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama and most Tibetan Buddhists, remained unknown since his 1995 forced disappearance by Chinese authorities. Nyima was six years old at the time he and his family were reportedly abducted. Media reported that on May 19, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said Nyima “received free compulsory education when he was a child, passed the college entrance examination, and now

has a job.” Zhao said neither Nyima nor his family wished to be disturbed in their “current normal lives.” The Panchen Lama is considered by the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism to be the second-most-prominent leader after the Dalai Lama. On April 25, Tibetans in exile marked the occasion of Nyima’s 31st birthday. Advocacy groups called on the government to release him and allow him to resume his religious duties.

In September, Tenzin Dhadon, a member of the UN and Human Rights Desk staff of the CTA (the Tibetan government in exile in Dharamsala, India) stated, “Chinese authorities disappearing and secretly sentencing Tibetans are their key political tool in suppressing the Tibetan dissent in Tibet. The Chinese government has been practicing enforced disappearances by detaining incommunicado Tibetans deemed a threat to PRC’s unity and stability.”

Media reported that on December 2, authorities arrested Tibetan writer and poet Gendun Lhundrup in Rebkong (Chinese: Tongren) County, Malho (Huangnan) TAP, Qinghai Province. Lhundrup, a former monk, was a proponent of preserving Tibetan culture and language, and he released an anthology of poems entitled *Khorwa* (cycle of repeated birth) in October. He also contributed to a website called Waseng-drak that promotes freedom of expression for writers and artists. His whereabouts were unknown at year’s end.

In December, the ICT issued a statement calling for the release of Rinchen Tsultrim, a Bon monk whom authorities continued to hold incommunicado following his arrest in August 2019 for “suspected incitement to split the country.” According to the ICT, police originally took Tsultrim into custody in Barma (Waerma) Township, Ngaba County, Sichuan Province for “peacefully expressing his thoughts on a range of Tibetan political, social and culture issues” on WeChat. The ICT stated it was concerned Tsultrim might be tortured while in custody.

Sources reported that the whereabouts of several monks remained unknown. These included Dorje Rabten, who in September 2018 protested against government policies restricting young people from becoming monks; Tenzin Gelek, who had protested Dorje’s detention; Lobsang Thamke, who was arrested in 2018 and sentenced on July 30 to four years in prison on unknown charges; Lobsang Dorje, who was arrested in August 2018; and Thubpa, whom police took from the Trotsik Monastery in Ngaba County, Sichuan Province, toward the end of 2017.

Sources told media that authorities routinely abused Tibetan prisoners. In May, a Tibetan former political prisoner told RFA, “Living conditions in Chinese prisons are extremely poor. Especially while inmates are being pressed to confess under questioning, interrogators use extreme violence against them that is beyond anyone’s imagining.”

Sources told RFA many monks and nuns who were evicted from Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute were placed in internment camps, where treatment of detainees was poor. RFA reported that an unnamed nun who had been expelled from Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute in 2019 and held at an internment camp in Sichuan Province committed suicide in February at the camp due to the harsh conditions. According to a source, “She was defiant of the political reeducation in the camp and always protested against the Chinese officials’ instruction and education, which often resulted in her being beaten.”

There were multiple reports of individuals who had been released dying as a result of illnesses and injuries suffered following beatings and mistreatment during incarceration. In August, RFA reported that authorities released a woman named Dolkar due to failing health after 15 months’ incarceration. She was convicted in May 2019 of telling others that her nephew publicly called for the release of the Panchen Lama. Sources told RFA, “While she was in prison, she was tortured and made to lift heavy stones and do other hard work, and her body is all bruised. Because she was not able to get treatment on time, her limbs are crippled, and she is now immobilized.”

Media reported that Gendun Sherab, a Tibetan monk arrested in 2017 and charged with sharing politically sensitive materials on social media, died in April shortly after being released. According to a source, authorities had charged Sherab with “sharing and disseminating politically sensitive documents on WeChat and social media.” He had shared a letter from the Dalai Lama on WeChat that recognized the reincarnation of religious figure Choedon Rinpoche, from Sera Je Lhopa Khantsen. The source said that during his incarceration, Sherab’s health deteriorated due to beatings, torture, and poor prison conditions, while authorities denied him medical treatment. The source said, “The torture was so bad that he could not even move his body and was unable to speak. They only let him go because it was pretty clear he was about to die.” Before his arrest, Gendun had been expelled from Rongpo Rabten Monastery in Sog County, TAR, for holding what the source said were controversial political views.

Tibetan Review reported that in May, Choekyi, a former monk, died at home in Serthar (Seda) County, Sichuan Province, after authorities denied him permission to travel to a hospital in Lhasa to be treated for damage to his liver and kidneys suffered as a result of torture during his incarceration from 2015 to 2019. According to *Tibetan Review*, Choekyi had been jailed in 2015 in Sichuan's Mianyang Prison for making a T-shirt that celebrated the 80th birthday of the Dalai Lama.

The India-based Tibetan media outlet *Phayul* reported that in February, Samdup, a former monk from Drepung Monastery in TAR, died of diabetes-related complications linked to his seven-year incarceration. Authorities had arrested Samdup for taking part in peaceful protests in 1992 and had not allowed him to return to his monastery after his release.

RFA reported that Tsering Bagdro, a former monk at the Ganden Monastery, died on April 26 in Maldro Gongkar (Mozhugongka) County, near Lhasa. A source told RFA, "His untimely death is certainly related to the physical torture and suffering he endured while he was in prison." Authorities had arrested Bagdro and others in 1992 for demonstrating in Lhasa for Tibetan independence and carrying the Tibetan flag. He was released in 2000. One source said, "During his time in prison, he experienced physical torture and psychological trauma like the other political prisoners held there.... He was not really free even after his release, though. Like other former political prisoners, he lived under constant surveillance by the Chinese authorities, and his movements, activities, and speech were restricted."

In September, the Jamestown Foundation published a report entitled *Xinjiang's System of Militarized Vocational Training Comes to Tibet*. The report noted that government documents indicated TAR authorities had launched a large-scale and aggressive "reeducation" or "vocational training" campaign to transform farmers and herders into laborers. The report also stated the vocational training process required "diluting the negative influence of religion." Satellite imagery from 2018 showed that facilities built for "reeducation" purposes included high walls and large-scale, barracks-style buildings. According to the report and human rights advocates, the government claimed the campaign was aimed at poverty alleviation, but there was evidence that farmers and herders were forced to participate in the program and were then subjected to coercive labor practices. According to the report, CCP documents showed these programs used "military drill and military-style training to produce discipline and obedience; emphasize the need to 'transform' laborers' thinking and identity, and to reform their 'backwardness';

teach law and Chinese; aim to weaken the perceived negative influence of religion; prescribe detailed quotas; and put great pressure on officials to achieve program goals.” The report stated, “While some documents assert that the [training and labor assignment] scheme is predicated on voluntary participation, the overall evidence indicates the systemic presence of numerous coercive elements.”

The report stated there was evidence that internment camps in the region were increasingly transitioning from political indoctrination to labor training facilities, with detainees being sent to other regions within the TAR, as well as to other parts of the country, to work in low-skilled jobs that included road construction, cleaning, mining, cooking, and driving as part of so-called labor transfer programs. In September, RFA reported Tibetans were also being forced to work in cotton and textile factories.

Limited access to information and travel restrictions, due both to government policies limiting access to Tibetan areas and to the COVID-19 pandemic, made it difficult to ascertain the exact number of individuals imprisoned because of their religious beliefs or affiliation, or to determine the charges brought against them or assess the extent and severity of abuses they suffered.

In its report *In Prison for Their Faith*, HRWF stated “It is common for Buddhists to be imprisoned with no official criminal charges or convictions. Instead, they often face vague accusations such as: ‘possession of banned photos of the Dalai Lama’, ‘praying to the Dalai Lama’, ‘found with books and religious audio recordings of the Dalai Lama’, ‘taking part in birthday celebrations of the Tibetan spiritual leader’, ‘inciting self-immolation and sending information on self-immolations abroad’, and ‘leading a conspicuous protest in public against the law of the land, calling for the release of a Tibetan spiritual leader.’ These accusations have no legal basis in the Constitution or the Penal Code and are often related to the Dalai Lama. As the Dalai Lama is considered to be a ‘splittist’ by the CCP, any affiliation with him is seen as against the communist state.”

In July, authorities sentenced lyricist Khadro Tseten and singer Tsego to seven years and three years in prison, respectively, for “subversion of state power” and “leaking state secrets” after they composed and circulated a song praising the Dalai Lama on social media.

Sources told media that officials handed down long prison sentences to writers, singers, and artists for promoting Tibetan national identity and culture. The NGO Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) reported that in June,

authorities sentenced Tibetan singer Lhundrub Drakpa to six years in prison for performing the song “Black Hat,” which denounced years of repressive policies and practices. Authorities arrested Drakpa two months after “Black Hat” debuted and held him in pretrial detention for one year with no access to legal representation.

According to multiple sources, political prisoners, particularly monks and nuns, often were forced to perform patriotic songs and dances praising the CCP and to watch propaganda films. If participants seemed uninterested, authorities considered it evidence of disloyalty to the state and subjected them to severe punishment, including beatings, and refused them permission to receive gifts of food or clothing from visiting family members.

In September, *Tibet.net*, the news outlet of the CTA, reported that according to official sources, in September, authorities released Phagba Kyab, whom the CTA described as a Tibetan political prisoner, in Khanlo TAP, Gansu Province. Authorities had arrested Kyab in 2012 and had held him for more than eight years in a Chinese prison for his involvement in the case of a Tibetan who self-immolated in 2012. According to local sources, during a series of interrogations, authorities beat him, deprived him of sleep and food, and told Kyab to denounce the Dalai Lama. Following his release, he was forbidden to travel outside his home village.

The NGO Dui Hua reported that from June to August, the Kardze (Ganzi) TAP Intermediate People’s Court in Sichuan Province convicted nine individuals of “inciting splittism.”

According to Dui Hua’s political prisoner database, at year’s end there were 1,008 known cases of Tibetans detained due to “ethnic minority activism.” It was unclear how many of these cases were connected to religion, but often charges contained vague references to political or religious activities. Observers stated they believed the actual number of Tibetan political prisoners and detainees to be much higher, but the lack of access to prisoners and prisons, as well as the lack of reliable official statistics, made a precise determination difficult. Authorities continued to hold an unknown number of persons in pretrial detention facilities and in “reeducation centers” rather than prisons. Human rights groups continued to report extensions of pretrial detention periods were common for Tibetans accused of engaging in prohibited political activities or threatening national security, resulting in suspects spending long periods of time in jail without being formally charged or brought to trial.

Security officials could confine citizens to reeducation centers without formal legal procedures. Local sources said stays in reeducation centers could last more than one year.

Media and human rights groups reported local officials in Tibetan areas explicitly stated supporters of the Dalai Lama and other religious leaders could be arrested under the government's nationwide anti-organized crime program and that Tibetans were told to inform on anyone who "links up with the Dalai clique." In January, authorities charged 12 villagers from Sog County, Nagqu Prefecture, TAR, for running a "criminal gang." Court documents stated these individuals had disseminated "negative religious influences" throughout their village.

Sources told *tibet.net* that from November 2019 through January, officials in Dze Mey Township, Kardze TAP, Sichuan Province, arrested nearly 30 persons, including monks from the Dza Wonpo Ganden Shedrub Monastery, on a variety of charges, including scattering pro-independence leaflets in front of a government building, using social media, displaying pictures of the Dalai Lama, and having contact with individuals outside of Tibet. Sources said authorities held the detainees for more than a month. The detainees were fed only barley flour and attended political reeducation classes for two weeks. One source told RFA that following the arrests, Chinese police patrolled the streets in Wonpo Township and other nearby townships, conducted mobile phone searches and interrogations, and extracted forced confessions.

RFA reported that in January and February, authorities detained seven Tibetans in Chamdo (Changdu) Prefecture, TAR, and charged them with "spreading rumors" about the spread of COVID-19. Tengchen County authorities punished a man identified as "Tse" for posting messages to WeChat asking readers to recite prayers 10 times in order to protect themselves against the virus. Tse also requested that readers share the post with their friends and families. Local authorities held him in administrative detention for seven days for posing information that did not comply with laws and regulations.

Media reported that sources said on or about December 30, 2019, police in Dzogang (Zuogong) County, Chamdo Prefecture, TAR, arrested 75-year-old Jampa Dorje and his son for listening to recordings of the Dalai Lama's teachings on a mobile phone and for communicating with Dorje's daughters living in exile in India. A source said authorities subsequently released them after recording the phone numbers on their phones and forcing them to sign a document stating they

would not communicate with the women or listen to recordings of the Dalai Lama again.

The NGO Free Tibet reported that in February, authorities released a man named Chochok, a monk at the village monastery in Zamey Wonpo, Serchul County, Kardze TAP, Sichuan Province, after imprisoning him for two years for a message he posted on WeChat in which he used the picture of Konpe, a Tibetan monk who self-immolated in December 2017, as the background.

RFA reported that on December 14, the Golog People's Intermediate Court in Qinghai Province sentenced Lhundup Dorje, a nomad, to one year in prison, followed by one year of probation, for promoting "separatism." According to a source, in 2019 Dorje posted a New Year's greeting message to the CTA on his Weibo account and a 10-second video clip of teachings by the Dalai Lama. The source said that on March 11, he posted slogans calling for Tibetan independence, and that on May 3, Dorje posted a picture of the Dalai Lama as a young man, "along with praises and compliments to him." According to the source, these postings were viewed on social media at least 2,383 times, and all were listed separately in the indictment against Dorje.

Media reported that in late March or early April, authorities released a shopkeeper named Sonam Dhargyal from prison. According to sources, Ngaba County police had arrested Dhargyal in 2015, two months after he attended the Monlam prayer festival at Ngatoe Goman monastery, where he carried a blue religious flag showing a world peace symbol and a color photograph of the Dalai Lama with two other prominent Tibetan figures.

The government continued to place restrictions on the size of Buddhist monasteries and other institutions and to implement a campaign begun in 2016 to evict monks and nuns from monasteries. While exact numbers were difficult to ascertain, human rights groups and local sources said that between 2016 and 2019, authorities evicted between 6,000 and 17,000 Tibetan and Han Chinese monks and nuns from Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes, both in Kardze TAP, Sichuan Province. Monastics expelled from Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes were specifically prohibited from transferring to other monasteries to continue their religious education.

In October, *India.com* reported that authorities destroyed large portions of the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute. Accompanying the article were before-and-after photographs of each institute showing large areas where structures had

been demolished. Media and local sources stated that during the year, authorities completed demolition of many structures at both Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institutes, and that authorities encouraged Han Chinese to visit the sites as tourists or to move there.

During the year, the government reportedly continued its policy of resettling previously nomadic Tibetans in government-subsidized housing units. In many areas, these were located near township and county government seats or along major roads that had no nearby monasteries where resettled villagers could worship. The government prohibited construction of new temples in these areas without prior approval. Traditionally, Tibetan villages were clustered around monasteries, which provided religious and other services to members of the community. Many Tibetans continued to view such measures as CCP and government efforts to dilute religious belief and weaken the ties between monasteries and communities.

The TAR government reportedly maintained tight control over the use of Tibetan Buddhist religious relics and declared them, religious buildings, and religious institutions to be state property. Sources continued to report that while authorities permitted some traditional religious ceremonies and practices, they continued to exercise control over the activities of religious leaders and religious gatherings of laypersons, confining many such activities to officially designated places of worship and preventing monks from traveling to villages for politically sensitive events and religious ceremonies. Religious figures and laypersons frequently reported difficulty traveling to monasteries outside their home regions, both within the TAR and in other parts of the country. Travelers said they encountered roadblocks and police checkpoints surrounding major monasteries, with security personnel often checking their identity cards and refusing entry to nonresidents. Tibetans wishing to visit family members residing in monasteries noted frequent refusals or limits on their ability to visit. Local sources reported similar restrictions on their movements and said checkpoints and fear of detention prevented them from visiting monasteries and participating in religious events. Many monks expelled from their monasteries after 2008 protests in Lhasa and other areas, such as Ngaba, had not returned, some because of government prohibitions.

According to sources, PRC authorities, citing COVID-19 concerns, continued to restrict many major monasteries across the Tibetan Plateau from holding large scale religious events. Many of these sources said officials were using pandemic restrictions to prevent individuals from participating in religious activities. In

March, ICT reported that authorities cancelled public religious festivals and prayer ceremonies for Losar (Tibetan New Year) in February, citing COVID-19 restrictions.

On April 17, ICT reported that in similar notifications, dated April 14 and 15, respectively, Samye and Yasang Monasteries in Lhokha (Shannan) Prefecture, TAR announced they were closed as “per circular from higher authorities, and in accordance with the need of work relating to the prevention of the infectious coronavirus.” According to ICT, “These announcements are surprising, as China claims that there were no newly confirmed or suspected cases for 78 consecutive days in the TAR.” ICT stated the PRC, “to bolster its image internationally and indicate a sense of normalcy after the coronavirus crisis,” announced on March 30 that some monasteries in Lhasa would reopen, but with restrictions.

Local sources said the government continued to suppress religious activities it viewed as vehicles for political dissent. There were reports that local authorities again ordered many monasteries and laypersons not to celebrate or organize any public gatherings to celebrate the Dalai Lama’s 85th birthday on July 6, or to commemorate the anniversary of the March 10, 1959, Tibetan uprising or the March 14, 2008, outbreak of unrest across the Tibetan Plateau. TAR authorities banned monks and nuns from leaving their monasteries and nunneries during such times, and pilgrimage sites were heavily policed.

A source told RFA that officials visited monasteries in Sichuan and Qinghai Provinces and parts of Kanlho (Gannan) TAP, Gansu Province, warning staff not to host “outside visitors” on the Dalai Lama’s birthday. In Kardze Prefecture, Sichuan Province, a government group led by Wang Shu Yin, a CCP official and head of the local police department, inspected Ganden Phuntsok Ling Monastery in Rongdrag (Danba) County on July 5. The source said that during their tour, the Chinese officials “urged the residents to become ‘exemplary and patriotic’ monks and watch out for any outside visitors in the area and in the monastery itself. The officials urged the monks to report any suspicious persons to the local government or police department.”

