

## II: Christianity

### Degree of persecution:

Catholicism

**MODERATE**

Protestantism

**HIGH**

### Trajectory of persecution:

Catholicism



Minor  
Decrease

Protestantism



Increase

### Key findings

- 1 **Revival:** Christianity in China has expanded rapidly since 1980, reaching an estimated population of 58 million Protestants and 12 million Catholics as of 2014, split evenly between registered and unregistered churches. Growth has been evident among urban educated professionals and wealthy entrepreneurs.
- 2 **Key political controls:** The Chinese authorities seek to monitor and control Christians by encouraging them—sometimes forcefully—to join state-sanctioned churches that are affiliated with “patriotic” associations and led by politically vetted clergy. Religious leaders and congregants who refuse to register for theological or practical reasons risk having their place of worship shuttered and face detention, beatings, dismissal from employment, or imprisonment.
- 3 **Under Xi Jinping:** Since early 2014, local authorities have increased efforts to stem the spread of Christianity amid official rhetoric on the threat of “Western” values and the need to “Sinicize” religions. They have resorted to forms of repression that were previously rare, such as targeting state-sanctioned churches and leaders, arresting human rights lawyers who take up Christians’ cases, and obstructing Christmas celebrations. A renewed crackdown on quasi-Christian groups designated as “heterodox religions” has resulted in the imprisonment of over 400 religious leaders and lay believers.
- 4 **Catholicism at a crossroads:** Relations between Beijing and the Vatican appear on the verge of a positive breakthrough. The two sides are reportedly working toward an agreement on the appointment of bishops acceptable to both the papacy and the Communist Party at a time when more than 40 vacancies have opened.



Sanjiang Cathedral, which belonged to an officially recognized church, in Zhejiang Province before and after its demolition in April 2015.

*Credits: Shanghaiist/China—in His image (blogs)*



**5 Response and resistance:** Increased repression has triggered a correspondingly assertive response from church leaders and believers, including influential members of the official “patriotic” associations. Christians have published joint letters, boycotted ceremonies, worshipped outdoors, asserted their legal rights, and physically blocked demolitions or cross removals. Many Christians also employ more subtle tactics to reduce the impact of state controls, such as incorporating religious outreach into charity work, attending private mountainside trainings, or cultivating cooperative relations with local officials to reduce the likelihood of persecution.

**“We must resolutely guard against overseas infiltrations via religious means.”**

*—President Xi Jinping, April 2016 speech<sup>3</sup>*

**“We hereby request that you [the provincial government]... immediately cease this mistaken policy of removing crosses that is tearing the Party and the masses apart.”**

*—Open letter from the state-affiliated Christian Council of Zhejiang Province, July 2015<sup>4</sup>*

## Historical evolution

Christianity is believed to have first come to China in the seventh century, but it was suppressed and largely disappeared by the end of the Tang Dynasty in 907. It reemerged in the 13th century under the Yuan Dynasty and experienced periodic cycles of growth and suppression, depending on the nature of Christian relations with imperial rulers and China's ties with foreign powers.<sup>3</sup> During the Republican period (1911–49), top Chinese leaders like Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek were Christians.

After the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rose to power in 1949, the government deported foreign missionaries. During the 1950s, "patriotic" associations were created to link the party, the government, and China's several million Christians while severing ties with foreign churches. These included the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM),<sup>4</sup> established in 1954, and the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA), established in 1957.<sup>5</sup> During the Cultural Revolution period, even the government-affiliated entities were dismantled and all public religious practice was banned. However, beginning in the early 1980s, paramount leader Deng Xiaoping presided over a comparative religious opening. The patriotic associations were revived, and state funding was provided for the rebuilding of churches and key pilgrimage sites.

Even in this more tolerant environment, the relationship between Chinese Christians and the state has been characterized by periodic crackdowns, particularly against unregistered churches and religious leaders. Given the CCP's concern that Christianity is a form of Western influence and a conduit for the infiltration of foreign values and democratic ideals, clampdowns on Christian groups have often been triggered by events with international links. This was true in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In other instances, certain groups were banned as "heterodox religions,"<sup>6</sup> usually after their influence spread across provinces.<sup>7</sup>

Repressive campaigns typically featured raids on unregistered Bible study meetings or religious ceremonies and the detention of hundreds of religious leaders and lay believers. During the presidency of Hu Jintao, most detainees were released after short stints of administrative detention, though each year several dozen would be sentenced to "reeducation through labor" camps or prison.<sup>8</sup>

The three decades after the end of the Cultural Revolution were also characterized by growing bureaucratization and regulation. Following the 2005 adoption of new Religious Affairs Regulations, some observers in China and abroad were optimistic that the rules might enable more house churches to register, perhaps without affiliating themselves with the TSPM. However, church leaders and lawyers who tried to help them soon found that registration was practically impossible to achieve and even dangerous to attempt. As a result, by 2010, only a handful of congregations had registered, and Beijing alone had an estimated 2,000 house churches, compared with five TSPM churches and eight affiliated meeting points.<sup>9</sup>

Christian clergy and congregants who have avoided joining state-sanctioned churches provide both principled and practical reasons for their hesitation:

- **Theology:** For Catholics, the point of contestation is their belief in the authority of the Vatican. As Pope Benedict XVI noted in a 2007 letter to Chinese Catholics, "the proposal for

a Church that is ‘independent’ of the Holy See, in the religious sphere, is incompatible with Catholic doctrine.”<sup>10</sup> Some Protestants cite similar concerns, arguing that “their [TSPM] head is the Communist Party, our head is Jesus Christ.”<sup>11</sup> Others find TSPM doctrinal adjustments, made to align with CCP priorities, to be contrary to their own understanding of the Bible.

- **History:** Some religious leaders and believers in unofficial churches resent the role that TSPM leaders played in the persecution of Christians during the Mao Zedong era, and therefore refuse to affiliate with them.<sup>12</sup>
- **Bureaucracy:** The administrative requirements related to registration are burdensome and unrealistic for many unofficial churches.<sup>13</sup> Once a church is registered, the state often involves itself in managing church activities and even topics for preaching. In some cases, the permitted number of TSPM churches within a geographic jurisdiction is restricted, meaning an unofficial church would have to merge with a larger TSPM church rather than simply registering on its own.<sup>14</sup> The limited number of official churches also leads to overcrowding, spurring the formation of unofficial congregations.<sup>15</sup>
- **Security concerns:** One of the requirements for registration is providing membership lists to religious affairs officials. Given past campaigns of persecution, many unofficial church leaders are reluctant to take this step, credibly fearing that such information could be used by the authorities to harass their congregants.<sup>16</sup>

“Their [TSPM] head is the Communist Party, our head is Jesus Christ.”

### Christianity in China today

Despite sporadic and at times severe persecution in certain locales, the overall trajectory for Christianity in China has been one of remarkable growth since 1980, including during the decade of Hu Jintao’s leadership. In many parts of the country, cooperative or at least tolerant relations developed between local officials and churches, both registered and unregistered.

Estimates on the number of Christians in China vary widely, partly because people worshipping at unregistered churches are unlikely to confess their true faith in a census or during public opinion surveys. In 2014, the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) reported that China was home to 29 million Protestants and 5.7 million Catholics who were part of congregations registered with the state.<sup>17</sup> Available surveys and scholarly research indicate that at least as many people worship in unofficial churches, resulting in estimates of 58 million Protestants and approximately 12 million Catholics.<sup>18</sup>

These totals, which are regularly cited by observers, bring the overall population of Christians to 70 million, making Christianity the second-largest institutionalized religion in China after Chinese Buddhism. Some scholars and evangelical organizations believe the true number of Christians may be as high as 100 million, with a greater proportion involved in unofficial churches.<sup>19</sup> Estimates of Christians are further obscured by an increasingly blurred line between official and unofficial churches, as leaders from both tacitly cooperate in some locales, and individual believers may worship at multiple sites.<sup>20</sup>

Chinese Christian practices include standard activities such as Sunday worship services, small

group Bible study and prayer meetings, holy communion, and baptism. Chinese Catholics hold special observances (high mass) for Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and the Feast of the Assumption of Mary.<sup>21</sup> Chinese Protestants observe Christmas and Easter as well. Some Chinese Christians, particularly in rural areas, also engage in “syncretized” practices that meld Christian and Chinese folk traditions, such as ancestor worship or geomancy (*feng shui*).<sup>22</sup>

The spread of Christianity is evident even from official figures, which tally only believers over age 18 who worship at registered churches. These figures show Protestants growing from 3 million in 1982 to 29 million in 2014,<sup>23</sup> a nearly tenfold increase. Perhaps the most visible growth in Christianity over the past decade has occurred among urban Chinese. This has led to the emergence of what some scholars have termed “boss Christians”—wealthy, well-educated professionals and entrepreneurs.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, Christianity is also prevalent in rural areas.<sup>25</sup>

### Many higher-income Chinese view Christianity and its association with the prosperous West as a symbol of modernity.

The growth of Christianity can be attributed in part to the broader spiritual revival that followed the loosening of controls after Mao's death, greater personal freedoms and economic prosperity, and the sense of a moral vacuum as Communist ideology loses its attractiveness for many Chinese. But there are also factors specific to Christianity that have contributed to its expansion, possibly at the expense of more “indigenous” religions like Buddhism and Taoism. Some experts argue that the fierce suppression of all religions during the Cultural Revolution reconfigured the “religious market” and created an opportunity for Christianity to gain a foothold where Chinese religions' influence had dwindled.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, as the country opened up to the world and embarked on an enormous project of economic development,

many university students and higher-income Chinese came to view Christianity and its association with the prosperous West as a symbol of modernity. Lastly, given China's politically hostile environment for religion, the organizational flexibility of Protestant “house churches” has facilitated expansion and recruitment of new believers.<sup>27</sup> This contrasts with Chinese Buddhism and Taoism, whose practice is closely tied to physical temples that, as immovable and often ancient sites, are vulnerable to political control and restrictions.

