



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on July 30, 2015

China's Communist Government Increases Persecution of Christians

Despite a popular belief that China is no longer a totalitarian communist state, ongoing persecution of Christians in the world's most populous country contradicts that misconception.

According to China Aid, 2014 was the "Year of Persecution and Endurance" in China, with human rights abuses and religious persecution rising 153 percent as compared to 2013. The number of Christians sentenced went from 12 in 2013 to 1,274 in 2014. But because China is a brutal dictatorship, the actual numbers are no doubt much higher.



"The Chinese government's persecution campaign included forced demolition of churches and crosses," explained China Aid, which keeps tabs on such abuses. Pastors have been detained, and fines have been levied on churches, which state-run media have referred to as "cults."

Zhejiang has one of the larger concentrations of Christians in the country. Exact numbers are difficult to determine, because some churches are "government-sanctioned," and others are illegal "house" churches, but total numbers in both are estimated at around 300,000 Catholics and about one million Protestants. In the nation at large, the "official" churches include about 30 million, with as many as 70 million to even 100 million worshipping in congregations unapproved by the government.

At one time, visitors to Zhejiang could see red church crosses over many homes, but the communist authorities have now forcibly removed them, sometimes destroying whole houses in the process. More than 1,200 crosses have been removed from churches in the province since the Communist Party-controlled government launched its crackdown in 2013. In May, online photographs showed a cross on one church in Zhejiang in flames.

Government officials claim that they are not attacking religion itself, but what they call "illegal building practices."

One church leader contended that the government is desirous of making Christianity "a tool that serves the [communist] party."

Some see the recent crackdown as reminiscent of the era of the so-called Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, when Red Guards of Mao Tse-tung destroyed churches and temples. President Xi Jinping is thought by many believers to be supportive of the attacks, warning that any religion in China should be free of foreign influence.

Although Christianity has existed in China since at least the Tang Dynasty of the eighth century, Chinese believers have always had to contend with the idea that it is a "foreign" influence. Jesuit missionaries were active in the country in the 16th century, but during the Boxer Rebellion, inspired by antagonism toward foreigners, Catholic missionaries and their families were murdered by Boxer rebels.



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The Republic of China under Chiang Kai-shek, who had adopted Methodism under the influence of his wife, established relations with the Vatican in 1943, and by the end of World War II, there were about four million Chinese who were Roman Catholic, found in 20 archdioceses, with 2,500 priests.

But since the communists took over in 1949, Catholics have faced imprisonment and martyrdom. In 1957, the Chinese communist government created the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, which rejected papal authority by selecting its own bishops. As Liu Bainian, the leader of the Bishops Conference of Catholics in China, explained in 2011, all good Catholics should “fervently love the socialist motherland.”

Members in the state-controlled churches are forced to attend “patriotic education centers,” where they are immersed in Communist Party beliefs, and the “sinicization” of the faith. This is “Christianity with Chinese characteristics,” which is similar to Adolf Hitler’s efforts in the 1930s to install a German church devoid of biblical Christianity, or the Soviet use of the Russian Orthodox Church to promote communism.

Still, about three million Catholics worship clandestinely in China, rejecting the authority of the communist-installed bishops.

Protestant Christians have provided some well-known missionary names in China over the years.

Hudson Taylor, born in 1832, was a British Protestant missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission (now OMF International). He traveled to China in 1854 and lived there 51 years. His society bought more than 800 missionaries to China, and Wikipedia notes that the China Inland Mission “began 125 schools and directly resulted in 18,000 Christian conversions.”

Southern Baptists honor the four-foot, three-inch tall Lottie Moon, who died of malnutrition on Christmas Eve, 1912, by naming their special international missions offering after her. She had given up her food to starving Chinese, and weighed only about 50 pounds at the time of her death.

One Baptist missionary from Georgia, John Birch, was killed by Communist Chinese in August of 1945 while on his way to reach a group of Allied men in a Japanese prison camp. Impressed with Birch’s knowledge of Mandarin Chinese, Lt. General Jimmy Doolittle had recruited him as an intelligence officer. The murder of John Birch is considered by many to make him the first American to die at the hands of the communists. When candy maker Robert Welch founded the constitutionalist, anti-communist John Birch Society in December of 1959, he obtained permission from Birch’s family to use his name for the organization.

The years of China as a great foreign mission field came to an abrupt halt when the bloody tyrant Mao Tse-tung came to power in 1949.

Watchman Nee was a native Chinese Christian who spent the last 20 years of his life in prison for his faith. He died on May 30, 1972, only a few months after President Richard Nixon’s infamous journey to China to open relations with the communist government. Nee, most famous in the West for his book *The Normal Christian Life*, was an evangelical Christian leader who was arrested by communist authorities in 1952 on several trumped-up charges, among them tax evasion. After his arrest, membership in the so-called “anti-revolutionary” sect of Watchman Nee was used to charge other Christian believers.

Following his death, Nee’s grandniece found a piece of paper under his pillow. On the paper, Nee had written, “Christ is the Son of God, who died for the redemption of sinners and resurrected after three days. This is the greatest truth in the universe. I die because of my belief in Christ. Watchman Nee.”



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As China has grown into an economic power in the world, many mistakenly believe that its anti-Christian totalitarianism has moderated. But attacks upon the Christian faith, escalating in recent years, have revealed the ugly truth that China is still a repressive state, hostile to all forms of freedom, including religious liberty.

Catholic officials have called the torching and removal of crosses “an evil act.” Protestant pastors have urged their congregations to resist by placing homemade wooden crosses in their homes or on their vehicles. One church leader even said that many were considering “making flags and clothes with cross patterns.’

“We will make the cross flourish throughout China,” he promised.

Why has the communist oligarchy which rules China resorted to such increased repression of Christianity, following a few years of relative leniency? China Aid contends it is because of the rapid growth of Christianity in the country, which if trends continue, could make it the world’s largest Christian nation. Such a possibility is of great concern to government officials. But, says China Aid, “As the Christian faith continues to grow in China, so does the number of Chinese citizens who embrace [the] rule of law, oppose totalitarian governance, and support the expansion of civil society.”

Chinese Christian leaders have pleaded with President Barack Obama to raise the issue of the communist suppression of Christianity in China with Xi Jinping, when China’s communist tyrant travels to America in September.

Americans should take note of the president’s response, and what it will mean for our own country.



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