In May, *Asianews.it* reported authorities banned Tibetan students and civil servants from participating in religious events during Saga Dawa, the month-long festival that marks the Buddha’s birth, enlightenment, and death. Sources said authorities threatened there would be “serious consequences” for individuals who defied the ban. Authorities intensified surveillance of and restrictions on access to the Jokhang Temple complex on the fifteenth day of Saga Dawa, the holiest day of the

month. Free Tibet reported, “The residents of Lhasa have been watched carefully by the local police, military personnel and officers dressed in civilian clothes. The offering sites at the temple and the circumambulation areas were packed with these police officers patrolling around. Tibetans who intended to go to the temple to carry out circumambulations and make offerings were stopped and their mobile phones were checked, reportedly making some of them feel anxious.”

According to local sources, security forces continued to block access to and from important monasteries during politically sensitive events and religious anniversaries. Police maintained heavy security during the Shoton festival held from August 15-25 in Lhasa. There were large numbers of uniformed and plain-clothes police monitoring crowds of worshippers. Officials delivered speeches at the festival denouncing the Dalai Lama and urging attendees to be loyal to the CCP.

In August, the NGO Tibet Watch reported authorities barred Tibetan government workers, school children, and retirees from entering the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, considered the most sacred temple in Tibet, while an increasing number of Chinese tourists were allowed in during the year. A source told Tibet Watch the Chinese tourists did not respect sacred Buddhist spaces. The source said, “The Chinese visitors smoke in holy sites like the central Barkhor area and the Potala Palace. They litter the ground with empty bottles and throw waste everywhere.”

In August, the government again banned the annual Dechen Shedrub prayer festival from occurring at the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute. Authorities cited overcrowding and COVID-19 concerns as reasons for the ban. The ban marked the fifth consecutive year the government prohibited the 22-year-old festival from taking place.

According to local sources, Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu provincial authorities warned major monasteries in Tibetan areas, including Labrang, Amchok, and Bora monasteries, that those holding special events or celebrations would face unspecified “severe consequences.”

Local authorities often invoked regulations concerning safeguarding national unity and responding to “religious extremism” in order to monitor individuals, groups, and institutions, and to punish adherents of religious leaders, such as the Dalai Lama.

There were reports that party leaders and branches of the UFWD, SARA, and the state-controlled BAC continued to station party and government officials, including security agents, in monasteries in Tibetan areas. Provincial, prefectural, county, and local governments continued to establish police stations or security offices adjacent to or on the premises of many monasteries and nunneries. While no updated statistics were available, sources estimated that in 2018, more than 15,000 government employees were working in approximately 3,000 Tibetan monasteries.

According to human rights groups and local sources, authorities continued to install overt camera surveillance systems at monasteries. RFA reported in October that authorities had opened “security centers,” or convenience police stations, throughout Lhasa. RFA described the security centers’ role as “subverting local indigenous populations through surveillance.”

According to multiple sources in Ngaba County, Sichuan Province, officials there continued to maintain a security watch list of family members, relatives, and close friends of self-immolators to prevent them from meeting and communicating with international visitors and, in some cases, deprived them of public benefits.

The report *Xinjiang’s System of Militarized Vocational Training Comes to Tibet* stated that the government employed “grid management” and a “double-linked household” system to surveil and control communities. Under the grid management system, neighborhoods and communities were divided into smaller units with dedicated administrative and security staff who maintained detailed databases on everyone living in that grid. The “double-linked household” system “corrals regular citizens into the state’s extensive surveillance apparatus by making sets of 10 ‘double-linked’ households report on each other.”

According to human rights groups and media sources, authorities frequently checked mobile phones for pictures of the Dalai Lama and other content that was considered sensitive. There were reports that authorities surveilled ordinary Tibetans for years after finding such material. In May, RFA reported authorities continued to surveil a walnut seller named Jampa Sonam eight years after police arrested him for a photograph of the Dalai Lama they found on his mobile phone in a random search. A Tibetan living in exile told RFA, “Now, whenever Jampa Sonam needs to go outside his place of residence, he needs to ask permission from the Chinese authorities, first at the village and then at the township level. Thus, he has remained in a virtual prison for the last eight years.”

In a March report entitled *Repressed, Removed, Re-Educated: The stranglehold on religious life in China*, the NGO CSW (formerly Christian Solidarity Worldwide) reported the presence of military surveillance and armed police in riot gear at monasteries during religious occasions such as prayer days. CSW wrote “religious ceremonies can resemble military exercises.”

Sources stated authorities forced monasteries to display portraits of CCP leaders and the national flag.

In April, Free Tibet reported authorities expanded the requirement that families replace images of the Dalai Lama and other lamas with portraits of preeminent CCP leaders, including Chairman Mao and President Xi, in their homes. Previously, this policy was only compulsory for families that were dependent on state support under the poverty alleviation program. According to Tibet Watch’s sources, authorities in the region stated that, in order to “remember the gratitude of the party and in the spirit of following the party, all households, monasteries, schools and offices must display the portrait of top party leaders.” As part of the program, authorities across Tibet gathered villagers together and distributed images of party leaders for them to hang on their walls or altars. Authorities also distributed images to be hung in schools, monasteries, and offices. Sources said authorities conducted inspections of each household to check for compliance. Tibet Watch reported an estimated 14,000 images of President Xi and other CCP leaders were distributed.

In June, RFA reported authorities ordered that prayer flags and the flagpoles from which they hung be taken down in TAR villages as part of what sources said the government called an “environmental cleanup drive” and “behavioral reform” program. One source said this was “an act of contempt and utter disregard for local Tibetans’ customs and faith.” In June, *Bitter Winter*, an online publication that tracks religious liberty and human rights abuses in China, reported TAR officials embarked on a campaign to remove Tibetan prayer flags from hilltops and villages. *Bitter Winter* stated the CCP “is trying to destroy Tibetan religion and culture, leaving only a ‘Disneyfied’ version for the benefit of naive tourists.”

According to HRW, the department under the TAR party committee in charge of overseeing retired government employees issued an official notice requiring TAR party and government officials, including nonparty members, to submit a list by August 18 of any retired personnel performing the *kora*, a Tibetan practice of circumambulating a sacred site or temple while reciting prayers or mantras. The *kora* is a standard form of religious devotion among Tibetan Buddhists,

particularly the elderly, for whom it is often a daily religious practice, as well as a form of exercise. Those named faced the potential loss of pensions and social benefits.

The CCP reportedly continued to forbid its members from participating in religious activities of any kind, despite reports that many local government officials and CCP members held religious beliefs. The TAR regional government punished CCP members who followed the Dalai Lama, secretly harbored religious beliefs, made pilgrimages to India, or sent their children to study with exiled Tibetans.

According to *The Diplomat*, on April 1, officials used bulldozers to demolish a building under construction that was to house 16 monks at Langdi Monastery in Markham County, Chamdo Prefecture, TAR. The building was reportedly built by the local community in traditional Tibetan style. The abbot of the monastery appealed against the demolition, but he was beaten. Authorities threatened to imprison him and two other monks. According to *The Diplomat*, photographs taken prior to the demolition showed two Chinese flags displayed on the main building, with Tibetan prayer flags beside them. *The Diplomat* reported, “Now the monastery is empty, as all the [20] monks were compelled to leave.”

Sources reported that authorities destroyed Tibetan religious sites outside the TAR. According to *Bitter Winter*, in July, the local government demolished the Fuyan Temple, a 1,000-year-old Tibetan Buddhist Temple in Jinzhong City, Shanxi Province, and expelled the monks. The Fuyan Temple was a popular tourist attraction, but in November 2019, local authorities ordered the removal of Tibetan prayer flags and two statues of Buddha. Accompanying the article were “before” photographs that showed the temple, which contained both Tibetan and Chinese architectural styles, and “after” images of the barren field where the temple had stood. According to an eyewitness, prior to bulldozing the temple, police, urban management officers, and village officials had broken some statues, looking for valuables inside them, and taken away all mahogany tables and chairs.

Media and NGOs reported that in April, authorities began erecting two Chinese-style pagodas in front of the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site originally built in 652 that is generally considered to be the most sacred temple in Tibet. In February 2018, a fire had damaged the temple complex, and the government started renovations that included laying pipes under the square in front of the temple that were aimed at improving security and firefighting facilities at the complex. ICT said the alterations appeared to be incompatible with traditional Tibetan architecture. In October, RFA reported the construction was

completed in August but that the square in front of the temple remained closed to worshippers. One source told RFA the square was surrounded by fencing that barred entry to devotees. The source said, “The pilgrims have nowhere to prostrate and worship, and only Chinese police and Chinese visitors can come inside the fenced enclosure. You don’t see any activities by Tibetan Buddhist devotees.”

In addition to the prohibition on the open veneration of the Dalai Lama, including the display of his photograph, the government continued also to ban pictures of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama and nearly all Tibetan Buddhists recognize as the 11th Panchen Lama. In some counties of the TAR, punishments for displaying images of the Dalai Lama included expulsion from monasteries. Local sources told RFA that officials from government bureaus monitoring religious practice visited Tibetan schools and warned teachers and students not to keep or display photographs of the Dalai Lama.

Local sources reported that “The 20 Prohibitions” were still in force. These regulations, instituted in the TAR in 2019, forbade monks from using social media to “incite subversion, defame or insult others, assist extremist religious groups, provide undisclosed information of the state to domestic or foreign individuals or organizations, or receive or release illegal information.” TAR government offices also announced that those who misused social media could be imprisoned for up to eight years.

Authorities increased the surveillance of and efforts to restrict access to WeChat and other social media. In May, HRW stated that a TAR official from Lhasa said, “The government monitors the WeChat and social media activity of monks even more strictly than that of ordinary citizens.” In June, *Tibetan Review* reported that according to Free Tibet, TAR officials also blocked the WeChat accounts of monks and nuns living outside the PRC. According to Tibet Watch, these measures were designed to restrict and control communication between Tibetan monks living abroad and friends and family inside Tibet. According to Tibet Watch, TAR officials investigated 4,000 to 5,000 Tibetan households with family ties to exiles living in Nepal and India.

In December, TCHRD reported that on November 24, Chinese internet police in the TAR again announced criminal prosecutions against individuals who used online communication tools to “split the country” and “undermine national unity.” The notice listed a range of illegal online activities, such as using virtual private networks (VPNs) and joining discussion groups. The notice said authorities would “strike hard” against offenders “in accordance with law.” TCHRD stated that in

February 2019, authorities had released a similar notice that criminalized online activities that purported to “collect, produce, download, store, publish, disseminate, and publicize malicious attacks against the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government, the socialist system, the regional ethnic autonomy system, and the party and the government’s policy of managing TAR.” The 2019 notice offered rewards of up to 300,000 renminbi (RMB) (\$45,900) for information regarding violators of the policy.

According to HRW, in anticipation of National Uprising Month in March (which commemorates the 1959 Lhasa uprising and large riots in 2008 protesting Beijing’s rule over Tibet), the PRC increased its censorship and security posture in Lhasa to deter any public gatherings or displays of support for the Dalai Lama. HRW reported the PRC staged mass rallies in Lhasa and other provincial cities on March 7. In Lhasa, thousands of armed police and other security forces from across the region gathered to “pledge” loyalty to the party and its political objective of “comprehensive, long-term stability.” Ding Yexen, head of the TAR Stability Maintenance Command, addressed the police, calling on them to “intimidate and terrify hostile forces and splittist forces, giving them nowhere to hide.” This was followed by a parade of armored vehicles and military equipment through the city.

Multiple sources reported the government continued to interfere in the religious education of laypersons and children. According to *Bitter Winter*, during the Seventh Tibet Work Forum organized by the CCP Central Committee on August 28 and 29, President Xi said the CCP should build a “new modern socialist Tibet that is united” and that this would be achieved through school reforms that “plant the seeds of loving China deep in the heart of every youth.” Authorities in the TAR required monks to cancel all classes with children, warning that monks and parents could have their social security benefits restricted or be detained if classes continued. The ban on religious education was also implemented in some places outside of the TAR.

A source told *Bitter Winter* that one of the government’s strategies to Sinicize Tibet was to send high performing students from Tibetan areas to other parts of the country to expose them to Han culture and Mandarin so that these students could become “reliable successors who will build Tibet and guard borders, [and] shoulder the great mission of ethnic unity.” The students were required to live with Han families with “strong political views and [the] correct ethnic minority outlook.” Host families were instructed to “pay attention to students’ spiritual growth” and to educate them with “correct” views that conformed to CCP ideology. Discussing Tibetan Buddhism and other “sensitive topics” was strictly

forbidden in Han homes and in schools. A Tibetan college student studying in Qinghai Province told *Bitter Winter* that students who were found to possess images of the Dalai Lama on their computers were subject to academic probation and other punishments for “being anti-Communist” or “having ideological problems.” The student said this might affect their studies, graduation, and future employment. The student said, “No one dares to touch the topics of religion.”

In September, RFA reported authorities closed primary schools in several towns in Rebkong County, Qinghai Province and forced the students to attend boarding schools in other regions of the country against the wishes of their parents. A source told RFA that police suppressed a protest by parents using police vehicles and blaring sirens and took one protester into custody. Authorities merged two middle schools in Themchen (Tianjun) County, Qinghai Province and changed the curriculum so that only the Tibetan-language class was taught in Tibetan, while all other subjects were taught in Mandarin.

Local sources reported that during the year, provincial officials in the TAR and other Tibetan areas again banned all underage students from participating in religious activities during school holidays. School officials again required students to sign an agreement stating they would not participate in any form of religious activity during the summer.

Local sources stated authorities in the TAR and some areas in Sichuan Province continued to prohibit Tibetan students from undertaking long-distance travel to other parts of the country during their two-month winter break. It was the fourth consecutive year authorities had implemented such restrictions. Tibetan rights advocates said the prohibition was an effort by authorities to stop parents from taking their children to visit temples outside the capital during the break.

During September testimony before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China in Washington, DC, Zeekgyab Rinpoche, Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, which serves as the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, said, “The Chinese government interferes and intervenes in the functioning of the monastic education system by imposing restrictions on our monks and nuns. Even in schools, we see this malign design to wipe out our unique identity in the form of restructuring the curriculum and banning the learning of Tibetan language.”

The government continued to insist that Gyaltzen Norbu, whom it selected in 1995, was the Panchen Lama’s true reincarnation, and not Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, whom authorities had disappeared that same year. Norbu remained the vice

president of and highest-ranking Tibetan in the government-affiliated BAC. According to numerous Tibetan Buddhist monks and scholars, SARA and provincial religious affairs bureau officials frequently pressured monks and laypersons, including government officials, to attend religious study sessions presided over by Norbu.

In accordance with official guidelines for monastery management, leadership of and membership in committees and working groups remained restricted to individuals the guidelines described as “politically reliable, patriotic, and devoted monks, nuns, and party and government officials.” General administrative affairs in TAR monasteries, which monks traditionally managed, continued instead to be overseen by monastery management committees and monastic government working groups, both of which were composed primarily of government officials and CCP members, in addition to a few government-approved monks. Since 2011, the government has established such groups in all monasteries in the TAR and in many major monasteries in other Tibetan areas.

The traditional monastic system reportedly continued to decline as many senior Buddhist teachers remained in exile or died in India or elsewhere. The heads of most major schools of Tibetan Buddhism – including the Dalai Lama, Karmapa, Sakya Trizin, and Khatok Getse Rinpoche, as well as Bon leader Kyabje Menr Trizin – all continued to reside in exile. The government also banned India-trained Tibetan monks, most of whom received their education from the Dalai Lama or those with ties to him, from teaching in Tibetan monasteries in China, although there were reportedly rare exceptions made for progovernment monks.

As in previous years, senior monks at some monasteries continued to report informal agreements with local officials whereby resident monks would not stage protests or commit self-immolations as long as the government adopted a hands-off approach to the management of their monasteries. Sources said authorities monitored all financial transactions involving monasteries inside Tibet and entities abroad.

According to media and NGO reports, the CCP maintained a list of state-approved “living buddhas.” Such individuals reportedly continued to undergo training on patriotism and the CCP’s socialist political system. In 2018, the BAC announced its database contained 1,311 “living buddhas” that it deemed “authentic.” The Dalai Lama was reportedly not on the list.

According to sources, “Every single individual now on the official reincarnation database has to go through an entire political procedure, entirely separate to religious training, in which they are advised about the need for their career and role in the religious community to motivate religious believers to love the party, love the country and social stability maintenance work, as well as fight against ‘separatism’ and the Dalai Lama... This means that now the Tibetan reincarnations are becoming Communist-trained talents rather than religious leaders.” Religious leaders continued to report that authorities were incentivizing lamas and monks to leave monastic life voluntarily by emphasizing the attributes of secular life, as compared to the more disciplined and austere religious life. Monastery leaders cited continued revisions to education policies, religion regulations, and government control of monastery management as reasons for the declining numbers of young monks. Religious leaders and scholars continued to say these and other means of interference continued to cause them concern about the ability of religious traditions to survive for successive generations. In a June letter about the continued enforced disappearance of the Panchen Lama, three UN special rapporteurs, including the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and representatives of two UN working groups, wrote, “Many Tibetan Buddhists have expressed their concerns about the regulation of reincarnation as it undermines the Tibetan religious traditions and practices while such regulation allow the State to interfere in the choice of their religious leaders.”

The government continued to require Tibetan monks and nuns to undergo political training in state ideology. Monks and nuns were required to demonstrate – in addition to competence in religious studies – “political reliability,” “moral integrity capable of impressing the public,” and willingness to “play an active role at critical moments.” Since the policy’s inception in 2018, many major monasteries and religious institutes have implemented political training programs.

According to media reports, authorities continued “patriotic reeducation” campaigns at many monasteries and nunneries across the Tibetan Plateau. All monks and nuns were required to participate in several sessions of “legal education” per year, during which they were required to denounce the Dalai Lama, express allegiance to the government-recognized Panchen Lama, study President Xi’s speeches, learn Mandarin, and hear lectures praising the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system.

According to the government media outlet *China Tibet Net*, from November 6 to 14, 168 Tibetan Buddhists in Lhasa attended training sessions on the constitution, religious affairs regulations, cybersecurity laws, and other subjects. Sources stated

that 26 Buddhist nuns in Lhatse County of Shigatse (Xigaze) City, TAR, completed a similar training session. One participant, Luosang Taba, Executive Deputy Director of the Kangma Temple Management Committee in Dangxiong County, said that after the training he had “the determination and confidence to take the lead in educating and guiding the monks and religious believers to firmly support the leadership of the party, adhere to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, take a clear-cut stand against division, safeguard the unity of the motherland, [and] strengthen national unity.”

According to Tibet Watch, on May 1, the Department of Justice and the TAR Religious Affairs Bureau conducted online training for more than 30,000 monks and nuns in “popularization activities” that included lessons on the constitution, national security law, antiterrorism law, and cyber security law.