Beyond socioeconomic and structural factors, discreet outreach efforts have also directly driven the exponential growth of Christianity, though proselytizing is technically forbidden. For example, Chinese Christians are increasingly initiating and involved in charity work. Some large foundations and organizations operate with government approval; the Amity Foundation was able to collect millions of dollars in relief funds following the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Other efforts are smaller in scale, with local churches sponsoring health clinics, cultural performances, or social events. These projects provide Chinese Christians with personal spiritual fulfillment and an outlet for “good works.” But they also indirectly demonstrate to nonbelievers the positive impact that the religion could have on individuals and Chinese society, and give Christians an opportunity to interact with strangers and discreetly share the principles and benefits of their faith.<sup>28</sup>

### **Christianity under Xi Jinping**

When Xi Jinping took the helm of the CCP in November 2012, Christianity in China had experienced extensive growth over the previous decade, but international advocacy groups also noted a trend of moderately escalating persecution for several years.<sup>29</sup> Relations

between the Chinese government and the Vatican were particularly tense after the appointment of several bishops unapproved by the papacy, and “house churches” were facing intensified pressure to register, merge with TSPM churches, or shut down.<sup>30</sup>

Initially, there appeared to be no significant change under the new leadership. Nonetheless, dozens of incidents of suppression were recorded throughout the country in 2013, particularly in Beijing, Henan, and Shandong.<sup>31</sup> By the end of 2014, persecution against Christians—particularly Protestants and various quasi-Christian groups—had intensified dramatically.<sup>32</sup> Areas of China that had previously featured a relatively relaxed atmosphere for Christianity became new sites of significant clampdowns and thousands more Christians than before directly encountered state persecution. This higher degree of suppression persisted throughout 2015 and early 2016.<sup>33</sup>

Over the course of 2014, persecution of Christians intensified dramatically.

In the general context of intensified persecution, several new phenomena have emerged under Xi:

- 1. Cross removal and demolition campaigns:** Beginning in March 2013, authorities in Zhejiang Province launched a three-year campaign called “Three Rectifications and One Demolition” that in practice has focused mainly on church buildings. By mid-2016, crosses had been removed from the rooftops or façades of at least 1,500 churches, and over 20 churches had been demolished.<sup>34</sup> Initially implemented in large cities like Wenzhou, the campaign soon spread across the province, even to rural villages. Most of the structures targeted have been Protestant churches, but several dozen Catholic sites of worship have had their crosses removed as well. The campaign was continuing apace as of early 2016, with 49 cross removals reported as of March 3.<sup>35</sup>

The authorities have retroactively sought to justify the demolitions by citing illegal construction or zoning violations. In some cases, churches do appear to have expanded beyond the permits granted by the government,<sup>36</sup> but internal government documents reveal the selective targeting of churches and a focus on cross removals, pointing to other motivations.<sup>37</sup> Although not as systematic as in Zhejiang, church demolitions have also been reported in Fujian, Henan, and Anhui Provinces, which have relatively large Christian minorities.<sup>38</sup>

The scale of the campaign and its contrast with past tolerance have contributed to a sense of alarm in China’s Christian community. Prior to 2014, Zhejiang was a relatively open place for Christianity. Authorities managed the religion with a light hand, and even unregistered groups were able to obtain permission to build places of worship. Reported incidents of persecution were few and far between.<sup>39</sup> Over the past two years, as congregants have tried to resist the official campaign, tensions have escalated, with sit-ins, mass detentions, and deployment of riot police becoming more frequent.<sup>40</sup> Some acts of resistance have ended tragically. In April 2016, a pastor’s wife was killed in Henan when bulldozers buried her and her husband as they attempted to block the demolition of their church.<sup>41</sup>

- 2. Repression of state-sanctioned churches and leaders:** One of the most notable aspects of the anti-cross campaign in Zhejiang has been the large-scale targeting of TSPM-

affiliated churches. As pastors from state-approved churches and even leaders from the government-affiliated “patriotic” religious associations have sought to fend off official intrusion, they too have faced punishments like detention and imprisonment that were previously reserved for their “house church” counterparts.

Pastors from state-approved churches have faced punishments like imprisonment that were previously reserved for their “house church” counterparts.

The most prominent cases were those of Bao Guohua, a member of the government-affiliated China Christian Council and a pastor at a state-approved church who was sentenced to 14 years in prison in February 2016,<sup>42</sup> and Gu (Joseph) Yuese, president of the Zhejiang Christian Council and pastor for a state-approved megachurch that the government had touted as a model of religious freedom in China, who was removed from the Christian Council and TSPM and detained from January to March 2016.<sup>43</sup>

The government alleged financial impropriety in both cases, but the men’s public opposition to the cross-removal campaign and the timing of their punishments led many observers to believe that the allegations were trumped up and retaliatory. Harsh punishments for TSPM pastors have been reported outside Zhejiang as well, including the 2014 sentencing of Zhang Shaojie to 12 years in prison in Henan.<sup>44</sup> Prior to 2013, it was exceedingly rare for TSPM church leaders to be subject to such treatment.<sup>45</sup>

**3. Large-scale imprisonment for membership in ‘heterodox religions’:** Since early 2014, the Chinese authorities have intensified efforts to suppress, and even eradicate, various quasi-Christian sects with tangential links to mainstream Protestantism. Hundreds of religious clergy and lay believers have been detained and sentenced to prison. The assault was in part catalyzed by a May 2014 incident in which alleged followers of the Almighty God (or Eastern Lightning) sect beat a woman to death in a McDonald’s restaurant in Shandong Province after she refused to provide her phone number for their recruitment drive.<sup>46</sup>

However, an analysis of Chinese court verdicts indicates that the groups targeted in the campaign have included eight other quasi-Christian sects that are unrelated to the McDonald’s incident.<sup>47</sup> The majority of people sentenced in these verdicts, including members of the Almighty God sect, appear to have been imprisoned for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of belief and expression rather than for engaging in violence against other Chinese.

Individuals swept up in this campaign are typically prosecuted under Article 300 of the Criminal Law, which punishes “using a heterodox religion to undermine implementation of the law” with terms of up to life in prison. The provision was created in late 1999 for use in the campaign against the Falun Gong spiritual group (see Falun Gong chapter). Court documents show that at least 439 individuals from quasi-Christian groups were sentenced under this article to prison terms of up to 10 years between January 2014 and May 2016, in cases spanning 28 provinces and major municipalities.<sup>48</sup> The prosecutions peaked in 2014–15 and slowed in early 2016, with approximately 80 percent linked to the controversial Almighty God sect.<sup>49</sup>

These findings help explain data published by the U.S.-based group China Aid that noted a sharp increase in Christians sentenced to prison in 2014.<sup>50</sup> But mainstream Protestant

leaders and congregants from underground “house churches” have reportedly been charged and sentenced under Article 300 as well, illustrating again how a repressive legislative tool created to persecute one religious group can be quickly and easily applied to others. Indeed, several local government representatives reportedly explained to a human rights lawyer that any unofficial religious group in their jurisdiction could be considered a “heterodox religion” and punished accordingly, whether or not it is on the government’s list of banned groups.<sup>51</sup>

**4. Crackdown on lawyers who assist churches:** For years, Chinese lawyers who represent persecuted religious believers have faced official reprisals in the form of disbarment, surveillance, and physical assaults. Prior to 2012, a small contingent of rights attorneys, such as Gao Zhisheng and Wang Yonghang, were even detained and imprisoned, but this appeared to have been triggered by their defense of Falun Gong adherents rather than Christians. Under Xi Jinping, the number of rights lawyers imprisoned has increased overall. As part of a crackdown launched in July 2015, several lawyers and legal activists who had been assisting persecuted Christians were arrested, held in custody for months, abused, and forced to make confessions to media outlets in which they denounced their human rights work. Prominent cases include those of attorney Zhang Kai and legal assistant Zhao Wei.<sup>52</sup> Others, like Li Heping, remained in custody as of September 2016, facing charges of “subversion of state power.”<sup>53</sup> All three are reportedly Christian believers themselves.

