

# CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU) 2013 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

*Reports on Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau are appended at the end of this report.*

The constitution states citizens enjoy “freedom of religious belief” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities.” The government applies this term in a manner that is not consistent with China’s international human rights commitments with regard to freedom of religion. In practice, the government restricted religious freedom. The constitution also proclaims the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant), however, are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services. The government’s respect for religious freedom overall remained low during the year. In Tibetan areas and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) there were particularly serious violations of religious freedom.

The government exercised state control over religion and restricted the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents when these were perceived, even potentially, to threaten state or Chinese Communist Party (CCP) interests, including social stability. The government harassed, assaulted, detained, arrested, or sentenced to prison a number of religious adherents for activities reported to be related to their religious beliefs and practices. There were also reports of physical abuse and torture in detention.

Local authorities often pressured unaffiliated religious believers to affiliate with patriotic associations and used a variety of means, including administrative detention, to punish members of unregistered religious or spiritual groups. In some parts of the country, however, local authorities tacitly approved of or did not interfere with the activities of unregistered groups.

There was societal and employment discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists experienced severe societal discrimination, especially around sensitive periods.

U.S. officials at all levels repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns and pressed for the expansion of religious freedom. U.S. officials consistently urged the government to adhere to internationally recognized rights of religious freedom,

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protested violations of religious freedom, acknowledged positive trends, and met with members of religious communities, including those being persecuted for their beliefs. The embassy protested the imprisonment of individuals on charges related to their religious practices and other abuses of religious freedom. The Ambassador hosted functions for various religious groups and highlighted the importance of religious freedom during visits to XUAR and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). The Department of State also brought religious leaders and scholars to the United States to deepen their understanding of the role of religion in American society. Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated the country as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

### **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 1.35 billion (July 2013 estimate). In its report to the United Nations Human Rights Council during its Universal Periodic Review in October, the government stated there were more than 100 million religious believers, 360,000 clergy, 140,000 places of worship, and 5,500 religious groups. Estimates of the numbers of religious believers vary widely. For example, a 2007 survey conducted by East China Normal University states that 31.4 percent of citizens aged 16 and over, or 300 million people, are religious believers. The same survey estimates that there are 200 million Buddhists, Taoists, or worshippers of folk gods, although accurate estimates are difficult to make because many adherents practice exclusively at home.

According to the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), there are more than 21 million Muslims in the country; unofficial estimates range as high as 50 million. Hui Muslims are concentrated primarily in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. Uighur Muslims live primarily in Xinjiang. According to Xinjiang Statistics Bureau data from 2010, there are approximately 10 million Uighurs in Xinjiang.

Prior to the government’s 1999 ban on Falun Gong, a self-described spiritual discipline, it was estimated that there were 70 million adherents.

The 2011 Blue Book of Religions, produced by the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a research institution directly under the State Council, reports the number of Protestants to be between 23 and 40 million. A June 2010 SARA report estimates there are 16 million Protestants affiliated with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the state-sanctioned umbrella

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organization for all officially recognized Protestant churches. According to 2012 Pew Research Center estimates, there are 68 million Protestant Christians, of whom 23 million are affiliated with the TSPM.

According to SARA, more than six million Catholics worship in sites registered by the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA). The Pew Center estimates there are nine million Catholics on the mainland, 5.7 million of whom are affiliated with the CPA.

In addition to the five nationally recognized religions, local governments have legalized certain religious communities and practices, such as Orthodox Christianity in Xinjiang, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, and Guangdong provinces. Some ethnic minorities retain traditional religions, such as Dongba among the Naxi people in Yunnan and Buluotuo among the Zhuang in Guangxi. Worship of the folk deity Mazu has been reclassified as “cultural heritage” rather than religious practice.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The constitution and other laws and policies generally restrict religious freedom. The constitution states Chinese citizens have “freedom of religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities,” a term applied in a manner that falls well short of China’s international human rights commitments with regard to freedom of religion. The constitution does not define “normal.” The constitution provides for the right to hold or not hold a religious belief and states that state organs, public organizations, and individuals may not discriminate against citizens “who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion.” It is not possible to take legal action against the government on the basis of the religious freedom protections afforded by the constitution. Criminal law allows the state to sentence government officials to up to two years in prison if they violate religious freedom. There were no reported cases of such prosecutions during the year.

The government has signed, but not ratified, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides all individuals the right to “adopt a religion or belief” of choice and manifest belief through “worship, observance, and practice.”

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CCP members are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. Members who belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion, although these rules are not universally enforced. The vast majority of public office holders are CCP members.

Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services. Other religious groups, such as Protestant groups unaffiliated with the official patriotic religious association or Catholics professing loyalty to the Vatican, are not permitted to register as legal entities. Proselytizing in public or meeting in unregistered places of worship is not permitted. Tibetan Buddhists in China are not free to venerate the Dalai Lama and encounter severe government interference in religious practice (see Tibet section). Religious groups independent of the five official government patriotic religious associations have difficulty obtaining any other legal status and are vulnerable to coercive and punitive action by SARA, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), and other party or government security organs.

Certain religious or spiritual groups are banned by law. The criminal law defines banned groups as “evil cults” and those belonging to them can be sentenced to prison. A 1999 judicial explanation states this term refers to: “those illegal groups that have been found using religions, *qigong* [a traditional Chinese exercise discipline], or other things as a camouflage, deifying their leading members, recruiting and controlling their members, and deceiving people by molding and spreading superstitious ideas, and endangering society.” There are no public criteria for determining, or procedures for challenging, such a designation. The government maintains a ban on the Guanyin Method Sect (Guanyin Famen or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy), Zhong Gong (a *qigong* exercise discipline), and Falun Gong. The government also considers several Christian groups to be “evil cults,” including the “Shouters,” Eastern Lightning, Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), Full Scope Church, Spirit Sect, New Testament Church, Three Grades of Servants (or San Ban Pu Ren), Association of Disciples, Lord God Sect, Established King Church, Unification Church, Family of Love, and South China Church.

The CCP maintains a Leading Small Group for Preventing and Dealing with the Problem of Heretical Cults and its implementing “610” offices (named for the date of its creation on June 10, 1999) to eliminate the Falun Gong movement and to address “evil cults.”

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The religious and social regulations permit official patriotic religious associations to engage in activities such as building places of worship, training religious leaders, publishing literature, and providing social services to local communities. The CCP's United Front Work Department, SARA, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs provide policy guidance and supervision on the implementation of these regulations, which are often enforced in an arbitrary and capricious manner. Most leaders of official government religious organizations serve in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a CCP-led body that provides advice to the central government from business leaders, academics, and other segments of society.

Since 2005, SARA has acknowledged through a policy posted on its website that family and friends have the right to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study, without registering with the government. Authorities still regularly harass and detain small groups, however, that meet for religious purposes in homes and other locations. Some house church members say they have more freedom than in the past to conduct religious services, as long as they gather only in private.

The law permits domestic nongovernmental institutions (NGOs), including religious organizations, to receive donations in foreign currency. The law requires documented approval by SARA of donations from foreign sources to domestic religious groups of over one million renminbi (RMB) (\$165,180).

The government offers some subsidies for the construction of state-sanctioned places of worship and religious schools.

Individuals seeking to enroll at an official seminary or other institution of religious learning must obtain the support of the official patriotic religious association. The government requires students to demonstrate "political reliability," and political issues are included in examinations of graduates of religious schools. Both registered and unregistered religious groups report a shortage of trained clergy.

The government and the Holy See have not established diplomatic relations, and the Vatican has no representative in the country. The CPA does not recognize the authority of the Holy See to appoint bishops; approximately 40 Catholic bishops remain independent of the CPA and operate unofficially. In April the CPA announced the Regulation on the Election and Consecration of Bishops, requiring candidate bishops to publicly pledge support for the CCP. The CPA allows the Vatican discreet input into selecting some bishops, and an estimated 90 percent of CPA bishops have reconciled with the Vatican. Nevertheless, in some locations

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local authorities reportedly pressure unregistered Catholic priests and believers to renounce all ordinations approved by the Holy See. Most of the Catholic bishops previously appointed by the government as CPA bishops later were elevated by the Vatican through apostolic mandates.

Faith-based charities, like all other charitable groups, are required to register with the government. According to several unregistered religious groups, an additional prerequisite is obtaining official co-sponsorship of the registration application by the local official religious affairs bureau. These groups often are required to affiliate with one of the five patriotic religious associations. The government does not permit unregistered charity groups of any sort to raise funds openly, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property.

The government has allowed some registered religious organizations to engage in disaster relief and social service activities. Overseas donations received by religious organizations receive favorable tax treatment if the funds are used for charitable activities.

Under the regulations, if a religious structure is to be demolished or relocated because of city planning or construction of key projects, the party responsible for demolishing the structure should consult with the religious affairs bureau and the religious group using the structure. If all parties agree to the demolition, the party conducting the demolition should agree to rebuild the structure or provide compensation equal to its appraised market value. In some cases officials do not hold developers accountable to these regulations or collude with them in their demolition plans.

Registered religious organizations are allowed to compile and print religious materials for internal use. To distribute religious materials publicly, an organization must follow national printing regulations, which restrict the publication and distribution of literature with religious content. The government limits distribution of Bibles to TSPM/Chinese Christian Council entities such as churches, church bookshops, and seminaries. Individuals cannot order Bibles directly from publishing houses. Members of unregistered churches report the supply and distribution of Bibles are inadequate, particularly in rural locations. There are approximately 600 Christian titles legally in circulation. According to a foreign Christian source, in the last 10 years an estimated 200 Christian bookstores and nine domestic Christian publishers have opened in the country.

