

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU) 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

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

The constitution states citizens have “freedom of religious belief” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities.” The constitution also proclaims the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. 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. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant), are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services.

There were reports the government tortured, physically abused, detained, arrested, sentenced to prison, or harassed a number of religious adherents of both registered and unregistered groups for activities related to their religious beliefs and practices. Human rights organizations stated police shot and killed Uighur Muslims during house raids and protests after disagreements arose due to stricter government controls on religious expression and practice. The government increasingly cited concerns over the “three evils” of “separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism” as grounds to enact and enforce repressive restrictions on religious practices of Uighur Muslims.” Four lawyers were detained and reportedly tortured in Heilongjiang Province after they attempted to investigate an extrajudicial detention facility where Falun Gong practitioners were reported to be held. The government sentenced Zhang Shaojie, a prominent state-sanctioned Christian pastor, to 12 years in prison on charges connected to his advocacy on behalf of his church community. Local authorities also shuttered many churches under the pastor’s jurisdiction as head of the district Protestant organization. As a result, hundreds of individuals were unable to worship in the church of their choosing. Authorities in Zhejiang Province ordered the destruction of hundreds of Christian churches and crosses as part of a campaign to demolish illegal structures. Media sources reported one pastor was arrested on public order charges for protesting the destruction of his church. In Guangdong Province, police took nearly 50 Zen Buddhists into custody, including 20 children, after raiding their businesses and homes to examine residency registration documents. Authorities later arrested

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leader Wu Zeheng and more than a dozen followers on charges of using an “evil cult” to undermine the implementation of the law. According to media and nongovernmental organization (NGO) reports, 11 Tibetans, including monks, nuns, and laypersons, self-immolated in protest of restrictive religious policies. Authorities often justified official interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by associating them with separatism and pro-independence activities, including routinely blaming the Dalai Lama for instigating self-immolations and other protests against government practices.

Local authorities in many areas pressured unaffiliated religious believers to join patriotic associations and used a variety of means, including administrative detention, to punish members of unregistered religious or spiritual groups. For example, authorities in Sichuan Province arrested 36 members of several unregistered churches, reportedly including children and elderly persons, many of whom received sentences of at least 10 days. In some parts of the country, however, local authorities tacitly approved or did not interfere with the activities of unregistered groups. After months of increasingly restrictive policies for Uighur Muslims, the Xinjiang government approved a ban on the practice of religion in government buildings and wearing clothes associated with “religious extremism.” Authorities also approved a ban on the wearing of Islamic veils in public in the capital city of Urumqi.

Because religion, culture, and ethnicity are often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on religious identity. Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists experienced severe societal discrimination, especially around sensitive periods.

U.S. officials at the highest levels, including the President and the Secretary of State, 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, 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 a visit to Xinjiang. The embassy arranged for religious leaders and scholars to visit the United States to deepen their understanding of the role of religion in American society. Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated

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China a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom, and most recently redesignated the country in July.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 1.4 billion (July 2014 estimate). In its report to the UN Human Rights Council during China’s Universal Periodic Review in October 2013, 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 years and over, or approximately 300 million people, are religious believers. The same survey estimates 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 2012, there are 10.37 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 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 5.5 million Catholics worship in sites registered by the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA). The Pew Center estimates there are nine

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million Catholics on the mainland, 5.7 million of whom are affiliated with the CPA.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution states citizens have “freedom of religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities.” 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.” The law does not allow for legal action to be taken 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 a citizen's 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.”

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” (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Protestant) 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 (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.

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All religious organizations are required to register with SARA or its provincial and local offices. Registered religious organizations are allowed to possess property, publish approved materials, train staff, and collect donations. According to regulations, religious organizations must submit information about the organization's historical background, doctrines, key publications, minimum funding requirements, and a government sponsor. Due to the difficulty of fulfilling these requirements, many religious organizations either remain unregistered or register as commercial enterprises.

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 Province and Buluotuo among the Zhuang in Guangxi Province. Worship of the folk deity Mazu has been reclassified as “cultural heritage” rather than religious practice.

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 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 published 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 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

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regulations, which are often enforced in an arbitrary manner. Most leaders of official government religious organizations serve in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a CCP-led body that provides advice to the central government from business leaders, academics, and other segments of society.

SARA has stated 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.

The law permits domestic 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 more than one million renminbi (RMB) (\$161,160). Overseas donations received by religious organizations receive favorable tax treatment if the funds are used for charitable activities.

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

The government and the Holy See do not have 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. Several of those bishops have been detained for many years or are under close government surveillance. In April 2013, the CPA promulgated 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 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.

By regulation, 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 its local Bureau of Religious Affairs (administered by SARA) and the religious group using the structure. If all parties

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agree to the demolition, the party conducting the demolition should agree to rebuild the structure or provide compensation equal to its appraised market value.

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. 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 years in the beliefs of officially recognized religious groups and children may participate in religious activities. Xinjiang officials, however, require minors to complete nine years of compulsory education before they can receive religious education. 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 in parts of the country despite relaxations proposed by the CCP in November 2013. 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.

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Some critics state amendments to the mental health law still do not provide meaningful legal protections for Falun Gong practitioners, members of unregistered religious organizations, and others sent to psychiatric facilities for political reasons.

Government Practices

There were reports the government tortured, physically abused, detained, arrested, sentenced to prison, or harassed a number of religious adherents of both registered and unregistered groups for activities related to their religious beliefs and practices. Human rights organizations stated police shot and killed Uighur Muslims during house raids and protests after disagreements arose due to stricter government controls on religious expression and practice. The government increasingly cited concerns over the “three evils” of “separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism” as grounds to enact and enforce repressive restrictions on religious practices of Uighur Muslims.” Throughout the country, religious affairs officials and security organs scrutinized and restricted the religious activities of registered and unregistered religious and spiritual groups, including assembling for religious worship, expressing religious beliefs in public and in private, and publishing religious texts. The government’s repression of religious freedom remained severe in Xinjiang and in Tibetan areas (see Tibet section).