**5. Increased obstruction of Christmas celebrations:** Christmas is becoming a popular commercial holiday in China,<sup>54</sup> but since 2013 authorities in different parts of the country have stepped up efforts to prevent Christians from worshiping or celebrating together.<sup>55</sup> Unofficial churches report greater obstacles to organizing large events for prayers or parties.<sup>56</sup> Authorities in Xi’an and Wenzhou took specific steps to limit children’s exposure to Christmas or to bar university students from celebrating the holiday in 2014.<sup>57</sup>

Together, these trends reflect a significant shift in the unwritten rules surrounding the relationship between Protestant groups and the state. An April 2013 article by scholars Teresa Wright and Teresa Zimmerman-Liu outlines various patterns of church-state engagement since the 1980s, including greater tolerance for registered churches, more autonomy for unofficial groups in provinces like Zhejiang and Guangdong, and less use of violent repression in urban areas.<sup>58</sup> As is evident from the above analysis, these patterns have changed in key regions of China since 2013, provoking greater conflict between the Chinese authorities and both official and unofficial Protestant groups.

[Authorities in Xi’an and Wenzhou took specific steps to limit children’s exposure to Christmas.](#)

There are several factors behind the increased repression and the forms it has taken. First, the growing popularity of Christianity may have provoked a backlash from certain party leaders. Credible estimates of 70 to 100 million believers place Christianity at precisely the same level of popularity as Falun Gong in 1999, when the CCP launched a nationwide crackdown on the spiritual practice, and make it nearly as large or larger than the CCP’s own membership, which stood at almost 88 million in 2015.<sup>59</sup> Although the leadership, doctrines, and practices of Christians in China are more fragmented than Falun Gong’s, the sheer



number and visibility of believers may have stoked anxiety among Chinese leaders.

Moreover, the ways in which Christianity has spread across the country among ethnic Han, reaching every stratum of society from poor farmers to wealthy entrepreneurs, and cultivated cross-provincial and transnational networks (including via the internet and human rights lawyers) match qualities that experts argue contributed to the CCP's crackdown on Falun Gong.<sup>60</sup> One internal government document cited in media reports stated explicitly that the cross removals in Zhejiang were aimed at regulating "overly popular" religious activities.<sup>61</sup>

The second factor contributing to increased repression is a growing official emphasis on "Sinicizing" Christianity and "adapting" it to China's "socialist society." Such efforts predate November 2012, but the rhetoric has since gained momentum and Xi's imprimatur. In a May 2015 speech and again in remarks in April 2016, Xi laid out the "Four Musts" of CCP religious work, one of which is Sinicization, including of religious doctrine.<sup>62</sup> It remains somewhat unclear what party leaders mean by Sinicization in practice, but some superficial changes have been observed. One of them involves "localizing" the architecture of churches, in effect reducing their public visibility. This was listed as an element of a pilot campaign launched in Zhejiang at the end of 2014, referred to as the "Five Introductions and Five Transformations" for Christian communities in the province.<sup>63</sup> The focus on architecture helps explain the cross removals and other changes to the exterior appearance of churches. Other aspects of Sinicization evident as of mid-2016 range from nationalistic measures like requiring a Chinese flag to be flown on church property,<sup>64</sup> to more eccentric initiatives like promoting Chinese tea culture among congregants.<sup>65</sup>

A third factor behind the repressive trend relates to the anti-Western political environment and ideological retrenchment that have taken hold under Xi, including official warnings against the influence of foreign values and the infiltration of overseas "hostile forces" into the religious sphere. Such comments, along with the increased restrictions on Protestant Christians in particular, seem to reflect CCP anxiety over the growing influence of a decentralized religion whose leaders have personal ties to coreligionists in democratic countries like the United States or South Korea, even if Christianity has in fact been quite Sinicized already.

With respect to escalating tensions in Zhejiang specifically, the initiative of provincial party leaders and the hosting of an international political summit appear to have played a critical role. Zhejiang Party Secretary Xia Baolong, who assumed his position in December 2012, has been closely associated with the cross-removal campaign, having reportedly stated in an October 2013 tour of Wenzhou that the large number of visible church buildings and crosses may not be "appropriate" for the landscape.<sup>66</sup> China's hosting of the Group of 20 summit in the provincial capital Hangzhou in September 2016 triggered another acceleration in efforts to curb the visibility of Christianity in the city.<sup>67</sup>

Xia had been Xi Jinping's deputy when Xi served as party secretary in Zhejiang from 2002 to 2007.<sup>68</sup> The close association has prompted speculation that Xi himself may have had a hand in initiating the crackdown.<sup>69</sup> Absent access to internal party sources, it is impossible to know whether this is the case. But the campaign has continued for two years, triggering domestic backlash and international criticism, and Xi has made no move to stop it.

## Catholicism at a crossroads

Although China's Catholics have been affected by some of the dynamics described above, particularly the cross removals in Zhejiang,<sup>70</sup> the overall trajectory of the government's policies toward Catholicism is distinct from the situation for Protestantism and appears to have serious potential for positive change. After a notable deterioration in Sino-Vatican relations from 2010 to 2012, by mid-2016 there was a sense of optimism surrounding the relationship and hope for some kind of breakthrough, especially regarding the appointment of bishops.

Pope Francis assumed his position in March 2013, just three days before Xi became China's state president. Almost immediately, the new pope began making overtures to China and Xi personally. He sent a congratulatory letter to Xi that month, appointed someone with China experience as the Vatican's senior diplomat, and sought to meet with Xi during the leaders' simultaneous visits to the United States in September 2013. The pope's efforts to get into Beijing's good graces have also been evident in his rhetoric. During a January 2016 media interview, he expressed admiration for China's great culture and age-old wisdom, and sent a Lunar New Year greeting to Xi and the Chinese people, the first known example of such a gesture by a pope to a Chinese leader.<sup>71</sup>

Beijing has taken notice of these efforts. Between June 2014 and January 2016, the Chinese government held three rounds of informal talks with Vatican representatives,<sup>72</sup> while state media coverage of Pope Francis has been quite positive.<sup>73</sup> Beijing has avoided appointing any bishops unilaterally, and in August 2015 a bishop approved by both sides took his post in Henan, the first case of its kind in three years.<sup>74</sup> In August 2014, China permitted the pope to fly through Chinese airspace on his return from a visit to South Korea, the first time such permission has been granted.

The timing of the apparent thaw in relations is especially meaningful given the large accumulation of bishop vacancies in China, which stems in part from the retirement or death of an older generation of bishops who were appointed before 1949. Should Beijing decide to appoint its own bishops to even some of these positions without Vatican approval, the number of illegitimate bishops could rise from fewer than 10 to more than 30. This would deepen rifts among Catholic leaders recognized only by the Vatican, those approved by both authorities, and those appointed only by CCP entities. Pope Francis is probably motivated to avoid such an outcome, though his recent efforts are in keeping with the Vatican's policy of reaching accommodations with Communist-led governments around the world.

From Beijing's perspective, several factors make Pope Francis a more attractive interlocutor than his predecessors. First, as a native of a developing country (Argentina) rather than a Western European power, Pope Francis may be perceived as less of a political tool for Western "hostile forces," which the CCP fears might use religious authority to undermine China's political stability.

Second, as the first Jesuit pope, Francis has expressed a strong sense of special connection to China. The Jesuits played a central role in introducing Catholicism to the country, and some of the order's representatives, like Matteo Ricci in the 16th century, developed close relations with the Chinese imperial court.<sup>75</sup>

Third, Pope Francis's stated admiration for the greatness of Chinese history and civilization

matches Xi's own "China Dream" of the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." The overtures appear to have engendered some goodwill, with leaders of state-affiliated Catholic institutions urging that an agreement on bishop appointments be reached and that the pope be permitted to visit China.<sup>76</sup>

Lastly, with only 12 million followers spread throughout the country, Catholicism is perhaps the least politically threatening organized religious group in China in terms of size and geographic distribution, despite its ties to a foreign spiritual authority. Taking advantage of the opportunity to ease tensions, especially with a pope perceived as less likely to use his power to spur anti-CCP sentiment, would improve Xi's reputation at home and abroad.

As behind-the-scenes negotiations move forward, observers believe that three options for ordination arrangements are likely on the table:

- The Vatican provides a list of acceptable candidates to Beijing, which makes the final selection. A similar model is used in Vietnam.
- The Vatican makes a specific selection that must then be confirmed via official Chinese channels.
- Beijing takes the initiative, but allows candidates enough time to try to win Vatican approval. This process has been used for several ordinations over the last decade.<sup>77</sup>

### Several factors make Pope Francis a more attractive interlocutor for Beijing than his predecessors.

Despite a sense of hope and optimism in the Vatican and among some Catholics in China, others in Hong Kong and on the mainland remain wary of a rapprochement.<sup>78</sup> They fear that Beijing will force the Vatican into a compromise that would increase state control, but may not necessarily reduce instances of violent persecution or detentions. Still, a change would resolve the moral dilemma facing many Catholics who want to be loyal to Rome but also avoid official persecution, while enabling greater unity between the approved and unapproved parts of the church.

Developments on the ground since March 2013 reinforce the skeptics' concerns. Even in the context of improved Sino-Vatican relations, the occasional detention of underground bishops and priests has persisted,<sup>79</sup> and Shanghai bishop Ma Daqin remains under house arrest at a seminary after disassociating from the CPA at his 2012 ordination. In June 2016, a blog entry posted under Ma's name recanted that decision as an "unwise move," explained that he had been "tricked by outside elements," and praised the CPA.<sup>80</sup> Some observers questioned the post's authenticity. They noted the likelihood of coercion and "political education" if it was Ma's writing,<sup>81</sup> and expressed consternation at the Vatican's silence on the matter.<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, in April 2013, the government adopted new, more restrictive regulations on appointment of bishops, replacing those in place since 1993.<sup>83</sup> The new rules explicitly require support from the CCP and give central authorities—particularly the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC) and the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB)—the final say over appointments, making it more difficult for dioceses to negotiate leeway via good relations with local officials.