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Under the law religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles and Qurans, may be confiscated and unauthorized publishing houses closed. Parents are permitted to instruct children under the age of 18 in religious beliefs and children may participate in religious activities. Officials in the XUAR, however, require minors to complete nine years of compulsory education before they can receive religious education. According to media reports, authorities in the Xinjiang town of Yining bar minors under the age of 18 from entering the city's mosques. The law imposes penalties on adults who "force" minors to participate in religious activities. The teaching of atheism in schools is allowed.

The law states job applicants shall not face discrimination in hiring based on factors including religious belief.

Strict birth limitation policies remain despite relaxations proposed during the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Communist Party of China Central Committee in November. Some religious adherents oppose the state's family planning policy for reasons of religious belief and practice.

Foreign residents who belong to religious groups not officially recognized by the government report being permitted to practice their religions, although, according to the rules, foreigners may not proselytize, conduct religious activities at unregistered venues, or conduct religious activities with local citizens at religious venues. The constitution states official government religious bodies are not "subject to any foreign domination." A CCP directive to universities provides guidance on how to prevent proselytizing among university students by foreigners.

The government allows some foreign educational institutions to provide religious materials in Chinese, which are used by both registered and unregistered religious groups.

According to the law inmates have the right to believe in a religion and maintain their religious beliefs while in custody. In practice, some prisoners and detainees of faith have been told to recant their beliefs, particularly Falun Gong practitioners, who reportedly endure "thought reform," or are not provided adequate access to religious materials, facilities, or clergy.

Some critics state amendments to the mental health law still do not provide meaningful legal protections for Falun Gong practitioners, members of

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unregistered religious organizations, and others sent to psychiatric facilities for political reasons.

### **Government Practices**

The government's respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom fell well short of its international human rights commitments. The government's repression of religious freedom remained severe in the XUAR and in Tibetan areas, particularly during "sensitive periods," such as Ramadan, significant anniversaries, or before important political events.

Religious affairs officials and security organs scrutinized and restricted the religious activities of registered and unregistered religious and spiritual groups. The government harassed, detained, arrested, or sentenced to prison a number of religious adherents for activities reported to be related to their religious beliefs and practices. These activities included assembling for religious worship, expressing religious beliefs in public and in private, and publishing religious texts. There were also reports of physical abuse and torture in detention.

Human rights organizations asserted in some instances security forces shot at groups of Uighurs in their homes or during worship. Authorities typically characterized these operations as targeting "separatists" or "terrorists." The government reportedly sought the forcible return of ethnic Uighurs living outside the country, many of whom had sought asylum for religious persecution. In some cases third countries complied with Chinese requests for forcible refoulement of Uighur asylum-seekers. There were reports of imprisonment and torture of Uighurs who were returned. The government's control of information coming out of the XUAR, together with its increasingly tight security posture there, made it difficult to verify the conflicting reports.

There was no new information on Su Zhimin, an unregistered Catholic bishop who disappeared after being taken into police custody in 1996.

In September Falun Gong practitioner Yu Jinfeng was reportedly arrested and then taken to a former reeducation-through-labor (RTL) facility. Her lawyer, Tang Jitian, was refused access to Ms. Yu and then detained for five days. Li Chang, a Falun Gong practitioner serving an 18-year sentence for reportedly holding a leadership position in Falun Gong and organizing a peaceful protest in 1999, remained in prison. Yu Changxin, a Falun Gang practitioner who was



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sentenced to 18 years in prison in 2000 on charges of using a heretical sect to obstruct justice, remained in prison.

According to *Legal Daily*, a newspaper published under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice, the MPS directly administered 24 high-security psychiatric hospitals for the criminally insane (also known as *ankang* facilities). Unregistered religious believers and Falun Gong adherents were among those reported to be held solely for their religious association in these institutions. Despite October 2012 legislation banning involuntary inpatient treatment (except in cases in which patients expressed an intent to harm themselves or others), critics stated the law did not provide meaningful legal protection for persons sent to psychiatric facilities. Patients in these hospitals reportedly were given medicine against their will and sometimes subjected to electric shock treatment.

International Falun Gong-affiliated NGOs and international media reported detentions of Falun Gong practitioners continued to increase around sensitive dates. Authorities reportedly instructed neighborhood communities to report Falun Gong members to officials and offered monetary rewards to citizens who informed on Falun Gong practitioners. Detained practitioners were reportedly subjected to various methods of physical and psychological coercion in attempts to force them to renounce their beliefs. It remained difficult to confirm some aspects of reported abuses of Falun Gong adherents. Reports from overseas Falun Gong-affiliated advocacy groups estimated thousands of adherents in the country had been sentenced to administrative sentences of up to three years in RTL camps. According to an April investigative article published in a mainland Chinese magazine, officials at Liaoning Province's Masanjia Labor Camp subjected prisoners to forced labor and abuses, including torture with electric batons, forced feeding, and prolonged solitary confinement. In November the international press reported the Masanjia Labor Camp had been closed, with its last group of detainees having been released in mid-September. Officials did not confirm these reports. Overseas Falun Gong advocacy groups stated the majority of prisoners at Masanjia were Falun Gong practitioners.

Individuals belonging to or supporting other banned groups were imprisoned or administratively sentenced to RTL on charges such as “distributing evil cult materials” or “using a heretical organization to subvert the law.”

On numerous occasions since his detention in 2009, prison authorities tortured Wang Yonghang, a lawyer who openly advocated for religious freedom and defended Falun Gong practitioners. He was serving a seven-year sentence for

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“using a cult to undermine implementation of the law.” In 2012, he was reportedly suffering from multiple ailments, including tuberculosis, internal fluid buildup, and paralysis below the waist. In early 2013, it was reported his health had deteriorated further and authorities refused to allow visits or provide his family with updates regarding his condition.

Although Zhu Yubiao, a lawyer who had represented Falun Gong and under arrest since August 2010, was scheduled to be released in August 2012, authorities instead transferred him to Sanshui Law School in Foshan, Guangdong Province, where Falun Gong practitioners are reportedly forced to attend mandatory study sessions. Family members said Zhu began a hunger strike August 20, 2012 to protest his ongoing detention. No new information was available by year’s end.

In November 2012, Beijing police arrested Zhang Fengying during a grocery shopping trip after she spoke to local residents about the benefits of practicing Falun Gong, according to her daughter. A court later charged Zhang with “using an evil cult” to undermine law enforcement. On January 22, authorities transferred her to the Tiantanghe Women’s RTL Camp in Beijing for two years of forced labor.

In parts of the country, local authorities tacitly approved of or did not interfere with the activities of some unregistered groups. Guangdong officials, for example, increasingly allowed unregistered places of worship to hold services provided they remained small in scale and did not disrupt “social stability.” In other areas local officials punished the same activities by restricting events and meetings, confiscating and destroying property, physically assaulting and injuring participants, or imprisoning leaders and worshippers. In some parts of the country, authorities charged religious believers not affiliated with a patriotic religious association with various crimes, including “illegal religious activities” or “disrupting social stability.” Local authorities pressured religious believers to affiliate with patriotic associations and used administrative detention, including confinement and abuse at RTL camps, to punish members of unregistered religious or spiritual groups. While the National People’s Congress Standing Committee passed legislation in December to abolish RTL camps and state media announced inmates would be released, state media later issued a clarification that all pre-abolition penalties would be considered legitimate. Advocacy groups reported some camps had simply been re-labeled.

Official tolerance for groups associated with Buddhism, except for Tibetan Buddhism, and Taoism was greater than for groups associated with other religions.

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The government continued to restrict the growth of unregistered Protestant church networks and cross-congregational affiliations.

Unregistered house churches fell outside of the TSPM structure. The government did not recognize house churches and maintained they did not exist. At the same time, the government asserted individuals had a right to participate in family worship in their homes in small numbers. In April seven house church Christians were sentenced in Ye County, Henan Province, to prison terms ranging from three to seven and a half years on charges of “using a cult to undermine law enforcement,” reportedly for recording and copying sermons. Their July and August appeal hearings were delayed due to judicial irregularities and to allow for gathering of new evidence. They remained in custody during these delays; a new appeal date had not been announced by year’s end.

In November authorities in Henan Province detained Zhang Shaojie, president of Nanle County’s Christian TSPM Committee, and over 20 members of his Nanle County Christian Church. Many of the detainees had reportedly traveled to Beijing to petition authorities about a land dispute between the church and the Nanle County government. During the Christmas holiday and afterward, authorities harassed other members of the church, lawyers attempting to assist the detainees, and Christian practitioners who traveled to Nanle County to show solidarity. Zhang Shaojie and several members of his church remained in detention at the end of the year.

On December 9, authorities in Shanxi Province reportedly arrested Pastors Feng Tiandong and Jiang Mao from the unregistered Zhenzihou Church. Their families were later notified the two pastors were detained on a charge of “organizing and using an evil cult to obstruct the law.” At year’s end, they remained in detention.

In June a baptism ceremony for more than 500 participants in Zhengan County, Guizhou Province was reportedly canceled due to pressure from local Religious Authorities Bureau (RAB) and United Front Work Department officials.

Thaddeus Ma Daqin, who is recognized by the Vatican as the successor to Aloysius Jin Luxian as Bishop of Shanghai, was rarely seen in public since Ma announced his resignation from the CPA during his July 2012 Vatican-sanctioned consecration ceremony. According to the Shanghai Religious Affairs Bureau, the Chinese Catholic Church suspended Ma’s right to conduct religious services for two years due to “improper consecration.” He reportedly spent most of his time in seclusion at the Sheshan Catholic Seminary outside Shanghai,

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although he occasionally posted on social media and his blog. The Shanghai diocese did not have a leader after Jin Luxian's death in April and was being managed by a five-priest caretaker council.

Some unregistered Catholic clergy remained in detention, in particular in Hebei Province. Harassment of unregistered bishops and priests continued, including government surveillance and repeated detentions.