Authorities continued to ban minors younger than age 18 from participating in any monastic training. Multiple sources reported authorities forced underage monks and nuns to leave their monasteries and Buddhist schools to receive “patriotic education.” Journalists reported that some underage monks who refused to cooperate were arrested and, in some cases, were beaten by police, and that parents and other family members were also threatened with loss of social benefits if underage monks did not comply.

Government officials regularly denigrated the Dalai Lama publicly and accused the “Dalai clique” and other “outside forces” of instigating Tibetan protests, stating such acts were attempts to “split” China. In March, TAR Communist Party Secretary Wu Yingjie publicly criticized the Dalai Lama’s “reactionary” nature and called on all Tibetans to strictly adhere to the CCP’s “guiding principles.” In July, Wu publicly called on security officials to crack down on the “Dalai Lama clique’s infiltration and destructive activities” and to “educate the masses to draw a clear line between them and the Dalai Lama.”

Tibet Watch reported that from July 6 to 8, Wang Yang, chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, toured monasteries, nomadic areas, and sites of relocated settlements in and around the cities of Lhasa and Shigatse. During the inspections, he reportedly said, “Tibetan religion is tied to the long term stability of Tibet, primary effort should be made on integrating Buddhism into China’s socialist society, and religious activities and monasteries should be strictly managed according to the law.” He also said laws of the state “are above religion. Tibetans should resolutely fight against the force of separatism... Training of model individuals and monks and promotion of patriotism should continue.”

In comments broadcast on CCTV on July 9, Wang said leaders needed to “thoroughly study and comprehend Xi Jinping’s ideas on Tibet and the CCP’s strategy for governing Tibet in the new era.” Wang said it was necessary to focus on improving the level of Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism.

The government outlet *Chinese Communist Party News* reported that at a province-level party meeting on September 2, TAR Party Secretary Wu vowed to “eliminate the negative religious influence of the 14th Dalai Lama” in order to implement the CCP Central Committee’s Tibet policy.

The Standing Committee of the Tibetan People’s Congress issued a statement in December that said, “Living Buddha reincarnation is a unique way of inheritance of Tibetan Buddhism, with fixed religious rituals and historical customization. The Chinese government has promulgated the ‘Regulations on Religious Affairs’ and the ‘Administrative Measures for the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism’ to respect and protect the inheritance method of Tibetan Buddhism.” The statement, which was published in response to passage of the U.S. Tibet Policy and Support Act of 2020, said the 14th Dalai Lama’s own selection had been reported to Chinese authorities for approval.

Authorities continued to justify in state media the interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by associating the monasteries with “separatism” and pro-independence activities.

During the year, there were no reports that the Boundary Management System Agreement signed by the PRC and the government of Nepal in 2019 had been used to return long-staying Tibetan refugees to the PRC from Nepal. Tibetan advocacy groups had stated when the agreement was signed that the provision that would require both countries to hand over citizens who illegally crossed the Nepal-China border was potentially in conflict with Nepal’s international commitments under the Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well the “gentlemen’s agreement” with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees which provides for Tibetan refugees in Nepal’s custody to transit to India.

Many Tibetans, including monks, nuns, and laypersons, reported continued difficulties traveling to India for religious training, meetings with religious leaders, or to visit family members living in monasteries. In many cases, Public Security Bureau officials refused to approve their passport applications. In other cases, prospective travelers were able to obtain passports only after paying bribes to local

officials. Some individuals seeking to travel said they could only obtain passports after promising not to travel to India or not to criticize government policies in Tibetan areas while overseas. In some cases, family members were required to sign a guarantee that passport applicants would return from their travel. According to local sources, numerous Tibetans in Gansu, Qinghai, and Sichuan Provinces waited up to 10 years to receive a passport, often without any explanation for the delay. There were also instances of authorities confiscating and canceling previously issued passports, reportedly as a way of preventing Tibetans from participating in religious events in India involving the Dalai Lama.

Tibetans who traveled to Nepal and planned to continue to India reported that PRC officials visited their families' homes in Tibet and threatened their relatives if they did not return immediately. Sichuan Province and TAR officials continued to require religious travelers returning from India to attend political training sessions. According to sources, these restrictions had prevented thousands of Tibetans from attending religious training in India.

Restrictions remained in place for monks and nuns living in exile, particularly those in India, which made it difficult or impossible for them to travel into Tibetan areas.

Tibetans who returned from India reported facing difficulties finding employment or receiving religious or secular education. Returning Tibetans were not allowed to study at Chinese monasteries, and most were denied admission to secular schools because they did not have education certificates recognized by the government. Local sources said they were subject to additional government scrutiny as a result of having relatives at religious institutions in India.

According to sources, authorities in some areas continued to enforce special restrictions on Tibetans staying at hotels inside and outside the TAR. Police regulations forbade some hotels and guesthouses in the TAR from accepting Tibetan guests, particularly monks and nuns, and they required other hotels to notify police departments when Tibetan guests checked in.

RFA reported that on June 11, a recruitment notice for government jobs restricted employment to those who “have a firm stand on the political principals of anti-secession, criticizing the Dalai [Lama], safeguarding the reunification of the motherland, and national unity.” According to RFA, applicants for low-wage positions such as drivers, office cleaners, and kitchen staff were required to support the CCP's leadership and socialist system.

In June, RFA reported that according to Shide Dawa, a Tibetan living in exile in India, Tibetans wishing to join the PRC army were required to have no record of engaging in political activities. A former resident of Chamdo Prefecture living in exile in India told RFA, “My younger brother tried to enroll in the Chinese police force. But because I’m now in India, they have denied my brother the job.”

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because expressions of Tibetan identity and religion are often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents as being solely based on religion. Tibetans, particularly those who wore traditional and religious attire, regularly reported being denied hotel rooms, refused service by taxi drivers, and discriminated against in employment and in business transactions.

Many Han Buddhists continued to demonstrate interest in Tibetan Buddhism and donated money to Tibetan monasteries and nunneries, according to local sources in such monasteries and nunneries. Tibetan Buddhist monks frequently visited Chinese cities to provide religious instruction to Han Buddhists. In addition, a growing number of Han Buddhists visited Tibetan monasteries, although officials sometimes imposed restrictions that made it difficult for Han Buddhists to conduct long-term study at many monasteries in Tibetan areas.

Media and NGOs reported that monasteries collected donations to purchase and distribute personal protective equipment to local residents and populations in other parts of China during the COVID-19 pandemic. The India-based Tibetan media outlet *Phayul* reported that in February, Kumbum Jampa Ling Monastery in Amdo Prefecture, Qinghai Province, donated RMB 1,000,000 (\$153,000) to the city of Wuhan, then the epicenter of China’s COVID-19 outbreak, to purchase items such as masks and goggles for affected people. Sera Monastery in Lhasa conducted prayers and collected donations for COVID-19 patients. A monk from the Shedrup Tenphel Choeling Monastery in Tawu (Daofu) County, Kardze Province said, “This is the least we can do in service to the people living in Tawu. We can only hope that we can be of some help in preventing [the further spread of] this pandemic.” Monks of the Minyak Pel Lhagang Monastery in Dartsedo, Kardze contributed RMB 130,000 (\$19,900). ICT reported that Tibetans posted images on social media of butter lamps they lit in memory of Dr. Li Wenliang, the Han physician whom authorities arrested for attempting to warn the public about the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

U.S. officials repeatedly raised concerns about religious freedom in Tibet with Chinese government counterparts at multiple levels. U.S. officials, including the Secretary of State, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Ambassador to China, and other Department and embassy officials continued sustained and concerted efforts to advocate for the rights of Tibetans to preserve, practice, teach, and develop their religious traditions and language without interference from the government. U.S. embassy and consulate officials regularly expressed concerns to the Chinese government at senior levels, including central government and provincial leaders, regarding severe restrictions imposed on Tibetans' ability to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including religious freedom and cultural rights. The Ambassador pressed senior PRC officials on the government's refusal to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama. U.S. officials continued to underscore that only the Dalai Lama and other faith leaders could decide the succession of the Dalai Lama, and they also raised concerns about the disappearance of the Panchen Lama. In addition to raising systemic issues, such as impediments to passport issuance to Tibetans, U.S. officials expressed concern and sought further information about individual cases and incidents of religious persecution and discrimination, and they sought increased access to the TAR for U.S. officials, journalists, and tourists, including religious pilgrims and those traveling for religious purposes.

Due to COVID-19 and tight PRC restrictions on access to the TAR, U.S. officials were not allowed to visit the TAR during the year. Before the PRC ordered the closure of the consulate in Chengdu in retaliation for the closure of the PRC consulate general Houston, the Consul General's request to visit the TAR was denied. In July, the PRC extended an invitation to the *Charge d'Affaires* to visit the TAR but rescinded it after the U.S. government announced that same month visa restrictions in accordance with the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018.

On May 17, on the 25th anniversary of the disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Secretary of State said in a statement, "The United States remains deeply concerned about the PRC's ongoing campaign to eliminate the religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of Tibetans, including through the ongoing destruction of communities of worship and learning, such as the Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Buddhist Institutes. Tibetan Buddhists, like members of all faith communities, must be able to select, educate, and venerate their religious leaders according to their traditions and without government

interference. We call on the PRC government to immediately make public the Panchen Lama's whereabouts and to uphold its own constitution and international commitments to promote religious freedom for all persons.”

On June 3, the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom told participants at an online forum organized by the ICT, “They [Tibetans] need to be able to practice their faith freely. The Dalai Lama needs to be able to go and return to his homeland if he would so choose. And yet these are all denied.”

On July 7, the Secretary of State announced the United States was imposing visa restrictions on PRC government and CCP officials determined to be “substantially involved in the formulation or execution of policies related to access for foreigners to Tibetan areas,” pursuant to the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018. In making the announcement, the Secretary stated, “The United States will continue to work to advance the sustainable economic development, environmental conservation, and humanitarian conditions of Tibetan communities within the People’s Republic of China and abroad. We also remain committed to supporting meaningful autonomy for Tibetans, respect for their fundamental and unalienable human rights, and the preservation of their unique religious, cultural, and linguistic identity.”

On September 2 remarks to the press, the Secretary of State said, “We’re also concerned about Chinese actions in Tibet, in light of the general secretary’s recent calls to Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism and fight ‘splittism’ there. We continue to call upon Beijing to enter into dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives without preconditions, to reach a settlement that resolves their differences.”

In November, at the virtual global Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom said, “Tibetan Buddhists have successfully picked their leader for hundreds of years.... [T]he United States supports that religious communities have the right to pick their own leadership.”

On October 14, the Secretary of State designated the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to serve concurrently as the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. In his announcement, the Secretary said the Special Coordinator would “carry forward the Department’s engagement with and support for Tibet’s global diaspora and their many courageous advocates for the protection of human rights, including the freedom of religion or belief.” The Office of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues continued to coordinate U.S. government efforts to preserve Tibet’s distinct religious, linguistic, and cultural

identity, as well as efforts to promote dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama. In November, CTA President Lobsang Sangay met with the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in Washington, DC.

On December 4, the Special Coordinator for Tibet Issues spoke at a forum hosted by the US Mission to International Organizations in Geneva entitled, “Religious Freedom in Tibet: The Appointment of Buddhist Leaders and the Succession of the Dalai Lama.” The Special Coordinator said, “The United States is committed to helping Tibetans safeguard their way of life – not just in Tibet but also in India, Nepal, Bhutan, and everywhere that it flourishes.” The Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the Office of the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva also pressed the PRC to respect the unique language, culture, and religion of Tibetans.

On December 27, the President signed into law the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020. The law states (in part): “(1) decisions regarding the selection, education, and veneration of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders are exclusively spiritual matters that should be made by the appropriate religious authorities within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and in the context of the will of practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism; (2) the wishes of the 14th Dalai Lama, including any written instructions, should play a determinative role in the selection, education, and veneration of a future 15th Dalai Lama; and (3) interference by the Government of the People’s Republic of China or any other government in the process of recognizing a successor or reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama and any future Dalai Lamas would represent a clear violation of the fundamental religious freedoms of Tibetan Buddhists and the Tibetan people.” The law further states the U.S. government may impose sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and visa restrictions under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act on Chinese officials “who are responsible for, complicit in, or have directly or indirectly engaged in the identification or installation of a candidate chosen by China as the future 15th Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism[.]”

Although U.S. officials were denied access to the TAR during the year, they maintained contact with a wide range of religious leaders and practitioners, as well as NGOs in other Tibetan areas, to monitor the status of religious freedom, although travel and other restrictions made it difficult to visit and communicate with these individuals.

The embassy and consulates delivered direct messaging to the public about religious freedom in Tibet through social media posts on Twitter and on the embassy's official website, which is required to be hosted on a PRC server and registered in an official PRC domain. In addition to more than 100 general messages promoting religious freedom posted by the embassy and consulates on Twitter and the PRC-controlled Weibo and WeChat platforms over the course of the year, the embassy also published many social media messages on Twitter that directly and indirectly promoted the religious freedom of the Tibetan people. Over the course of the year, statements from the Secretary of State and others supporting religious freedom for Tibetans reached millions of Chinese social media users. The Secretary's call on Beijing to enter into dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives without preconditions, the appointment of a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, and statements of concern over continuing interference with the religious freedom of Tibetans drew particularly high attention on social media despite China's online censorship.

XINJIANG 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), which cites the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), states that citizens “enjoy freedom of religious belief” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities,” without defining “normal.” The U.S. government estimated that since April 2017, the government has detained more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and members of other Muslim groups, as well as some Christians, in specially built internment camps or converted detention facilities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) under the national counterterrorism law and the regional counter-extremism policy. Some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and academics estimated the number of individuals detained in internment camps or other facilities was higher. Authorities subjected individuals to forced disappearance, political indoctrination, torture, physical and psychological abuse, including forced sterilization and sexual abuse, forced labor, and prolonged detention without trial because of their religion and ethnicity. There were reports that authorities moved tens of thousands of individuals from their home areas to work elsewhere in the region and the country. One researcher stated that, based on a survey of Chinese academic research and government figures, up to 1.6 million transferred laborers were at risk of being subjected to forced labor. The government continued to cite what it called the “three evils” of “ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism” as its justification for enacting and enforcing restrictions on religious practices of Muslims and non-Muslim religious minorities. During a speech in September, PRC President and CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping said the government’s actions to Sinicize Islam were “totally correct and must carry on for a long time.” In February, new analysis of 311 entries in the “Karakax List,” a set of PRC government documents originally leaked in 2019 that described the systematic targeting and imprisonment of Muslim populations in Karakax (alternate Uyghur spelling: Qaraqash, Mandarin spelling: Moyu) County, Hotan (Hetian) Prefecture, showed that the government recorded the personal details of individuals living in the region and listed reasons for detaining them, including violating the government’s family planning policies. The whereabouts of hundreds of prominent Uyghur intellectuals, religious scholars, cultural figures, doctors, journalists, artists, academics, and other professionals, in addition to many other citizens who were arrested or detained, remained unknown. There were reports of individuals dying as a result of injuries sustained during interrogations, medical neglect, and torture. One Uyghur advocacy and aid organization reported that

since 2018, authorities have detained at least 518 Uyghur religious figures and imams. PRC government documents, eyewitness accounts, and victims' statements indicated the government sharply increased the use of forced sterilization and forced birth control to reduce the birthrate among Muslims. Authorities implemented a variety of different methods, including home inspections, to ensure families were not observing religious practices such as praying, and it forced people to consume food and drink during Ramadan. According to government sources and eyewitness accounts, the government encouraged – and in some cases required – neighbors to spy on each other. Other surveillance included behavioral profiling and forcing Uyghurs to accept government officials and CCP members living in their homes. Government documents revealed extensive use of surveillance cameras and security checkpoints in public spaces. In September, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) published a report based on satellite imagery and other sources that estimated that approximately 16,000 mosques in the region (65 percent of the total) had been destroyed, damaged, or desecrated, and a further 30 percent of important Islamic sacred sites had been demolished. Research conducted during the year estimated that by 2019, nearly 900,000 children, including some preschool-aged children, were separated from their families and were living in boarding schools or orphanages, where they studied ethnic Han culture, Mandarin, and CCP ideology. The government sought to forcibly repatriate Uyghur and other Muslim citizens from overseas and detained some of those who returned. The government harassed and threatened Uyghurs living abroad and threatened to retaliate against their families in Xinjiang if they did not spy on the expatriate community, return to Xinjiang, or stop speaking out about relatives in Xinjiang who had been detained or whose whereabouts were unknown.

Unequal treatment of Uyghur Muslims and Han Chinese continued in parallel with the authorities' suppression of Uyghur language, culture, and religious practices while promoting the Han majority in political, economic, and cultural life. Muslims reported severe societal discrimination in employment and business opportunities. There were reports that some Han Chinese living in Xinjiang described Uyghurs in derogatory terms.

U.S. embassy officials met with national government officials regarding the treatment of Uyghur Muslims and other Muslim and non-Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang. The embassy and consulates general delivered direct messaging about religious freedom in Xinjiang through social media posts and promoted online engagement on the issue of religious freedom for Xinjiang's ethnic minority Muslim populations. On June 17, President Trump signed into law the Uyghur

Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, authorizing the imposition of U.S. sanctions, including asset blocking and denial of visas, against individuals responsible for the detention and other human rights abuses of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang. The act also directed U.S. agencies to take steps to hold accountable PRC officials, or individuals acting on their behalf, who harassed, threatened, or intimidated Uyghurs within the United States. During the year, the Department of Commerce placed one PRC government entity and 19 commercial industries on the “Entity List” for being implicated in human rights violations and abuses committed in China’s repression, mass arbitrary detention, forced labor and high-technology surveillance in Xinjiang, making them subject to specific license requirements for export, re-export, and/or transfer in-country of specific items. On July 1, the Departments of State, the Treasury, Commerce, and Homeland Security issued the Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory to caution businesses about the economic, legal, and reputational risks of supply chain links to entities that engage in human rights abuses, including forced labor in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China. On July 9, the Secretary of State imposed visa sanctions on three senior CCP officials and their families for their involvement in gross violation of human rights in Xinjiang. The Secretary also placed additional visa restrictions on other CCP officials believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, the detention or abuse of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang. Also on July 9, the Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act on one government entity and four current or former government officials in connection with serious rights abuses against ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. On July 31, the Department of the Treasury imposed additional sanctions on the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) and its current and former senior officials for serious human rights abuses in Xinjiang. On May 1, June 17, and September 14, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency prohibited imports of specified merchandise produced by eight companies that operated in Xinjiang based on information that reasonably indicated the use of prison labor and forced labor of Uyghurs and other minority groups being held in internment camps. On December 2, CBP announced it would detain all shipments of cotton and cotton products originating from the XPCC because of forced labor concerns. At the direction of the Secretary of State, U.S. government officials explored whether the PRC’s actions in Xinjiang constituted atrocities, namely crimes against humanity and genocide. The process was ongoing at year’s end.*

*On January 19, 2021, the then Secretary publicly announced his determination that since at least March 2017, the government has committed crimes against humanity and genocide against Uyghurs, who are predominantly Muslim, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang.