It is important to note that this is not the first time hopes have been raised. The same proposals for bishop ordination that are now being considered were discussed in 2007, only to have relations sour again three years later.<sup>84</sup>

### Key methods of political control

The Chinese authorities employ several major tactics to influence the development of state-sanctioned churches and reduce the prevalence and growth of unofficial churches:

- 1. Bureaucratic oversight and registration pressures:** The foundation of the party-state's control over Christianity is the government's network of local RABs and the "patriotic" associations, including the CPA and the BCCCC for Catholics and the TSPM for Protestants. The charters of these entities relay their clear political priorities. Scholar Pitman Potter notes that the TSPM charter "underscores its submission to Party leadership, support for the authority of the state and the socialist motherland."<sup>85</sup>

Churches and religious leaders aligned with these associations receive government funding and permission to train in official seminaries, but must commit to "three fixes"—fixed meeting place, fixed leader, and fixed area of coverage—and to excluding congregants under the age of 18.<sup>86</sup> Many church leaders and congregants prefer to operate outside state controls and retain greater autonomy, even if this comes with risk.

Meanwhile, the party's own bureaucratic restrictions have made it effectively impossible for official churches to meet the needs of all of the country's Christians, and the rules do not allow churches to register without joining the TSPM or CPA.<sup>87</sup> The result is a large extralegal arena of worship, with local officials using various methods to pressure unregistered groups to disband or merge with official churches nearby.

- 2. Restrictions on places of worship:** Many reported instances of persecution involve measures taken by local authorities to restrict the use of a particular location for Christian worship, meetings, or trainings. Periodic raids disperse unregistered church Bible trainings, and pressure on landlords to cancel rental agreements prevents unofficial churches from meeting at their chosen location.<sup>88</sup> In more extreme cases, security agents turn off the water and electricity of a church site, physically bar believers' access, or demolish a church building.

Until recently, such measures were typically focused on unregistered churches, particularly large, urban congregations like Beijing's Shouwang, in an effort to force worshipers to join a TSPM church or disband into smaller and less influential groups.<sup>89</sup> However, over the past three years, a growing number of TSPM churches have also encountered restrictions on their places of worship, demolitions, or property disputes with local authorities.<sup>90</sup> The trend of TSPM churches being subject to harassment and demolitions undercuts any incentives for unofficial groups to register.

- 3. Controlling religious clergy:** A key function of the "patriotic" associations is to train, ordain, appoint, and manage religious clergy. The party hopes to cultivate "patriotic" religious leaders who can teach believers to "love the country" and "protect the leadership of the Communist Party."<sup>91</sup> Training occurs at a network of 24 national, regional, and provincial TSPM seminaries and 13 CPA seminaries.<sup>92</sup>

Aspiring students face a number of hurdles, including a preference for young applicants (aged 18–25), academic tests, and political vetting through a background check by the local RAB. A surplus of applicants and the limited openings allow the seminaries to be very selective in their admission criteria. Graduates must complete another set of steps to become TSPM pastors, including an apprenticeship and ordination, all with close supervision by the RAB and approval from various levels of TSPM leaders.

## Efforts to train and ordain politically loyal clergy have failed to keep pace with the expansion of Christianity in China.

For Catholics, the BCCCC is the agency through which bishops are selected and ordained, including those without Vatican approval. In a practice that has stoked discontent among government-approved clergy in recent years, officials have sometimes forced bishops who had been ordained with Vatican approval to participate in the ordination of others without papal consent. The participation of such “illegitimate” bishops in various other ceremonies or seminary graduations has also raised tensions.<sup>93</sup>

Efforts to train and ordain politically loyal clergy have failed to keep pace with the expansion of Christianity in China, undermining the CCP's goals. Indeed, fieldwork by scholar Carsten Vala indicates that some of the party's own controls—including rigid training curricula, political vetting for seminary applicants, and government intervention in church appointments and theology—have led to a dearth of TSPM pastors. By contrast, leadership training in unregistered churches is more diverse, flexible, simple, and autonomous. It provides greater opportunities for lay believers or even TSPM-trained pastors to become leaders, despite the greater risk of harassment.<sup>94</sup>

- 4. Doctrinal manipulation and political education:** The CCP recognizes that theology is central to determining believers' political tendencies and has sought to downplay certain aspects of the Christian faith while promoting others. In 1998, top TSPM leader Bishop Ding Guangxun launched the Theological Construction Movement. He advocated “diluting” the traditional doctrine of “justification by faith” with an emphasis on being a “law-abiding, good citizen,” essentially encouraging Chinese Protestants to obey party-state authority over religious authority. Ding also backed interpretations that adhered to other party priorities, such as maintaining national unity and providing social welfare.<sup>95</sup>

This theological approach has since come to underpin the training curriculum at seminaries and sermons at many TSPM churches.<sup>96</sup>

Seminary training is supplemented by periodic “political education” campaigns among clergy. In July 2015, for example, authorities in Shanghai mandated that Catholic priests and nuns undergo “reeducation” classes on the themes of the CCP's most recent National Congress plenary session.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, extensive resources are dedicated to controlling the publication of religious texts and punishing individuals who produce unofficial versions, imprisoning them on charges of engaging in “illegal publication.”

- 5. Detentions and violent repression:** Those who persist in leading or worshipping at unregistered churches or otherwise opposing or circumventing government controls risk detention, imprisonment, and some torture. Most detained Christians are subject to relatively short periods in custody, ranging from several hours of interrogation

to administrative detention of up to 15 days. This is particularly true for ordinary congregants who make up the majority of detained Christians. However, each year a number of mainstream Protestants and Catholics are placed in long-term custody, “disappeared,” or sentenced to prison.

Many of the cases of arrest and imprisonment that receive international attention involve church leaders or clergy members, and their proportion among the overall number of Christians detained has reportedly risen since 2014.<sup>98</sup> This may indicate that officials are making a more concerted effort to control lay believers via the clergy, but it could also be a reaction to greater outspokenness on the part of church leaders in their interactions with the authorities.

Lawyers and family members of imprisoned Christians periodically relay reports of torture,<sup>99</sup> though such abuse appears to be less common than with some other religious minorities. Instead, in recent years, Christians seem more likely to encounter brutality outside of custody, particularly in confrontations with riot police or demolition crews.

### **Economic incentives and reprisals**

In contrast to Buddhist temples, local officials have not traditionally viewed Christian churches and seminaries as potential vehicles for generating income. However, as Christianity’s popularity has grown, some party-state officials are encouraging or pressuring leaders of Christian institutions to shift resources toward projects that might attract tourists and build the local economy. In a 2013 article, Carsten Vala cites an example of RAB cadres in Hunan convincing the leaders of the provincial Protestant seminary to change their plans for the campus’s design. The revised design incorporated a pedestrian street with snack carts, a collection of life-size sculptures depicting Bible scenes, and one of the largest churches in China.<sup>100</sup>

Given the increasingly hostile political environment for Christianity, such encouragement by local officials has been known to backfire. In one of the most publicized demolitions of recent years, the Sanjiang Church in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, was destroyed in April 2014 after a lengthy standoff between the government and congregants. Some officials attempted to justify the demolition by arguing that the cathedral-like building had been constructed beyond the permitted size. However, according to a pastor familiar with the details of the case, “It was not the original plan to build such a large church, but the government gave encouragement for a larger building because ... the authorities wanted it to become a tourist attraction.”<sup>101</sup>

Indeed, local officials pronounced it a “model building,”<sup>102</sup> but their plan went awry when provincial party secretary Xia Baolong toured the area in late 2013 and voiced concern over the church’s prominence on the landscape, with some sources reporting that he personally ordered the demolition. Five bureaucrats were then punished for failing to stop the construction.<sup>103</sup> In other cases, local officials themselves have ordered demolitions of urban churches because they wish to use the land for more lucrative projects.<sup>104</sup>

Besides physical destruction of property, Chinese officials often impose significant financial costs on Christian believers. Many of the dozens of official churches demolished in recent

years—including Sanjiang—were built with donations from local congregants, in some cases amounting to millions of dollars. This creates a particularly close personal connection between believers and their place of worship, intensifying frustration with the government when the edifice is arbitrarily destroyed before their eyes.

Many of the official churches demolished in recent years were built with donations from local congregants, in some cases amounting to millions of dollars.