In August media reported public security officers from Qiadong District, Hebei Province, detained and took to an unknown location Song Wanjun, an underground priest of Hebei's Xiwanzi diocese. At year's end his whereabouts remained unknown.

Overseas media reported Shenzhen house church preacher Cao Nan sued the Futian District police in February for illegal detention. On December 8, 2012, police seized Cao and 10 others while he was preaching in Shenzhen's Lizhi Park during new Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's visit to the city. On December 15, 2012, police again detained Cao for 13 days under the charge of "disrupting social order under a false Christian identity" after he returned to the park to preach, according to Western media reports. Results of the lawsuit were not released.

Alimujiang Yimiti, the Uighur leader of an unregistered Christian church, continued to serve a 15-year sentence for "illegally providing state secrets or intelligence to foreign entities." An advocacy organization reported he was being kept under harsh conditions and visits with family had been reduced. Yimiti was sentenced in December 2009 by the Kashgar Prefecture Intermediate People's Court; his appeal was denied in March 2010.

On August 16 local officials in Hainan Province's Lincheng County attacked a group of Christian church members who were trying to prevent the seizure of land on which they planned to build a new church, according to online reports. Local authorities allegedly sold the same parcel of land to both church members and developers but then failed to inform the public of their decision. Several church members, including children and elderly persons, were reportedly injured during the attack.

Following his 2010 release after 11 years in prison on spurious economic charges, Buddhist Zen Master Wu Zeheng continued to face harassment, close monitoring,

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and restrictions on his movement by authorities in Guangdong Province's Zhuhai City, according to overseas media and religious groups.

Security officials frequently interrupted outdoor services of the unregistered Shouwang Church in Beijing and detained people attending those services for several hours without charge. In August officials detained 37 Shouwang Church members. Authorities restricted the freedom of movement of Shouwang's head pastor and his family and several other leaders. Authorities continued to deny the church access to a property it had purchased for the purpose of holding religious services. At various times the church's website was blocked. In July authorities beat and then held in detention without medical treatment a member of the Shouwang Church when he attempted to attend Sunday services.

The government did not renew the professional licenses of a number of attorneys who advocated on behalf of religious freedom and it imprisoned other religious freedom activists or otherwise impeded their work on behalf of religious clients. Authorities also harassed or detained the family members, including children, of religious leaders and religious freedom activists.

Officials continued to hold "anti-cult" education sessions and propaganda campaigns.

Some officials required families to sign statements guaranteeing they would not take part in house churches and "evil cult" activities involving Falun Gong as a prerequisite for registering their children for school. Media reported government employees in Xinjiang were being forced to sign guarantees they would refrain from religious or political expression. The penalty for not signing could be barring their children from entering university or being subject to administrative investigation.

Individuals and groups affiliated with religious communities reported the government took their land without adequate compensation in accordance with religious affairs regulations. In April there were reports a church property which at one time had been the Seventh-day Adventist Beimenli Church in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, was demolished after the Three-Self Patriotic Church took over the property and sold it to real estate developers.

Authorities also applied indirect pressure on house churches by using utility companies and CCP neighborhood committees to cut off electricity and evict Christians from their homes.

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Pressure from authorities on unregistered churches in Guangdong Province continued. According to online reports, the 1,000-member Guangfu house church in Guangzhou, which rented a new location in August, had its lease suddenly canceled in September under pressure from local authorities. Police in 2012 had cut off the electricity and water supply to the church's recently-purchased Baiyun District facility because "it was being used for illegal gatherings." Government officials also banned the church's Christmas services in December 2012 and made cuts to the power and water supply at the church's meeting place in January.

In Guangdong Province's Dongguan municipality, police and the local RAB continued their harassment of house churches after having shut down churches in the city's Tangxia and Gaobu townships in 2012. According to online reports, the Tangxia and Gaobu house churches' pastors requested a dialogue with the directors of the local RAB about the proper legal procedures to shut down a church. After the authorities refused to review the cases and retract the shut-down notices, the two churches filed an appeal in August 2012 with the Dongguan municipal government to overturn the local officials' decisions. After losing the initial appeal in December 2012, the minister of the house church in Gaobu submitted a second petition to the Dongguan Intermediate Court in January. There was no further information during the year, and the churches remained closed.

On August 16, the police prohibited Guangzhou activist Tang Jingling and his wife Wang Yanfang from attending the funeral of well-known Guangzhou house church Pastor Samuel Lamb. Other pastors were also put under house arrest to prevent them from attending the funeral, according to online reports.

On May 26, religious and local government officials from Hainan Province's Sanya municipality reportedly disrupted a house church's worship service and ordered participants to stop all illegal gatherings, warning they must instead go to the city's registered religious meeting sites. Officials forced the church's landlord to stop renting to the church. They also banned the church's leader from attending a conference in Hong Kong, allegedly to avoid "jeopardizing national security and national interests." Eight other house churches in Sanya, several churches in Hainan's Haikou municipality, and one in Hainan's Baoting county either faced similar harassment by local officials or were ordered shut down, according to online reports.

In the XUAR, the government cited concerns over "separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism" as a pretext to enact and enforce repressive restrictions

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on religious practices of Uighur Muslims. Authorities often failed to distinguish between peaceful religious practice and criminal or terrorist activities. It remained difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted those seeking political goals, the right to worship, or criminal acts. There was increased pressure in official campaigns to dissuade women from wearing religious clothing and men from wearing beards. Officials singled out lawyers and their families in these campaigns. The Xinjiang judicial affairs department website posted a statement saying, “Lawyers must commit to guaranteeing that family members and relatives do not wear burqas, veils, or participate in illegal religious activities, and that young men do not grow long beards.” Authorities in Bulaqsui reportedly kept “stability maintenance” registers that included information such as whether female Muslims wore a veil. Uighur sources also reported recipients of public welfare stipends were asked to sign a pledge not to cover their faces for religious reasons. Uighurs in Kashgar and Turpan reported officials interfered with fasting during Ramadan. Hui Muslims in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces engaged in religious practice with less government interference than did Uighurs.

Media reported Muslims could apply online or through local official Islamic associations to participate in the Hajj. According to media reports in the country, approximately 11,800 Muslim citizens participated in the Hajj in the fall including 2,223 individuals from Ningxia; 2,228 from Gansu Province; 1,310 from Yunnan Province; and 236 from the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. These figures included Islamic association and security officials sent to monitor Muslim citizens and prevent unauthorized pilgrimages. Figures were not available for pilgrims from the XUAR. According to reports, Hajj pilgrims paid RMB 42,000 (\$6,938) to participate, which included roundtrip flights, meals, and accommodations. Uighur Muslims reported difficulties taking part in state-sanctioned Hajj travel due to the inability to obtain travel documents in a timely manner and difficulties in meeting criteria required for participation in the official Hajj program run by the Islamic Association of China. The government limited the ability of Uighur Muslims to make private Hajj pilgrimages outside of the government-organized program.

Authorities continued their “patriotic education” campaign, which in part focused on preventing illegal religious activities in XUAR.

Authorities in the XUAR imposed strict controls on religious practices during Ramadan. The government barred teachers, professors, civil servants, and CCP members from fasting and attending religious services at mosques. Local

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authorities reportedly fined individuals for studying the Quran in unauthorized sessions, detained people for “illegal” religious activities or carrying “illegal” religious materials, and stationed security personnel in and around mosques to restrict attendance to local residents. Authorities reportedly hung Chinese flags on mosque walls in the direction of Mecca so prayers would be directed toward them.

There were widespread reports of prohibitions on children participating in religious activities in various localities throughout the XUAR, but observers also reported seeing children in mosques and at Friday prayers in some areas of the region.

Islamic schools in Yunnan Province were reluctant to accept ethnic Uighur students out of concerns they would bring unwanted attention from government authorities and negatively affect school operations. Kunming Islamic College, a government-affiliated seminary, posted an official announcement stating it was open only to students from Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou provinces or from Chongqing municipality.

In various areas throughout the country, religious groups reported authorities rejected their applications for registration because the groups had not affiliated with an official patriotic religious association. In some cases, local officials disrupted religious meetings in private homes, detained participants, and confiscated materials and equipment.

Adherents of the Bimo shamanistic religion, practiced by many of the eight million ethnic Yi living in southwest China, continued to seek government approval to register Bimo as an officially sanctioned religion, but were unable to do so. This limited the Yi people’s ability to preserve their religious heritage.

Authorities often confiscated Bibles in raids on house churches. In June a Shanxi court sentenced a bookstore owner and a fellow Christian to imprisonment of five and two years, respectively, on charges related to distribution of Christian books. In the XUAR government authorities at times restricted the sale of the Quran. In March authorities in Kashgar reportedly detained a Uighur Muslim without charge for 63 days for selling the Quran and study aids.

Patriotic religious association-approved Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and some Buddhist monks were allowed to travel abroad for additional religious study. Religious workers not affiliated with a patriotic religious association faced difficulties in obtaining passports or official approval to study abroad.



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Authorities periodically blocked the blogs of a number of religious groups and individuals during the year.

In some instances, foreign groups had to apply for special access to religious facilities.

There were reported incidents of government interference with Falun Gong activities abroad. According to NGO reports and several media outlets, Chinese government officials pressured venues and governments in a number of countries to limit the broadcast time of Falun Gong-associated radio stations and cancel or otherwise delay dance performances by Shen Yun Performing Arts Company, which is associated with Falun Gong.

Registered religious groups provided social services throughout the country, and authorities allowed certain overseas faith-based aid groups to deliver services in coordination with local authorities and domestic groups. Some unregistered religious groups reported local authorities placed limits on their ability to provide social services.

