



**Australian Government**  
**Refugee Review Tribunal**

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# Country Advice

## China

China – CHN39323 – Treatment of  
Christians – Anyang - Henan Province

22 September 2011

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**1. Please provide information on the treatment of Christians in Anyang, Henan Province, in both the official registered church and in unofficial churches.**

According to the US Department of State, the Chinese constitution “protects religious freedom for all citizens but, in practice, the government generally enforced other laws and policies that restrict religious freedom”. Groups not affiliated with the five state-sanctioned ‘patriotic religious associations’ (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic and Protestant) are not permitted to register as legal entities or allowed to conduct worship services, and members have been charged with crimes such as ‘illegal religious activities’ and ‘disrupting social stability’.<sup>1</sup> A number of religious groups are banned in China, and some members have been “imprisoned or sentenced to Reeducation Through Labor (RTL) on charges such as ‘distributing evil cult materials’ or ‘using a heretical organization to subvert the law’”. Protestant Christian groups including, but not limited to, the Local Church (also frequently termed Shouters), Eastern Lightning and the Society of Disciples have been designated as ‘evil cults’ by the Chinese government.<sup>2</sup> According to Freedom House, unregistered Christian groups may also face harassment, imprisonment and torture. Freedom House also noted that signs of “a potential escalation in the persecution of Christians emerged towards the end of 2010”, with the arrest and detention of high profile Christian activists.<sup>3</sup>

Official Chinese figures suggest that there are an estimated 23 million Christians in China, 70 per cent of whom are female, and 67 per cent of whom have been baptised. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) estimates that 70 per cent of Protestants attend registered churches, while the remaining 30 per cent “worship in unregistered churches, residences of friends, or their own homes”. According to the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), there are more than 50,000 Protestant Churches affiliated with the state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). In 2007, the Pew Research Center estimated that “50 million to 70 million Christians practice in unregistered religious gatherings, also known as ‘house churches’”. SARA also noted that there are 5.3 million Catholics affiliated with the formally registered Catholic Patriotic Association; the Holy Spirit Study Center, however, estimated that in 2009, there were 12 million Catholics in China.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of State 2011, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2010 – China (July-December)*, 13 September, Introduction <Attachment>

<sup>2</sup> US Department of State 2011, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2010 – China (July-December)*, 13 September, Section II <Attachment>

<sup>3</sup> Freedom House 2011, *Freedom in the World – China*

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2011&country=8016> – Accessed 28 June 2011 <Attachment>

<sup>4</sup> US Department of State 2011, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2010 – China (July-December)*, 13 September, Section I <Attachment>

Limited information was found specifically relating to the treatment of Christians in Anyang, Henan Province. According to *The Australian*, “although Christianity in China has traditionally been based in the countryside, with the provinces of Henan and Zhejiang being the main centres, in the decade or so the growth has switched to urban areas”.<sup>5</sup> *Asia News* reported that Chinese repression against ‘domestic churches’ has led to the demolition of buildings and to the arrests of house church members. Four women from Henan were arrested and sentenced to 15 days’ gaol for “organizing illegal religious activities”.<sup>6</sup>

In 2007, *UCA News* reported that “Catholic dioceses in mainland China saw a surge in baptisms” during Easter of that year. The cathedral of Anyang in Henan Province reportedly conducted an estimated 100 baptisms, and the 2,000 parishioners of the cathedral “welcomed 85 new members, of whom 20 were men”.<sup>7</sup>

Also in 2007, the Henan provincial government reportedly decreed that the annual pilgrimage to a Catholic sanctuary in the diocese of Anyang was an “illegal religious activity”. The government further decreed that the “historic sanctuary dedicated to our Lady of Mount Carmel will be blown up with dynamite; a complete ban on Catholics organizing their annual pilgrimage; [and] a complete ban on any religious gathering or function being celebrated in the area”.<sup>8</sup> As of November 2007, the government had delayed the destruction of the sanctuary, although it continued to maintain restrictions on pilgrimages.<sup>9</sup>

With regard to Henan Province more broadly, the China Aid 2010 annual report on government harm against Chinese Christians noted that incidents of government harassment of Christians and churches in China had increased compared to the previous year. The report identified Henan as one of six areas in which the most severe harassment and targeting occurs in China, despite the claim that overall figures in Henan had dropped dramatically.<sup>10</sup>

A number of examples of police harassment of Christians in Henan were located. In September 2010, Henan police raided a house church meeting and detained over 30 people, including a Russian and an American pastor. One of the church members was reportedly assaulted by police during the raid. Those arrested were sentenced to 10 days detention, while according to one church member, the church has no information on the location or situation of the foreign pastors.<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Watch reported that in March 2010, “[p]olice and

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Persecuted in prayer’ 2009, *The Australian*, 24 December