Section I. Religious Demography

A 2018 report on the XUAR issued by the Department of Population and Employment Statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics estimates the total population was 24.87 million. The report states Uyghurs, along with Kazakh, Hui, Kyrgyz, and members of other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups constitute approximately 14.9 million residents in Xinjiang, or 60 percent of the total population. According to the BBC, of these, 12 million are Uyghurs. The largest segment of the remaining population is Han Chinese, with additional groups including Mongols, Tibetans, and others. Most Uyghurs are Muslim. The *Globe and Mail* reported in September 2019 that according to sources in the region, Christians likely number in the thousands.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution, which cites the leadership of the CCP and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping Thought, states that citizens “enjoy freedom of religious belief” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities,” without defining “normal.” The constitution also stipulates the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. The government recognizes five official religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Only religious groups belonging to one of five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” (the Buddhist Association of China, the Chinese Taoist Association, the Islamic Association of China, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association) representing these religions are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services or other religious ceremonies and activities.

In addition to the national counterterrorism law, Xinjiang has its own counterterrorism law and de-extremification laws that went into effect in 2016 and 2017, respectively, containing similar provisions to the national law regarding “religious extremism.” These laws ban the wearing of long beards, full-face coverings, religious dress, expanding halal practice beyond food, daily prayer, and “interfering” with family planning, weddings, funerals, or inheritance, among other provisions. The law limits the information that may be released to the public following an incident the government defines as a terror attack.

Regional regulations passed in 2018 to implement the national counterterrorism law permit the establishment of “vocational skill education training centers” (which the government also calls “education centers” and “education and transformation establishments”) to “carry out anti-extremist ideological education.” The regulations stipulate that “institutions such as vocational skill education training centers should carry out training sessions on the common national language, laws and regulations, and vocational skills, and carry out anti-extremist ideological education, and psychological and behavioral correction to promote thought transformation of trainees and help them return to the society and family.”

Regulations in Xinjiang’s capital, Urumqi, prohibit veils that cover the face, homeschooling children, and “abnormal beards.” A separate regulation bans the practice of religion in government buildings and the wearing of clothes associated with “religious extremism.” Neither “abnormal” nor “religious extremism” are defined in law. Similar regulations are in effect in other parts of Xinjiang.

Authorities in the XUAR have defined 26 religious activities, including some practices of Islam, Christianity, and Tibetan Buddhism, as illegal without government authorization. Regional regulations stipulate no classes, scripture study groups, or religious studies courses may be offered by any group or institution without prior government approval. No religious group is permitted to carry out any religious activities, including preaching, missionary work, proselytizing, and ordaining clergy, without government approval. Regional regulations also ban editing, translation, publication, printing, reproduction, production, distribution, sale, and dissemination of religious publications and audiovisual products without authorization.

Xinjiang officials require minors to complete nine years of compulsory education before they may receive religious education outside of school. Xinjiang regulations also forbid minors from participating in religious activities and impose penalties on organizations and individuals who “organize, entice, or force” minors to participate in religious activities. A regulation in effect since 2016 further bans any form of religious activity in Xinjiang schools and stipulates parents or guardians who “organize, lure, or force minors into religious activities” may be stopped by anyone and reported to police. Xinjiang’s regional version of the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency Law states children affected by ethnic separatism, extremism and terrorism, and/or committing offenses that seriously endanger society but do not warrant a criminal punishment may be sent to

“specialized schools for correction” at the request of their parents, guardians, or school.

Government Practices

According to media and NGO reports, the central government and XUAR authorities continued to cite what they called the “three evils” of “ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism” as justification to enact and enforce restrictions on religious practices of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and members of other Muslim and non-Muslim religious groups. Police raids and the government’s restrictions on Islamic practices, carried out as part of “strike hard” campaigns, the latest iteration of which began in 2014, continued throughout the year. Local observers said many incidents related to abuses or pressure on Uyghurs and other Muslims went unreported to international media or NGOs due to government restrictions on the free flow of information.

According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), during a speech at the September 25-26 Xinjiang Central Work Forum, President Xi said the government’s strategy and policies in Xinjiang were “totally correct and must carry on for a long time.” He also said, “We must also continue the direction of Sinicizing Islam to achieve the healthy development of religion,” and he stated the government’s policies brought stability and economic growth to the region.

According to multiple human rights NGOs and academic sources, authorities held more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and members of other Muslim groups as well as some Christians, in a vast network of camps since 2017, many of them co-located with factories, where sources said detainees were subjected to forced labor and “re-education.” Several human rights groups estimated the number of individuals interned to be higher. The government continued to use detentions to implement a XUAR-specific counterextremism policy that identifies “extremist” behaviors (including growing beards, wearing headscarves, and abstaining from alcohol) in concert with the National Counterterrorism Law, which contains provisions on “religious extremism.” In September, researchers at ASPI’s International Cyber Policy Centre published the Xinjiang Data Project, an online database that used satellite imagery, Chinese government documents, official statistics, and other sources to document human rights abuses in the region. The project located, mapped, and analyzed suspected detention facilities. According to the data, the government built or expanded 381 detention centers between 2017 and 2020, including at least 61 facilities that were built or expanded between July 2019 and July 2020. Based on satellite imagery

analysis of security features including high perimeter walls, watchtowers, internal fencing, and other features and usage patterns, analysts concluded 108 were low security facilities, 94 were medium security facilities, 72 were high security facilities, and 107 were maximum security facilities.

In a press release about the launch of the Xinjiang Data Project, ASPI stated, “The findings of this research contradict Chinese officials’ claims that all ‘re-education camp’ detainees had ‘graduated’ in December 2019. It presents satellite imagery evidence that shows newly constructed detention facilities, along with growth in several existing facilities, that has occurred across 2019 and 2020.”

The *Washington Post* reported in September that one new facility that had opened “as recently as January” in Kashgar (Kashi) City, Kashgar Prefecture, was a 60-acre compound, with 45-foot-high walls and guard towers and 13 five-story residential buildings that could house more than 10,000 individuals. According to the *Washington Post*, at least 14 new facilities were under construction during the year. In November, RFA reported police officers from Uchturpan (Wushi) County, Aksu (Akesu) Prefecture, said that at least three camps were still in operation in the county and estimated that together they likely held more than 20,000 detainees, nearly 10 percent of the county’s population.

On November 16 and November 24, 2019, the *New York Times* (NYT) reported on the leak of 403 pages of purported internal government and CCP documents describing the government’s mass internment program in Xinjiang; these leaked documents were later called “The Xinjiang Papers.” NYT was one of 17 media outlets to partner with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) regarding release of the leaked documents. Also in November 2019, the ICIJ reported on an additional 24 leaked government and CCP documents, later referred to as the “China Cables.” The leaked documents obtained by the ICIJ included a CCP manual, called a “telegram,” for operating internment camps, which it referred to as “vocational skill education training centers.” According to the ICIJ, this manual “instructs camp personnel on such matters as how to prevent escapes, how to maintain total secrecy about the camps’ existence, methods of forced indoctrination, how to control disease outbreaks, and when to let detainees see relatives or even use the toilet.”

On February 17, the ICIJ, human rights NGOs, and international media provided additional analysis of the “Karakax List” (also referred to as the “Karakax Document,” “Qaraqash Document,” or “Qaraqash List”) that was originally made public in November 2019. The list contained the personal details of 311

individuals being held in camps in Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture, as well as official determinations on whether they could have contact with their families and the grounds upon which they could be released. Reasons for detention included wearing a veil, having a wife who wore a veil, growing a beard, having a household with “a dense religious atmosphere,” applying for a passport, obtaining a passport but not leaving the country, visiting a foreign website, and being related to a person living outside China. The number one reason for imprisonment was violating the government’s family planning policies. Authorities sentenced one man to five years for having a beard and organizing religious study groups. CNN stated it had independently corroborated the details of eight families mentioned in the document.

CNN reported that in a press conference on February 22 in Urumqi, Mehmetjan Umarjan, governor of Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture, said “after careful investigation,” many of the residents mentioned in the Karakax List had never been in the camps. At the press conference, a Uyghur man told reporters he had been to a “training center” but it had been “for his own good.” In a video released by state broadcaster CCTV, the man said, “My mind used to be filled with religious extremist thinking. Not only did I not earn a living for my family, but I also prohibited my wife from doing so, because I believed it was against Muslim practices for women to earn money. At the center, I learned to speak Mandarin and [learned] about national laws and regulations. I also got lessons in business management.”

The *Economist* reported in 2018 that authorities used detailed information to rank citizens’ “trustworthiness” using various criteria. According to the *Economist*, “The catalogue is explicitly racist: people are suspected merely on account of their ethnicity.” Being labelled “untrustworthy” could lead to being detained by authorities. Officials deemed individuals as trustworthy, average, or untrustworthy depending on how they fit into the following categories: aged 15 to 55 years old (i.e., of military age); of Uyghur ethnicity; unemployed; possessed religious knowledge; prayed five times a day; had a passport; had ever overstayed a visa; wore religious clothing or had long beards; had family members living abroad; homeschooled their children (which was prohibited throughout the country); or had visited one of the “sensitive countries.” According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the 26 “sensitive countries” were Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

In December, HRW reported what it called the “Aksu List,” a leaked list, dated 2018, of more than 2,000 detainees from Aksu Prefecture that the government had identified through its “predictive policing program based on big-data analysis,” called the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), which collects a variety of personal information on the lives and movements of individuals. According to HRW, “The Aksu List provides further insights into how China’s brutal repression of Xinjiang’s Turkic Muslims is being turbocharged by technology.” According to HRW, the Aksu List showed authorities consider behaviors that included certain Islamic traditions to be suspicious, such as: studying, reciting, or preaching the Quran without state permission; wearing religious clothing or having a beard; having children in excess of the government’s family planning policy; “marrying through a *nikah* (an Islamic law marriage contract), or practicing polygamy”; going on the Hajj; and “performing the Hijra, a form of migration to escape religious persecution.” HRW stated the list indicated that in at least one case, authorities in 2019 detained a woman, identified as “Ms. T,” whose sister lived in one of the “sensitive countries.” Ms. T’s sister told HRW that upon her release, Ms. T was forced to work in a factory five days a week against her will and was allowed to go home only on weekends.

There were numerous reports of individuals being incarcerated, sometimes for lengthy periods of time, held under harsh conditions, physically and sexually abused, and subjected to involuntary sterilization. Many individuals disappeared in prior years, but relatives only learned what happened to them in 2020. Some ethnic Uyghur and Kazakh individuals who had been held in detention facilities managed to emigrate abroad during the year, where they were able to speak with human rights NGOs and journalists about their experiences.

In February, when COVID-19 was spreading throughout the country, a report from the Australian outlet *SBS News* that included interviews with Uyghur refugees stated that in the camps, “Access to hospitals, quarantine areas, food, and hygiene products is severely restricted, according to human rights organizations and former detainees. Showers are rare and monitored; washing your hands or feet is considered a Muslim ablution, and therefore very controlled.” Munawwar Abdulla, cofounder of the Uyghur diaspora organization Tarim Network, told *SBS News*, “Each camp holds thousands of inmates in highly unsanitary conditions. There are also reports of sexual abuse, lack of medical care, neglect, psychological stress, and injections of unknown substances; these all create ripe conditions for a virus to spread.”

In October, RFA reported that Qelbinur Sidik, a former Mandarin-language instructor at two internment camps who subsequently left China, described harsh conditions at one camp holding approximately 3,000 men and a second camp holding approximately 10,000 women in Urumqi. She said at the men's camp, the prisoners were rushed under unreasonable time constraints to use the bathroom, which had only one toilet, and to wash their hands and faces. They did not have access to shower facilities. She said that the men's camp also had an underground interrogation room, and that at times she could hear screams coming from this room. Sidik also said she heard of one case in which a man was "very badly hurt in the process of interrogation" and that he later died of his injuries. At the women's camp, there were more than 50 women in each cell, and they were not provided with appropriate privacy – only a partial wooden partition separated a bucket that was used as a toilet from the living space in the cell. There was a communal shower that each woman could use for 10 minutes once per month.

In August, the BBC reported that Uyghur fashion model Merdan Ghappar sent a video of himself in a cell in a detention center. There were bars on the windows, and one of Ghappar's hands was handcuffed to the metal frame of a bed. Accompanying the video, Ghappar sent a series of text messages in which he described 18 days spent shackled and hooded in a jail with more than 50 other Uyghurs in Kuchar (Kuche) City, Aksu Prefecture. He said he was later moved to his own cell after showing signs of being ill and was given access to his phone. Relatives said authorities forcibly transported Ghappar back to Xinjiang in January after he completed a 16-month sentence for a drug offense in Foshan City, Guangdong Province, where he had been living and working. In August, Ghappar's uncle told RFA that Ghappar and his aunt, who sent the video out of the country, had both disappeared and their whereabouts were unknown at year's end.

In October, Zumrat Dawut, a Uyghur woman living in exile who spent two months in an internment camp, told the *Economist* that during her time there, every day the female inmates would gather in a classroom to study "Xi Jinping Thought." As they left, guards would ask them, "Is there a God?" If an inmate answered "yes," she would be beaten. According to Dawut, guards would then ask if there was a Xi Jinping, and say, "Your God cannot get you out of here, but Xi Jinping has done so much for you."

According to *Bitter Winter*, an online publication that tracks religious liberty and human rights abuses in China, on June 13, the People's Court in Korla City, Bayingolin (Bayinguoleng) Mongol Autonomous Prefecture sentenced 18 Jehovah's Witnesses to imprisonment, with sentences ranging from two and a half

years to six and a half years and a 30,000 renminbi (RMB) (\$4,600) fine for “using or organizing a cult to undermine implementation of the law.” According to *Bitter Winter*, this was the first case of using Article 300 of the criminal code, which covers “cult” offenses, against Jehovah’s Witnesses. According to a report by Weiquanwang, a Chinese blog that reports on human rights abuses in the country, most of the 18 Jehovah’s Witnesses were subject to physical punishment and mistreatment while in detention, and one of them attempted suicide.

According to CNN, shortly after former Xinjiang resident Yerzhan Kurman, an ethnic Kazakh who moved to Kazakhstan with his family in 2015, returned to Xinjiang to visit his mother in 2018, authorities placed him in a “political educational school.” Speaking to CNN in October, Kurman said authorities placed him in a cell with nine other men, with whom he shared a bucket as a toilet. Police continuously monitored them via cameras, did not allow them to talk to each other, and required them to ask permission to use the bucket. If they disobeyed the rules, police punished them by making them stand upright all night or by denying them food.

In October, a former Xinjiang resident, an ethnic Kazakh living in exile, said authorities placed her in a camp in 2017 when she returned to Xinjiang from visiting her family in Kazakhstan. She said cameras monitored her every movement. According to the former detainee, “If we cried, they would handcuff us, if we moved, they would also handcuff us...They would allow us to go to the toilet for two minutes only. If anyone exceeded that time, they would hit us with electric sticks.” She also stated that authorities cut her hair and took blood samples.

In August, the German media outlet *Deutsche Welle* reported that Sayragul Saulytbay, an ethnic Kazakh born in Ili Kazakh (Yili Kasake) Autonomous Prefecture and a former camp detainee, said she was aware of “reports of mass rapes, mock trials, suspected drug experiments – and a ‘black room’ where she was imprisoned.” Saulytbay said authorities tortured detainees in an electric chair in the “black room,” and that she said personally had experienced this.

In January, sources told RFA that in 2018 authorities jailed Ekber Imin, a Uyghur businessman who ran a real estate firm based in Urumqi, his two brothers, Memetturdi Imin and Memetjan Imin, and 20 employees, including company drivers, on charges that included “extremism.” A police officer in Hotan Prefecture told RFA that one of the crimes of which Ekber Imin was convicted was “propagating extremist ideology by incorporating ethnic and religious elements

into building designs.” A source from the prefectural legal and political bureau said Ekber Imin had been sentenced to 25 years in prison, while a Hotan City police officer said he had been sentenced to life imprisonment.

In January, RFA reported that the niece of Abidin Ayup, a 90-year-old Uyghur imam of the Qayraq Mosque in Atush (Atushi) City, Kizilsu Kirghiz (Keleisu Keerkezi) Autonomous Prefecture, learned that authorities had arrested her uncle in 2017 for “religious extremism.” She said since his being taken into custody, Ayup’s condition was unknown. Ayup’s family only became aware of his arrest after a CCP official, Song Kaicai, was charged with corruption and criminal negligence after he permitted Ayup to visit a hospital to treat an illness he experienced while being incarcerated. Ayup’s niece told RFA, “It appeared that [my uncle] got sick around May of [2017] and was taken to the Atush City Hospital.” Song reportedly gave permission for Ayup’s sons and other relatives to visit him in the hospital. Song was later arrested for taking bribes.

In August, *Buzzfeed News* interviewed multiple ethnic Kazakhs born in China and living in Kazakhstan about their experiences in internment camps. Former inmates said that “vocational training” consisted of being taught Mandarin and CCP ideology and working in factories without pay. In the classrooms, the teacher at the front was separated from the detainees by a transparent wall or a set of bars. Guards flanked the classroom, and some former detainees said they carried batons and even hit “pupils” when they made mistakes about Chinese characters.

In August, *Buzzfeed News* reported that authorities first detained Dina Nurdybai, an ethnic Kazakh who ran a clothing manufacturing business, on October 14, 2017. Nurdybai was moved between five different camps, ranging from a compound in a village to a high security prison. She told the media outlet that in the first camp, “It seemed like 50 new people were coming in every night. You could hear the shackles on their legs.” After some time, authorities told her she had been detained for downloading WhatsApp – which authorities described as “illegal software” – to her mobile phone.

Human rights groups reported that at year’s end, the whereabouts and welfare of Tashpolat Tiyip, former president of Xinjiang University, remained unknown, following his disappearance in 2017. International media reported in 2018 that Tiyip had been sentenced to death, with the sentence suspended for two years. On April 20, Amnesty International wrote on its website, “While Chinese authorities have since indicated that he is being tried on corruption charges, his current condition and whereabouts remain unknown. Without any official information

about the charges and proceedings against him, there are grave fears for Tashpolat Tiyip's future.”