Human rights organizations reported 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.” According to reports, these actions bred resentment, and at times, deadly protests. Media reported 37 civilians and 50 “terrorists” were killed and another 13 civilians wounded after protestors gathered in front of a police station and government offices in Kashgar Prefecture’s Shache (Yarkand) County on July 28. Police arrested 215 people in connection with the incident, which protestors stated stemmed from the detention of women and girls who had refused to uncover their faces covered by headscarves. According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), on May 20 police killed two Uighurs when firing on protesters in Aksu Prefecture’s Kucha County after they threatened to storm a government building. The protesters had gathered following the detention of 25 Uighur women and girls who had refused government instruction to uncover their faces covered by headscarves. RFA also reported police shot and killed 14 Uighurs during a house raid in Kashgar Prefecture’s Konasheher County on December 15. While the government stated

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the security forces were attacked by a “terror gang,” residents reported the violence was triggered by the lifting of a woman’s veil by a police officer.

According to RFA, authorities in Xinjiang sentenced to prison 22 Uighurs for alleged illegal religious activities and other infractions in November. State media reported the Uighurs, including Muslim religious leaders accused of preaching illegally, received jail terms ranging from five to 16 years at a public sentencing in the western Xinjiang town of Kashgar.

In July a Nanle County, Henan Province, court sentenced Three-Self Church Pastor Zhang Shaojie, president of Nanle County’s Christian TSPM Committee, to 12 years in prison for “picking quarrels and disturbing public order” and “fraud.” Li Cairen, the prosecution’s sole witness on the fraud charge, reportedly held in extrajudicial detention since December 2013, was unable to testify in person. In November local authorities placed Zhang Shaojie’s daughter, Zhang Linxin, under extrajudicial detention for several days. Zhang Shaojie and more than 20 members of his Nanle County Christian Church had originally been detained by authorities in Henan province in November 2013. Many of the detainees had reportedly traveled to Beijing to petition authorities about a land dispute between the church and the Nanle County government. Advocacy groups reported authorities harassed and detained family members and other members of the church throughout the year.

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, and he has not been permitted to meet with his lawyers since 2012.

On July 29, police officers in Guangdong Province arrested Buddhist leader Wu Zeheng after raiding the businesses and homes of members of his Buddhist spiritual group. Almost 50 people, including 20 children, were detained during the raids, and reports indicated Wu and 20 followers remained in detention at the end of the year as authorities gathered evidence to try his case. Wu had previously served 11 years in prison and continued to face harassment since his release in 2010.

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Huang Yizi, pastor of Fengwo Church in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, was placed under criminal detention and formally arrested in August for “gathering a crowd to disrupt public order” after he and several congregants protested the demolition of a cross of a nearby church in July. He remained in custody at the end of the year.

In September authorities in Sichuan Province’s Leibo County arrested 36 members of several unregistered village churches on charges of practicing cult worship. The detainees were reported to include children and elderly individuals, many of whom received administrative sentences of at least 10 days.

In August 2013, media reported public security officers from Qiadong District, Hebei Province, detained and took to an unknown location Song Wanjun, an underground Catholic priest of Hebei’s Xiwanzi diocese. At year’s end, his whereabouts remained unknown. There was no new information on Su Zhimin, an unregistered Catholic bishop who disappeared after being taken into police custody in 1996.

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 announcing his resignation from the CPA during his July 2012 Vatican-sanctioned consecration ceremony. According to the Shanghai Religious Affairs Bureau, the CPA suspended Ma’s right to conduct religious services for two years due to “improper consecration.” He reportedly spent most of his time since in seclusion at the Sheshan Catholic Seminary outside Shanghai, 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 2013, and at year’s end it 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.

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

Local authorities pressured religious believers to affiliate with patriotic associations and used administrative detention, including confinement and abuse in administrative detention centers, to punish members of unregistered religious or

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spiritual groups. While the National People's Congress Standing Committee passed legislation in December 2013, to abolish reeducation-through-labor 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 simply had been relabeled, and authorities continue to detain members of religious and spiritual groups in these renamed facilities.

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 were told to recant their beliefs (particularly Falun Gong practitioners, who reportedly endured "thought reform") or were not provided adequate access to religious materials, facilities, or clergy. Reports stated some prisons failed to accommodate prisoners' religious dietary requirements.

According to *Legal Daily*, a newspaper published under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice, the MPS directly administered 23 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 associations 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 terms of up to three years in administrative detention. According to the human rights monitoring NGO Dui Hua Foundation, there were 2,201 Falun Gong prisoners as of June 30.

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In August a Falun Gong practitioner was detained in Mudanjiang City, Heilongjiang Province. Authorities detained lawyers Wang Yu, Li Chunfu, and Li Dunyong for seven hours when they attempted to visit her. Yu Ming, a Falun Gong practitioner from Shenyang, reportedly remained in detention at the end of the year and suffered physical and psychological abuse while imprisoned.

Falun Gong practitioners He Wenting and her husband Huang Guangyu were tried on May 20 at the Panyu District Detention Center for “using an evil cult organization to interfere with the implementation of the law.” According to news reports and advocacy groups, the couple was detained for more than five months at the Fuyong Detention Center in Shawan City in Guangzhou after they were arrested for distributing free copies of internet censorship circumvention software at a Guangzhou university. After going on a hunger strike to protest her detention, He Wenting reported being restrained and force fed in a manner resulting in bruising, vomiting, and extreme physical pain. She reported prison officials attempted to “brainwash” her and asked her to sign a statement denouncing Falun Gong.

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

After the June 2 arrests of six members of the Church of Almighty God on allegations of murder, state-media reported in June that Ningxia Province police had detained more than 1,000 members since 2012 and Liaoning Province police had arrested 113 leaders since 2013. In June Huang Mingfei, a member of the Church of Almighty God, was sentenced to five years in prison in Guangdong Province for “organizing and using a religious cult to break laws.” Huang reportedly invited 39 people to her home and organized religious study sessions. In December state media reported Liaoning Province officials sentenced Zhang Shuzhi and Geng Yuqin to seven and four years in prison, respectively, for their recruitment activities. Also in December, 19 other members of the group in Jilin Province were sentenced to prison terms of between two and a half and six years.