Although authorities required CCP members to be atheists and generally discouraged them from participating in religious activities, attendance by party members at official church services in Guangdong Province was reportedly growing, as authorities increasingly chose to turn a blind eye to their attendance.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There was societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Because religion, culture, and ethnicity are often tightly intertwined, it was difficult to categorize many incidents specifically as examples of ethnic or religious intolerance. Religious and ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims, experienced institutionalized discrimination throughout the country both because of their religious beliefs and their status as ethnic minorities with distinct languages and cultures. In the XUAR, tension between Uighur Muslims and ethnic Han continued, as officials strengthened their enforcement of policies banning men from growing long beards, women from wearing veils that cover their faces, and parents from providing their children with religious education. Many hospitals and businesses would not provide services to women wearing veils. In September a Uighur Muslim was reportedly beaten for praying on a bus and later detained by authorities. Tensions also continued among

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ethnic and religious groups in Tibetan areas, particularly between Han and Tibetans, and, in some areas, between Tibetans and Hui Muslims.

Despite the labor law's provisions against discrimination in hiring based on religious belief, some employers openly discriminated against religious believers. Protestants stated they were terminated by their employers due to their religious activities. Muslims in the XUAR faced discrimination in hiring, lost their positions, and were detained by authorities for praying in their workplaces.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

U.S. officials regularly urged government officials at the central and local levels to implement stronger protection for religious freedom. The Ambassador met with members of religious groups and religious freedom defenders and highlighted religious freedom in public speeches and private diplomacy with senior officials. At the same time, government pressure led some religious leaders to decline requests for meetings with U.S. government officials. The Department of State, the embassy, and the consulates general regularly called upon the government to release prisoners of conscience, including religious prisoners. The U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue held in July in Kunming included a discussion of religious freedom and visits to a local mosque and Buddhist temple.

U.S. officials met regularly with academics, NGOs, members of both registered and unregistered religious groups, and family members of religious prisoners. The Ambassador hosted events for religious leaders and practitioners, including an iftar that had among its guests prominent imams from around the country. The Department of State nominated a number of religious leaders and scholars to participate in exchange programs related to the role of religion in American society. The Department of State also introduced government officials to members of U.S. religious communities and U.S. government agencies that engaged with those communities.

Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated China as a CPC under the IRFA for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. In August 2011, the Secretary redesignated the country as a CPC and extended existing sanctions under the IRFA related to restrictions on exports of crime control and detection instruments and equipment (Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, P.L. 101-246).

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**TIBET 2013 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Tibetan autonomous prefectures (TAPs) and counties in other provinces to be a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The constitution of the PRC states Chinese citizens enjoy “freedom of religious belief” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities.” The government applied this term in a manner that was not consistent with China’s international human rights commitments with regard to freedom of religion. In practice, the government restricted religious freedom. The constitution also stipulates the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Protestant), however, are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) demands that religion “adapt to socialism.” CCP members are forbidden from holding religious beliefs and from participating in religious activities.

The government’s respect for and protection of religious freedom in the TAR and other Tibetan areas were poor, with widespread official interference in religious practice, especially in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries. There were reports of detention, sentencing (including two death sentences, one with a two-year reprieve), three deaths attributed to police, and other government-initiated violence related to religious issues. Repression was severe and increased around politically sensitive events and religious anniversaries. Official interference in the practice of Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions continued to generate profound grievances. According to reports by journalists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 26 Tibetans, including monks, nuns, and laypersons, self-immolated. The government routinely denigrated the Dalai Lama, whom most Tibetan Buddhists venerate as a spiritual leader, and blamed the “Dalai Clique,” other outside forces, and foreign media reports for instigating the self-immolations. Authorities often justified official interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by associating them with separatism and pro-independence activism.

There were reports of Tibetans encountering societal discrimination in employment, while engaging in business or when traveling, but because Tibetan

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Buddhists' ethnic identity is closely linked with religion, it can be difficult to categorize incidents of intolerance as purely ethnic or religious.

The U.S. government repeatedly urged authorities at multiple levels to respect religious freedom for all faiths and to allow Tibetans to preserve, practice, teach, and develop their religious traditions. The U.S. government raised individual cases and incidents with the Chinese government. U.S. officials urged the Chinese government to engage in constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives, as well as to address the policies that threaten Tibet's distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity; such policies are a primary cause of grievances among Tibetans. In the first visit by a U.S. diplomat to the TAR to be approved in over two years, the Ambassador visited Lhasa and nearby areas in June. The Chinese government, however, denied multiple requests by other U.S. and foreign diplomats for permission to visit the TAR and repeatedly prevented foreign diplomatic personnel from visiting Tibetan areas outside the TAR for which permission was not officially required. Such interference was particularly acute during anniversaries and periods that Chinese authorities deemed sensitive. In the TAR and most other Tibetan areas, the ability of U.S. diplomatic personnel to speak openly with Tibetan residents and members of the monastic community was severely restricted.

### **Section I. Religious Demography**

According to official data from China's November 2010 census, 2,716,400 ethnic Tibetans make up 91 percent of the TAR's total population. Official census data show ethnic Tibetans constituting 1.8 percent of the total population of Gansu Province, 24.4 percent in Qinghai Province, 2.1 percent in Sichuan Province, and 0.3 percent in Yunnan Province. Some experts believe the 2010 census underreported the number of non-Tibetans living in the TAR.

Most ethnic Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority practices Bon, an indigenous religion, and very small minorities practice Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Some scholars estimate there are as many as 400,000 Bon followers across the Tibetan Plateau. Scholars also estimate there are up to 5,000 ethnic Tibetan Muslims and 700 ethnic Tibetan Catholics in the TAR.

Many Tibetan government officials and CCP members in Tibet are religious believers, despite government and CCP prohibitions against officials holding religious beliefs or participating in religious activities.

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Other residents of traditionally Tibetan areas include ethnic Han Chinese, many of whom practice Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, or traditional folk religions, or profess atheism; Hui Muslims; and non-ethnic Tibetan Catholics and Protestants. Approximately 4,000 to 5,000 Muslims worship at mosques within the TAR. A Catholic church with 560 members is located in the traditionally Catholic community of Yanjing in the eastern TAR. Cizhong (Tsodruk), in Diqing (Dechen) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP), Yunnan Province, is home to a large Tibetan Catholic congregation. The TAR is home to a small number of Falun Gong adherents, as well as unregistered Christian churches.

According to the State Council Information Office's 2013 white paper *Development and Progress of Tibet*, the TAR has "over 46,000 resident monks and nuns." While no recent official data on the number of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns in other Tibetan areas of China are available, a 2009 article in the *People's Daily* (the official newspaper of the CCP) stated the TAR and Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces were home to 120,000 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

While the constitution permits freedom of religious belief, other laws and policies generally restrict religious freedom. The constitution states citizens enjoy "freedom of religious belief" but limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities" and does not define "normal." The government applies this term in a manner that does not meet international human rights commitments for freedom of religion and routinely enforces other laws and policies restricting religious freedom. The constitution bans the state, public organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion. The constitution states religious bodies and affairs are not to be "subject to any foreign control."

The government's 2005 *White Paper on Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities* states, "Organs of self-government in autonomous areas, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and relevant laws, respect and guarantee the freedom of religious belief of ethnic minorities and safeguard all legal and normal religious activities of people of ethnic minorities." Organs of self-government include governments of autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties.

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At the national level, the CCP Central Committee’s Central Tibet Work Coordination Group, the CCP’s United Front Work Department (UFWD), and the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), with support from officially recognized Buddhist, Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant “patriotic religious associations,” are responsible for developing religious management policies. At local levels, party leaders and branches of the UFWD, SARA, and the Buddhist Association of China are required to coordinate implementation of religious policies in monasteries, and many have stationed party cadres and government officials in monasteries.

General affairs in TAR monasteries, which in the past had been managed primarily by monks, are now overseen by Monastery Management Committees (MMCs) and Monastic Government Working Groups (MGWGs), both of which are composed primarily of government officials and CCP members, together with a few carefully selected monks. Since 2011, China has established such groups in most monasteries in the TAR and in many major monasteries in other Tibetan areas.

In accordance with official guidelines for monastery management, leadership of and membership in the various committees and working groups are restricted to “politically reliable, patriotic, and devoted monks, nuns, and party and government officials.” Government-selected monks have primary responsibility for conducting “patriotic education campaigns” at each monastery. In some cases the government has established “official working groups” at monasteries, and religious affairs and public security officials personally lead the patriotic education.

On February 4, TAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo urged party cadres and government officials to “take strong root in the monasteries.” On September 17, Chen said the party had deployed 7,000 permanent cadres to work for MGWGs established in each of some 1,800 monasteries in the TAR. Chen said the working groups were particularly important because the CCP considered the TAR to be the frontline in the government’s effort to fight against [Tibetan] separatism and the “Dalai [Lama] Clique.” A February 2012 report in the *Global Times*, a commercially focused tabloid published by the CCP Central Committee newspaper *People’s Daily*, announced the establishment of MMCs headed by party and government officials in each of the TAR’s monasteries. An MMC established in 2011 at Lhasa’s Jokhang Temple, the holiest monastery for most Tibetan Buddhists, reportedly includes 17 members, nine of whom are CCP cadres. Those officials maintain control of key decisions within the monastery, including decisions about security, finance, property, and the admission of new monks.

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The CCP's prohibition of religious faith among its members means that few openly practicing Tibetan Buddhist religious figures hold direct access to political decision-making power. In 2007 (the most recent year for which official data are available), Tibetan religious figures held approximately 615 out of some 30,000 positions in provincial and lower-level People's Congresses (PCs) or in committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in the TAR. The CPPCC is a political advisory body composed of representatives drawn from China's various political parties, religious groups, and other organizations. Although CCP cadres are not permitted to practice religion, Tibetan members of local PCs and CPPCCs are permitted to practice Buddhism. For example, the government-recognized 11th Panchen Lama Gyaltzen Norbu, who is distinct from the Dalai Lama-recognized 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, is the vice president of the Buddhist Association of China and a member of the CPPCC. The TAR People's Political Consultative Conference made the 7th Reting Rinpoche, who is the abbot of Reting Monastery, a member in January.

