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Chinese authorities shut down historic house church over refusal to join state-controlled movement

By [Morning Star News](#)



REUTERS/Lang Lang

Authorities in China “liquidated” a historic house church in Xi’an, Shaanxi Province, as part of a crackdown on churches that refuse to join the state-controlled Three-Self Church, rights advocates said.

The Church of Abundance, which began about 30 years ago, had been targeted as a “cult” that allegedly collected illegal donations. Officials closed it as an “illegal social organization” — that is, one that refused to join the Chinese Communist Party-controlled Three-Self Church, according to the Italy-based religious rights organization [Bitter Winter](#).

The closure appeared to be part of Chinese President Xi Jinping’s call in December 2021 for action against “non-Sinicized” and “illegal” religious groups, Bitter Winter reported.

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“Xi Jinping’s plan of compelling all Protestant Christians to join the government-controlled Three-Self Church or face arrest and ‘liquidation’ of their churches as xie jiao or ‘illegal’ religious groups is being ruthlessly implemented,” the organization added.

The Church of Abundance was ordered to cease activities or its members and pastors would be subject to arrest and detention. Bitter Winter reported that Church of Abundance Pastor Lian Changnian and his son, Pastor Lian Xuliang, were placed under “residential surveillance at a designated place.”

The ban also targeted the China Gospel Association, part of the same house church network, the rights group continued.

Christian rights group China Aid reported that the Civil Affairs Bureau and the Religious Affairs Bureau announced the charges against the Church of Abundance personnel as illegal gathering, illegal fundraising and illegal venue registration.

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The wife of one of the arrested pastors stated, according to [China Aid](#), that Pastor Lian Xuliang had a large bruise from a beating on his forehead.

“His eyes were bloodshot, and there was dried blood in the corner of his eyes,” she stated. “His face-mask also had blood streaks. His arms and hands were bruised and swollen. There was undoubtedly physical abuse by these so-called law enforcement officers during their ‘law enforcement.’”

The pastors, their wives and other workers were arrested on Aug. 17, according to China Aid. The wives and most of the church workers were released, but not preacher Fu Juan, the group reported.

“The whereabouts of preacher Fu Juan is unknown, and her husband has not yet received any official written notice of detention,” one of the pastor’s wives reported.

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Since President Xi’s call for a crackdown on unofficial religious organizations at the CCP’s National Conference on Work Related to Religious Affairs last December, authorities have raided churches refusing to join the Three-Self Church in Beijing, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Jilin and Sichuan provinces, according to Bitter Winter.

On Aug. 19, about 100 armed police officers in Linfen, Shanxi Province, surrounded some 70 members of Covenant Home Church who were attending a parent-child camp, the group reported. Detaining the adults, police also searched the homes of church members Han Xiaodong, Li Jie and his wife, Li Shanshan, and seized Christian books and documents.

On Aug. 21 in Changchun city, Jilin Province, police raided a service of Changchun Sunshine Reformed Church, a house church, Bitter Winter reported.

“As demonstrated by videos circulated by the believers, those attending the service were beaten by the agents,” Bitter Winter stated. “Two women had heart attacks and had to be hospitalized.”

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Officers detained nine Christians, including Pastor Guo Muyun, Elder Qu Hongliang, and Brother Zhang Liangliang, who were accused of running an illegal religious organization, the group reported.

On Aug. 14 in Beijing, the Mentougou branch of the Zion Church was raided.

“Computers were confiscated, and the Pastor, Yang Jun, and nine devotees were detained, although they were later released,” Bitter Winter reported.

China is ranked No. 17 on the Christian support organization Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of the countries where it's most difficult to be a Christian.

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