Authorities released Wang Zhiwen from prison in October after serving a 15-year sentence for activities related to his Falun Gong practice. Following his release from prison, Wang was held in an administrative detention center and then placed under house arrest.

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Human rights lawyers defending religious adherents were subject to harassment, detention, and professional pressure. In March human rights lawyers Zhang Junjie, Jiang Tianyong, Wang Cheng, Tang Jitian, and others were detained and reportedly beaten in Heilongjiang Province after they attempted to investigate an extrajudicial detention facility where Falun Gong practitioners were being held. Jiang Tianyong reported he was beaten with a water bottle by police, suspended from the ceiling and stretched by ropes while in handcuffs, threatened with brainwashing classes, and repeatedly slammed against the wall. Official media reported the lawyers and others were fined and held in administrative detention for five to 15 days for “using cult activities to endanger society.”

Human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, who had defended religious minorities including Christians and Falun Gong members, was released from prison in August after completing a three-year term. After his release, authorities continued to restrict his movement and access to medical care.

The government did not renew the professional licenses of a number of attorneys who advocated for 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.

In parts of the country, local authorities tacitly approved of or did not interfere with the activities of some unregistered groups. Officials in many large urban areas, for example, increasingly allowed services in unregistered places of worship 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. Some local governments continued to restrict the growth of unregistered Protestant church networks and cross-congregational affiliations. 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.”

Unregistered house churches fell outside of the TSPM structure. The government did not recognize house churches and maintained they did not exist. Although SARA has said family and friends had the right to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study, without registering with the government,

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authorities still regularly harassed and detained small groups that met for religious purposes in homes and other locations. Some house church members said they had more freedom than in the past to conduct religious services, as long as they gathered only in private.

Authorities in Liuzhou, Guangxi Province arrested and charged four individuals with “illegal business operations,” reportedly for their compilation and distribution of a Christian textbook. On February 18, police took Cheng Jie, director of a Christian kindergarten established by the Liangren Church in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, and Mo Xiliu, a teacher, into custody. On February 21, the women were placed under criminal detention and charged by the Liuzhou Public Security Bureau with “engaging in an illegal business operation.” The arrest and charges were reportedly due to the Christian textbooks used at the kindergarten, provided by the Liangren Church. Mo Xiliu was later released on bail. On June 23, Liuzhou police officers forcibly entered the home of Liangren Church missionary Ma Jiawen's house. Ma was not home at the time, but the police took his wife, Li Jiatao, into custody and confiscated a computer with some religious material. Police also detained Huang Quirui, a Liangren Church elder, and Fang Bin, a non-Christian contracted to print the Christian textbooks that same night. Li, Huang, and Fang were also charged with “illegal business operations.” The case was awaiting trial at the end of the year.

Authorities often confiscated Bibles in raids on house churches.

In June 2013, 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. One of the employees, Li Wenxi, was reportedly released in December. In Xinjiang, government authorities at times restricted the sale of the Quran.

Security officials frequently interrupted outdoor services of the unregistered Shouwang Church in Beijing and detained people attending those services for several days without charge. Reports indicated the average length of these detentions increased from hours to days. Several members of the church's leadership, including Pastor Jin Tingming, remained under periods of extrajudicial detention since leading open air services in 2011.

In Xinjiang, the government cited concerns over the three evils – “separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism” – as a reason to enact and enforce repressive

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restrictions 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.

The government reportedly sought the forcible return of ethnic Uighurs living outside the country, many of whom had sought asylum from religious persecution. Hundreds of ethnic Uighurs reportedly fled or attempted to flee to Southeast Asia through China's southern border. Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia all reported an increase in illegal immigrants believed to be Uighurs. In some cases third countries, Vietnam in particular, complied with Chinese requests for forcible return 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 Xinjiang, together with the increasingly tight security posture there, made it difficult to verify the conflicting reports.

In Xinjiang, retired CCP cadre Memetimin Tursuntohti was fined 1,000 RMB (\$161) by the Dol Township government for "ideological degradation," failure to attend political study sessions, and for praying at a mosque, according to the Lop County website.

On March 31, the People's High Court, Department of Public Security, Department of Culture, and Department of Industry and Commerce in Xinjiang announced a "joint crackdown" on videos and audio recordings the government defined as promoting terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism. It was forbidden to disseminate such materials on the internet, social media, and online marketplaces, according to the notice. As part of this "joint crackdown," the Xinjiang government announced on its website that police could randomly stop individuals to check their mobile phones for any sensitive content. Reportedly, many Uighurs subsequently opted to delete any religious content on their mobile devices, including Arabic audio files of Quran readings and photos featuring women in conservative religious dress.

There was increased pressure in official campaigns in Xinjiang 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 in July saying, "Lawyers must commit to guaranteeing that family members and relatives do not wear burqas, veils, or

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participate in illegal religious activities, and that young men do not grow long beards.”

In January newly appointed Hotan Municipal Government Party Secretary Chen Yuanhua asked all public and private medical organizations in Hotan to refuse service to women in religious dress, according to RFA. Chen stated that hospitals and clinics that treated women in religious dress, including veils, hijabs, and *jilbabs*, would risk losing their business licenses. This measure also forbade patients from performing the daily prayers while convalescing in hospitals or clinics

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.

During July Kashgar Prefecture forced all current and retired government employees to sign a pledge not to grow long beards or wear veils during Ramadan, according to RFA. At least 70 Uighurs were arrested in Kashgar and Aksu Prefectures in April for growing long beards, possessing “illegal” religious materials, and for gathering, according to RFA. Turahan, a woman from Shayar County, Aksu Prefecture, was detained by police for wearing religious dress and fined 800 RMB (\$129). When she refused to pay the fine, RFA reported Turahan was forced to attend ideological study sessions at the police station, where there were at least 20 other women who were also detained for their religious dress, and only released after her family agreed to pay the police station 400 RMB (\$64).

According to the Kashgar Prefecture government website, 58,000 ethnic minority, primarily Uighur, CCP cadres signed the “4 Nots” pledge, which stipulated that they and their family members would not: wear religious dress, including *jilbabs* and veils for women and long beards for men; participate in religious activities; listen or disseminate religious content and publications; and apply to or attend the Hajj.