The government also continues to regulate Tibetan religious traditions. Regulations issued by SARA codify government control over the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including reincarnate lamas. These regulations stipulate city governments and higher-level political entities may deny permission for a lama to be recognized as a reincarnate. Provincial or higher-level governments must approve reincarnations, and the State Council has the right to deny the recognition of reincarnations of high lamas of "especially great influence," often referred to by the Chinese term "Living Buddhas." The regulations also state no foreign organization or individual may interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within China. The government maintains a registry of officially recognized reincarnate lamas.

Within the TAR, regulations issued by SARA assert state control over all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious groups, venues, and personnel. The TAR government has the right to deny any individual's application to take up religious orders. The regulations also require monks and nuns to obtain permission from county-level religious affairs officials in both the originating and receiving counties before traveling to other prefectures or county-level cities within the TAR to "practice their religion," engage in religious activities, study, or teach. Since 2011, Tibetan autonomous prefectures outside of the TAR have formulated similar regulations.

The restrictions on movement hinder a key component of religious education within Tibetan Buddhism calling for nuns and monks to visit different monasteries

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and religious sites to receive specialized training from experts in theological traditions. Such restrictions sometimes also apply to monks and nuns seeking to visit monasteries within their home counties for study or teaching. Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns have stated these restrictions have damaged and fragmented the quality of monastic education.

TAR regulations also give the government formal control over the building and management of religious structures and require monasteries to obtain official permission to hold large-scale religious gatherings. The TAR maintains tight government control over the use of Tibetan Buddhist religious relics and declares the relics, as well as the religious buildings and institutions themselves, to be state property.

### **Government Practices**

The government's respect for and protection of religious freedom in the TAR and other Tibetan areas were poor. There were numerous and severe government actions affecting religious freedom, including incarceration of people due to their religious practice and three reports of deaths at the hands of the police or while in police custody. Two previously arrested people were sentenced to death, and a monk was shot in the head during a police crackdown.

During President Xi Jinping's first year in office and particularly around sensitive anniversaries, authorities across the Tibetan Plateau continued to enforce security measures that severely restricted religious freedoms. Repression was severe throughout the year and increased around politically and religiously sensitive anniversaries and events, including the 15-day observance of Tibetan New Year; a period of central leadership transition that commenced in March; the observance of "Serf Emancipation Day" on March 28; the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6; and the celebration of China's National Day on October 1. During the fifth anniversary of violent protests across Tibetan areas in March it became difficult for Tibetans living outside the TAR to enter it.

According to Phayul.com, a website maintained by Tibetan exiles, on July 6, security forces used tear gas and live ammunition to disperse a crowd of monks, nuns, and laypersons gathered in Daofu (Tawu) County, Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, to mark the Dalai Lama's 78th birthday. Security forces reportedly shot one monk, Tashi Sonam, in the head and injured other monks. Exile groups initially reported Tashi Sonam had been hospitalized in critical condition, but his subsequent condition was unknown.



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Official intimidation was often used to compel acquiescence with government regulations and to attempt to reduce the likelihood of anti-government demonstrations, projecting an image of stability and the appearance of popular support. At various times monasteries in the TAR and other Tibetan areas were surrounded by security forces. Police detained students, monks, laypersons, and others in many Tibetan areas who called for freedom, human rights, and religious liberty, or who expressed support for the Dalai Lama or solidarity with individuals who had self-immolated. On May 14, Phayul.com reported Chinese police in the TAR on April 28 had beaten to death Kaldo, a former monk at the Chamdo Monastery who went by only one name, after he was detained for possessing recordings of speeches by the Dalai Lama.

On December 19, the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, an NGO based in India, reported that monk Ngawang Jampel died while in police custody. According to the center, Ngawang Jampel was detained in Lhasa on November 23, with two other monks. The three monks, who resided at the Tarmoe Monastery in Biru (Driru) County, Naqu (Nagchu) Prefecture, TAR, had traveled to Lhasa on vacation, and Ngawang Jampel was reportedly healthy when he left his monastery. According to the center, public security officers warned Ngawang Jampel's family not to speak publicly about the death. The condition and location of the other two monks remained unknown.

In January the Intermediate People's Court of Aba (Ngaba), Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, sentenced Lobsang Konchok, a monk from Kirti Monastery, to "death with a two-year reprieve." (A "death sentence with reprieve" means a prisoner can avoid execution, but remains in prison, usually for life, if he or she is judged to be sufficiently reformed after the designated reprieve period.) The court sentenced his nephew, Lobsang Tsering, to 10 years in prison. Both were convicted of "intentional homicide" for "inciting and coercing eight people to self-immolate, resulting in three deaths," according to a report by the official Xinhua News Agency. Also in January Xinhua reported officials had detained seven Tibetans in connection with the October 6, 2012, self-immolation by Sanggya Gyatso in Hezuo (Tsoe) TAP, Gansu Province. In April a court in Huangnan (Malho) TAP, Qinghai Province, sentenced four Tibetans to up to six years' imprisonment for inciting "separatism" by sharing information about self-immolations with domestic and overseas groups. In August the Intermediate People's Court of Aba (Ngaba) Prefecture, Sichuan Province, sentenced Dolma Kyab (also known as Droma Gya) to death for allegedly killing his wife, Kunchok Wangmo, and burning her body to make it look as if she had self-immolated,

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according to official Chinese media reports. At the time of her death in March, Radio Free Asia and exile groups reported that Kunchok Wangmo had self-immolated as an act of protest.

Tibetan monks, nuns, and laypersons continued to engage in self-immolation, often at or near monasteries and usually resulting in death, as a protest against government policies. During the year at least 26 Tibetans reportedly self-immolated, including laypersons and Tibetan Buddhist clergy, a significantly smaller number than the 83 self-immolations reported in 2012. The majority of self-immolators were laypersons, as opposed to current or former Buddhist monks or nuns.

Prior to March 2012, all of the reported self-immolators were current or former monks or nuns. As highlighted in the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China August 2012 report *Tibetan Self-Immolation – Rising Frequency, Wider Spread, Greater Diversity*, self-immolation by laypersons grew markedly during the latter half of 2012. By the end of 2012, laypersons represented more than half of the self-immolations committed. This trend continued in 2013, with only 10 of the 26 self-immolators being monks or nuns. During the year self-immolators reportedly continued to see their act as a protest against political and religious oppression. Many self-immolators, including a large number of the laypersons, were reported to have been clutching photos of the Dalai Lama and calling for religious freedom and the Dalai Lama’s return to Tibet as they set themselves on fire. For example, according to media reports, Lobsang Namgyal, formerly a monk at the Kirti Monastery and the 100th Tibetan to self-immolate in China since March 2009, called for the long life of the Dalai Lama while self-immolating.

Some experts believe the declining number of reported self-immolations was due to tightened controls by authorities. A December 2012 editorial in the *Gansu Daily*, an online news site, noted the Supreme People’s Court, the Supreme People’s Procuratorate, and the Ministry of Public Security had jointly issued the *Opinion on Handling Cases of Self-Immolation in Tibetan Areas According to Law*, which criminalized various activities associated with self-immolation, including “organizing, plotting, inciting, compelling, luring, instigating, or helping others to commit self-immolation,” each of which could be prosecuted as “intentional homicide.” Using the *Opinion*, local authorities prosecuted and imprisoned an unknown number of Tibetans who authorities claimed had aided or instigated self-immolations. In February official media reported nearly 90 arrests of individuals linked to self-immolators in Qinghai and Gansu provinces.

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Authorities also took measures to limit news of self-immolations from spreading within Tibetan communities and beyond. In numerous cases following self-immolations, officials shut down or restricted local access to the internet and cellular phone services, according to reports. In March citizens of Aba (Ngaba) Prefecture, Sichuan Province, reported their internet service had been blocked and they were unable to send or receive messages using their cell phones. Many residents believed the government had blocked the services to keep them from spreading news of self-immolations.

In some self-immolation cases, security personnel also reportedly beat, kicked, or otherwise physically abused individuals as they burned. There were no reported arrests in a case brought to light by video footage obtained by the U.S. NGO International Campaign for Tibet showing armed police kicking former Andu monk Losang Jamyang after he set himself on fire on the main street of Aba County Town, Aba (Ngaba) Prefecture, on January 14, 2012. When local Tibetans gathered, police reportedly fired into the crowd, killing one woman and injuring several others. Losang Jamyang died a few days later.

Authorities continued to enforce particularly severe restrictions at Kirti Monastery in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) Prefecture, where in March 2011, up to 1,000 residents protested the violent beating by police of Kirti monk Phuntsog (who used a single name). Security forces removed hundreds of monks from the monastery and forced others to return to their hometowns. At least two monks affiliated with Kirti Monastery, which has several branch monasteries, self-immolated during the year.

*The Tibet Post*, a newspaper run from India, reported July 8 that three Tibetan monks from Wonpo Monastery in Shiqu (Sersul) County, Ganzi (Kardze) Prefecture, Sichuan Province, who were detained in late 2012, were sentenced to prison. Sonam Choedar and Sonam Gonpo, both 22 years old, received four-year sentences. The third monk, also named Choedar, received a one-year sentence. Authorities detained the three monks during a crackdown after local Tibetans pulled down a Chinese flag and distributed leaflets calling for freedom.