Human rights groups reported the whereabouts of Rahile Dawut, a prominent professor at Xinjiang University who disappeared in December 2017, remained unknown. The Open Society University Network marked the third anniversary of her disappearance by naming Dawut an Honorary Professor in Humanities. Prior to her disappearance, Dawut had told a relative that she planned to travel from Urumqi to Beijing. Scholars at Risk, an international network of institutions and individuals whose mission is to protect scholars and promote academic freedom, awarded Dawut its Courage to Think Award for 2020. The organization recognized Dawut “for her own work, as well as that of all the scholars and students of the [XUAR], who together struggle for academic freedom and freedom of opinion, expression, belief, association, and movement.”

Human rights groups and family members reported in December that authorities sentenced Gulshan Abbas, a Uyghur doctor missing since September 2018, to 20 years in prison on terrorism-related charges. The sentence had been issued in March 2019 following a secret trial, but Abbas' family only learned of the sentence in December 2020. On September 25, at a virtual event at the UN General Assembly hosted by the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Ziba Murat, the daughter of Dr. Abbas, said, “Innocent people are being abducted, and my mother, Dr. Gulshan Abbas, a Uyghur retired medical doctor, was not spared from this tragedy, and as of now has been in a concentration camp for the past two years...I am trying every moment of my day to receive news about my mother, to fight to free her. Every day I'm left wondering where she is being held, if her delicate health is being taken care of, if she is mentally strong without a contact for two years...I would not wish this pain on my worst enemy and I cannot bear it any longer.”

RFA reported in March that authorities sentenced Rashida Dawut, a well-known Uyghur singer who had been missing since 2018, to 15 years in prison in late 2019, reportedly on “separatism” charges. Although the sentencing took place in 2019, RFA and Dawut's family only learned of it (from multiple sources) in March 2020.

In March, *National Public Radio* (NPR) reported that a Uyghur woman living in exile in Turkey said she and her daughter fled Xinjiang in 2016 while she was pregnant with her fifth child. Her husband and three other children planned to follow but went missing in Xinjiang in January 2017 after her husband sent her money in Turkey. She subsequently heard that police arrested him on the charge

of “investing in terrorism.” The woman said she did not know the whereabouts of her three children, but that she heard they were taken to Chinese military-style schools surrounded by barbed wire.

In October, *Voice of America* (VOA) reported on several cases of Uyghur individuals living outside the country who were directly contacted by Chinese officials or learned through foreign missions, UN working groups, or Chinese government press conferences that authorities had imprisoned their missing family members in the XUAR. Abdurehim Gheni, a Uyghur man living in Netherlands, had not heard from his family since 2017. The Chinese embassy in the Netherlands conveyed to Gheni a letter via the Dutch Foreign Ministry, received on September 29 according to RFA, that stated two of his brothers, a niece, and two brothers-in-law had been sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to 16 years for such crimes as disturbing social order. Nursiman Abdureshid, a human rights activist living in Turkey, had not heard from her family since 2017, according to VOA. In July, the Chinese embassy in Ankara called to inform her that her parents and two brothers had been imprisoned for “terrorism,” and that their sentences ranged from 13 to 16 years in prison. A Uyghur woman living in Europe, who asked to remain anonymous, said she received a video call from a Chinese official on WeChat, a Chinese social media platform, informing her that her parents, who disappeared in 2018, had been sentenced to more than 10 years in prison on unspecified charges.

RFA reported that in March, authorities detained Subhi Mevlan, an ethnic Uyghur cosmetics shop owner and amateur singer from Ghulja (Yining) City, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, purportedly for watching a Turkish television show about the Ottoman Empire. According to RFA, “References to the Ottoman Empire are associated in Beijing with ideas of ‘separatism’ and opposition to its rule in the region.” Mevlan, his mother, and his sister were detained after authorities searched Mevlan’s house and found a recording of the television show. Authorities released Mevlan’s mother and sister 15 days later, but Mevlan remained in detention. Six months after taking Mevlan into custody, authorities came to the house to pick up his clothes. At year’s end his whereabouts were unknown.

There were multiple reports that women were sexually assaulted in internment camps. In October, RFA reported that Qelbinur Sidik, who formerly taught Mandarin to inmates in men’s and women’s detention centers, said that one female camp officer told her, “The police officers would take groups of four or five girls in for interrogation and take turns with them.”

In March, *Bitter Winter* reported on several members of The Church of Almighty God (CAG) living in Xinjiang who said authorities imprisoned and tortured them in internment camps. One church member said that after she refused to sign statements saying she would abandon her religious beliefs guards beat her, put a hood over her head, and handcuffed her to a chair for three days. She said that at one point female guards forcibly stripped her of her clothes to bathe her and she narrowly avoided being sexually assaulted by a male guard. Another CAG member held in a camp said she attended indoctrination classes every day and was told to sign statements saying she would abandon her religious beliefs. Authorities punished those who did not sign these statements, including by forcing them to stand still for long periods of time for several days in a row and by rationing their food.

According to media, authorities continued to have more than one million CCP officials from other parts of the country live part-time with local families. According to a 2018 CNN report, the government instituted these home stays (the “Pair Up and Become a Family” program) in 2014 to target agricultural households in southern Xinjiang. The government said the program was part of efforts to combat “terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism.” The government required families to provide detailed information on their personal lives and political views during to the officials’ visits to their homes. Live-in officials also subjected families to political indoctrination. In October, the *Economist* reported that Han “relatives” sometimes stayed with Uyghur families for up to 10 days every month.

In September, *Bitter Winter* reported on sexual assaults that occurred in Uyghur homes as a result of the “Pair Up and Become a Family” program. Speaking of her experience, Qelbinur Sidik said Uyghur families “were asked to ‘live together, cook together, eat together, learn together, sleep together’ with Han cadres assigned by the local government. Women must have a male Han cadre ‘relative,’ and men must have a Han female ‘relative.’” According to Sidik, “We had no option but to accept the arrangements, and no right to object.” Sidik said her family was assigned her husband’s boss and his wife as “relatives,” but the wife stopped visiting. The man repeatedly made lewd and suggestive comments to Sidik’s husband about her and “playful” advances to her, which gradually progressed to sexual molestation. Sidik said Han male “relatives” bragged about sexually abusing young women and girls. “How could [the girls] resist? Their fathers, brothers, and mothers were all in camps. They were powerless to repel the men and were terrified themselves of being taken away.” Zumrat Dawut told the

Economist her 10-year-old daughter was assigned a 20-year-old man as “kin,” a relationship that made Dawut extremely uncomfortable.

In June, VOA reported that according to Uyghur Hjelp, a Norwegian-based Uyghur advocacy and aid organization, since 2018, authorities detained at least 518 Uyghur religious figures and imams. In October 2019, NPR reported that according to family members, courts handed down prison sentences of up to 20 years to religious students, imams, or persons who prayed regularly. Imam Abdurkerim Memet from Yengisar County, Kashgar City was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2017, according to his daughter, who only learned of his whereabouts in 2020.

In November, RFA reported that according to Abduweli Ayup, a fellow at the International Cities of Refuge Network, XUAR authorities arrested and detained in camps at least 613 imams between early 2017 and June 2020. He said that in interviews with Uyghurs, they told him Uyghurs in Xinjiang were afraid to die because there would be no one to oversee their funeral rites. One academic said authorities also targeted female religious leaders who traditionally officiated at the funerals of women, taught children to recite the Quran, and conducted other rituals within the home.

On June 8, *Deutsche Welle* reported that it conducted separate interviews with four former detainees. The former detainees said that after they had been held under arrest for several months in 2017 and 2018, authorities handed them a list of 70 crimes and forced them to pick one or more from the list, after which they were then convicted of these crimes in sham trials devoid of due process. According to the former detainees, most of the “crimes” on the list were religious acts, such as praying or wearing headscarves.

In February, the Associated Press (AP) reported that information from the Karakax List indicated authorities detained Uyghur Memtimin Emer, a former imam in his 80s, and his three sons in 2017 and sentenced Emer to up to 12 years in prison on charges of “stirring up terrorism,” acting as an unauthorized “wild” imam, following Wahabbism, and conducting illegal religious teaching. One of Emer’s former students told AP that Emer practiced a moderate Central Asian form of Islam and had stopped preaching and teaching in 1997. The Karakax List indicted that in 2017, Emer’s sons were held in detention for having too many children, trying to travel abroad, being “untrustworthy,” being “infected with religious extremism,” and going on the Hajj.

In April, RFA reported on several cases that came to light during the year in which Uyghurs were given long prison sentences. In 2019, taxi driver Shireli Memtili received a 16-and-a-half-year sentence for “illegally gathering and disturbing the social order,” “endangering national security,” receiving “illegal religious education,” and driving an “illegal” religious figure, which RFA stated likely meant an unlicensed imam. Abduhaliq Aziz, a Uyghur studying in Egypt, told RFA he learned in February that his mother, who disappeared in 2017, had been sentenced to six years in prison. Aziz said he had no news of his father, who disappeared in 2016. Aziz said she was likely sentenced for sending him to study abroad to study Islam. According to Aziz, “The fact that they sent me money [while I was abroad] is also a possible reason.”

RFA reported in November that Kastar Polat, an ethnic Kazakh from Chaghantoqay (Yumin) County, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, was sentenced to 15 years in prison and fined RMB 30,000 (\$4,600) for “promoting religious extremism.” Polat, a locally well-known wrestler, was detained in 2019 for posting a song by Kazakh singer Didar Kamiev on his social media page. According to sources quoted in the RFA report, the song Polat posted did not “directly challenge” Chinese authorities, but instead encouraged people to “preserve the traditions and culture of the Kazakh people.” Polat’s family received a written notification of his sentencing in August.

In May, Amnesty International reported that Ekpar Asat, a Uyghur journalist and entrepreneur who founded the popular Uyghur-language website Baghdax.com, was convicted of “inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination” and sentenced to 15 years in prison. Public security officers in Xinjiang first detained Asat in April 2016 after he returned from a U.S. Department of State-sponsored leadership program in the United States. He was among a group of six Uyghur webmasters and writers detained between March and May of that year.

In November, NPR reported that authorities sometimes forced Muslims who were registered in Xinjiang but residing elsewhere in China to return to Xinjiang. A source told NPR that in December 2019, authorities sent one Hui Muslim woman who taught at a religious school in a mosque located outside Xinjiang, together with her infant child, back to her hometown of Tacheng City, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, where she was questioned and received a seven-year prison sentence. The woman had previously completed theological studies at a university in Egypt. The source stated he did not know the crime for which the woman had been convicted.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on June 9, authorities sentenced Jiang Yanghua, a CAG member in Aksu City, to 15 years in prison and a fine of RMB 100,000 (\$15,300) for “using or organizing a cult to undermine implementation of the law.” The court determined that she kept CAG e-books, videos, and audio recordings in her home and allowed other CAG members to gather there.

RFA reported that officials threatened to take residents to internment camps as a means of enforcing COVID-19 quarantine restrictions. When Kashgar underwent lockdown in July, residents reported to RFA that authorities posted police and placed barricades on every corner and cautioned that “whoever leaps over [the barricades] will be taken for ‘re-education.’”

In March, ASPI published a report, *‘Re-education’, forced labour and surveillance beyond Xinjiang*, stating that authorities facilitated the mass transfer of more than 80,000 Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities from the region to factories across the country between 2017 and 2019, and that some of them were sent directly from detention camps. ASPI stated, “The estimated figure is conservative and the actual figure is likely to be far higher.” One independent researcher stated that, based on a survey of Chinese academic research and government figures, up to 1.6 million transferred laborers were at risk of being subjected to forced labor.

In its detailed analysis of the Karakax List, the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) stated that some entries indicated the individual had “found employment.” According to the UHRP, “The term used, *jiuye* can have the innocuous meaning of simply getting a job, but it is also associated with China’s longstanding ‘re-education through labor’ or *laogai* system, describing people being released from a re-education camp or prison into a factory or other facility where they work with little or no pay and remain under state monitoring and control.” UHRP stated the document, coupled with other official media, indicated some individuals worked in factories located within detention camps.

Satellite imagery analyzed by ASPI’s Xinjiang Data Project appeared to indicate factories were located within medium-security detention facilities. In its September report, entitled *Documenting Xinjiang’s Detention System*, ASPI stated, “There is evidence that detainees ‘released’ from these camps have gone into either forced labour assignments or strictly controlled residential surveillance.” In November, RFA reported that satellite imagery provided to it by Bahtiya Omar of the Norway-based Uyghur Transitional Justice Database showed that factories were constructed adjacent to detention camps outside Aksu City between 2017 and

2019. Omar told RFA that the images were “irrefutable proof” that “China’s camp policies have been combined with forced labor from 2018 onward.”

In September, media reported that the government released a white paper, entitled *Employment and Labor Rights in Xinjiang*, that stated the government had provided “vocational training” for an average of 1.29 million persons in the region each year from 2014 to 2019. The paper said the government carried out this program to educate the workforce and combat poverty. One academic speculated the government may have released the paper in response to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which was under consideration in the U.S. Congress at the time.

In February, RFA reported that authorities sent hundreds of Uyghurs to other parts of China to work in factories affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, millions of people throughout the country were in quarantine under government orders. Dolkun Isa, President of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) based in Munich, Germany, said, “It is clear that the Chinese government is placing these Uyghurs in harm’s way because Uyghur lives don’t matter to China.” A Uyghur researcher based in the U.S. said, “China is sending Uyghurs because they have no means to oppose the authorities, they can be forced to work as cheap labor, and the companies that employ them won’t be held accountable, even if they get sick or die due to the coronavirus.”

In December, the Newlines Institute for Strategic Policy released a report indicating that in 2018 in Aksu, Hotan, and Kashgar Prefectures, at least 570,000 persons were mobilized involuntarily to work in cotton-picking operations, according to official government figures. The report stated the actual number of laborers could be higher by several hundred thousand.

During the year, academic studies and media investigations indicated that authorities administered unknown drugs and injections to women in detention, forcibly implanted intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUDs) prior to and during internment, coerced women to accept abortion and surgical sterilization, and used internment as punishment for birth control violations. Multiple eyewitness and victims’ accounts supported these findings. In an AP investigative report published on June 29, a U.S.-based academic stated said the intention “may not be to fully eliminate” the Uyghur population, “but it will sharply diminish their vitality. It will make them easier to assimilate into the mainstream Chinese population.” In an academic paper, a United Kingdom-based scholar stated, “It’s not immediate, shocking, mass-killing, on-the-spot-type genocide, but it’s slow,

painful, creeping genocide.” According to the scholar, the aggressive birth control measures were a “direct means of genetically reducing” the Uyghur population.

On July 21, the Jamestown Foundation released a report, *Sterilizations, IUDs, and Coercive Birth Prevention: The CCP’s Campaign to Suppress Uyghur Birth Rates in Xinjiang*, based on further analysis of the Karakax List, government statistics, and other documents. According to the report, natural population growth in Xinjiang’s minority regions began declining dramatically in 2017. Growth rates fell by 84 percent in the two largest Uyghur prefectures between 2015 and 2018 and declined further in several minority regions in 2019. In 2020, one Uyghur region set a near-zero birth rate target of 1.05 per million. The report stated, “This was intended to be achieved through ‘family planning work.’” It cited Chinese academic articles linking “religious extremism” to birth rates in Xinjiang, including one article that said, “It is undeniable that the wave of extremist religious thinking has fueled a resurgence in birth rates in Xinjiang’s southern regions with concentrated Uyghur populations.”

According to the Jamestown Foundation report, government documents “bluntly mandate that birth control violations are punishable by extrajudicial internment in ‘training’ camps. This confirms evidence from the leaked ‘Karakax List’ document, wherein such violations were the most common reason for internment....” The report stated government documents from 2019 laid out plans to sterilize 14 percent of all married women of childbearing age in one primarily Uyghur county and 34 percent in another during that year. The project continued in 2020 with increased funding. The report concluded that the campaign “likely aims to sterilize rural minority women with three or more children as well as some with two children – equivalent to at least 20 percent of all childbearing-age women.” Government documents show that in 2019, authorities planned to insert IUDs or sterilize 80 percent of women of childbearing age in four minority prefectures in southern Xinjiang. According to the report, “In 2018, 80 percent of all net added IUD placements in China (calculated as placements minus removals) were performed in Xinjiang, despite the fact that the region only makes up 1.8 percent of the nation’s population.”

According to the government-affiliated media outlet *ECNS*, in response to the Jamestown Foundation report, Xinjiang Health Commission Director Mutalif Roz said in an August press conference that authorities in Xinjiang had applied the same family planning restrictions on ethnic Han and all ethnic minorities in the region since 2018. Roz said the government’s family planning policy had historically permitted Uyghurs to have more children than Han Chinese, but in

2017 the same restrictions were placed on all ethnic groups: Couples in urban areas could have two children, while couples in rural areas could have three. *ECNS* reported that Tursunay Abdurehim, an official from Xinjiang's Bureau of Statistics, said the Jamestown Foundation report was biased, used incorrect data, and cited fake cases.

On June 29, AP released an article based on its investigation of government statistics, state documents, and interviews with 30 ex-detainees, family members, and a former detention camp instructor. AP stated the government "is taking draconian measures to slash birth rates among Uyghurs and other minorities as part of a sweeping campaign to curb its Muslim population, even as it encourages some of the country's Han majority to have more children." AP stated, "The campaign over the past four years in the far west region of Xinjiang is leading to what some experts are calling a form of 'demographic genocide.'" The AP reported PRC government statistics showed birth rates in Hotan and Kashgar fell by more than 60 percent from 2015 to 2018, the latest year government statistics were available. Across the XUAR, birth rates fell by 24 percent in 2019, compared with 4.2 percent nationwide. According to AP, "The state regularly subjects minority women to pregnancy checks, and forces intrauterine devices, sterilization and even abortion on hundreds of thousands...Even while the use of IUDs and sterilization has fallen nationwide, it is rising sharply in Xinjiang." AP reported that authorities threatened to detain women who did not comply, and parents with three or more children were often detained in camps or fined. Former detainees said authorities also detained doctors and medical students who helped Uyghur women give birth at home to evade the birth control policies. On June 29, PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian, when asked about the AP article, said, "Everyone, regardless of whether they're an ethnic minority or Han Chinese, must follow and act in accordance with the law."

In the same article published in June, AP reported, "The parents of three or more [children are] ripped away from their families unless they can pay huge fines. Police raid homes, terrifying parents as they search for hidden children." According to government notices obtained by AP, authorities offered rewards to individuals who reported "illegal" births. Gulnar Omirzakh, an ethnic Kazakh, told AP that in 2016 authorities forced her to get an IUD and threatened to detain her if she did not pay a large fine for giving birth to her third child. In January 2018, four officials in military camouflage came to her home and told Omirzakh she had to pay a fine equivalent to \$2,685 for having more than two children. The officials threatened to send her husband to a labor camp if she did not pay.