Authorities in Karamay banned individuals with long beards or veils from boarding buses in August, with the stated reason of temporarily strengthening security during a sports competition.

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On November 28, the Xinjiang People's Congress Standing Committee approved a regulation banning the practice of religion in government buildings and wearing clothes associated with "religious extremism," due to be implemented in January 2015. On December 10, the Urumqi city People's Congress Standing Committee approved a separate ban on the wearing of Islamic veils in public in the capital city of Urumqi, with an implementation date of February 1, 2015.

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

Uighurs in Kashgar and Turpan reported officials interfered with fasting during Ramadan. In July local authorities in Xinjiang continued the annual practice of banning government employees and their family members from fasting during Ramadan. As part of the government's stability maintenance campaign, students and teachers in Karghilik County signed a pledge in June not to fast or participate in religious activities, according to the Karghilik County Education Bureau website. The Kashgar Teachers College forced students to drink water during Ramadan and students were asked to partake in group lunches by their teachers to ensure they were not fasting during the day, reported Radio Free Asia.

Media reported Muslims could apply online or through local official Islamic associations to participate in the Hajj. According to media reports in the country, more than 14,500 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 China Islamic Association and security officials sent to monitor Muslim citizens and prevent unauthorized pilgrimages. Figures were not available for pilgrims from Xinjiang. 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 China Islamic Association. The government restricted the ability of Uighur Muslims to make private Hajj pilgrimages outside of the government-organized program. Ethnic and religious committee staff from across

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Xinjiang were sent to international airports in China in June and July to ensure Uighurs were not making private Hajj pilgrimages outside of government sanctioned programs, a government source reported.

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

There were widespread reports of prohibitions on children participating in religious activities in various localities throughout Xinjiang, but observers also reported seeing children in mosques and at Friday prayers in some areas of the region. In August and September state newspapers reported hundreds of children were “rescued” and dozens of persons were detained in a sweep of “illegal” religious schools.

The government continued to restrict religious education in institutions across the country. Islamic schools in Yunnan Province were reluctant to accept ethnic Uighur students out of concern that they would bring unwanted attention from government authorities and negatively affect school operations, according to local sources. Kunming Islamic College, a government-affiliated seminary, posted an official announcement stating it primarily accepted students from Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou Provinces, as well as the Chongqing Special Municipality.

Hui Muslims in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces engaged in religious practice with less government interference than did Uighurs, according to local sources.

Individuals seeking to enroll at an official seminary or other institution of religious learning had to obtain the support of the official patriotic religious association. The government required students to demonstrate “political reliability,” and political issues were included in examinations of graduates of religious schools. Both registered and unregistered religious groups reported a shortage of trained clergy.

There were reports authorities restricted the acquisition or use of buildings for religious ceremonies and purposes.

Numerous international media sources reported that local authorities ordered the destruction of more than 230 Christian objects in Zhejiang Province throughout the year. While most incidents involved the removal of crosses and steeples, a handful

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of prominent churches were also affected, including the Sanjiang Church in the city of Wenzhou, which was leveled in April despite efforts by its parishioners to form human shields to protect it. Zhejiang officials stated the crosses and churches needed to be “demolished as “illegal structures” that violated local zoning laws.

There were reports authorities applied indirect pressure on house churches to cease their activities. In June advocacy groups reported a house church in Guangdong Province received an eviction notice from its landlord, who stated he had been pressured by the government. The church was in the middle of a three-year lease.

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.

Pressure from authorities on unregistered churches in Guangdong Province continued. In January human rights groups reported Guangzhou police repeatedly interrupted Guangfu House Church gatherings and demanded the church cease the meetings.

Authorities continued to restrict the free printing and distribution of religious materials. The government limited distribution of Bibles to TSPM/Chinese Christian Council entities such as churches, church bookshops, and seminaries. Individuals could not order Bibles directly from publishing houses. Members of unregistered churches reported the supply and distribution of Bibles was inadequate, particularly in rural locations. There were 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 had opened in the country.

A U.S. citizen aid worker was arrested in November on charges of embezzlement and counterfeiting receipts. His attorney stated he believed that the aid worker was being targeted because of his Christian faith.

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On December 24, media reported the Modern College of Northwest University prohibited Christmas celebrations on campus, hung banners exhorting students to “oppose kitsch Western holidays” and “resist the expansion of Western culture.” School authorities required students to attend a three hour screening of propaganda films. Municipal education authorities in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, forbade all high schools, middle schools, elementary schools, and kindergartens from holding Christmas-related events.

There were reports officials refused a request to hold the funeral of Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang, the leader of the “underground” Catholic Church in China, at the Shanghai cathedral. Services were instead held at a funeral home where thousands of mourners paid their respects.

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.

There were reported incidents of government interference with Falun Gong activities abroad. According to advocacy groups, 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 the Shen Yun Performing Arts Company, which is associated with Falun Gong.

Government policy allows religious groups to engage in charitable work, although charities are not allowed to share religious beliefs while conducting activities. Faith-based charities, like all other charitable groups, are required to register with the government. The government does not permit unregistered charitable groups of any sort to raise funds openly, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property

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.

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According to several unregistered religious groups, the government required faith-based charities to obtain official co-sponsorship of the registration application by the local official religious affairs bureau. These groups often were required to affiliate with one of the five patriotic religious associations. The government did not permit unregistered charity groups of any sort to raise funds openly, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property. The government allowed some registered religious organizations to engage in disaster relief and social service activities.

On March 19, human rights groups reported authorities threatened to shut down a house church-run care center for the homeless, disabled, orphaned, and elderly called the Huizhou Loving Care Center. Police claimed that the center was housed in a building that was not legally registered, threatened to demolish the house, and ordered the inhabitants to move out.

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 was reportedly growing, as authorities increasingly chose to turn a blind eye to their attendance. In November a CCP Central Inspection Team openly criticized Zhejiang CCP officials for having religious beliefs that conflicted with CCP discipline. Zhu Weiqun, chairman of the CPPCC Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee wrote in a November *Global Times* editorial that adherence to non-belief was an “unshakable principle” of the CCP and that members “cannot follow any religion.” Zhu suggested that scholars who advocated for allowing party members to adhere to religious faith had “already converted to Christianity long ago.”

