

China frees Christian prisoner but persecution ongoing

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CHINA (BP)—China has freed an imprisoned Christian but continues a reign of persecution including church demolitions and restrictions barring foreign students from worship, religious liberty advocates reported.

China released house church member Gou Zhongcan on Oct. 22 after seven months in prison, [International Christian Concern](#) reported.

Gou, a member of Early Rain Covenant Church in Sichuan, had gone missing in March and was seen days later with several plainclothes police, witnesses said. [Police](#) have taken into custody 150 members of the church since fall 2018.

Gou was held in a government basement for a portion of his imprisonment, International Christian Concern reported, and had refused to divulge his computer and cellphone passwords.

Police returned Gou to his home in Bazhou City, where he is said to be recovering after his vision deteriorated in prison. China previously imprisoned Gou 10 years, before he accepted Christ, when as a reporter he wrote about China's inhumane treatment of prisoners.

Others still are imprisoned in China, where Christians are among several persecuted religious minorities including Uighur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists and Falun Gong.

"ERCC pastor Wang Yi and elder Qin Derfu are still criminally detained on trumped up charges and their lawyers and family have not been able to see them, even after 10 months," Goh said. "We should continue to put

pressure on Beijing so that they will be set free. None of them deserved imprisonment in the first place.”

Wang is charged with “incitement to subvert state power” and “illegal business activities.” As recently as August, Qin’s wife had not been informed of charges against him and was denied information on any case against him.

Church building demolished



Chinese police demolished a Three-Self megachurch in Anhui without prior notice, interrupting worship service for perhaps 3,000 Christians. (China Aid photo via BP)

In the latest reported church demolition, police demolished a government-sanctioned Three-Self Church in Anhui province, attacking the church without notice of demolition and disrupting worship for perhaps 3,000 worshippers. Police arrested two pastors and three members of the church days later, Oct. 22, [China Aid](#) reported.

Police arrived at the megachurch in Anhui Oct. 18 in the middle of worship and demolished the church before members and leaders could save any property or belongings, reported China Aid among many religious liberty advocates.

Days later, Oct. 23, police detained the church's pastors, Geng Yimin and Sun Yongyao, on suspicion of "gathering a crowd to disturb social order," China Aid said.

"This is yet another clear example showing the escalation of religious persecution today by the Chinese Communist regime," ChinaAid President Bob Fu said. "The total disregard of religious freedom's protection as enshrined in the Communist Party's own constitution tells the whole world President Xi Jinping is determined to continue his war against the peaceful Christian faithful. This campaign will surely fail in the end."

Elsewhere in China, restrictions barring foreigners from worship most recently affected a group of 80 Christian students from Africa, according to religious liberty advocate [Bitter Winter](#).

Under the guise of "preventing foreign infiltration through religion," China prohibits foreigners from attending Three-Self churches and denies them the opportunity to form separate congregations.

The international students still were having difficulty finding a place to worship in China, a month after the government barred them from a Three-Self church in Liaoning. They were driven from the church weeks after the government held an "anti-religious infiltration" symposium in August and questioned members of the church about foreign visitors, a church member said.

In Hubei, more than 40 African students worship under the guise of birthday parties or other gatherings after the government barred them from a church, Bitter Winter reported.