In a more direct form of penalty, the government fines congregants to deter participation in unofficial churches. Christians affiliated with the TSPM have also been fined to prevent public resistance by other state-appointed religious leaders. For example, TSPM Pastor Zhang Shaojie was fined 100,000 yuan (\$16,000) in addition to a 12-year prison term in prison in 2014, prompting authorities to pressure his family to vacate their home so it could be auctioned off.<sup>105</sup> Extortion and confiscation of property—including valuable personal items—are customary in crackdowns on unofficial churches, pastors, and members.<sup>106</sup> Government employees found to be involved in underground religious activities are subject to economic reprisals ranging from forced unpaid leave to dismissal.<sup>107</sup> Since 2014, some families in Sichuan and Guizhou have had welfare assistance suspended for attending underground church services,<sup>108</sup> or been warned that their children's future educational opportunities would be restricted if they accompanied their parents.<sup>109</sup>

### Community response and resistance

Christians in China have responded to the strict regulatory framework, corporatist controls, and periodic campaigns of persecution in a variety of ways. The responses straddle registered and unregistered churches, further blurring the distinctions between the two. As official hostility has increased in recent years, mistrust of the government among state-sanctioned church leaders and believers has correspondingly grown, leading them to adopt more confrontational approaches.

Still, perhaps the most common form of Chinese Christian resistance to official controls is simply to expand opportunities for religious practice outside of state-designated spaces, sometimes with tacit official approval, rather than directly challenging religious policy or seeking to alter the political system. Such efforts include:

- 1. Quietly circumventing restrictions:** Many Christian leaders and lay believers discretely take steps on a daily basis to expand the space for autonomous religious practice while avoiding reprisals from authorities. Unofficial church congregations and Bible study groups meet in private homes, office spaces, or hotel conference rooms when denied an officially sanctioned place of worship. In a 2013 article, scholar Susan McCarthy describes how the priests, nuns, and lay volunteers at the state-sanctioned Catholic Jinde charity in Beijing insinuate religious symbols and spiritual meaning into its projects.<sup>110</sup> Mundane activities—like joining a marathon, hosting a Christmas charity party, or providing earthquake relief—take on spiritual significance for the organizations' staff personally and as a means of demonstrating the positive role that Christianity can play in Chinese society.

In another example, hundreds of Christians from both registered and unregistered congregations across China take part in training programs run by the Hong Kong-based Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC) at any given time. The radio-based

program, conducted with TSPM approval, provides an alternative, low-risk avenue for training outside the complex, politicized official seminaries.<sup>111</sup> Other opportunities for autonomous study include online seminary courses offered outside of China, unofficial seminars by overseas pastors and scholars during visits to China, and the sharing of religious media content via applications like WeChat.<sup>112</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, many Christians engage in activities that are banned by the government and go to great lengths to maintain secrecy. They participate in rural mountainside training workshops, equip their homes with soundproofing and hiding spaces to accommodate underground church meetings, produce and disseminate unofficial religious publications, or flee the country by land to Southeast Asia.<sup>113</sup>

- 2. Developing cooperative relations with local officials:** Many unofficial churches have sought to cultivate positive relationships with local cadres, police, and RAB personnel. They attempt to be polite to officers assigned to monitor them, openly notify them of meeting times, and otherwise try to demonstrate that they are good people with no interest in sowing social discord.<sup>114</sup> In response, some officials have given tacit approval to the existence of a “house church” in their jurisdiction, and police have warned unofficial church leaders of coming raids or crackdowns.<sup>115</sup> Such dynamics have greatly contributed to the growth of Christianity and enabled the construction of formal church buildings for unregistered congregations. It remains unclear how much the space for these kinds of relationships has dwindled in recent years as the overall political environment for Christianity has soured.
- 3. Legal activism and education:** When confronted with arrests or property disputes, both registered and unregistered church leaders and members have worked with human rights lawyers to file administrative lawsuits or defend their innocence and religious freedom in court. Such efforts continue despite the risk of reprisals—including against the lawyers themselves—and the slim chance of success.<sup>116</sup> Over the past decade, one Christian activist has also conducted a series of trainings for believers across China, particularly those from unregistered churches, to educate them about their rights under Chinese law and help them identify official actions that are illegal. The sessions and a broader increase in legal awareness among Chinese Christians have reportedly provided grassroots believers with negotiation strategies and talking points that can be employed in communications with local police, which in some cases have fended off arbitrary acts of persecution.<sup>117</sup>

Some police have warned unofficial church leaders of coming raids or crackdowns.

While the above approaches have at times proven effective, in the face of intensified assaults or as a matter of principle, some Christian leaders and believers have turned to more public and confrontational tactics to resist encroachment or press for more liberal registration policies. Notably, since 2013, more Christians from state-sanctioned churches and even the “patriotic” associations themselves have resorted to these avenues of appeal. In many instances, the greater assertiveness has been met with repression from authorities, including detention, imprisonment, and beatings. The main forms of public resistance are as follows:

- 1. Publishing written objections to official actions:** Either prominent individuals or a coalition of church leaders or congregants have submitted open letters and petitions to relevant official organs; the documents are then published online and circulated



via social media. Many such documents have been written and publicized since 2014, appealing to provincial and national authorities to cease the campaign of cross removals and church demolitions in Zhejiang. Remarkably, a number of open letters have come from individuals and entities affiliated with state-sanctioned churches, including the province's "patriotic" Zhejiang Christian Council and Catholic clergy in Wenzhou led by the government-approved bishop, Zhu Weifang.<sup>118</sup>

- 2. Boycotting the religious rituals of clergy deemed illegitimate:** Some Catholics have refused to attend or participate in ceremonies involving the eight bishops who have not received papal approval. At his 2012 ordination, Shanghai bishop Ma Daqin deftly embraced three illegitimate bishops rather than let them perform a "laying on of hands" ritual on him.<sup>119</sup> In July 2014, when an official seminary in Beijing announced that a bishop who had been excommunicated by the Vatican would celebrate graduation Mass, the class boycotted their own graduation.<sup>120</sup>
- 3. Worshipping outdoors:** When unregistered churches have been evicted from their meeting sites because of official pressure on landlords or other government obstruction, some have taken to worshipping in public spaces instead. The most prominent case in recent years was that of the Shouwang Church in Beijing. Once one of the largest unofficial congregations in the country, it was forced out of its meeting location in 2009, and congregants and church leaders began to meet in public plazas and parks to pray. After several rounds of arrests, however, repressive efforts appeared to have succeeded by 2015, with the church's followers dispersing into smaller "house church" groups or other congregations.<sup>121</sup>
- 4. Physically blocking demolition efforts, replacing crosses:** On numerous occasions over the past few years, large numbers of congregants—sometimes hundreds at a time—have met at a threatened site of worship, held hands to create a "human wall," conducted a sit-in while chanting hymns, or piled up stones to block access to the site.<sup>122</sup> In some instances riot police and demolition crews dispersed the gatherings by force, but particularly in smaller villages or with lower-profile churches, believers have succeeded in fending off destruction.

According to one pastor in Zhejiang, "quite a few" cross removals have been prevented using these methods. In other cases, he says congregants "put up new crosses right after they are torn down." In a more indirect response, some Christians have taken to manufacturing large numbers of smaller crosses that can be placed on cars, on homes, or by the side of the road in an effort to foil the government campaign's core aim of rendering the region's Christian presence less visible. The activists then maximize the impact by documenting their efforts in photographs or videos and circulating them in China and abroad.

### Future outlook

The Chinese authorities' intensified repression of Christians and particularly Protestants since November 2012 appears to have achieved several goals. Crosses atop churches are significantly less visible across Zhejiang than four years ago, many fewer members of quasi-Christian groups are spreading their faiths, and some human rights lawyers and state-sanctioned church leaders may be thinking twice before defying government orders.

Yet official actions have also produced negative effects, from the CCP's perspective. While the lines between registered and unofficial churches had been blurring for some time, the increased persecution has fueled greater solidarity between these two parts of China's Christian community, as well as between Catholic and Protestant groups. The cross-removal campaign has been especially pivotal as a unifying force for China's Christians. This may be one reason, along with factors related to individual officials, why the removal campaign has not spread from Zhejiang to other provinces.

Nevertheless, other elements of increased control and coerced "Sinicization" may appear nationwide in the coming years. Should the current trajectory of harassment and imprisonment of TSPM churches and leaders continue, unofficial congregations will have less reason to register, and TSPM leaders and members may even choose to "defect" to unregistered churches in larger numbers.

For Catholics, at the time of writing, an agreement between the Vatican and the Chinese government regarding the appointment of bishops seems imminent. Should this breakthrough occur, the most significant question for both sides will be whether the pact reduces the grassroots persecution of Catholics in China. If it does not, the Vatican will face the dilemma of how to respond in a principled manner without risking the dissolution of its new agreement. This is perhaps the most disconcerting scenario among skeptics of a deal like Hong Kong's Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun.

Increased persecution has fueled greater solidarity between the official and unofficial parts of China's Christian community, as well as between Catholics and Protestants.