In May the University of International Relations and the Social Science Academy Press released a Blue Book citing religion among the four greatest challenges to national security faced by the People’s Republic of China. The Blue Book identified “religious infiltration” as a challenge to the preservation of the current governmental system. In a speech on December 24, SARA Director Wang Zouan warned against the “foreign infiltration of Christianity into China” and instructed the Catholic Church to uphold the “banner of patriotism.”

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because religion, culture, and ethnicity are often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on

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religious identity. 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 Xinjiang, 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 covered their faces, and parents from providing their children with religious education. Many hospitals and businesses would not provide services to women wearing veils. Tensions also continued among ethnic and religious groups in Tibetan areas, particularly between Han and Tibetans, and, in some areas, between Tibetans and Hui Muslims.

Despite labor law 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 Xinjiang 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 at the highest levels repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns and pressed for the expansion of religious freedom. The President reiterated the importance of human rights of all people, including for ethnic and religious minorities, during his public remarks in his visit to Beijing in November. The Secretary of State raised religious freedom concerns with government officials during the U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue in July.

Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, 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.

U.S. officials met regularly with academics, NGOs, members of registered and unregistered religious groups, and family members of religious prisoners to

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reinforce U.S. support for religious freedom. The Ambassador hosted events for religious leaders and practitioners that had among its guests prominent religious leaders from around the country. The embassy nominated a number of religious leaders and scholars to participate in exchange programs related to the role of religion in American society. The embassy arranged for the introduction of 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 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 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution of the People's Republic of China states citizens enjoy "freedom of religious belief;" however, it limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities" and does not define "normal." In the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and other Tibetan areas, authorities severely restricted religious freedom and engaged in widespread interference in religious practices, especially in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries. There were reports of extrajudicial killings, prolonged detention without trial, torture, and arrests of individuals due to their religious practices. Travel restrictions also severely hindered traditional religious practices. 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 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), 11 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 [Lama] Clique" or other outside forces and foreign media reports for instigating the self-immolations and other protests against government practices. Authorities often justified official interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by associating them with separatism and pro-independence activities.

Tibetans encountered societal discrimination when seeking employment, engaging in business, or when traveling. Since religion and ethnicity are closely linked for most Tibetans, it is difficult to categorize many incidents as being solely based on religious identity.

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

The U.S. government repeatedly pressed authorities at multiple levels to respect religious freedom for all faiths and to allow Tibetans to preserve, practice, teach, and develop their religious traditions. In February President Obama met with the Dalai Lama at the White House, where the President reiterated his strong support for the preservation of Tibet's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic traditions and the protection of human rights for Tibetans. The U.S. government raised

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individual cases and incidents with the Chinese government. Embassy and other 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, which are major causes of grievances among Tibetans. The government denied nearly all requests by U.S. and foreign diplomats for permission to visit the TAR, although it granted one U.S. consular visit in late December.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to official data from China's most recent census in November 2010, 2,716,400 Tibetans make up 91 percent of the TAR's total population. Some experts, however, believe the number of ethnic Han Chinese and other non-Tibetans living there is underreported. Official census data show Tibetans constitute 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.

Most 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 Tibetan Muslims and 700 Tibetan Catholics in the TAR. Other residents of traditionally Tibetan areas include ethnic Han Chinese, many of whom practice Buddhism (including Tibetan Buddhism), Daoism, Confucianism, or traditional folk religions, or profess atheism; Hui Muslims; and non-Tibetan Catholics and Protestants.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

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 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 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

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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 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.

Regulations issued by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (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.” 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 venues, groups, and personnel. Through local regulations issued under the framework of the national-level Management Regulation of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries, governments of the TAR and other Tibetan areas control the registration of monasteries, nunneries, and other Tibetan Buddhist religious centers. 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 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. 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 events or gatherings.

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At the national level, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee's Central Tibet Work Coordination Group, the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD), and the 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.

Government Practices

Government practices that severely infringed on religious freedom across the Tibetan Plateau included extrajudicial killings and the prolonged detention of people due to their religious practice, according to reports. In addition, 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. Restrictions were particularly severe around politically and religiously sensitive anniversaries and events. Authorities heavily scrutinized and sought to control monastic operations and restricted travel for religious purposes.

There were reports authorities beat a monk to death. Authorities detained Tashi Paljor, a monk at Wenpo Monastery in the TAR's Qamdo (Chamdo) Prefecture, on February 28, for his alleged possession of politically sensitive writings and recordings by the Dalai Lama. He died after being severely beaten in custody, according to Radio Free Asia (RFA).

In December authorities released Tenzin Choedak, also known as Tenchoe, less than six years into a 15-year prison sentence for participating in protests in Lhasa in 2008. However, he died two days after his release because of the beatings and torture he suffered while in custody, according to media reports.

There were no reported arrests in the case of Geshe Ngawang Jamyang, whom, according to an RFA report, police beat to death in December 2013. Jamyang was a monk at Tarmoe Monastery in the TAR's Biru (Driru) County. According to the

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report, Jamyang's family members were warned that they too would be killed if they spread information about his death to outside contacts.

There were reports of prolonged detention without criminal charges, arrest, and the torture of individuals for their religious practice. For example, Norgay, who uses one name and is from the TAR's Dingri (Dhingri) County, was reportedly detained and tortured in January for possessing pictures and audio recordings of the Dalai Lama on his mobile phone. In August a court in Lhasa sentenced Tsultrim Nyendak, a monk at Rabten Monastery in the TAR's Biru (Driru) County, to nine years in prison after a secret trial convicted him of unknown charges, according to *Phayul*, a website based in India. Nyendak was held for more than seven months before his sentencing and, according to RFA, was tortured and is in poor health. According to the India-based Central Tibetan Administration, in January a court in the TAR's Biru (Driru) County sentenced Thardoe Gyaltzen, the administrator of Drongna Monastery, to 18 years in prison for allegedly storing photos of and speeches by the Dalai Lama. On March 4, authorities arrested Lobsang Choejor, a senior Tibetan monk at the Drongsar Monastery in the TAR's Qamdo (Chamdo) Prefecture, because he allegedly used text and voice messaging services to disseminate the Dalai Lama's teachings, according to *Phayul*.