According to a July 16, 2012, Phayul.com report, police stopped Pema Norbu, a monk from Lhopu Monastery in Changdu (Chamdo) Prefecture, TAR, at a checkpoint and beat him to death. No information about administrative or criminal investigations was reported after his death.

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There was no reported investigation into the January 23, 2012 use of force by security forces in Luhuo (Draggo) County, Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province. In that incident police fired at a crowd of protesters, wounding at least 32 and killing at least one – Norpa Yonten, a 49-year-old layperson – according to overseas media and human rights groups. According to some reports, the protesters were demonstrating against the arbitrary detention of Tibetans and calling for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet as well as for additional self-immolations if Tibetans' concerns were ignored. According to a report published by Phayul.com, Tsering Gyaltzen, a monk from Draggo Monastery in Luhuo County, died from injuries sustained after being beaten by police who had arrested him on allegations of participating in the January 2012 protest. Ganzi (Kardze) TAP Party Secretary Hu Changsheng visited Draggo Monastery in February 2013, and told officials and senior monks not to discuss the cases of four monks reportedly sentenced to prison terms of between five and seven years for their alleged participation in the January protest.

According to contacts in Yajiang (Nyagchuka) County, Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, prominent Buddhist figure Rinpoche Tenzin Delek, who was sentenced to life in prison in 2002 on separatism, firearms, and explosives charges he denied, was suffering from heart disease and circulatory problems. According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, four villagers and Rinpoche Tenzin Delek's sister, Donkar Lhamo, traveled to Beijing in early July to petition the central government for his release. Security officials from Yajiang detained the four villagers for several weeks. According to the group, the petition did not receive a substantive response.

According to contacts and media reports, in August authorities reportedly banned all religious activities at the Shag Rongpo Monastery in Naqu (Nagchu) County, TAR, and expelled resident monks for alleged links with the Dalai Lama. In September authorities arrested 50 Tibetans in the Shag Rongpo area after they protested against government interference at the monastery. Nine of the 50 were identified: Lobsang Tsering, 27; Dhunghuk, 26; Dagyal, 35; Karma, 31; Gyalhuk, 28; Gyalwa, 29; Sichoe, 39; Choedhar, 27; and Jampa, 21.

On August 2, authorities in Changdu (Chamdo) Prefecture, TAR, reportedly sentenced Namsay Sonam, the administrator of Karma Monastery, and monks Dhondup Gyaltzen and Rabsel (who uses only one name) to two and a half years' imprisonment on allegations of providing protection to criminals. According to Phayul.com, the three were arrested in October 2012 for hanging anti-government posters on and near government buildings.

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Limited access to information about prisoners and prisons made it difficult to ascertain the exact number of Tibetan prisoners of religious conscience, determine the charges brought against them, or assess the extent and severity of abuses they had suffered.

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China Political Prisoner Database (PPD) contained records of 613 Tibetan political prisoners who had been detained by the end of 2013 and who were believed or presumed to remain detained or imprisoned.

Of the 613 political prisoners, 594 were detained on or after March 10, 2008, the start of a wave of political protests that spread across the Tibetan areas of China. Of those 594 detainees and prisoners, 259 were held in Sichuan Province, 154 in the TAR, 115 in Qinghai Province, 65 in Gansu Province, and 1 in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, according to PPD information. Males accounted for 88 percent (520 cases), females made up 8 percent (48 cases), and gender information was unavailable for 4 percent (26 cases). Tibetan Buddhist monks, nuns, and teachers made up 48 percent (283 cases) of the 594.

Sentence information available in the PPD for 194 of the 594 cases from March 10, 2008 onward showed 188 fixed-term sentences ranging in length from 1.5 years to 20 years (average 6 years and 3 months), and six sentences of life imprisonment or death with a two-year reprieve (usually commuted to life imprisonment if a prisoner committed no new “crimes”). Of the 194 cases with known sentences, 43 percent (83 cases) were Tibetan Buddhist monks, nuns, or teachers.

An unknown number of Tibetans were detained, arrested, and/or sentenced as a result of their religious activity. Many prisoners were held in extrajudicial reeducation through labor (RTL) prisons and never appeared in public court. At the conclusion of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CCP Central Committee in November, the Communist Party announced its intention to abolish RTL, and the National People’s Congress Standing Committee subsequently said the system would be dismantled effective January 1, 2014. Amnesty International, however, published a report in December saying many RTL detention centers were being surreptitiously replaced by other forms of extrajudicial detention.

In Tibetan areas outside the TAR, provincial, prefectural, county, and local governments have stationed CCP cadres in, and established police stations or security offices on the premises of, or adjacent to, many monasteries. On August

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27, the government of Tianjun (Temchen) County in Haixi (Tsonub) TAP, Qinghai Province, announced it had established MGWGs in seven monasteries. The government also stated one of these groups had removed 23 novice monks under the age of 18 to attend government schools.

The CCP continued to forbid its members from participating in religious activities. In June Zhu Weiqun, Director General of the Ethnic Affairs Committee of China's national CPPCC, stated party members, and particularly party members whose work involves religious issues, "must not be allowed to have religious faith."

In general controls were particularly tight at monasteries. Authorities often hindered Tibetan Buddhist monasteries from delivering the religious, educational, and medical services they traditionally provided to their communities or from carrying out environmental protection, a traditional element of both religious and conservation practice.

The government continued to exercise its authority over the approval of reincarnations of Tibetan Buddhist lamas and the supervision of their education. Authorities also often publicly associated Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with "separatism" and pro-independence activism and characterized disagreement with government religious policies as "seditious behavior."

In March authorities reportedly told many Tibetans who had attended a 2012 Buddhist teaching conference convened in India by the Dalai Lama that they could no longer leave their home counties and were required to report to their local police bureaus on a regular basis. Although many of the attendees had traveled to India legally, officials seized their passports.

Although authorities permitted some traditional religious ceremonies and practices, including public manifestations of religious belief, they rigorously confined most religious activities to officially designated places of worship, often restricted or canceled religious festivals, at times forbade monks from traveling to villages to conduct religious ceremonies, and maintained tight control over the activities of religious leaders and religious gatherings of laypeople. The government suppressed religious activities it viewed as vehicles for political dissent or advocacy of Tibetan independence.

In July authorities in Hainan (Tsolho) TAP, Qinghai Province, canceled the Kalachakra (Wheel of Time) initiation ceremony, which had attracted more than a

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thousand Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists in previous years, according to Radio Free Asia. No official statement was given as to why the ceremony was canceled.

In early August over 1,000 Chinese police and security personnel were dispatched to oversee the annual Shoton Festival at Drepung monastery in Lhasa. Security scanners were placed at the entrance to the monastery, and Tibetans who entered were subjected to extensive checks, according to International Campaign for Tibet. The Shoton Festival is a traditional celebration in which lay people offer yogurt to monks who have completed their annual meditation retreats.

Government officials and students in Lhasa reportedly were told they would be punished if surveillance cameras showed they had participated in celebrations in monasteries and other religious sites during Sago Dawa, which commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha. As a result, many TAR officials, their family members, and students reportedly traveled to Tibetan areas outside of the TAR to participate in religious activities.

In March officials in Tibetan areas in Sichuan Province and parts of Qinghai Province were reportedly warned not to participate in religious activities, but the overall implementation of the order was less strict than in the TAR, and most students were allowed to visit monasteries after school hours or during holidays.

“Patriotic education” campaigns, in which authorities forced monks and nuns to participate in “legal education,” denounce the Dalai Lama, study materials praising the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system, and express allegiance to the government-recognized 11th Panchen Lama, were carried out periodically at many monasteries and nunneries across the Tibetan Plateau. Many monks and nuns reported that party and government activities, including “patriotic education” campaigns and “legal education” campaigns, detracted from their religious studies; some fled their monasteries and nunneries because they faced expulsion for refusing to attend the education sessions and participate in forced denunciations of the Dalai Lama. The implementation of “patriotic education,” coupled with strengthened controls over religious practice, including the permanent installation at many monasteries and nunneries of party and public security officials, were said by many observers to be among the primary sources of discontent among Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, and the impetus behind some of the self-immolations. Senior monks at some monasteries outside of the TAR said they had reached informal agreements with local officials that resident monks would not stage protests or commit self-immolation as long as the government adopted a hands-off approach to the management of their monasteries.

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The number of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns in monasteries and nunneries fluctuated significantly, due in part to religious personnel leaving their monasteries and nunneries to avoid government-imposed “patriotic education” and “legal education” campaigns, the forced denunciations of the Dalai Lama, and other acts they felt would constitute a betrayal of their religious beliefs. Authorities in the TAR and some other Tibetan areas tightened enforcement of longstanding regulations forbidding monasteries and nunneries from accepting individuals under the age of 18 for training. Contacts reported officials in Changdu (Chamdo) Prefecture, TAR, and in Tibetan areas of Sichuan Province occasionally forced novice monks and nuns younger than 18, unregistered monks and nuns, and monks and nuns who came from other areas to leave their monasteries and nunneries. Nevertheless, monasteries and nunneries in some areas routinely accepted minors and unregistered monks and nuns, including from distant areas.

The government prohibited monasteries from operating schools, although some outside of the TAR did so. Children were sometimes forcibly removed from schools attached to monasteries and enrolled in public schools or provided no alternative arrangements, according to local contacts. Local authorities continuously pressured parents, especially those who were CCP members or government employees, to withdraw their own children, or the children of their relatives, from monasteries in their hometowns, from private schools attached to monasteries, or from Tibetan schools in India. In some cases, local authorities warned parents who worked for the government about possible demotion, cancellation of loans, and cancellation of their children’s identity documents if they sent their children to monastic schools or to Tibetan schools in India.

