

CHINA

Difficulties for believers have increased as the new 2018 Regulations on Religious Affairs limit many religious activities to registered sites and introduce further restrictions.¹ On March 21, 2018 oversight of religious affairs was transferred from the State Administration of Religious Affairs to the United Front Work Department, an agency of the Chinese Communist Party.² There are fears that China's new "social credit system" – designed to reward good citizenship and punish bad – will be used to discriminate against Christians.³ Education is used as a tool of social conditioning: in some regions pupils were reportedly required to sign a statement saying they will "promote atheism, and oppose belief in God."⁴ In other areas problems continue. Christian clergy are still subject to arbitrary arrest⁵ and building regulations are increasingly used as a pretext for church demolitions. Despite the September 2018 agreement between the Vatican and China, the Catholic Church's status continues to be complex: two underground bishops were formally replaced by bishops from the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association; and even after the agreement, state agents destroyed Marian shrines in Shanxi and Guizhou.⁶

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3. "China's dystopian present: could 'social scoring' surveillance increase pressure on Christians?," *Barnabas Fund*, November 27, 2018, <https://barnabasfund.org/en/news/chinas-dystopian-present-could-social-scoring-surveillance-increase-pressure-on-christians/> (accessed July 16, 2019).
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10. Christian Ellis, "11 Christian Children Arrested in Violent Raid as China Increases Persecution," *CBN*, March 6, 2019, <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2019/march/11-christian-children-arrested-as-china-increases-persecution-but-faith-continues-to-grow-%3A-Christian-Prisoners-of-Conscience-Pastor-Wang-Yi>, *Barnabas Fund*, <https://barnabasfund.org/en/Christian-Prisoners-of-Conscience/Wang-Yi> (accessed June 11, 2019).
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APRIL 2018

The Bible was banned from sale online⁷ ahead of a new version compatible with Sinicization and socialism.⁸

NOVEMBER 2018

Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin of Wenzhou was arrested for the fifth time in two years. Reports suggested that the bishop of the "underground" Catholic Church would be held in isolation and subject to indoctrination in Communist ideology for 10-15 days. After he was seized in May 2017, he was detained for 7 months.⁹

FEBRUARY 2019

At 8PM on the evening of Sunday the 24th, 44 members of the Early Rain Covenant Church – including 11 children – were taken into custody in Chengdu city. Two members, "Tang Chunliang and his wife were hit in the face by a plainclothes police officer at the police station." One officer savagely beat the pastor's mother, grabbing her hair and kicking her, while another held her down. Most members were released in the early hours of Monday between 2PM and 6PM, 11 were placed in administrative detention. In December 2018 local authorities had formally closed the church, arresting Pastor Wang-Yi and 160 Christians, for "inciting subversion of state power."¹⁰

MARCH 2019

Chinese officials in Guangzhou city introduced cash rewards for those who inform on underground churches and other "unofficial" places of worship. Those with useful information will receive 100 yuan (\$14), which could rise to 10,000 yuan – about two months' average salary – for those who help identify and arrest ministers and members from unofficial religious groups.¹¹