Some Tibetans continued to engage in self-immolation as a protest against government policies. At least 11 Tibetans reportedly self-immolated, a significantly smaller number than the 26 self-immolations reported in 2013. Some experts said the declining number of reported self-immolations was due to tightened controls by authorities. Local authorities prosecuted and imprisoned an unknown number of Tibetans whom authorities claimed had aided or instigated self-immolations. According to the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), through February at least 11 Tibetans were sentenced to prison terms or death on "intentional homicide" charges based on association with self-immolations since 2012. The same report listed 98 Tibetans who were subjected to punitive measures because of their alleged association with self-immolations since 2010. In November a court in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) County sentenced eight Tibetans, including Dolma Tso, to up to five years in prison on charges of murder for their alleged involvement in self-immolations, according to media reports. RFA reported Dolma Tso was sentenced to three years in prison because she lifted the charred body of Kunchok Tseten, who self-immolated in December 2013, into a vehicle. Authorities also reportedly took measures to limit news of self-immolations and other protests from spreading within Tibetan communities and

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beyond. In numerous cases, officials shut down or restricted local access to the internet and cellular phone services, according to reports.

Limited access to information about prisoners 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, including torture, that they suffered. The Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) Political Prisoner Database (PPD) reported records of 639 Tibetan political prisoners who had been detained by September 1, and who were believed or presumed to remain detained or imprisoned. Of the 639 political prisoners, 621 were detained on or after March 10, 2008, the start of a wave of political protests that spread across the Tibetan areas of China. Tibetan Buddhist monks, nuns, and teachers made up 44 percent, or 283 cases, of the 639.

According to the official Xinhua News Agency, there are more than 46,000 monks and nuns in the TAR, and about 100,000 Tibetan monks and nuns and 1,800 monasteries and nunneries in Tibetan areas outside of the TAR. 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.

Authorities often justified official interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by associating them with separatism and pro-independence activities. General affairs in TAR monasteries, which in the past had been managed primarily by monks, were overseen by Monastery Management Committees and Monastic Government Working Groups, 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 all 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.”

There were reports Chinese authorities forcibly removed monastery managers suspected of unpatriotic activities and replaced them with monks of their own choosing. According to RFA, normal religious and monastic group activities were ordered to cease at the Drongna, Tarmoe, and Rabten Monasteries in Driru County,

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TAR in December 2013. Many monks in these three monasteries who were not formally registered with the government were expelled during the year, according to reports. Authorities reportedly closed schools for young monks in Tibetan areas. According to RFA, authorities in Pema (Banma) County, Qinghai Province closed a private school for young monks in April and ordered its students to enroll in “mainstream” government-run schools.

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. For example, the TAR had 1,787 monasteries and 6,575 government cadres working in such monasteries, according to a September report on the website of *China Daily*, a state-controlled newspaper. Security forces continued to block access to and from important monasteries during sensitive times. For example, a heavy police presence within and surrounding some monasteries in March restricted the movement of monks and prevented “unauthorized” visits, including by foreign diplomats, journalists, and other observers.

“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 Panchen Lama, were carried out periodically at many monasteries and nunneries across the Tibetan Plateau. In the past many monks and nuns reported that party and government activities, including “patriotic education” campaigns and “legal education” campaigns, detracted from their religious studies. Some monks and nuns 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. Authorities also often publicly associated Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with “separatism” and pro-independence activism, and characterized disagreement with government religious policies as “seditious behavior.”

According to many observers, the implementation of “patriotic education,” coupled with strengthened controls over religious practice, including the permanent installation at many monasteries and nunneries of CCP and public security officials, were primary sources of discontent among Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, and the impetus behind some of the self-immolations and protests. 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

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commit self-immolation as long as the government adopted a hands-off approach to the management of their monasteries.

Authorities restricted the number of monks and nuns in Tibetan areas. According to a temporary TAR regulation released in September, the TAR government would only recognize 1,000 new monks or nuns per year. Civil society representatives reported that officials in Qamdo (Chamdo) Prefecture 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. RFA reported authorities in the TAR's Jiangda (Jomda) County ordered residents to recall home any of their family members who were monks or nuns enrolled at Buddhist centers in other provinces, and those found noncompliant were threatened with withdrawal of all forms of government aid.

There were reports government officials had denied permission to build or operate religious institutions or facilities in some rural areas. In April authorities in Qinghai Province ordered the destruction of prayer wheels at a clinic because they had "political implications," according to an RFA report. In October there were reports authorities in Biru (Driru) County, TAR ordered religious sites and shrines built after 2010 to be destroyed.

The TAR government also maintained tight control over the use of Tibetan Buddhist religious relics and declared the relics, as well as religious buildings and institutions themselves, to be state property.

The government continued to exercise its authority over the approval of reincarnations of Tibetan Buddhist lamas and the supervision of their education. In September *China Daily* reported the TAR had established a Leading Group for Identifying Tibetan Buddhist Reincarnate Lamas and released the Detailed Implementation Regulation for Tibetan Buddhist Reincarnation Management and Guiding Opinions for Identifying Tibetan Buddhist Reincarnations in order to prevent the "Dalai Clique" from influencing the process and ensure that the Communist Party controlled the reincarnation process. In addition, authorities closely supervised the education of many key young reincarnate lamas. In a major deviation from traditional custom, government officials, rather than religious leaders, managed the selection of the reincarnate lamas' religious and lay tutors in the TAR and some other Tibetan areas.

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Although authorities permitted some traditional religious ceremonies and practices, including public manifestations of religious belief, they confined many 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.

According to the Norway-based Voice of Tibet, authorities in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) County compelled Kirti Monastery to cancel its annual winter debate session (Jang Gunchoe) and arrested Lobsang Kirti, a monk, on January 15. Lobsang was suspected of posting a letter on the monastery's premises that objected to government interference in the monastery's traditional religious activities. In July authorities in Sichuan Province's Ganzi (Kardze) Prefecture banned public gatherings of more than three Tibetan families, deployed security forces, and blocked electronic communications in order to prevent people from celebrating the Dalai Lama's 79th birthday, according to RFA.