Although some government officials stated there was no law against possessing or displaying pictures of the Dalai Lama, multiple sources reported that open veneration of the Dalai Lama remained prohibited in almost all areas and that officials, many of whom considered the images to be symbols of opposition to the CCP and the state, had removed pictures of the Dalai Lama from monasteries and private homes. According to local contacts, officials in Tongren (Rebkong) County, Huangnan (Malho) TAP, Qinghai Province, confiscated photos of the Dalai Lama from restaurants, shops, and private homes in August. The government also continued to ban pictures of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama and the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize as the 11th Panchen Lama, in accordance with a regulation stating “religious personnel and religious citizens may not distribute books, pictures, or other materials that harm the unity of the nationalities or endanger state security.” Some officials



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deemed photos of and books by or about the Dalai Lama or Gedun Choekyi Nyima to violate this ban.

Officials in Qinghai Province reportedly announced at a June meeting that residents of some parts of the province would be allowed to openly display images of the Dalai Lama and not be required to denounce the Tibetan spiritual leader. SARA, however, quickly refuted the reports in a written statement sent to foreign media outlets on June 28, announcing its policy toward the “Dalai Clique” was clear and consistent and had not changed. In June Hong Kong’s *Asia Week* magazine published an interview with Jin Wei, the Director of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Research Office at Beijing’s Central Party School, in which Jin stated “the best way to solve the Dalai Lama issue and the Tibet-related issues” would be to resume direct talks with the Dalai Lama’s office.

Despite the de facto ban on images of the Dalai Lama, many Tibetans continued to own and privately display photos of the Dalai Lama and of Gedun Choekyi Nyima in their homes, in lockets, and on cellular telephones. The ability of Tibetans to display the Dalai Lama’s picture varied regionally and with the political climate. In Tibetan areas outside the TAR, visitors saw pictures of the Dalai Lama prominently displayed in private homes, shops, and monasteries, although monks reported they would temporarily remove such photos during inspections by officials from the local religious affairs bureau or other agencies.

Government officials continued to publicly denigrate the Dalai Lama and accused the “Dalai Clique” and other outside forces of instigating Tibetan self-immolations, alleging they were attempts to split China. On March 8, senior leaders of the TAR asserted that “self-immolations were related to the Dalai Clique and foreign forces.” On May 16, China Central Television, which is under the direct leadership of China’s State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, released a “special program” in Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Arabic, and Russian, arguing the “Dalai Clique” was inciting self-immolations. During a visit to Tibetan areas in Gansu Province in July, Yu Zhengsheng, a member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee and Chairman of the CPPCC, stated that “for the sake of national unity and the development of stability in Tibetan regions, we must take a clear-cut stand and deepen the struggle against the Dalai Clique.”

Authorities in the TAR continued to prohibit the registration of children’s names that included parts of the Dalai Lama’s name or names included on a list blessed by the Dalai Lama.

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China further strengthened controls along its borders, and Tibetans encountered substantial difficulties in traveling to India via Nepal for religious and other purposes. Many Tibetans, including monks, nuns, and laypersons, sought to travel to India for religious purposes, including to seek audiences with the Dalai Lama, an important rite for Tibetan Buddhists, or to continue their studies with key Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders and teachers. In many cases Public Security Bureau officials refused to approve the passport applications of Tibetans. This was particularly true for Tibetan Buddhist religious personnel. Citizens from other ethnic groups received passports from the same offices without undue delay. Some Tibetans attributed the passport restrictions to an official effort to hinder travel for religious purposes.

There were instances in which authorities confiscated previously issued passports from Tibetans. In other cases prospective travelers were able to obtain passports only after paying substantial bribes to local officials, or after promising not to travel to India or criticize the Chinese government or CCP while overseas. Sources reported the government had increased patrols along its border to prevent Tibetans from crossing the frontier without permission. Some sources stated the Chinese government had exerted pressure on the governments of neighboring countries to forcibly return Tibetan refugees.

The traditional monastic system suffered because many top Buddhist teachers remained in exile in India and elsewhere, older teachers were not replaced, educated young monks were not promoted due to lack of political credentials, and those who remained in Tibetan areas outside the TAR had difficulty securing permission to teach in other parts of China, abroad, or within the TAR. Many monks expelled from their TAR monasteries after the March 2008 Lhasa riots had still not returned, and some reported they had been prevented from joining new monasteries. The heads of most major schools of Tibetan Buddhism – including the Karmapa, Sakya Trizin, Rinpoche Taklung Tsetrul, and Gyalwa Menri Trizin – all resided in exile.

Authorities closely supervised the education of many, but not all, young reincarnate lamas. In a major deviation from traditional custom, government officials, rather than religious leaders, managed the selection of their religious and lay tutors in the TAR and some other Tibetan areas.

In recent years several large monasteries began to use funds from the sale of entrance tickets or pilgrims' donations – and, in some cases, from monastery-run

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hotels, shops, and restaurants – for purposes other than support for monks engaged in full-time religious study, as such funds are intended to be used, in accordance with the government policy of monastery self-sufficiency. Although local government policies designed to attract tourists to religious sites provided some monasteries with extra income, such activities also reportedly interfered with and deflected time and energy from the monasteries' provision of traditional services, such as religious instruction and education, community medical care, and the performance of religious rites and ceremonies for the local Tibetan community.

There were reports government officials had denied some spiritual leaders permission to build or operate religious institutions in some rural areas. Officials in some areas contended these religious venues drained local resources and served as a conduit for political infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. In other areas, however, the government restored monastic buildings, although often with the goal of promoting tourism and boosting revenue.

Security forces continued to block access to and from important monasteries, including those in the Lhasa area of the TAR and in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) Prefecture and Ganzi (Kardze) TAP. A heavy police presence within and surrounding some monasteries restricted the movement of monks and prevented numerous "unauthorized" visits, including by foreign diplomats, journalists, and other observers.

According to policy, government-subsidized housing units in Tibetan areas were constructed at new village sites near county government seats or along major roads, which often resulted in there being no nearby monasteries where newly resettled villagers could worship. Traditionally, Tibetan villages were clustered around monasteries, which provided religious and other services to members of the community. Many Tibetans saw such measures as illustrative of CCP and government efforts to dilute religious belief and weaken the ties between monasteries and communities. In some cases Tibetans were able to construct new villages near monasteries after negotiating with the local authorities.

The whereabouts of Gedun Choekyi Nyima remained unknown. The government ignored requests by international observers to visit Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who turned 24 on April 25, and continued to maintain his identification as the 11th Panchen Lama was "illegal." The government continued to insist that Gyaltzen Norbu, whom it selected in 1995, was the Panchen Lama's true reincarnation. According to numerous Tibetan Buddhist monks and scholars in China, United Front Work Department and Religious Affairs Bureau officials frequently

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pressured monks and laypeople, including government officials, to attend sessions presided over by Gyaltzen Norbu. For example, when Gyaltzen Norbu visited the TAR in October, monks and villagers were reportedly ordered to greet him. According to a *People's Daily* article, CPPCC Chairman Yu Zhengsheng asked Gyaltzen Norbu at an April 12 meeting to play a more active role in safeguarding the unification of the motherland and promoting ethnic unity.

The government severely restricted contact between several important reincarnate lamas and the outside world. For example, the 11th Rinpoche Pawo, whom the 17th Karmapa recognized in 1994, reportedly remained under official supervision at Nenang Monastery in the TAR. According to some Buddhist scholars, the Rinpoche Pawo was allowed to travel to some major cities to study Chinese but was not allowed to travel outside of China or to Hong Kong.

Sources reported security personnel targeted individuals in monastic attire, particularly those from Naqu (Nagchu Prefecture), TAR, and Tibetan areas outside of the TAR, for arbitrary questioning and other forms of harassment on the streets of Lhasa and other cities and towns. Many Tibetan monks and nuns chose to wear non-religious garb to avoid such harassment when traveling outside their monasteries and around China.

Several Christians in Lhasa reported officials had not significantly interfered with small house churches since 2011. The Lhasa-based Christians said both foreigners and TAR government officials had participated in services at Christian house churches.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There were reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Since ethnicity and religion are tightly intertwined for many Tibetan Buddhists, however, it was sometimes difficult to categorize incidents solely as ethnic or religious intolerance. Tibetans, particularly those who wore traditional and religious attire, regularly reported incidents in which they were denied hotel rooms, avoided by taxis, and/or discriminated against in employment opportunities or business transactions.

Many ethnic Han Buddhists were interested in Tibetan Buddhism and donated money to Tibetan monasteries and nunneries. Tibetan Buddhist monks frequently visited Chinese cities to provide religious instruction to ethnic Han Buddhists. In addition, a growing number of ethnic Han Buddhists visited Tibetan monasteries,

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although officials sometimes imposed restrictions that made it difficult for ethnic Han Buddhists to conduct long-term study at many monasteries in ethnic Tibetan areas.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

The U.S. government, including the Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and the U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu, made a sustained and concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibetan areas. U.S. officials at the most senior levels urged China to ease restrictions on religious freedom, including repressive policies in Tibetan areas. U.S. officials repeatedly raised Tibetan religious freedom issues in public remarks and with Chinese government counterparts at multiple levels, including expressing concern for, and seeking further information about, individual cases and incidents of religious persecution and discrimination. U.S. officials also raised these concerns and discussed these issues at length and in depth during the U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue held in Kunming, Yunnan Province, July 30-31.

Speaking at a press conference in Beijing August 2, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor expressed “deep concern about China’s stepped-up attempts to silence dissent and tighten controls over Tibetans,” stated that “policies ostensibly designed to maintain stability are counterproductive when they deny Chinese citizens their universal rights and fundamental freedoms,” and urged the Chinese government to “engage in substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives without preconditions.”