In its June article, AP also reported that a former detainee named Tursunay Ziyawudun said that during her internment, authorities injected her with drugs until she stopped menstruating and repeatedly kicked her in her lower stomach during interrogations. She said as a result, she was no longer able to have children and still sometimes doubled over in pain and bled. Ziyawudun said authorities forced her and the 40 other women in her “class” to attend weekly family planning lectures. She said married women were rewarded for good behavior with conjugal visits from their husbands, but only on condition that they took birth control pills beforehand.

The *Financial Times* reported that the Karakax List contained an entry dated March 7, 2018, for one Uyghur woman. The reasons listed next to her name for her internment were “having one more child than allowed by family planning policies” and “having a passport.” The *Financial Times* confirmed with her sister living in Turkey that she lost contact with the woman at that time.

In July, RFA reported that local sources said authorities in Suydung Township, Qorghas (Huocheng) County, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture gathered local residents together and ordered them not to tell outside visitors, including both Chinese nationals and foreigners, about the forced birth control practices in the region, should inspections by such groups occur. A neighborhood committee chief in Suydung Township said, “They [the authorities] said that we should say the birth control policy is good, but that we shouldn’t give really detailed answers. They said to say ‘no’ if asked whether [residents] had IUDs inserted.” Instead, authorities instructed residents to “talk at length” about topics such as free health checks, home construction, and social security.

According to RFA, there were cases of Uyghur women who faced long-term health problems due to forced birth control procedures. A Uyghur doctor living in exile in Turkey said that since 2013, she had seen at least 200 Uyghur women fitted with IUDs and at least 80 who were forcibly sterilized. She said there were cases in which the IUDs were stuck in the uterine walls, causing physical problems. She said there were also women with psychological problems due to undergoing the procedures.

In October, the *Economist* reported that “when Uyghur girls grow old enough to wed (the legal age for which is 20 [for women] in China), they can expect to be cajoled by officials into marrying Han men. Nowadays refusal can incur retribution for the woman’s family.”

In March, the U.S.-based NGO Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (VOC) released a report entitled *Organ Procurement and Extrajudicial Execution in China: A Review of the Evidence*. In the report, VOC stated that Uyghur Muslim prisoners of conscience, along with Falun Gong practitioners, were the most likely source of organs for sale in the country's organ transplant market. In November, RFA reported that an infectious disease hospital in Aksu City had been turned into an internment camp, which experts said they believed indicated authorities could be harvesting organs from detainees.

Media reported authorities conducted regular, sometimes daily, inspections of private homes to ensure no religious activities were occurring. On April 27, Dili Shati, spokesperson for the WUC, told RFA that during Ramadan, in places such as in Kashgar, Hotan, and Aksu Prefectures, and other areas in the south, "The Chinese government used the political excuse of so-called poverty alleviation" to enter the homes of Muslims and encourage them to drink tea and eat fruits.

Reports published in June on the official websites of local governments in the XUAR indicated authorities restricted or banned certain groups of Muslims, including CCP members, their relatives, students, and employees of state-owned enterprises and state-run organizations, from observing Ramadan.

In May, RFA reported that authorities ordered residents in Makit (Maigaiti) County, Kashgar Prefecture to report anyone who fasted during Ramadan. A Uyghur working for the Makit County government said authorities threatened residents with punishment, including detaining them in internment camps, if they did not comply. Another Uyghur government employee said the reason for the order was to maintain "national security." An official in Peyziwat (Jiashi) County, Kashgar Prefecture said his township scheduled dawn flag raising ceremonies and evening political study sessions specifically to interfere with fasting during Ramadan.

In April, a Kazakh human rights activist told RFA that in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, "[E]very community and every unit must organize a large-scale group meal at noon. For those who do not have a work unit or retired people, all units must gather them for lunch together." According to the activist, authorities placed fruits, cookies, and other foods at expressway toll booths, and required ethnic minorities to eat them, and, in some areas, officials put beer at the table and demanded Muslims drink it. The activist said village committees, town governments, and county governments organized home inspection teams to prevent observance of Ramadan fasting. "Everyone must be checked from 12 to 1. They

[the inspection teams] also need to bring biscuits, sugar, and fruit, and ask people at home to eat at noon.”

In September, RFA reported that Xinjiang authorities continued to maintain a ban, enacted in 2017, on daily prayers for anyone younger than 65 years old. A village police officer in Atush City, Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture said officers did not allow those younger than 65 to enter mosques. Local sources also said authorities restricted all individuals receiving government welfare benefits from saying daily prayers, including those older than age 65. According to sources, neighbors were encouraged to monitor each other and report to police on anyone “guilty” of religious practices, such as observing daily prayer. The police officer in Atush said, “We tell the offenders that they have violated the law, and we turn them over to the village brigade. The village brigade takes them for re-education, and we then inform their family about what happened. That’s how it goes.”

In May, *Taiwan News* reported that a high school teacher in Shandong Province said the school forced all Uyghur children to eat pork with their Han classmates. According to the teacher, “To turn them into Chinese is the end goal of the education.”

The government continued to administer mosques and restrict access to houses of worship, requiring worshipers to apply for mosque entry permits. In September, ASPI stated in its report *Tracing the Destruction of Uyghur and Islamic Spaces in Xinjiang*, “In many cases, otherwise undamaged sites appear to have installed security checkpoints at the entrances or have been fully enclosed by walls, restricting access.”

In November, RFA reported on satellite imagery provided to it by the Norway-based Uyghur Transitional Justice Database. The imagery appeared to show that two camps with adjacent factories located outside Aksu City were constructed between 2017 and 2019. These were separated by a cemetery and a crematorium. Sources told RFA individuals who died in the camps were cremated, contrary to Uyghur religious and funeral traditions.

Witnesses and former prisoners stated authorities forced Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslims in custody to renounce Islam, criticize their own Islamic beliefs and those of fellow inmates, and recite CCP propaganda in the internment camps.

RFA reported that on April 28, a United Kingdom-based professor posted a series of time-lapsed satellite images on social media of authorities systematically

demolishing plots in the Sultanim Cemetery in Hotan City and erecting a parking lot in 2019 and 2020. The professor stated, “This is not just a run-of-the-mill graveyard. It is a well-known sacred site, the only major one inside the city. People would go there to pray for healing, fertility, forgiveness, etc.”

According to RFA, on May 22 authorities announced plans to demolish a Uyghur cemetery in Urumqi on June 10. A document making the announcement circulated on social media. It stated those with family members buried in the cemetery needed to register to exhume their remains.

According to human rights groups and international media, in addition to the IJOP big-data collection program, authorities in Xinjiang continued to maintain extensive and invasive security and surveillance, in part to gain information regarding individuals’ religious adherence and practices. Human rights groups said surveillance was more severe in parts of the country where religious minorities predominated, including the XUAR, compared with other parts of the country with ethnic Han Chinese majorities, due to the connection between religion and the ethnic and cultural identities of these groups.

Government documents stated that Han Chinese officials continued to implement a surveillance system, in which teams of six – composed of police or local officials and one Uyghur language speaker – went to each house and compiled information on occupants. Since the program began in 2014, more than 200,000 cadres from all levels of the government were sent to more than 8,500 villages. The teams reported on “extremist” behavior, such as abstaining from alcohol, fasting during Ramadan, and wearing long beards. They reported on the presence of “undesirable” items, such as Qurans, or occupants’ perceived propensity for “extremist” ideology.

In October, the online magazine *ChinaFile* published a report entitled *State of Surveillance*, examining 76,000 government procurements throughout the country related to surveillance equipment dating back to 2004. The report stated Xinjiang’s surveillance apparatus was among “the most pervasive and invasive” in the world, using facial recognition software to identify ethnic minority community populations. “A person’s facial hair, family size, even a person’s name: all are traits local governments in Xinjiang have viewed as signs of danger,” the report stated. According to the report, the surveillance system also included “QR codes on people’s front doors, which police can scan for information about the household” and required residents to “swipe ID cards to fuel up their cars.”

According to *ChinaFile*'s report, a 2017 government procurement notice for Shawan County, Tacheng Prefecture, stated the county would acquire computer systems that could "automatically identify and investigate key persons involved in terrorism and [threatening social] stability." The report stated that a 200-page Shawan government surveillance feasibility study in 2015 found the 484 existing cameras for its population of 200,000 (77 percent Han Chinese, 18 percent ethnic Kazakh, and five percent ethnic Uyghur) was insufficient, and recommended authorities install "4,791 networked HD cameras, 70 of which were to be facial recognition units" in public spaces, including crowded places, and on buses and trains. Fifty of the 70 facial recognition units would be installed in mosques.

In its October report, *ChinaFile* stated there was a sharp increase in recent years of security cameras in "core" checkpoints (e.g., airports or subway stations), "key" checkpoints (e.g., schools, hospitals, hotels, shopping malls, and entertainment venues), and "auxiliary areas," areas without a single point of entry or exit (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, or scenic areas). Photographs taken at these additional checkpoints, together with other data, fed into "surveillance algorithms." There was also an increase of neighborhood "convenience police stations." According to *ChinaFile*, "In Shawan, where people have to provide their ID number and have their picture taken in order to enter subways, hotels, Internet cafes, and other such places, authorities hoped to use this information to train an integrated tracking system."

According to HRW, turning off one's mobile phone repeatedly was also considered a suspicious behavior, as was using a cellular phone that was not registered to the individual. Both actions could lead to detention.

In December, the *Economist* reported that authorities in Urumqi visited schools weekly to question children about their home lives. Zumrat Dawut said every Friday authorities questioned her three children and others about whether their parents prayed or used Islamic greetings at home or talked to the children about the Prophet Mohammad. Each Monday, all residents were required to attend a ceremonial raising of the national flag in the courtyard of her apartment block. Dawut said every family was told to keep watch on 10 neighboring families and report anything suspicious by putting notes in a box during the ceremony. In September, Dawut told RFA, "The Chinese [government's] hatred of religion has gotten out of control... They've now put up things inside people's homes, things that record voices, and there's even the possibility that they're filming people at home." According to RFA, anyone who did not report a "mistake" within a given week was labeled as having "ideological problems" and taken to the village cadre's

office for questioning, a threat which “effectively compelled neighbors to find fault in their neighbors’ smallest, most innocuous everyday actions.”

In September, RFA reported that in Kashgar, a volunteer responsible for monitoring and reporting on 10 households said Uyghur residents there were so worried about being suspected of performing morning prayer ablutions that since 2018 they no longer washed their faces in the mornings. The brigade leader said, “In the mornings, we go and ask people what they’re up to, see what they’re doing – are people doing *namaz* [morning prayer] or not, are they washing themselves? We look at these kinds of things.”

A Xinjiang government statement available online in 2018 indicated officials had to inspect the homes in which they were staying for any religious elements or symbols, and the statement instructed officials to confiscate such items if found. In an op-ed published on January 9 in the Turkey-based *Daily Sabah*, a U.S.-based academic wrote that authorities looked for items such as prayer mats and Qurans.

Demolition of mosques continued under a campaign that began in 2016 called “Mosque Rectification.” Based on analysis of satellite imagery, ASPI, in its September report entitled *Tracing the Destruction of Uyghur and Islamic Spaces in Xinjiang*, estimated approximately 16,000 mosques in Xinjiang (65 percent of the total) had been destroyed or damaged as a result of government policies, mostly since 2017. An estimated 8,500 had been demolished outright, with satellite images showing vacant land where they previously stood. Approximately 7,500 had sustained damage. A further 30 percent of important Islamic sacred sites, including shrines, cemeteries, and pilgrimage routes, had been demolished across the region, mostly since 2017, and an additional 28 percent were damaged or altered in some way. ASPI stated, “The Chinese government’s destruction of cultural heritage aims to erase, replace and rewrite what it means to be Uyghur.” According to the *Wall Street Journal*, in response to the report, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said there were 24,000 mosques in the region.

In August, RFA reported that authorities built a public toilet on the site of the Tokul Mosque, which authorities had demolished in 2018 in Suntagh Village, Atush City, Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture. A Uyghur neighborhood committee chief from Suntagh said the toilet was built approximately three kilometers (1.85 miles) outside central Atush City in an area that saw few to no tourists who would require access to a washroom. The committee chief said authorities likely built the facility to cover up the ruins of the Tokul Mosque as well as for the needs of inspecting groups or cadres visiting the area. Another

resident of Suntagh said authorities tore down another mosque in the village in 2019 and built in its place a convenience store that sold alcohol and cigarettes, which Muslims generally do not consume for religious reasons.

RFA also reported in August that a public security official in Suntagh Village stated that in 2019 the government destroyed Azna Mosque and Bastaggam Mosque, leaving only Teres Mosque standing. Teres Mosque was reportedly small and in poor condition. According to the official, the Anza and Bastaggam Mosques were constructed of brick, whereas the Teres Mosque had earthen walls that were “covered with older wood.” The official said, “[The destroyed] mosques were more solid because the roofs were poured...with cement,” while the Teres Mosque could barely keep out the rain.

On August 24, *Made In China Journal* published an article analyzing the widespread destruction of *mazars*, which it defined as locations that hold particular spiritual significance, “a connection to and presence of the divine that surpasses the sacredness even of the mosque as a physical structure...Mazars are nearly always marked by some physical construction, ranging from high domes with green, glazed tiles to nothing more than a few flags on crooked twig poles.” According to the article, sometime between March 10 and 17, 2018, authorities destroyed a six-meter (20-foot) high grave marker for Imam Jefiri Sadiq, who died there 1,000 years earlier, and removed the flags surrounding the site. The pilgrimage site was located on a high sand dune 75 kilometers (47 miles) from the town of Niya. According to the article, following the destruction and removal of the flags, all that remained was “an empty dune.” Accompanying the article were before and after photographs of Imam Asim mazar, also located in the desert near Khotan, in 2010. The 2010 photograph showed pilgrims praying at Imam Asim mazar, a grave marker atop a low intact mudbrick building on a sand dune surrounded by and adorned with dozens of flags upon which pilgrims tied prayers. The 2018 photograph showed a plain, low, crumbling structure with a collapsed outer wall on a barren sand dune.

In September, NYT published an article on destruction of Islamic holy sites that included photographs taken in Kashgar. One showed a Uyghur *muezzin* calling the evening prayer from the rooftop of a partially destroyed mosque in Kashgar, and another showed a closed mosque from which the crescent symbol had been removed. Another showed the interior of a former mosque that had been turned into a bar, while a fourth showed a mosque turned into a shop. According to the article, journalists found four sites in Hotan City where mosques had been torn down and replaced with public parks or empty lots. The article also included

before and after satellite imagery at the Ordam Padishah mazar, located in the desert near Yensigar Town, 50 kilometers (31 miles) from Kashgar, that showed the shrine's mosque, prayer hall, and housing where custodians lived had been completely obliterated by 2018. A Uyghur man from Kashgar who was living in Australia, said, "It's like I'm losing my family members because our culture is being taken away. It's like our flesh, our body, is being removed."

In October, a research study published online on parent-child separation in Yarkand County, Kashgar Prefecture, analyzed data from government spreadsheets not previously available. The study found that government statistics showed that between 2017 and 2019, the number of boarding students in primary and middle schools (grades 1 to 9) increased by 76.9 percent, from 497,800 to 880,500. According to NYT, children in these schools studied ethnic Han culture, Mandarin, and CCP ideology.

In October, the *Economist* reported that in 2018, the state newspaper *Xinjiang Daily* described a visit by Zhu Hailun, deputy party chief of Xinjiang, to a "Kindness Pre-school" at a camp in Hotan Prefecture. He was told that the children, some aged less than a year, all had parents who could not take care of them "for various reasons." In May, RFA reported that the government education authority in Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture, circulated an official notice saying that all preschools in the county must convert into boarding schools. It required guardians to drop off children on Monday morning and not pick them up until Saturday. The online study concluded that this was part of the government's effort to assimilate children and control their culture, language, and traditions.

According to the online study of parent-child separation in Yarkand County, Kashgar Prefecture, a region with approximately 900,000 residents, there were approximately 100,000 children aged seven to 12. In 2018, the government classified more than 10,000 of these as being "children in difficult circumstances" or "children in especially difficult circumstances," based on whether they had one or both parents in internment camps. Government records showed more than 1,000 children had both parents interned. Nearly all of the children were Uyghur, apart from 11 who were of Kazakh and Tajik ethnicity. No ethnic Han child had a parent in custody. The data indicated that 53.1 percent of all students in Yarkand lived in boarding facilities.

In December, *Bitter Winter* reported that in a boarding school in southern Xinjiang, some children were allowed to visit their relatives once every two weeks, but others had to stay at the school. There, teachers made them watch propaganda

films praising the CCP. The report stated that in Korla City, Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture, police officers took children aged 3-6 whose parents were in internment camps to “welfare houses” after school.

The Islamic Association of China, managed by the State Administration for Religious Affairs under the leadership of the United Front Work Department, passed regulations in 2019 regarding the qualifications for Muslim clerics throughout the country. The national level regulations required Muslim clerics to meet the following requirements: “uphold the leadership of the CCP; love Islam and serve Muslims; possess a degree in or receive formal training in Islamic scriptural education; have graduated from junior high school or above, in addition to attaining competency in Arabic; and be at least 22 years old.” In addition to these, XUAR regulations on the administration of religious affairs, revised in 2014, required clerics to “uphold the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system, safeguard the reunification of the motherland and ethnic unity, be patriotic and loyal, and have high prestige and religious knowledge.”

To apply to become a cleric, applicants had to first submit an “Application Form for the Qualification of Islamic Clerics.” In addition, they had to provide a certificate of education from an Islamic school, an education certificate from junior high school or above, and a physical examination certificate issued by a designated hospital (which included items such as “mental history”). Applicants were also required to submit a household registration certificate and national ID card. The applicant had to receive a letter of recommendation written by the Administration of Islamic Activity Sites where the applicant’s household registration was located and submit it to the Islamic Association of the province, autonomous region, or municipality after review and approval by the local Islamic Association.

International media and NGOs reported Chinese authorities or their representatives pressured Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslims from Xinjiang to spy on fellow expatriates, return to China, or cease advocacy on behalf of residents of Xinjiang, and threatened retaliation against family members still in Xinjiang if they did not comply. The Karakax List contained personal data on more than 300 Uyghurs living abroad.