Authorities permitted a major religious gathering, attended by over 100,000 people, at Tseo Monastery in Gansu Province in June, according to a report by *China News*, a state-controlled media outlet. On September 18, Xinhua News Agency also reported authorities allowed Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the seat of the Panchen Lamas in the TAR, to carry out a "longevity initiation," which attracted nearly 10,000 people. The last "longevity initiation" at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery was held in 1999.

The government prohibited monasteries from operating schools for children, although some monasteries 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 sources. Local authorities reportedly 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.

Authorities further strengthened controls along the country's borders, and Tibetans encountered substantial difficulties in traveling to India for religious purposes. Many Tibetans, including monks, nuns, and laypersons, sought to travel to India

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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. 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 authorities while overseas. 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.

Authorities in the TAR reportedly told Tibetans who had previously attended Kalachakra Initiations, traditional Tibetan Buddhist ceremonies convened by the Dalai Lama, that they could not leave their home counties in July, when he convened another Kalachakra Initiation in India. They were required to report to their local police bureaus on a regular basis. Although many of the attendees had previously traveled to India legally, officials seized their passports to prevent their attendance at the most recent Kalachakra Initiations. Sources also reported the government had increased patrols along the Indian border to prevent Tibetans from crossing without permission. Rural officials in the TAR's Ngari Prefecture were reportedly required to stop rural villagers from crossing the Indian border to attend the Dalai Lama's Kalachakra Initiation held in early July. In addition to restricting foreign travel, authorities also restricted travel by Tibetans inside China, particularly for Tibetans living outside the TAR that wished to visit the TAR, such as for pilgrimage.

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 of the TAR had difficulty securing permission to teach in the TAR, as well as other parts of China and abroad. Many monks expelled from their TAR monasteries after the 2008 Lhasa riots had still not returned, and some reported they had been prevented from joining new monasteries. The restrictions on movement hindered a key component of religious education within Tibetan Buddhism calling for nuns and monks to visit different monasteries and religious sites to receive specialized training from experts in theological traditions. Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns stated these restrictions have damaged and fragmented the quality of monastic education.

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The government severely restricted contact between several important reincarnate lamas and the outside world. For example, the 11th Pawo Rinpoche, considered to be one of the highest lamas of the Karma Kagyu tradition, reportedly remained under official supervision at Nenang Monastery in the TAR. According to some Buddhist scholars, the Pawo Rinpoche was allowed to travel to some major cities to study Chinese but was not allowed to travel to Hong Kong or outside of China. The heads of most major schools of Tibetan Buddhism – including the Karmapa, Sakya Trizin, Taklung Tsetrul, Rinpoche, and Gyalwa Menri Trizin – all resided in exile.

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 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. Sources reported security personnel targeted individuals in religious attire, particularly those from Nagqu (Nagchu) Prefecture in the TAR and Tibetan areas outside of the TAR, for arbitrary questioning 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 of their monasteries and around the country.

Although many Tibetan government officials and CCP members are religious believers, the CCP continued to forbid its members from participating in religious activities. Gansu Province forbade government employees from attending a large religious ceremony held in the TAR in June, according to RFA. In March officials in some Tibetan areas in Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai provinces were reportedly warned not to participate in religious activities, but the implementation of the order was less strict than in the TAR.

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 local officials, had removed

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pictures of the Dalai Lama from monasteries and private homes during visits by senior officials. Despite the ban on images of the Dalai Lama, many Tibetans continued to own and privately display photos of the Dalai Lama 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 such acts were attempts to split China. 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.

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. His whereabouts remained unknown. The government ignored requests by international observers to visit Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who turned 25 years old on April 25, and continued to maintain his identification as the 11th Panchen Lama was "illegal." The government continued to insist Gyaltzen Norbu, whom it selected in 1995, was the Panchen Lama's true reincarnation. Gyaltzen Norbu has been appointed to two political positions, as vice president of the Buddhist Association of China and as a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. According to numerous Tibetan Buddhist monks and scholars in the country, United Front Work Department and Religious Affairs Bureau officials frequently pressured monks and laypeople, including government officials, to attend sessions presided by Gyaltzen Norbu. When Gyaltzen Norbu visited the TAR in August, officials reportedly ordered monks and villagers to greet him.

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 functioning 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 viewed such measures as illustrative of CCP and government efforts to dilute religious belief and weaken the ties

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between monasteries and communities. In some cases Tibetans were able to build small temples near new villages after negotiating with the local authorities.

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.

With the exception of a few highly controlled trips, authorities did not allow international journalists to visit the TAR and other Tibetan areas.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Since ethnicity and religion are tightly intertwined for many Tibetan Buddhists, 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, although officials sometimes imposed restrictions that made it difficult for ethnic Han Buddhists to conduct long-term study at many monasteries in Tibetan areas.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government, including the White House, 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.

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In February President Obama met with the Dalai Lama at the White House. After the meeting, the White House released a statement stating that President Obama reiterated his strong support for the preservation of Tibet's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic traditions and the protection of human rights for Tibetans. The State Department's Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues echoed these messages following a meeting with the Dalai Lama in India in November.

U.S. diplomats 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. Officials from the embassy in Beijing and the consulate general in Chengdu made several trips throughout the year to visit monasteries and nunneries in Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan Provinces.

U.S. government officials submitted 12 requests for diplomatic access to the TAR, but only one was granted.

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HONG KONG 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), as well as other laws and policies, protects religious freedom. The Bill of Rights Ordinance incorporates the religious freedom protections of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Religious groups are exempt from the legal requirement that nongovernmental organizations register, and can apply for subsidies and concessionary terms to run schools and lease land. The government invites all religious groups to comment on whether proposed measures discriminate on the basis of religion.

There were no reports of significant societal action affecting religious freedom.

The U.S. consulate general affirmed 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 2014 estimate). Hong Kong's Information Services Department data notes 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, and in some cases elements of Confucianism were practiced in conjunction with other religions. 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 and maintains links to the Vatican.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

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Legal Framework

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 Basic Law also states the HKSAR cannot interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations or restrict religious activities which do not contravene other laws.

