

Ambassador Wang Min

Embassy of the People's Republic of China
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Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern for the actions taken against Protestant churches in the People's Republic of China in the past months. News agencies report of tighter government control of religious affairs, including restriction of church activities, closure and demolition of church buildings, a ban on online Bible sales and arrests of church members.

On January 9, the Golden Lampstand Church was demolished and several members of the congregation imprisoned. More recently, police raided the Early Rain Convent Church in Chengdu on May 12 and arrested dozens of church members who arrived for a memorial service for the victims of the 2008 earthquake. The police also seized some 15,600 books and pamphlets. In Zhejiang province, local churches report that the local government has banned all kinds of religious meetings and called for people to renounce their faith. Finally, the local governments in Fujian, Jiangxi, and Guizhou sent out notifications ordering the house churches to shut down and requiring the members to join the government sponsored Three-Self Church.

Your Excellency, I am concerned that these actions signify a larger campaign directed towards Protestant churches outside the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in China. News agencies also report of escalating surveillance and discrimination of other religious groups in China.

Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China of 1982 provides for the freedom of religion for citizens. No state organ may discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. The actions against believers practicing their faith peacefully constitute discrimination based on religion and represent a severe breach of their constitutional freedoms and human rights. I humbly petition your intervention to ensure that Chinese authorities:

- immediately stop all actions targeting Christian and other religious communities in China that disrupt their peaceful practice of faith, including arresting group members, closing places of worship, and confiscating religious literature;
- respect and uphold the freedom of religion or belief for all religious groups in the country

I thank you in advance for using your influence as ambassador and conveying this message to the relevant authorities in your home country.

Yours sincerely,