In May, a WUC representative told the U.S.-based *Vice News* that every two months the organization received more than 100 reports of CCP officials harassing Uyghurs living outside of China and pressuring them to inform on fellow Uyghurs abroad. The representative said, “The past year we have noticed it more than ever. People are breaking down because they are so mentally exhausted. Many won’t

talk to us. We can understand why – families are being targeted because their relatives abroad are criticizing the Communist government.” According to *Vice News*, during the year, Uyghurs living in exile became more likely to give information on their community to protect family in Xinjiang from being sent to internment camps, where there were fears of COVID-19 outbreaks. The news outlet interviewed 12 Uyghurs living in London, 11 of whom reported suffering serious psychological trauma – including paranoia, PTSD, depression, anxiety, and night terrors – since the internment camps first opened.

In February, Amnesty International published a report stating authorities continued to pressure Uyghurs, ethnic Kazaks, and other Muslims living abroad to return to China and threatened to retaliate against their families in Xinjiang if they spoke out about human rights abuses there. In August 2019, the *Atlantic* published “Conversations with Uyghurs in Belgium, Finland, and the Netherlands reveal a systematic effort by China to silence Uyghurs overseas with brazen tactics of surveillance, blackmail, and intimidation.” The article described Chinese authorities monitoring Uyghurs abroad by surveilling their contacts and family members in Xinjiang via phone or social media and pressuring them to cease advocacy efforts on behalf of Uyghur rights or speak out about relatives in Xinjiang who had been detained or whose whereabouts were unknown. A Uyghur woman living in Turkey told NPR in March that one day she received a call from a Chinese area code. The man on the line identified himself as a police officer in Xinjiang. Referring to herself and her husband, she said, “He knew everything about us. He even sent us photos of our families in China. The man told me we had to spy on other Uyghurs. He said: If you don’t, you don’t know what bad things might happen to you.”

In January, *Agence France Press* reported that the Chinese embassy in Saudi Arabia had stopped renewing passports for Uyghurs and only issued documents that enabled their one-way return to China. In March, NPR estimated there were 35,000 Uyghurs living in Turkey and many of them had expired Chinese passports. A Uyghur activist living in Turkey, told NPR that he knew of many people who had attempted to renew their passports at the Chinese consulate in Turkey, only to have Chinese officials destroy them. He said officials then presented them with documents that enabled their one-way return to China. In January, one Uyghur student told RFA the Chinese embassy did renew passports for Han Chinese.

Media reported the PRC placed pressure on foreign governments to repatriate Uyghurs living in exile. On December 26, the PRC announced that the National People’s Congress had ratified an extradition treaty with Turkey, which it said

would be used for counterterrorism purposes. China and Turkey signed the bilateral treaty agreement in 2017, but Turkey's parliament has not ratified it. A number of Uyghur diaspora organizations raised concerns that Turkish ratification of the treaty could result in the extradition of Uyghur refugees living in Turkey back to China; however, local Uyghur community sources said they knew of no cases of deportations of Uyghurs to the PRC during the year. Turkish government officials, including Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, reaffirmed their commitment not to return Uyghurs to China. On December 31, Foreign Minister Cavusoglu stated, "Until now, there have been requests for returns from China related to Uyghurs in Turkey. And you know Turkey hasn't taken steps like this."

According to VOA, in an interview with the government-affiliated *China Global Television Network* (CGTN) in April, Elijan Anayit, a spokesperson for the XUAR government, said foreign officials and media spread "rumors" about the detention and persecution of Uyghurs. He said the government subsidized Islamic schooling, including the Xinjiang Islamic Institute, which he said had more than 1,000 students at eight branches around the region. Anayit said, "The criminals who have been prosecuted are neither religious personages nor religious staff. They are criminals who spread extremism and engage in separation, infiltration, sabotage, and terrorist and extremist activities under the banner of Islam."

On July 19, BBC interviewed China's ambassador to the United Kingdom Liu Xiaoming. The interviewer showed Liu drone footage appearing to show Uyghur men with their heads shaven who were blindfolded and shackled and being forced onto trains. Liu denied claims that the government was abusing Uyghurs and questioned the authenticity of the video. He said, "You know, sometimes you have transfers of prisons and prisoners in any country... There is no such a [sic] concentration camp in Xinjiang." Asked about reports of forced birth control and forced sterilization, he said the population in Xinjiang had doubled in the past 40 years. He stated, "So there is no so-called restriction of population and there is no so-called forced abortion, and so on... Government policy is opposed to this kind of practice. But I cannot rule out, you know, single cases for any country." Liu said, "People in Xinjiang enjoy happy life... People call for good order to [be] restored in Xinjiang. China, of course, is opposed to any torture, any persecution, and discrimination of any ethnic group of people."

Media reported that on August 30, at a conference at the French Institute of International Relations, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said, "The rights of all trainees in the education and training program, though their minds have been encroached by terrorism and extremism, have been fully guaranteed. Now all of them have

graduated, there is no one in the education and training center now. They all have found jobs.”

CGTN reported the third Central Symposium on Work Related to Xinjiang was held in Beijing on September 25-26. President Xi delivered the keynote speech, during which he lauded the CCP’s work in economic development, education, health care, and other sectors since the second central symposium in 2014. Xi stated the CCP needed to continue to promote “economic development” in Xinjiang and continue to strive to implement the Party’s “Xinjiang policy” to build a Xinjiang with “Chinese characteristics.”

In October, the government-affiliated media outlet *Tianshan Network* reported Xinjiang’s Development Research Center conducted an employment survey, purportedly to challenge reports by “Western think tanks” that forced labor was occurring in the region. According to media, the center’s report found no examples of forced labor, instead stating that minorities in Xinjiang had a “strong desire” to work, and that residents “hoped” the government would increase employment opportunities.

According to *Tianshan Network*, on October 16-17, Minister of Education Chen Baosheng visited the region to evaluate its “educational work.” During the visit, he said local authorities must continue to “strengthen the Party’s overall leadership over education” and “strengthen the work in the ideological field, guard the ideological front, and carry out the project of saturating Xinjiang with culture.”

The government-affiliated outlet *Xinhuanet.com* reported in October that XUAR government spokesperson Zuliyati Simayi held a press conference to refute allegations by international organizations and media that forced labor was taking place in Xinjiang. Simayi said all “trainees” from “vocational training centers” had finished their studies and returned to normal lives. She said the “three evils” still existed and that Xinjiang authorities would “continue to deepen the fight against terrorism and de-radicalization based on the realities of the region.” At the same press conference, Rehemanjiang Dawuti, director general of the Human Resources and Social Security Department, said Xinjiang’s “labor employment” policies had increased the total number of employed workers in the region.

On December 18, at the PRC’s daily Ministry of Foreign Affairs press briefing, spokesperson Wang Wenbin was asked to comment on U.S. and international Uyghur and Muslim organizations’ calls for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to speak out against China’s treatment of Uyghurs. Wang replied,

“The human rights of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang are well protected in accordance with the law, and Xinjiang has made positive achievements in economic and social development. In these respects, we believe that such prejudice and smearing by relevant organizations and individuals on Xinjiang-related issues has no factual basis.”

In November, Reuters reported that in his book entitled *Let Us Dream: The Path to A Better Future*, Pope Francis wrote, “I think often of persecuted peoples: the Rohingya, the poor Uighurs, the Yazidi.” Reuters reported that on November 24, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a press conference, “The Chinese government has always protected the legal rights of ethnic minorities equally.” He stated people of all ethnicities in Xinjiang enjoyed full protection of their subsistence rights, developmental rights, and religious freedom, and that “the remarks by Pope Francis are groundless.”

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because the government and individuals closely link religion, culture, and ethnicity, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on religious identity. Unequal treatment of Uyghurs and Han Chinese continued in parallel with the authorities’ suppression of Uyghur language, culture, and religion, and the promotion of the Han majority in political, economic, and cultural life. Muslims in Xinjiang faced discrimination in hiring and in retaining their positions, and in pursuing other business opportunities.

In June, Amnesty International published an article by Cha Naiyu, an ethnic Han Chinese man who grew up in Xinjiang. Cha stated one friend who worked at a state-owned enterprise said there were no ethnic minorities at the company and no plans to recruit any. Another friend said she disliked encountering Uyghurs on the train because they were “noisy, smelly, and dirty.” A relative told Cha that ethnic minorities at the factory where he worked were slow to learn their jobs.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

Embassy officials routinely raised concerns about the treatment of Uyghur Muslims and members of other Muslim and non-Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang with government officials. Embassy staff visited the region during the year, although at a reduced rate compared with previous years due to COVID-19 restrictions. When the region was not under travel restrictions, embassy staff could

travel there without requesting prior permission, but local governments denied or impeded access to schools, “re-education camps,” and residences.

The embassy and consulates general delivered direct messaging about religious freedom in Xinjiang through social media posts on Weibo and WeChat as well as on the embassy’s official website. Throughout the year, the embassy expressed to the broader Chinese public the U.S. government’s concern about the PRC’s repression of the Uyghur Muslim community with a series of posts focusing on millions of Uyghurs and other minorities in internment camps being subjected to forced labor, disappearances, sterilization, torture, and abuse.

On March 4, the Secretary of State hosted the annual International Women of Courage Awards in Washington, D.C., which honored women who demonstrated exceptional courage, strength, and leadership to bring positive change to their communities. Awardee Sayragul Sauytbay, a Muslim of Kazakh descent born in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, was one of the first victims in the world to speak publicly about the CCP’s repressive campaign against Muslims in the region. From November 2017 to March 2018, the government forced Sayragul to teach Chinese to ethnic minorities in a detention camp. In an interview with RFA following the awards ceremony, Sayragul, speaking of the detention and forced assimilation of Uyghurs and other ethnic Muslim groups in Xinjiang, said, “The current situation has already surpassed ethnic and religious issues and has risen to a level of humanitarian tragedy.”

In an October speech on tolerance given while visiting Indonesia, the Secretary said, “The gravest threat to the future of religious freedom is the Chinese Communist Party’s war against people of all faiths: Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Falun Gong practitioners alike.” On October 16, at an online event hosted by the Aspen Institute, the National Security Advisor said of the CCP’s treatment of Uyghurs, “If not a genocide, something close to it [is] going on in Xinjiang.”

On June 17, the President signed into law the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 “to direct United States resources to address human rights violations and abuses, including gross violations of human rights, by the Government of the People’s Republic of China through the mass surveillance and internment of more than 1,000,000 Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and members of other Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.” The law directed U.S. agencies to take steps to hold accountable PRC officials, or individuals acting on their behalf, who harassed, threatened, or intimidated persons, including Uyghurs

and members of other Muslim minority groups, within the United States. The law authorized the imposition of sanctions, including asset blocking and the restricting of U.S. visas, against Chinese officials responsible for the detention and other violations of the human rights of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities. The law extends to family members of these officials. The President issued a statement accompanying the passage of the law, stating, “The Act holds accountable perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses such as the systematic use of indoctrination camps, forced labor, and intrusive surveillance to eradicate the ethnic identity and religious beliefs of Uyghurs and other minorities in China.”

On July 1, the Departments of State, the Treasury, Commerce, and Homeland Security issued the Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory to caution businesses about the economic, legal, and reputational risks of supply chain links to entities that engage in human rights abuses, including forced labor in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China.

On July 9, the Secretary of State imposed visa restrictions on three senior CCP officials under Section 7031(c) of the Fiscal Year 2020 Department of State Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act for “their involvement in gross violation of human rights,” rendering them ineligible for entry into the United States. The officials were Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region XUAR party secretary Chen Quanguo, XUAR Political and Legal Committee party secretary Zhu Hailun, and Xinjiang Public Security Bureau (XPSB) party secretary Wang Mingshan. In making the announcement, the Secretary stated, “The United States will not stand idly by as the CCP carries out human rights abuses targeting Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang, to include forced labor, arbitrary mass detention, and forced population control, and attempts to erase their culture and Muslim faith.” Pursuant to the Immigration and Nationality Act, the Secretary also placed additional visa restrictions on other CCP officials believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, the detention or abuse of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang.

Also on July 9, the Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on Chen, Zhu, Wang, and Huo Liujun, former party secretary of the XPSB, as well as the XPSB, pursuant to Executive Order 13818, which builds on the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. In response, the Chinese government on July 13 imposed sanctions on the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, three members of Congress, and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. On July 31, the Department of the Treasury imposed

additional Global Magnitsky sanctions on the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) and its current and former senior officials, Sun Jinlong, a former political commissar of the XPCC, and Peng Jiarui, the deputy party secretary and commander of the XPCC. The Department of the Treasury issued a statement which read, in part: “The entity and officials are being designated for their connection to serious human rights abuse against ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, which reportedly include mass arbitrary detention and severe physical abuse, among other serious abuses targeting Uyghurs, a Turkic Muslim population indigenous to Xinjiang, and other ethnic minorities in the region.”

On May 22, the Bureau of Industry and Security of the U.S. Department of Commerce announced it would add China’s Ministry of Public Security Institute of Forensic Science and eight commercial entities to the list of entities subject to specific license requirements for export, re-export, and/or transfer in-country of specific items (the “Entity List”) for being implicated in human rights violations and abuses committed in China’s campaign of repression, mass arbitrary detention, forced labor, and high-technology surveillance against Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other members of Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang. On July 20, the Bureau of Industry and Security announced it would add an additional 11 commercial entities to the list for the same reasons. These actions constrict the export of items subject to the Export Administration Regulations from entities that have been implicated in human rights violations and abuses in the country’s campaign targeting Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang.

On May 1, June 17, September 14, and December 2, the CBP agency prohibited imports of specified merchandise, including hair products, apparel, cotton, and computer parts, produced by eight companies that operated in Xinjiang, based on information that reasonably indicated the use of prison labor and forced labor of Uyghurs and other minority groups in Xinjiang being held in internment camps. The December Withhold Release Order applied to “all cotton and cotton products produced by the XPCC and its subordinate and affiliated entities as well as any products that are made in whole or in part with or derived from that cotton, such as apparel, garments, and textiles.”

On October 6, the United States joined a group of 39 countries in signing onto a joint statement on the human rights situation in Xinjiang and recent developments in Hong Kong. The statement read, in part, “We are gravely concerned about the existence of a large network of “political re-education” camps where credible

reports indicate that more than a million people have been arbitrarily detained. We have seen an increasing number of reports of gross human rights violations. There are severe restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and the freedoms of movement, association, and expression as well as on Uyghur culture.”

At the direction of the Secretary of State, U.S. government officials explored whether the PRC’s actions in Xinjiang constituted atrocities, namely crimes against humanity and genocide. The process was ongoing at year’s end.*

*On January 19, 2021, the then Secretary publicly announced his determination that since at least March 2017, the government has committed crimes against humanity and genocide against Uyghurs, who are predominantly Muslim, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang.

HONG KONG 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) as well as other laws and policies state that residents have freedom of conscience, freedom of religious belief, and freedom to preach, conduct, and participate in religious activities in public. The Bill of Rights Ordinance incorporates the religious freedom protections of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). On June 30, the People's Republic of China (PRC) imposed a broad National Security Law (NSL) for the SAR with the stated aim of combating secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign powers. Religious leaders and advocates stated that religious freedom remained unchanged during the year, although they expressed concerns about possible future encroachment by PRC authorities. Religious leaders expressed no public reaction in February when the PRC appointed as the new Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office chief, Xia Baolong, who in 2014 led a suppression campaign against local churches in mainland China's Zhejiang Province. Sources said most Christian denominations were internally divided on the NSL, with some viewing it as a necessary measure for stability that did not encroach upon religious freedom, and others viewing it as a threat to civil liberties and religious freedom. Other religious leaders said they and their institutions preferred to stay neutral. Cardinal John Tong, leader of the Catholic Church of Hong Kong, who described the NSL as "understandable," said the NSL would not curtail religious freedom; other religious leaders made similar comments. Tong's predecessor, Cardinal Joseph Zen, and some other Christian leaders said they were concerned the law would enable the government to curtail religious liberty and freedom of expression in the name of combating subversion. One Protestant leader said the law's ambiguous wording meant churches raising funds from overseas were open to accusations of colluding with foreign powers and money laundering. Although in-person services were not permitted for much of the year due to COVID-19 restrictions, the government granted churches permission to resume in-person or hybrid (in-person/online) services when health restrictions were lifted. Authorities did not curtail activities of Falun Gong practitioners during the year, but the Hong Kong Falun Dafa Association said it was concerned practitioners could be accused of "subversion of state power" under the NSL and sentenced to prison for activities that were currently permitted, including criticizing the PRC's persecution of practitioners in mainland China. In May, a phishing campaign targeted Hong Kong Catholic Diocese leadership using a method "typically associated with Chinese state groups." In an August letter to principals and supervisors of Catholic primary and secondary schools, the Catholic

Diocese of Hong Kong episcopal delegate for education, Peter Lau, urged them to guard against campus politicization and to “foster the correct values on their national identity, consistent with the Catholic teaching.” In December, police froze the bank accounts, raided two buildings, and arrested two members of the Good Neighbor North District Church, saying the church was under investigation for money laundering and fraud related to a crowd-funding campaign. Police said they froze the church’s assets because the church had underreported donations. The church pastor said the raid and asset freezes were in retaliation for church members’ support for prodemocracy protestors in 2019.

Falun Gong practitioners reported some incidents of harassment and vandalism at public information booths. Religious observers and practitioners stated groups were able to worship in line with their religious norms and without incident. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many groups moved observances online or made provisions within their physical organizations to allow in-person observations while strictly following health precautions. Observers reported Christian churches in Hong Kong provided underground churches in mainland China with spiritual and monetary support – including Bibles and Christian literature and visits from church members – until their shared border closed due to COVID-19 health restrictions. Some churches reported they were able to conduct cross-border online services, while others, including the Catholic Church, reported PRC authorities prohibited attending their online services.

The U.S. consulate general affirmed U.S. government support for protecting freedom of religion and belief in meetings with public officials, religious leaders, and community representatives. In September, the Secretary of State said imposition of the NSL could be used to repress religious believers.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 7.2 million (midyear 2020 estimate). According to SAR government statistics, there are more than one million followers of Taoism and approximately one million followers of Buddhism; 500,000 Protestants; 403,000 Catholics; 300,000 Muslims; 100,000 Hindus; and 12,000 Sikhs. The Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, which recognizes the Pope and maintains links to the Vatican, reported approximately 620,000 followers (403,000 local residents and 217,000 residents with other nationalities). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reported it has approximately 25,100 members. According to the World Jewish Congress, there are approximately 2,500 Jews, primarily expatriates. Small communities of Baha’is

and Zoroastrians also reside in the SAR. Confucianism is widespread, and in some cases, elements of Confucianism are practiced in conjunction with other belief systems. The Falun Dafa Association estimates there are approximately 500 Falun Gong practitioners.