U.S. diplomatic personnel maintained contact with a wide range of religious leaders and practitioners in Tibetan areas to monitor the status of religious freedom, although travel and other restrictions made it difficult to visit and communicate with these individuals. U.S. diplomatic personnel from the embassy and the Consulate General in Chengdu made several trips throughout the year to visit monasteries and nunneries in Sichuan, Qinghai, and Yunnan Provinces, including Sichuan’s Aba (Ngaba) Prefecture and Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, although Chinese officials sometimes prevented travel to Tibetan areas for which permission was not officially required.

U.S. government officials submitted more than 16 requests for diplomatic access to the TAR between May 2011 and November 2013, but only two were granted (one related to the provision of emergency consular assistance to Americans involved in a vehicle crash). In June 2013, the Ambassador led the first official U.S.

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delegation to the TAR in more than two years. During the trip, which was tightly controlled and limited to Lhasa and nearby areas, the Ambassador raised concerns about religious freedom at meetings with TAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo and Lhasa Party Secretary Qi Zhala. He also visited several major Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and a nunnery. U.S. and other foreign diplomats who lawfully traveled in some Tibetan areas outside the TAR, such as Sichuan Province's Ganzi (Kardze) TAP and Aba (Ngaba) Province, were frequently approached by local police and forced to leave without reasonable explanation. With the exception of a few highly controlled trips, authorities repeatedly denied requests for international journalists to visit the TAR and other Tibetan areas.

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### **HONG KONG 2013 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

#### **Executive Summary**

The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), as well as other laws and policies, protect religious freedom, and in practice the government generally respected religious freedom.

There were reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Falun Gong practitioners reported an increase in harassment by one pro-Beijing group.

The U.S. consulate general stated U.S. government interest in the full protection of freedom of religion in meetings with the government. Consulate general officers at all levels, including the Consul General, met regularly with religious leaders and community representatives.

#### **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 7.2 million (July 2013 estimate). Hong Kong's Information Services Department data note that approximately 43 percent of the population practice some form of religion. The two most prevalent religions are Buddhism and Taoism, often observed in the same temple. There are approximately 1.5 million Buddhists and Taoists, 480,000 Protestants, 363,000 Roman Catholics, 220,000 Muslims, 40,000 Hindus, 20,000 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), 10,000 Sikhs, and 5,000-6,000 Jews. Confucianism is also prevalent. There are between 300 and 500 practitioners of Falun Gong.

There are approximately 50 Protestant denominations, including Baptists, Lutherans, Seventh-day Adventists, Anglicans, Christian and Missionary Alliance groups, the Church of Christ in China, Methodists, and Pentecostals. The Hong Kong Catholic Diocese recognizes the Pope. A bishop, priests, monks, and nuns serve Catholics and maintain links to the Vatican.

#### **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

##### **Legal/Policy Framework**

## **CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)**

The Basic Law and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom. Under the Basic Law, the HKSAR has autonomy in the management of religious affairs. The Basic Law calls for ties between the region's religious groups and their Mainland counterparts to be based on "nonsubordination, noninterference, and mutual respect." The Basic Law states that residents have freedom of conscience; freedom of religious belief; and freedom to preach, conduct, and participate in religious activities in public.

The Bill of Rights Ordinance incorporates the religious freedom protections of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These protections include the right to manifest religious belief individually or in community with others, in public or private, and through worship, observance, practice, and teaching. The ordinance also protects the right of parents or legal guardians to "ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."

The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) functions as a liaison between religious groups and the government. The government invites all interested groups, including affected organizations or individuals, to provide views on whether proposed measures discriminate on the basis of religion.

Religious groups may apply to the government to lease land at concessionary terms through HAB sponsorship. Religious groups may apply to develop or use facilities in accordance with local legislation.

The only direct government role in managing religious affairs is the Chinese Temples Committee, led by the secretary for home affairs. The Hong Kong chief executive appoints its members. The committee oversees the management and operations of 24 of the region's 600 temples. The colonial-era law does not require new temples to register.

The law stipulates that the six largest religious groups in Hong Kong hold 60 seats on the 1,200-member election committee tasked with nominating and voting for the region's chief executive. The groups represented are the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, the Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association, the Hong Kong Christian Council (which represents Protestant denominations), the Hong Kong Taoist Association, the Confucian Academy, and the Hong Kong Buddhist Association.



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Religious groups are exempt from the legal requirement that nongovernmental organizations register. Registration for religious groups is needed only if a group seeks government benefits or receives a grant to provide social services. The Falun Gong and similar groups are not classified as religious groups under the law and must register if they wish to establish offices, collect dues from members, or have legal status.

The government offers funding to cover 90 percent of the budget of schools built and run by religious groups, should they seek such support. Subsidized schools may not bar students based on religion, but they may provide religious instruction as part of their curriculum.

### **Government Practices**

Falun Gong representatives asserted that Mainland authorities pressured the HKSAR to restrict the group's activities in the region. Practitioners reported that relevant authorities consistently denied them access to public facilities they wished to rent for functions, usually by stating the facilities were already booked.

Falun Gong representatives maintained regular information displays in high-traffic areas and conducted public protests against the repression of fellow practitioners outside the HKSAR. They reported a significant increase in harassment from a pro-Beijing group called the Hong Kong Youth Care Association (HKYCA) beginning immediately before the July 2012 inauguration of Hong Kong Chief Executive C.Y. Leung. Falun Gong leaders stated that the police did not protect their practitioners when the association's members harassed them, which included at least one case of bodily harm to a Falun Gong member.

Religious belief was not a barrier to public service, and a wide range of faiths were represented in the government, judiciary, and civil service.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There were reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, for example, against the Falun Gong. The Falun Gong reported that members of the HKYCA attacked and damaged Falun Gong information sites, slandered Falun Gong with illegal banners, and threatened and harassed practitioners and tourists who stopped by Falun Gong information sites.

## **CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)**

Prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Senior government leaders often participated in large-scale events held by religious organizations.

A large variety of faith-based aid groups, including Jewish, Protestant, Muslim, and Catholic groups, provided education services.

Catholic and Protestant clergy from the HKSAR accepted invitations from state-sanctioned patriotic religious associations on the Mainland to teach at religious institutions in China. There were also student exchanges between state-sanctioned religious groups on the Mainland and Hong Kong-based religious groups.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

Consulate general officers at all levels, including the Consul General, stressed the importance of religious freedom in meetings with HKSAR government representatives. Consulate General representatives met regularly with religious leaders and community representatives to receive reports about the status of religious freedom both in Hong Kong and in the Mainland.

**CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)**  
**MACAU 2013 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

The Basic Law of the Macau Special Administrative Region (Macau SAR) and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Officers from the U.S. consulate general in Hong Kong and Macau met with leaders of religious groups and spiritual organizations in the region, as well as with academics from the Catholic Church-affiliated University of Saint Joseph, to discuss religious freedom.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 583,000 (July 2013 estimate). The Government Information Bureau of the Macau SAR reports that nearly 80 percent of the population practices Buddhism. There are approximately 29,390 Roman Catholics (of whom over half are foreign domestic workers and other expatriates residing in Macau) and more than 8,000 Protestants. Protestant denominations include Baptist, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches. There are also evangelical groups and independent local churches. Smaller religious groups include Bahais (estimated at 2,500 persons), Muslims (estimated at 400 persons), and a small number of Falun Gong practitioners (estimated at 50 persons).

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The Basic Law and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom.

The Basic Law states, “Macau residents shall have freedom of religious belief, and freedom to preach and to conduct and participate in religious activities in public.” In addition, the Basic Law stipulates, “the government, consistent with the principle of religious freedom, shall not interfere in the internal affairs of religious groups or in the efforts of religious groups and their believers to maintain and

## **CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)**

develop relations with their counterparts outside Macau or restrict religious activities which do not contravene the laws of the Special Administrative Region.”

Under the Basic Law, the government of the Macau SAR, rather than the central government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), safeguards religious freedom in the SAR. Religious groups coordinate their relations with co-religionists in the PRC through the Central Government Liaison Office (CGLO). The CGLO also maintains dialogue with religious groups in the SAR.

The Basic Law’s provisions are further delineated in a law that provides for freedom of religion, including privacy of religious belief, freedom of religious assembly, freedom to hold religious processions, and freedom of religious education.

The law allows religious groups to register directly with the Identification Bureau, which is required under the law to receive and process registrations. Applicants must supply name, identification card number, contact information, group name, and a copy of the group’s charter to register. Registration is not required to conduct religious activities, and it does not automatically confer tax-exempt status or other advantages.

Religious groups can apply to media organizations and companies to use mass media (television, radio, etc.) to preach, and such applications generally are approved.

The law also stipulates that religious groups may develop and maintain relations with religious groups abroad. The Catholic Church, which is in communion with the Vatican, recognizes the Pope as the head of the church. The Vatican appoints the bishop for the diocese.

### **Government Practices**

The Macau government provides financial support, regardless of religious affiliation for the establishment of schools, childcare centers, clinics, homes for the elderly, rehabilitation centers, and vocational training centers run by religious groups.

Religious groups reported the CGLO supported their activities and exchanges with co-religionists in the PRC.

## **CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)**

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Relations among the various religious groups were good, and citizens generally were tolerant of the religious views and practices of others. Many religious groups, including Catholics, Buddhists, Protestants, and Bahais, provided extensive social services. Falun Gong members regularly set up informational sites in public venues.

Public ceremonies and dedications often included prayers by both Christian and Buddhist groups.

The private University of Saint Joseph, (formerly the Macau Inter-University Institute) which is affiliated with the Catholic University of Portugal, offers a Christian studies course that includes Catholic seminary students from the Mainland.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

Officers from the U.S. consulate general in Hong Kong and Macau met with leaders of religious groups and spiritual organizations in the region, as well as with academics from the University of Saint Joseph, to discuss religious freedom. Consulate general staff stressed the importance of religious freedom in meetings with top Macau SAR officials.