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/persecuted-in-prayer/story-e6fmg6z6-1225813278273> – Accessed 24 December 2009 <Attachment>

<sup>6</sup> ‘Beijing does not recognize domestic churches, and persecutes them’ 2009, *Asia News*, 16 January

<http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=14230&geo=6&size=A> – Accessed 20 January 2009 <Attachment>

<sup>7</sup> ‘More young, educated people baptized in mainland church at Easter’ 2007, *UCA News*, 12 April – Accessed 18 April 2007 <Attachment>

<sup>8</sup> ‘Henan government: destroy the sanctuary of Our Lady of Carmel in Tianjiajing’ 2007, *AsiaNews*, 21 June – Accessed 25 June 2007 <Attachment>

<sup>9</sup> ‘Our Lady of Carmel shrine in Tianjiajing safe for now’ 2007, *AsiaNews*, 12 November – Accessed 15 November 2007 <Attachment>

<sup>10</sup> China Aid Association 2011, *2010 Annual Report Chinese Government Persecution of Christians & Churches in Mainland China*, China Aid website, 31 March, p.5 <http://www.chinaaid.org/p/annual-reports.html> – Accessed 20 September 2011 <Attachment>

<sup>11</sup> ‘House Church in Henan Raided on Mid-Autumn Festival Day’ 2010, China Aid website, source: *Voice of America*, 29 September <http://www.chinaaid.org/2010/09/house-church-in-henan-raided-on-mid.html> – Accessed 21 September 2011 <Attachment>

government officials raided a training session on law and theology organized by a Christian house church in Henan's Fangcheng County".<sup>12</sup>

An April 2010 report from China Aid states that officers from the Yucheng County Public Security Bureau (PSB) in Henan "arrested several local 'house church' Christians without legal documentation, releasing them only after a fine was paid". While one of the detainees was released after her family paid the fine, those unable to pay were subsequently sent to a detention centre. After the detainees' families received notices of their relatives' detention, they were informed that they were required to provide bedding for those in detention, as well as a "living expense" of 500 yuan in order to see them.<sup>13</sup>

In July 2009, China Aid reported that Pastor Dou Shaowen had been "secretly transferred to Shifo Re-education Through Labor Center in Zhengzhou city, Henan province". Arrested in June 2009 due to his leadership of the Rock Church, Dou and his wife received one-year sentences for engaging in 'illegal activities'; five other members of the church were received 15 days' detention and a fine. In addition, government officials "raided and forcibly abolished and sealed Rock Church's building". Before being transferred to the Shifo centre, Dou was reportedly held in Baimiao Re-education Through Labor Center in Zhengzhou, where he was "given inhuman treatment... was forced to squat... worked 18 hours a day" and was forced to sleep in a room with 70 other people. According to China Aid, conditions at the Shifo centre were thought to be worse.<sup>14</sup>

In 2008 the China State Council's Research and Development Centre arranged meetings with "academics and lawyers, many of them house church members, and a delegation of six Protestant house church leaders from Beijing, Henan and Wenzhou". Church leaders involved in the talks were reportedly 'cautiously optimistic' at the time, with one leader stating that the government "wanted to evaluate whether house churches posed a threat to the regime and to ask why they rejected the leadership of the Three Self Patriotic Movement". However, despite these talks, raids on house churches and arrests of members reportedly continued. In December 2008, members of the Taikang County Domestic Defense Protection Squad reportedly raided a house in Henan province and arrested 50 Christians; an estimated 20 were sentenced to 15 days' administrative detention, while three leaders were sentenced to one year of labour and re-education. In January 2009, officers from the Public Security Bureau forcibly removed a pastor from his colleague's house in Beijing, reportedly placing him on a bus to Henan, and warning him not to return.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report for 2011 – China*, 24 January <http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/china> – Accessed 31 January 2011 <Attachment>

<sup>13</sup> 'Henan Police Unlawfully Fine, Sentence Believers to Labor Camps' 2010, China Aid Association website, 9 April <http://www.chinaaid.org/2010/04/henan-police-unlawfully-fine-sentence.html> - Accessed 22 September 2011 <Attachment>

<sup>14</sup> 'Rock Church pastor secretly transferred to Re-education Through Labor camp' 2009, China Aid Association website, 13 July [http://www.chinaaid.org/qry/page.taf?id=105&\\_function=detail&sbtblct\\_uid1=1246&month=07&year=2009&\\_nc=7f51b46202e1f88e977c26c8381d337c](http://www.chinaaid.org/qry/page.taf?id=105&_function=detail&sbtblct_uid1=1246&month=07&year=2009&_nc=7f51b46202e1f88e977c26c8381d337c) – Accessed 22 July 2009 <Attachment>

<sup>15</sup> 'Officials in China grapple with spread of Christianity' 2009, *Compass Direct News*, 5 February <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/china/1981> – Accessed 5 February 2009 <Attachment>

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