There are numerous Protestant denominations, including Baptist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, the Church of Christ in China, Seventh-day Adventist, and Pentecostal.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The Basic Law states residents have freedom of conscience; freedom of religious belief; and freedom to preach, conduct, and participate in religious activities in public. The Basic Law also states the government may not interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations or restrict religious activities that do not contravene other laws. The Basic Law calls for ties between the region's religious groups and their mainland counterparts based on "nonsubordination, noninterference, and mutual respect." The Basic Law states that religious organizations "may maintain and develop their relations with religious organizations and believers elsewhere."

The Bill of Rights Ordinance incorporates the religious freedom protections of the ICCPR, which include the right to manifest religious belief individually or in community with others, in public or private, and through worship, observance, practice, and teaching. The Bill of Rights Ordinance states persons belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture, profess and practice their own religion, and use their own language. The ordinance also protects the right of parents or legal guardians to "ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions." These rights may be limited when an emergency is proclaimed and "manifestation" of religious beliefs may be limited by law when necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals, or the rights of others. If a state of emergency is proclaimed, the rights may not be limited based solely on religion.

On June 30, with the support of Chief Executive Carrie Lam, the PRC National People's Congress (NPC) announced the imposition of an NSL for Hong Kong. The law prohibits secession, subversion, terrorism and "collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security." The law states

that it shall override local Hong Kong laws if there are inconsistencies. The NSL states power to interpret the law lies with the NPC Standing Committee, not local Hong Kong courts.

Religious groups are not legally required to register with the government. They must, however, register to receive government benefits such as tax-exempt status, rent subsidies, government or other professional development training, use of government facilities, or a grant to provide social services. To qualify for such benefits, a group must prove to the satisfaction of the government that it is established solely for religious, charitable, social, or recreational reasons. Registrants must provide the name and purpose of the organization, identify its office holders, and confirm the address of the principal place of business and any other premises owned or occupied by the organization. If a religious group registers with the government, it enters the registry of all nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but the government makes no adjudication on the validity of any registered groups. Religious groups may register as a society, a tax-exempt organization, or both, provided they have at least three members who hold valid SAR identity documents; the registration process normally takes approximately 12 working days. The Falun Dafa Association is registered as a society rather than a religious group; as a society, it may establish offices, collect dues from members, and have legal status.

The Basic Law allows private schools to provide religious education. The government offers subsidies to schools that are built and run by religious groups. Government-subsidized schools must adhere to government curriculum standards and may not bar students based on religion, but they may provide nonmandatory religious instruction as part of their curriculum. Teachers may not discriminate against students because of their religious beliefs. The public school curriculum mandates coursework on ethics and religious studies, with a focus on religious tolerance; the government curriculum also includes elective modules on different world religions.

The NSL includes articles on public education, stipulating that the SAR “shall take necessary measures to strengthen public communication, guidance, supervision and regulation over matters concerning national security, including those relating to schools, universities, social organizations, the media, and the internet.” The NSL states the SAR “shall promote national security education in schools and universities[.]” The SAR and Education Bureau advised that subsidized schools, which include most religious schools, must comply with the NSL.

Religious groups may apply to the government to lease land on concessional terms through Home Affairs Bureau sponsorship. Religious groups may apply to develop or use facilities in accordance with local legislation.

The Chinese Temples Committee, led by the secretary for home affairs, has a direct role in managing the affairs of some temples. The SAR chief executive appoints its members. The committee oversees the management and logistical operations of 24 of the region's 600 temples and gives grants to other charitable organizations. The committee provides grants to the Home Affairs Bureau for disbursement, in the form of financial assistance to needy ethnic Chinese citizens. The colonial-era law does not require new temples to register to be eligible for Temples Committee assistance.

An approximately 1,200-member Election Committee elects Hong Kong's chief executive. The Basic Law stipulates the Election Committee's members shall be "broadly representative." Committee members come from four sectors, divided into 38 subsectors, representing various trades, professions, and social services groups. The religious subsector is composed of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, the Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association, the Hong Kong Christian Council, the Hong Kong Taoist Association, the Confucian Academy, and the Hong Kong Buddhist Association. These six bodies are each entitled to 10 of the 60 seats for the religious subsector on the Election Committee. The religious subsector is not required to hold elections under the Chief Executive Election Ordinance. Instead, each religious organization selects its electors in its own fashion. Each of the six designated religious groups is also a member of the Hong Kong Colloquium of Religious Leaders.

Government Practices

Religious leaders and advocates stated that religious freedom remained unchanged during the year, although they expressed concerns about possible future encroachment by PRC authorities. Religious leaders expressed no public reaction in February when China appointed as the new head of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office Xia Baolong, who in 2014 led a suppression campaign against local churches in mainland China's Zhejiang Province.

The Catholic News Agency reported that in April, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong called for the Chinese government to respond to prodemocracy demonstrators' demands, including an independent inquiry into police tactics.

Sources said most Christian denominations were internally divided on the NSL – some viewed it as a necessary measure for stability that did not encroach upon religious freedom, but others viewed it as a threat to civil liberties and religious freedom. Other religious leaders said they and their religious institutions preferred to stay neutral on the politically polarizing law.

Several Christian groups and religious leaders issued statements and open letters to the government regarding the NSL. After the May announcement that the NPC would pass the NSL, Cardinal Tong, leader of the Catholic Church of Hong Kong, described the NSL as “understandable” and said it would not curtail religious freedom. He stated the Church’s relationship with the Vatican should not be seen as collusion with foreign forces. Anglican Archbishop Paul Kwong said he supported the NSL, stating, “I cherish our Hong Kong freedoms – in particular the freedom of religion and way of life – as much as anyone, and I don’t think this law will change any of that....What I hope the new law will do is diminish the agitation against the government that last year brought things to a standstill, and to restore law and order.”

In June, the Hong Kong Christian Council released a public statement acknowledging the Hong Kong government’s inability to pass its own NSL legislation but calling for the NPC to abide by the principles of the Basic Law and to “fully guarantee human rights and all types of freedoms (including freedom of expression, publication, information, assembly, religion, association, etc.) that have been enjoyed under the one country, two systems principle.” In May, Cardinal Joseph Zen, Cardinal Tong’s predecessor, told the Catholic News Agency that he worried the NSL would be used to subvert freedom of religion in the SAR. According to the NGO International Christian Concern, Chairman of the Hong Kong Baptist Convention Reverend Hing Choi Lo said in a statement to all member churches in May, “When the Church thinks it is ‘acting justly and [with] loving mercy,’ but the authorities consider the Church to be overthrowing [the regime], what choices do we have? Do we dance with the authorities’ baton?”

Although in-person services were not permitted for much of the year due to COVID-19 restrictions, churches petitioned directly to the government to resume in-person or hybrid services and did not report any difficulty in getting approval once health restrictions eased.

During the year, Falun Gong practitioners reported they generally were able to operate openly and engage in behavior that remained prohibited in mainland

China, including distributing literature, conducting public exhibitions, sharing information about the group on social media, and accessing and downloading online materials. In June, a practitioner in the Hong Kong Falun Dafa Association said the community was fearful. “Falun Gong practitioners take part in activities exposing the CCP’s crimes and encourage Chinese people to renounce the CCP and its affiliated organizations....These activities can all be considered ‘subversion of state power’ under the so-called National Security Law. Falun Gong practitioners could be sentenced to prison for activities that they are now able to freely partake in on a daily basis.” Falun Gong practitioners continued to state they suspected that the CCP funded private groups that harassed them at informational displays. No Falun Gong rallies were permitted during the year due to COVID-19 health restrictions.

In July, the NGO International Christian Concern stated that in May, a phishing campaign targeted leaders of the Catholic Church. According to a malware analyst, the campaign involved a type of malware “typically associated with Chinese state groups.” The malware files made use of “lure documents” associated with the Catholic Church, including communications from Vatican officials and news articles from the Union of Catholic Asian News. The NGO said that as the legitimate documents loaded, malware was installed, allowing the hacker remote access and full control of the victim’s computer.

Media reported in August that in a letter to principals and supervisors of Catholic primary and secondary schools, the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong episcopal delegate for education Peter Lau told them to guard against campus politicization. The letter stated in part that school authorities should “enhance students’ awareness to national security and [the importance of] abidance to the law, have them learn and respect the national flag, the national emblem and the national anthem and foster the correct values on their national identity, consistent with the Catholic teaching.” Critics on social media accused the Catholic Diocese of pandering to the PRC. Some members of the Catholic Church leadership said adhering to the law did not invalidate the Church’s vision or mission.

In August, the Justice and Peace Commission, comprised of 18 elected bishops, began to solicit donations to place advertisements in media that included a prayer to preserve democracy in Hong Kong. The Catholic Diocese suspended the donation campaign and pulled the advertisements, stating it did not approve of the method of fundraising or the content of the advertisements.

Media reported that on December 8, police froze the bank accounts of the Good Neighbor North District Church, raided two of its buildings and three homeless shelters it ran, arrested two church members, and ordered the arrests of church pastor Roy Chan and his wife, who were abroad. The police said this was done because the church had raised 27 million Hong Kong dollars (\$3.5 million) through crowd funding campaigns from June 2019 through September 2020 but had publicly declared raising only one-third of that amount. The church stated the investigation was an “act of political retaliation” because some of its members had formed a group called “Safeguard Our Generation” in 2019 in an attempt to deescalate violent clashes between police and prodemocracy protesters.

In December, Radio Free Asia reported that Reverend Chi Wai Wu, general secretary of the Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement, said, “The wording of the national security law is ambiguous, which means that churches, whether Catholic or Protestant, are now open to accusations of colluding with foreign powers.” He said police were using the law’s vague definition of “money laundering” to target religious groups that garnered overseas donations or host conferences with overseas church groups. Wu said the targeting of the Good Neighbor North District Church sent “shock waves” through religious communities in Hong Kong and that it was likely intended as a warning to them.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

The Falun Gong-affiliated publication *Epoch Times* reported that in August, a man reportedly defaced a Falun Gong display several times in one week and said to a Falun Gong practitioner, “The national security law is enacted, yet you dare to show these [Falun Gong materials]?” When the practitioners said he would call the police, the man responded, “Okay, I also want the police to come....See who the police will arrest, you or me?” *Epoch Times* reported that more than a dozen people gathered at the display the following day and cursed at Falun Gong practitioners. According to *Epoch Times*, in December, Falun Gong practitioners reported experiencing harassment at informational booths, as well as multiple instances of vandalism.

Religious observers and practitioners stated they were able to worship consistent with their religious norms and without incident. With COVID-19 measures requiring more restrictions, many religious groups moved observances online or made provisions within their physical organizations to allow in-person observation while strictly following health precautions.

Observers reported Christian churches in Hong Kong provided underground churches in mainland China with spiritual and monetary support – including Bibles and Christian literature and visits from church members – until their shared border closed due to COVID-19 health restrictions. Some Hong Kong churches reported that they were able to conduct cross-border online services, while others, including the Catholic Church, reported PRC authorities prohibited attending their online services.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

Consulate general officials, including the Consul General, stressed the importance of religious freedom and interfaith dialogue in meetings with public officials, religious leaders, NGOs, and community representatives. In June, the Consul General met with the Hong Kong Christian Council to discuss the effects of political divisions on congregations within the Hong Kong Christian community. The Consul General and other consulate officials met with Buddhist, Catholic, Taoist, Jewish, Muslim, and Protestant religious leaders and adherents to emphasize the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and to receive reports about the status of religious freedom both in Hong Kong and in the mainland.

In September, the Secretary of State said imposition of the NSL “raises the specter that the Party will use the same tactics of intimidation and the full apparatus of state repression against religious believers.”

Throughout the year, consulate general officials promoted respect for religious traditions by marking traditional religious holidays and visiting local Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist temples. In May, the Consul General met the Chief Imam and toured the Blue Mosque, the largest mosque in Hong Kong. At all these events, consulate general officials stressed in public and private remarks the importance of religious freedom, tolerance, and diversity.

MACAU 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The Basic Law of the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) grants residents freedom of religious belief, freedom to preach and participate in religious activities in public, and freedom to pursue religious education. The law protects the right of religious assembly and the rights of religious organizations to administer schools, hospitals, and welfare institutions and to provide other social services. The law states the government does not recognize a state religion and explicitly states all religious denominations are equal before the law. The law stipulates religious groups may develop and maintain relations with religious groups abroad. The SAR enacted bylaws to the 2009 National Security Law on October 7 allowing the Judiciary Police to create national security branches. Some members of the religious community said they were concerned Macau's implementation of these new provisions could mirror the Hong Kong police force's national security units and potentially affect civil liberties, although they were uncertain if the new provisions could eventually infringe upon religious freedom. Religious figures expressed no public reaction in February when China appointed as the new Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office Chief Xia Baolong, who previously led a suppression campaign against local churches in mainland China's Zhejiang Province. At a Lunar New Year celebration, the Deputy Director of the Central Government Liaison Office told religious community representatives the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) "one country, two systems" policy relied on support from Macau's religious groups and thanked them for that support. Falun Gong practitioners held a rally on April 25 to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the mass arrest of Falun Gong members in mainland China and protest the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in mainland China.

Falun Gong practitioners continued to be able to discuss their beliefs openly with Macau residents.

In meetings with civil society representatives, representatives from the U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong and Macau stressed the importance of religious freedom and tolerance for all religious groups and discussed religious communities' relations with their coreligionists on the mainland and in Hong Kong.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 614,000 (midyear 2020 estimate). According to a 2015 estimate by the research group Association of Religion Data Archives, 48.1 percent of the population are folk religionists, 17.3 percent Buddhist, 11 percent Taoist, 4.5 percent Catholic, 2.5 percent other Christian, 1.2 percent other religious groups (including Hindus, Muslims, and Jews), and 15.4 percent nonreligious. The SAR Government Information Bureau 2020 yearbook states the majority of the population practices Buddhism or Chinese folk religions. The yearbook does not provide an estimate for Buddhists, but it states they are numerous and individuals often practice a mixture of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Chinese folk religions. The SAR Government Information Bureau estimates 4.5 percent of the population are Roman Catholics, of whom almost half are foreign domestic workers and other expatriates, and 2.5 percent of the population are Protestants. Protestant denominations include the Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, and Presbyterian Churches. Evangelical Christian and independent local nondenominational churches, some of which are affiliated with officially recognized mainland churches, are also present. Various reports estimate the Muslim population at 5,000 to 10,000. Smaller religious groups include Baha'is, who estimate their membership at more than 2,000, and Falun Gong practitioners, who estimate their numbers at 20 to 50 persons.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The Basic Law states residents have freedom of religious belief and the freedom to publicly preach as well as conduct and participate in religious activities. These rights may be limited in extreme situations for national security reasons. The Basic Law further stipulates the government shall not interfere in the internal affairs of religious groups or in their relations with their counterparts outside Macau. It bars the government from restricting religious activities that do not contravene the laws of the SAR.

Under the Basic Law, the SAR government, rather than the central government of the PRC, safeguards religious freedom in the SAR.

The law states there is no official religion in the SAR and stipulates all religious denominations are equal before the law. The law provides for freedom of religion, including privacy of religious belief, freedom of religious assembly, freedom to hold religious processions, and freedom of religious education. On October 7, the

SAR enacted bylaws to the 2009 National Security Law allowing the Judiciary Police to create four new national security branches: the National Security Information Division; the National Security Crime Investigation Division; the National Security Action Support Division; and the National Security Affairs Integrated Service Division.

Religious groups are not required to register to conduct religious activities, but registration enables them to benefit from legal status. Benefits include exemption from taxation (such as property tax, stamp duty, complementary tax [profit tax], and industrial tax) and financial assistance from the government. Religious groups register with the Identification Bureau, providing the name of an individual applicant and that person's position in the group, identification card number, and contact information, as well as the group's name and a copy of the group's charter. Registered charities receive the same benefits as registered religious groups. Religious groups need to be registered as a charity under a similar or different name in order to provide charitable services.

The law states that religious organizations may run seminaries and schools, hospitals, and welfare institutions, and provide other social services.

There is no religious education in public schools. A small number of schools run by religious organizations receive no public funding, and these schools may require students to receive religious education.

By law, religious groups may develop and maintain relations with religious groups abroad.

Government Practices

The government's stated aim in amending the 2009 National Security Law was to improve external communications about national security and promote law enforcement. Human rights advocates said they were concerned the SAR's new divisions mirrored the divisions that were created under Hong Kong's National Security Law, which came into effect on June 30 and were being used to threaten civil liberties. Religious leaders said they were uncertain if the new provisions might eventually infringe upon religious freedom.

Religious figures expressed no public reaction in February when China appointed as the new Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office Chief Xia Baolong, who

previously led a suppression campaign against local churches in mainland China's Zhejiang Province.

According to the Central Government Liaison Office in Macau, in January, Zhang Rongshun, Deputy Director of the Central Government Liaison Office, held a Lunar New Year celebration with more than 30 representatives from the Catholic, Buddhist, Christian, Taoist, and Baha'i communities. Zhang said successful implementation of the PRC's "one country, two systems" policy relied on support from Macau's religious groups and thanked them for that support.

On April 25, Falun Gong practitioners held a rally in front of St. Dominic's Church to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the mass arrest of Falun Gong members in mainland China and protest the CCP's treatment of Falun Gong practitioners on the mainland. According to the Falun Gong website *Minghui.org*, practitioners set up message boards with information about the history of the group, carried banners, and distributed informational pamphlets.

Some religious groups continued to report they retained their ability to conduct charitable activities on the mainland by working through official channels and officially recognized churches.

The government continued to provide financial support, regardless of religious affiliation, to religious groups to establish schools, child-care centers, clinics, homes for the elderly, rehabilitation centers, and vocational training centers. The government also continued to refer victims of human trafficking to religious organizations for the provision of support services.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

The Catholic Church in Macau, in communion with the Holy See, continued to recognize the Pope as its head. The Vatican appointed the bishop for the diocese. Sources stated the PRC central government and religious leaders from mainland-authorized churches invited Macau diocese representatives to public events.

The Catholic Diocese of Macau continued to run many educational institutions.

According to *Minghui.org*, with fewer foreigners visiting the SAR due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Falun Gong practitioners interacted more with local residents, handing out information on the streets, including publications called

CCP Virus Special Editions and *MinghuiWeekly*. According to the website, “Local residents have always treated Falun Dafa practitioners with kindness.”

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

U.S. Consulate General representatives in Hong Kong, including the Consul General, stressed the importance of religious diversity and discussed religious communities’ relations with their coreligionists on the mainland. They raised these points in meetings with civil society representatives, religious leaders, and nongovernmental organizations.