## NOTES

1. "China's Xi warns against religious infiltration from abroad," Associated Press, April 24, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0181dc9eb62b4c91ae76818b97c17eb0/chinas-xi-warns-against-religious-infiltration-abroad>.
2. China Change, "Christian Sentiment in Zhejiang against Cross Removal: Three Statements," August 7, 2015, <https://chinachange.org/2015/08/07/christian-sentiment-in-zhejiang-against-cross-removal-three-statements/>.
3. Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Chinese Christianity* (United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).
4. "China Christian Council," *Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias*, [http://contemporary\\_chinese\\_culture.academic.ru/126/China\\_Christian\\_Council](http://contemporary_chinese_culture.academic.ru/126/China_Christian_Council).
5. Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, & World Affairs, "China Patriotic Catholic Association," <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/organizations/china-patriotic-catholic-association>.
6. The Chinese term applied by the authorities is *xiejiao*. Chinese government sources and state media often use a slightly misleading English translation, "evil cult," to demonize the groups labeled as *xiejiao*. "Heterodox religion" more accurately captures the term's traditional meaning in Chinese and will be used in this report.
7. One such example was a crackdown on the South China Church in Hubei Province in 2001.
8. U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, "2007 Annual Report," May 2007, [http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/AR\\_2007/annualreport2007.pdf](http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/AR_2007/annualreport2007.pdf).
9. This total has expanded in the years since, reaching 16 major churches and 49 affiliated meeting points as of late 2016. See "Beijing Jidujiao Sanzi Aiguo Yundong Weiyuanhui" [Beijing Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church], accessed November 29, 2016, <http://www.bjcctspm.org>; Lauren Homer, "Registration of Chinese Protestant House Churches under China's 2005 Regulation on Religious Affairs: Resolving the Implementation Impasse," *Journal of Church and State* 52, no. 1 (2010): 50–73.
10. Pope Benedict XVI to Priests, Consecrated Persons and Lay Faithful of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China, *Letter of the Holy Father*, May 27, 2007, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2007/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20070527\\_china.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20070527_china.html).
11. Carsten Vala, "Protestant Christianity and Civil Society in Authoritarian China. The Impact of Official Churches and Unregistered 'Urban Churches' on Civil Society Development in China in the 2000s," *China Perspectives* no. 2012/3 (October 1, 2012): 43–52.
12. Ibid.

13. Homer, "Registration of Chinese Protestant House Churches."
14. Ibid.; Vala, "Protestant Christianity and Civil Society in Authoritarian China."
15. Email communication with Carsten Vala, November 2016.
16. Teresa Wright and Teresa Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State: Unofficial Chinese Protestant Groups in China's Reform Era," *China: An International Journal* 11, no. 1 (April 25, 2013): 1–20.
17. State Administration of Religious Affairs of China, "Woguo Zongjiao De Jiben Qingkuang" [The Basic Information of Our Country's Religions], April 1, 2014, <http://www.sara.gov.cn/llyj/63734.htm>.
18. Pew Research Center, "Appendix C: Methodology for China," in *Global Christianity—A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population*, December 19, 2011, <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/>.
19. See for example Asia Harvest, "Population of Christians," accessed November 29, 2016, <http://asiaharvest.org/wp-content/uploads/christians-in-china/China.htm>. For Asia Harvest's methodology, see Paul Hattaway, "How Many Christians Are in China? A Brief Summary of Our Full Article," Asia Harvest, <http://asiaharvest.org/how-many-christians-are-in-china-summary/>.
20. See also Tom McGregor, "Catholicism in China Today," *Crisis Magazine*, August 15, 2013, <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2013/catholicism-in-china-today>.
21. Richard Madsen, "Introduction: The Context of Chinese Catholicism," *China's Catholics Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
22. See Eriberto Lozada, Jr., *God Aboveground: Catholic Church, Postsocialist State, and Transnational Processes in a Chinese Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
23. State Administration of Religious Affairs of China, "Woguo Zongjiao De Jiben Qingkuang."
24. Nanlai Cao, *Constructing China's Jerusalem: Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
25. Francis Khék Gee Lim, "Shields of Faith: Christianity in Contemporary China," *Christianity in Contemporary China: Sociocultural Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
26. Ibid. See also Fenggang Yang, "The Red, Black, and Gray Markets of Religion in China," *Sociological Quarterly* 47: 93–122.
27. Karrie Koesel, "The Rise of a Chinese House Church: The Organizational Weapon," *The China Quarterly* 215 (June 2013).
28. Carsten Vala and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Attraction Without Networks: Recruiting Strangers to Unregistered Protestantism in China," *Mobilization* 12, no. 1 (March 2007): 79–94.
29. China Aid Association, "2012 Annual Report on 'Chinese Government Persecution of Christians & Churches in Mainland China,'" February 3, 2013, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2013/02/chinaaid-releases-2012-annual-report-on.html>.
30. One 2012 report from China Aid referred to an internal CCP document that indicated this was part of a more systematic campaign to "eradicate" house churches. Freedom House was unable to find additional evidence of such an order. See China Aid Association, "China Aid Special Report: Chinese Government Launches New Campaign to Eradicate House Churches," April 22, 2012, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2012/04/chinaaid-special-report-chinese.html>.
31. China Aid, "2013 Persecution Report Indicates Rising Trend in Persecution Cases," February 13, 2014, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2014/02/china-aid-association-2013-persecution.html>.
32. China Aid, "2014 Annual Report Indicates Rising Trend in Persecution Cases," April 21, 2015, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/04/china-aid-2014-annual-report-indicates.html>. See also Tom Phillips, "China's 'evil' church demolition campaign continues, say activists," *Telegraph*, April 15, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/11537435/Chinas-evil-church-demolition-campaign-continues-say-activists.html>.
33. China Aid, "2015 Annual Report on Chinese Government Persecution," May 18, 2016, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/05/china-aid-releases-2015-annual-report.html>.
34. Ian Johnson, "Decapitated Churches in China's Christian Heartland," *New York Times*, May 21, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/world/asia/china-christians-zhejiang.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/world/asia/china-christians-zhejiang.html?_r=1); U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "2016 Annual Report," October 6, 2016, <https://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/2016%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.
35. Qiao Nong, Carolyn Song, and Brynne Lawrence, "17 crosses destroyed, authorities threaten demolition," China Aid, March 8, 2016, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/03/17-crosses-destroyed-authorities.html>.
36. Yaxue Cao, "Interview with a Wenzhou Pastor: The Chinese Government's Large-Scale Destruction of Crosses in Zhejiang Province," China Change, July 26, 2015, <https://chinachange.org/2015/07/29/interview-with-a-wenzhou-pastor-the-chinese-governments-large-scale-destruction-of-crosses-in-zhejiang-province/>.
37. Ian Johnson, "Church-State Clash in China Coalesces Around a Toppled Spire," *New York Times*, May 29, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/30/world/asia/church-state-clash-in-china-coalesces-around-a-toppled-spire.html>.
38. Ava Collins, "Henan church wins rights to land where pastor's wife was killed," China Aid, April 27, 2016, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/04/henan-church-wins-rights-to-land-where.html>; Qiao Nong, Carolyn Song and Brynne Lawrence, "Crosses removed, churches demolished in government crackdown," China Aid, January 8, 2016, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/01/crosses-removed-churches-demolished-in.html>; Rachel Ritchie, "Anhui government issues demolition notice for church after approving building site," China Aid, March 31, 2015, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/03/anhui->

[government-issues-demolition.html](#).