The Bill of Rights Ordinance incorporates the religious freedom protections of the UN 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 Bill of Rights Ordinance states that persons belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture, profess and practice their own religion, and use their own language. 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." These rights may be limited when an emergency is proclaimed and "manifestation" of religious beliefs may be limited by law when necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the rights of others. Such limitations may not discriminate solely on the basis of religion.

Religious groups may apply to the government to lease land at concessionary terms through Home Affairs Bureau (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 logistical operations of 24 of the region's 600 temples and provides grants to other charitable organizations. The committee also provides grants to the Home Affairs Department for eventual disbursement as financial assistance to needy ethnic Chinese citizens. The colonial-era law does not require new temples to register.

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Procedures under the current law have resulted in the six largest religious groups in Hong Kong holding 60 seats on the approximately 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. Many of these groups hold their own internal elections to determine which member will hold a seat on the election committee.

Religious groups are exempt from the legal requirement that nongovernmental organizations register with the government. Religious groups are only required to register if they seek government benefits, such as tax-exempt status, rent subsidies, government training, the use of government facilities, or other professional development training, or receive 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 Basic Law allows private schools to provide religious education. The government offers funding to cover 90 percent of the budget of schools built and run by religious groups, should they seek such support. Government subsidized schools may not bar students based on religion, but they may provide religious instruction as part of their curriculum, which may be mandatory for all students. Teachers, however, may not discriminate against students on account of their religious beliefs.

Government Practices

Falun Gong representatives stated 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. The group, however, was regularly permitted to maintain information displays in high-traffic areas and conduct public protests against the repression of fellow practitioners outside the HKSAR.

In April Falun Gong members reported violations of their right to free speech when Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) officials removed

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approximately 130 Falun Gong banners and nearly 500 media boards from the streets, with the justification that the group failed to obtain permission before placing the displays. Falun Gong members challenged the FEHD's decision in court on the basis of free speech protections contained in the Basic Law. This lawsuit was a continuation of a case Falun Gong practitioners originally submitted in 2013, when practitioners requested a stay of FEHD's enforcement actions against the group's existing displays in protest areas.

In October a judge of the High Court's Court of First Instance sustained the FEHD's enforcement actions to remove posters, writing "the requirement for permission does not interfere with the applicants and their fellow Falun Gong practitioners' 'right to freedom and expression'" as protected in Hong Kong's human rights law or Basic Law. The judge dismissed the Falun Gong suit, noting the group had never applied for a poster permit.

The HAB functioned as a liaison between religious groups and the government. The government invited all interested groups, including affected organizations or individuals, to provide views on whether proposed measures discriminate on the basis of religion.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

The Falun Gong reported disputes with the private, pro-Beijing Hong Kong Youth Care Association (HKYCA). These disputes took the form of a "poster war" in which both groups sought prominent placement for their own messages.

Prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Members of the Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant communities participated in a range of social services open to all religious groups, including welfare, elder care, hospitals, publishing services, media and employment services, rehabilitation centers, and other charitable activities. Jewish leaders hosted public Holocaust awareness events. The chief imam and Islamic scholars hosted events and lectures open to the public, and taught courses on both Islam and history.

Senior government leaders often participated in large-scale events held by religious organizations. For example, clergy from all major faiths led a prayer or recitation at a Remembrance Day Ceremony to pay respects to all who died during the two World Wars.

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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.

The Consul General met with Buddhist, Taoist, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim leaders throughout the year. For example, he attended numerous events to remember the Holocaust, celebrated Hindu Diwali, and supported local imams through U.S. exchange programs. Other consulate officials participated in Islamic culture festivals, hosted religious leaders at prominent events, and visited various Christian charity centers and programs. These events highlighted U.S. government support for religious freedom and tolerance.

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MACAU 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The Basic Law of the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) grants residents freedom of religious belief, freedom to preach and participate in religious activities in public, and to pursue religious education. The law also protects religious assemblies and the rights of religious organizations to run schools, hospitals, and welfare institutions and to provide other social services.

There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

The U.S. Consul General in Hong Kong and Macau engaged with government, religious, and civil society leaders on religious freedom. Consulate general staff stressed the importance of religious freedom in meetings with top Macau SAR officials.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 588,000 (July 2014 estimate). The Government Information Bureau of the Macau SAR reports that nearly 80 percent of the population practices Buddhism. There are approximately 29,700 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 the Baptist, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Pentecostal Churches. There are also evangelical groups and independent local churches. Macau's government reports 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 Framework

The Macau 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." The Basic Law further 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

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develop relations with their counterparts outside Macau or restrict religious activities which do not contravene the laws of the Special Administrative Region.” These rights may be limited for national security reasons in extreme situations.

Under the Basic Law, the government of the Macau SAR, rather than the central government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), is charged with safeguarding religious freedom in the SAR. Religious groups coordinate their relations with coreligionists 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 further specifically guarantees that religious organizations may run seminaries and other schools, hospitals, and welfare institutions and provide other social services. Schools run by religious organizations may provide religious education. The law also guarantees religious organizations the right to acquire, use, dispose of, and inherit property.

The law allows religious groups to register directly with the Identification Bureau. 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.

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

Government Practices

The Macau government provided 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.

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Religious groups could apply to media organizations and companies to use mass media (e.g., television or radio) to preach. No groups reported their applications were denied.

Some religious groups reported the CGLO supported their activities and exchanges with coreligionists in the mainland.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Relations among the various religious groups were good, and there were no reports of societal intolerance of religious views and practices. Many religious groups, including Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, and Bahais, provided extensive social services available to anyone regardless of his or her religious affiliation. Falun Gong members regularly set up informational sites in public venues without incident.

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, offered a Christian studies course that includes Catholic seminary students from the mainland. The University of Macau's Philosophy and Religious Studies Program also accepted mainland students.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. consulate general affirmed U.S. government interest in the full protection of freedom of religion in meetings with the government and civil society leaders. Consulate officers at all levels, including the Consul General, stressed the importance of religious freedom in meetings with top Macau SAR officials.