39. Wright and Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State." According to China Aid, in 2013 there were no more than a handful of persecution incidents in the entire province. This jumped to dozens in 2014, resulting in over 1,000 detentions.
40. Yaxue Cao, "Interview with a Wenzhou Pastor: The Chinese Government's Large-Scale Destruction of Crosses in Zhejiang Province," China Aid, July 29, 2015, <https://chinachange.org/tag/xia-baolong/>.
41. Following an initial outcry, authorities arrested two of the men responsible and later acknowledged that the land indeed belonged to the church for use as a religious site. See Stoyan Zaimov, "Church Leader's Wife Buried Alive by Chinese Authorities for Protesting Church Demolition," *Christian Post*, April 19, 2016, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/china-church-leaders-wife-buried-alive-killed-for-protesting-church-demolition-162067>; Brent Fulton, "Death of Henan Pastor's Wife Points to Nationwide Problem," *China Source* (blog), June 1, 2016, <http://www.chinasource.org/blog/posts/death-of-henan-pastors-wife-points-to-nationwide-problem>; Collins, "Henan church wins rights to land where pastor's wife was killed."
42. His wife was sentenced to 12 years in prison. See "China pastor who resisted cross removals jailed for corruption," *BBC*, February 26, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-35673952>.
43. He was released into "residential surveillance," a form of house arrest, in late March. See China Aid, "CHINA: Pastor Gu Yuese released to 'residential surveillance,'" Church in Chains, April 6, 2016, <http://www.churchinchains.ie/node/873>; "China pastor Gu Yuese investigated for corruption," *BBC*, February 1, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-35457150>; Brendon Hong, "China's Crackdown on Christian Churches," *Daily Beast* (blog), May 8, 2016, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/05/08/china-s-crackdown-on-christian-churches.html>.
44. U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Pastor Zhang Shaojie's Harsh Sentence Highlights China's Increasing Intolerance of Christianity," November 3, 2014, <http://www.cecc.gov/publications/commission-analysis/pastor-zhang-shaojie%E2%80%99s-harsh-sentence-highlights-china%E2%80%99s-increasing>.
45. Wright and Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State."
46. Terrence McCoy, "The Chinese cult behind a brutal McDonald's murder believes Jesus has returned as a woman," *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 14, 2014, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/the-chinese-cult-behind-a-brutal-mcdonalds-murder-believes-jesus-has-retuned-as-a-woman-20141013-115kr6.html>.
47. The other eight groups whose followers are punished in the sample of verdicts are: Mentuhui, Church Rebuilt by the Holy Spirit, Shouters, Lingling sect, Three Ranks of Servants, Lord God sect, Xinling sect, and House of Joseph. The documents were collected and downloaded from the online database of the Supreme People's Court in June 2016, then sorted and analyzed. Since January 1, 2014, Chinese courts have been required to publish verdicts online, providing a significantly greater number of available verdicts even on a sensitive issue like religious persecution. Nevertheless, the database is not comprehensive, and individual verdicts are periodically removed. See Zhongguo Caipan Wenshu Wang [China Judgements Online], accessed November 29, 2016, <http://wenshu.court.gov.cn>.
48. The only three province-level administrative units that did not appear were Tianjin, Chongqing, and Tibet.
49. The Church of Almighty God, also known as Eastern Lightning, started in Henan Province in early 1990s, and some international experts have characterized it as a cult. In addition to reports of violence by believers, like the 2014 McDonald's incident, it is viewed as controversial because of a core belief that Jesus has returned in the body of a Chinese woman and accounts of followers severing ties with their families. William Bennett, "Where Did Eastern Lightning Come From?" *China Source*, April 4, 2014, <http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/where-did-eastern-lightning-come-from>; Malcolm Moore, "Inside China's most radical cult," *Telegraph*, February 2, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/11046155/Inside-Chinas-most-radical-cult.html>.
50. China Aid Association, "2014 Annual Report: Religious and Human Rights Persecution in China," April 2015, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B024UfutRtHodGVzbWhyLUtCdjg/view>; State media reports said over 1,000 members of Almighty God were arrested from May to August 2014. Malcolm Moore, "Inside China's most radical cult."
51. Wright and Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State."
52. Freedom House, "China Media Bulletin Issue No. 113," March 2016, [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/CMB113\\_English-FINAL.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/CMB113_English-FINAL.pdf); Tom Phillips, "The day Zhao Wei disappeared: How a young law graduate was caught in China's human rights dragnet," *Guardian*, January 24, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/25/zhao-wei-mothers-search-for-daughter-caught-china-human-rights>; "Zhao Wei Released, Many Lawyers Still in Detention," *China Digital Times*, July 7, 2016, <http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2016/07/zhao-wei-released-year-detention>.
53. Front Line Defenders, "Whereabouts of at least 18 human rights defenders remain unknown two months after their detentions," September 14, 2015, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-li-heping>; Human Rights In China, "Official Notice of Arrest of Lawyer Li Heping on Suspicion of 'Subversion of State Power,'" January 8, 2016, <http://www.hrichina.org/en/official-notice-arrest-lawyer-li-heping-suspicion-subversion-state-power>.
54. Robert Foyle Hunwick, "Why Christmas Is Huge in China," *Atlantic*, December 24, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/12/why-christmas-is-huge-in-china/384040>.
55. Interview with Bob Fu, executive director of China Aid, September 2016.
56. Xin Lin, Hai Nan, and Luisetta Mudie, "China's Christians Told to Keep a Low Profile This Christmas," *Radio Free Asia*, December 24, 2015, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/church-12282012173743.html>; Qiao Nong, Carolyn Song,

- and Ava Collins, "Authorities crack down on Christmas plans," China Aid, November 16, 2015, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/11/authorities-crack-down-on-christmas.html>.
57. "Christmas banned by Chinese university because it's 'kitsch,'" *Telegraph* (London), December 25, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/11313212/Christmas-banned-by-Chinese-university-because-its-kitsch.html>.
  58. Wright and Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State."
  59. "China's Communist Party now larger than the population of Germany," Agence France-Presse, June 30, 2015, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1829407/chinas-communist-party-enlists-million-new-members>.
  60. See Falun Gong chapter of this report for a detailed analysis of the factors that provoked the party's campaign against the spiritual group.
  61. Ian Johnson, "Church-State Clash in China Coalesces Around a Toppled Spire," *New York Times*, May 29, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/30/world/asia/church-state-clash-in-china-coalesces-around-a-toppled-spire.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/30/world/asia/church-state-clash-in-china-coalesces-around-a-toppled-spire.html?_r=0).
  62. Xing Fuzeng, "Quanguo Zongjiao Huiyi Ping: Zhongguo Tese Shehui Zhuyi Zongjiao Lilun" [Comments of the National Conference on Religious Work: Socialism Religious Theory with Chinese Characteristics], *Stand News*, April 30, 2016, <https://www.thestandnews.com/society/%E5%85%A8%E5%9C%8B%E5%AE%97%E6%95%99%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E6%9C%83%E8%AD%B0%E8%A9%95-%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B%E7%89%B9%E8%89%B2%E7%A4%BE%E6%9C%83%E4%B8%BB%E7%BE%A9%E5%AE%97%E6%95%99%E7%90%86%E8%AB%96/>.
  63. Interview with pastor in China who wished to remain anonymous, June 2016. See also Guo Baosheng, "Wu Jin Wu Hua' Zhizai Chedi Gaizao Yu Kongzhi Jidujiao" [Five 'in's and Five transformations aiming to totally remold and control Christianity], China Aid, September 3, 2015, [http://www.chinaaid.net/2015/09/blog-post\\_89.html](http://www.chinaaid.net/2015/09/blog-post_89.html).
  64. For example, a government website from Lanxi in Zhejiang notes that 69 religious sites in the city had flown Chinese flags on their property, including churches. See Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of Zhejiang Province, "Lanxi Luoshuo Quansheng Zongjiao Gongzuo Huiyi Jingshen Shauxian Shixian Zongjiao Changsuo Guoqi Xuangua Quan Fugai" [Lanxi City Practices the Spirit of the Provincial Conference on Religious Work and Become the First One Achieving the Hanging of National Flag in Religious Venues All over the City], July 15, 2016, <http://www.zjsmzw.gov.cn/Public/NewsInfo.aspx?type=1&id=ef5d4c32-65ff-4274-8d4b-f0d1b1249edd>.
  65. In June 2016, the TSPM and the China Christian Council in Jinan city, Shandong Province, announced a new initiative to promote Christianity and "tea culture." They urged pastors and church leaders to promote the campaign in the city and invited submissions of articles on the themes of "Christianity and Tea," "Tea and Christian Cultivation," and "The Ministry of the Gospel and Tea." Screenshot of webpage on file with the author.
  66. Peter Berger, "Is the Chinese Regime Changing its Policy Toward Christianity?" *American Interest*, June 11, 2014, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/06/11/is-the-chinese-regime-changing-its-policy-toward-christianity/>.
  67. Ibid.
  68. China Vitae, "Biography of Xi Jinping," [http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/xi\\_jinping/full](http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/xi_jinping/full).
  69. Yaxue Cao, "Interview with a Wenzhou Pastor."
  70. By July 31, 2014, at least 229 Christian churches were believed to have been demolished or had their crosses removed during the campaign. They included 25 Catholic churches belonging to both the open and underground communities. Holy Spirit Study Centre, "China Church and News Update 2014," *Tripod* 35, no. 176 (Spring 2015), [http://www.hsstudyc.org.hk/en/tripod\\_en/en\\_tripod\\_176\\_06.html](http://www.hsstudyc.org.hk/en/tripod_en/en_tripod_176_06.html).
  71. Francesco Sisci, "Pope Francis urges world not to fear China's rise: AT exclusive," *Asia Times*, February 2, 2016, <http://www.atimes.com/at-exclusive-pope-francis-urges-world-not-to-fear-chinas-rise/>.
  72. The first meeting occurred in June 2014, followed by another in China in October 2015, and a third in January 2016.
  73. Vatican Radio reported that on December 24, 2013, 50 of the main publications in China listed Pope Francis third among the 10 most important foreign persons of the year in 2013. A March 2014 article in *Vatican Insider* reported that, since Francis became pope, there has been an increase in Chinese websites that publish his messages, speeches, and homilies. Holy Spirit Study Centre, "China Church and News Update 2014," *Tripod* 35, no. 176 (Spring 2015), [http://www.hsstudyc.org.hk/en/tripod\\_en/en\\_tripod\\_176\\_06.html](http://www.hsstudyc.org.hk/en/tripod_en/en_tripod_176_06.html).
  74. Michael Forsythe, "New Bishop in China Signals Hope for Relations with Vatican," *New York Times*, August 5, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/06/world/asia/china-ordains-bishop-joseph-zhang-yinlin.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/06/world/asia/china-ordains-bishop-joseph-zhang-yinlin.html?_r=0).
  75. Victor Gaetan, "The Pope and the Politburo." *Foreign Affairs*, March 24, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2016-03-24/pope-and-politburo>.
  76. Ibid. Holy Spirit Study Centre, "China Church and News Update 2014," *Tripod* 35, no. 176 (Spring 2015), [http://www.hsstudyc.org.hk/en/tripod\\_en/en\\_tripod\\_176\\_06.html](http://www.hsstudyc.org.hk/en/tripod_en/en_tripod_176_06.html).
  77. Ibid.
  78. For example, Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, retired bishop of Hong Kong, said in November 2015 that now was not a suitable time for Sino-Vatican negotiations to take place: "The Chinese government does not need the Vatican. So any discussion will become one-sided, and go in the direction of forcing the Holy See to surrender." In November 2016, he reiterated his fears to the *Wall Street Journal*. David Feith, "The Vatican's Illusions about Chinese Communism," *Wall Street Journal*, November 10, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-vaticans-illusions-about-chinese->

- [communism-1478215875](#); Holy Spirit Study Centre, "A Review of the Last 35 Years of the Catholic Church in China," *Tripod* 35, no. 179 (Winter 2015), [http://www.hsstudyc.org.hk/en/tripod\\_en/en\\_tripod\\_179\\_04.html](http://www.hsstudyc.org.hk/en/tripod_en/en_tripod_179_04.html).
79. A list of known political prisoners published by the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) from 2016 included 11 Catholics, five of whom were detained in 2013–15 in Hebei and Heilongjiang Provinces. U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "China: List of Political Prisoners," October 11, 2016, [http://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/documents/CECC%20Pris%20List\\_20161011\\_1433.pdf](http://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/documents/CECC%20Pris%20List_20161011_1433.pdf).
  80. David Barrett, "Chinese Bishop Shocks Faithful by Recanting Position on State-Run Church—CatholicHerald.co.uk," *Catholic Herald*, June 17, 2016, <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/06/17/chinese-bishop-shocks-faithful-by-recanting-position-on-state-run-church/>.
  81. Brian Fraga, "Chinese Church Conundrum: Why Did Bishop Ma Recant?" *National Catholic Register*, June 30, 2016, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/chinese-church-conundrum-why-did-bishop-ma-recant-criticism>.
  82. Bernardo Cervellera, "Vatican silence over Shanghai's Mgr Ma Daqin causing confusion and controversy," *Asia Times*, June 21, 2016, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Vatican-silence-over-Shanghai%E2%80%99s-Mgr-Ma-Daqin-causing-confusion-and-controversy-37831.html>.
  83. Gerard O'Connell, "China tightens rules for appointment of bishops in Catholic Church," *Vatican Insider*, May 23, 2015, <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/05/23/vaticaninsider/eng/world-news/china-tightens-rules-for-appointment-of-bishops-in-catholic-church-rJGALtFa2n6BYLT7cGnMXJ/pagina.html>.
  84. Gaeten, "The Pope and the Politburo."
  85. Pitman B. Potter, "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China," *China Quarterly*, no. 174 (2003): 317–37.
  86. Wright and Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State."
  87. Homer, "Registration of Chinese Protestant House Churches."
  88. Qiao Nong, "Officials terminate church's lease, order all house churches to register," *China Aid*, December 30, 2015, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/12/officials-terminate-churchs-lease-order.html>.
  89. By 2015, after several years of barring Shouwang from renting space indoors and violent suppression of its attempts to hold services in outdoor public places, official efforts appeared to have succeeded, with the church's followers dispersing into smaller groups or to other congregations.
  90. Nanle and Sanjiang were two particularly prominent examples.
  91. Carsten Vala, "Pathways to the Pulpit: Leadership Training in 'Patriotic' and Unregistered Chinese Protestant Churches," *Making Religion, Making the State: The Politics of Religion in Modern China*, ed. Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wang (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
  92. Vala, "Pathways to the Pulpit"; "China's seminaries 30 years after reopening," *Sunday Examiner*, accessed November 19, 2016, <http://sundayex.catholic.org.hk/node/1914>.
  93. U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Chinese Government Continues to Coerce Registered Catholic Bishops," June 2, 2006, <https://www.cecc.gov/publications/commission-analysis/chinese-government-continues-to-coerce-registered-catholic-bishops>.
  94. Vala, "Pathways to the Pulpit."
  95. *Ibid.*
  96. The China Christian Council (CCC), established in 1980, is another government-affiliated entity that works closely with the TSPM to provide lay training, theological guidance, and Bible distribution, and to explore how to Sinicize Christian theology so that it is "biblically grounded, rooted in Chinese culture, encapsulates the special experience of the Chinese church, and is able to provide a sound explanation of Christian faith in the modern Chinese contexts." Global Ministries, "China Christian Council," accessed November 19, 2016, [http://www.globalministries.org/eap\\_partners\\_china\\_christian\\_council](http://www.globalministries.org/eap_partners_china_christian_council).
  97. "Shanghai priests, nuns forced to undergo reeducation classes," *UCA News*, July 9, 2015, <http://www.ucanews.com/news/shanghai-priests-nuns-forced-to-undergo-reeducation-classes/73901>.
  98. Data compiled by the U.S.-based China Aid indicates that from 2011 to 2013, the proportion of persecuted/detained Christians who were religious leaders was 3.5 percent. This jumped to 15 percent in 2014 and remained at the same level in 2015.
  99. Brynne Lawrence, "Tortured pastor's life threatened, lawyers file lawsuit," *China Aid*, June 13, 2016, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/06/tortured-pastors-life-threatened.html>.
  100. Carsten Vala, "The State-Religion Relationship in Contemporary China," *The Chinese Corporatist State: Adaption, Survival, and Resistance*, ed. Jennifer Y.J. Hsu and Reza Hasmath (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).
  101. Yaxue Cao, "Interview with a Wenzhou Pastor."
  102. Julie Makinen, "China demolition of church in Wenzhou leaves Christians uneasy," *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-china-church-20140506-story.html>.
  103. *Ibid.*
  104. Interview with Carsten Vala, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Loyola University, September 2016. Expropriations and forced demolitions of various types of property are common across China, often serving as a catalyst

for state-society tensions. Chen Xi, *Social Protest and Contentious Authoritarianism* (Cambridge, 2012).

105. CECC, "Pastor Zhang Shaojie's Harsh Sentence."
106. Wright and Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State."
107. Wright and Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State."
108. Qiao Nong, "Government terminates welfare for Christians," *China Aid*, August 9, 2016, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/08/government-terminates-welfare-for.html>.
109. Carey Lodge, "China: Christians threatened with having welfare payments cut unless they stop going to church," *Christian Today*, August 10, 2016, <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/china.christians.threatened.with.having.welfare.payments.cut.unless.they.stop.going.to.church/92814.htm>.
110. Susan McCarthy, "Serving Society, Repurposing the State: Religious Charity and Resistance in China," *China Journal* 70 (July 2013): 48-72.
111. Wright and Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State."
112. Email communication with researcher of Christianity in China who wished to remain anonymous, November 2016.
113. Wright and Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State"; Qiao Long and Shi Shan, "Daughter of Jailed Chinese Pastor in US to Highlight Plight of Father's Church," *Radio Free Asia*, July 21, 2014, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/daughter-07212014180702.html>.
114. Kay Danielson, "House Church Attitudes towards Government Authorities," *China Source*, December 9, 2013, <http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/house-church-attitudes-towards-government-authorities>.
115. Wright and Zimmerman-Liu, "Engaging and Evading the Party-State."
116. *China Aid*, "Wenzhou house church leader beaten by authorities," May 16, 2016, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/05/wenzhou-house-church-leader-beaten-by.html>; *China Aid*, "Christians take legal action against unlawful persecution in China," February 19, 2016, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/02/christians-take-legal-action-against.html>.
117. For examples of sessions conducted in 2014 by activist Bo Ai and anecdotes of their impact, see *China Aid*, "Law and religious training seminars take place across China," March 14, 2014, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2014/03/law-and-religious-training-seminars.html>. Several trainings were held in 2015 and 2016 in Chongqing, Yunnan, Henan, Liaoning, and Beijing. For an example of how legal knowledge is deployed by grassroots believers asking authorities to show a search warrant, see Tony Carnes, "China's New Legal Eagles," *Christianity Today*, September 18, 2006, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/september/china-civil-rights-movement.html>.
118. For the English translation of the Zhejiang Christian Council letter and other examples, see "Christian Sentiment in Zhejiang Against Cross Removal: Three Statements," *China Change*, August 7, 2015, <https://chinachange.org/2015/08/07/christian-sentiment-in-zhejiang-against-cross-removal-three-statements/>. Bishop Zhu reportedly published two letters, one in mid-2014 urging the government to cease the cross removals and a more strongly worded version signed with other clergy in mid-2015. The bishop himself passed away from illness in September 2016. "A Call to 'Cry Out' Against Cross Removals in China," *New York Times*, *Sinosphere* (blog), August 7, 2015, [http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/08/07/a-call-to-cry-out-against-cross-removals-in-china/?\\_r=0](http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/08/07/a-call-to-cry-out-against-cross-removals-in-china/?_r=0).
119. Sui-Lee Wee, "Special Report: The bishop who stood up to China," *Reuters*, March 31, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-catholics-special-report-idUSBREA3001820140401>.
120. "Beijing, seminarians desert graduation ceremony: We will not celebrate Mass with illegitimate bishops," *Asia News*, July 18, 2014, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Beijing,-seminarians-desert-graduation-ceremony:-We-will-not-celebrate-Mass-with-illegitimate-bishops-31658.html>.
121. Andrew Jacobs, "Illicit Church, Evicted, Tries to Buck Beijing," *New York Times*, April 17, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/18/world/asia/18beijing.html>.
122. Yaxue Cao, "Interview with a Wenzhou Pastor."

