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2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: China

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
U.S. Department of State, September 5, 2000

CHINA

(Note: Tibet is discussed in a separate annex at the end of this report.)

The Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups. There are five officially recognized religions--Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. For each faith there is a government-affiliated association to monitor and supervise its activities. Membership in many faiths is growing rapidly; however, while the Government generally does not seek to suppress this growth outright, it tries to control and regulate religious groups to prevent the rise of groups or sources of authority outside the control of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

During the beginning of the period covered by this report (the last 6 months of 1999), the Government's respect for religious freedom deteriorated markedly, especially for the Falun Gong and Tibetan Buddhists, and the Government's repression and abuses continued during the first 6 months of 2000. The atmosphere created by the harsh crackdown on the Falun Gong spiritual movement and the unremitting nationwide campaigns against "cults" and superstition, along with frequent exhortations by senior leaders to "strengthen religious work," had an inevitable spillover effect on other faiths. In October 1999, as part of the Government's anti-Falun Gong crackdown, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a decision to ban "cults," including the Falun Gong, under Article 300 of the Criminal Law. Several non-Falun Gong qigong groups and unregistered religious groups were banned under the decision. However, the Government's basic policy of permitting apolitical religious activities of registered religious groups to take place relatively unfettered in government-approved sites remained unchanged.

In general, unregistered religious groups, including Protestant and Catholic groups, continued to experience varying degrees of official interference, harassment, and repression. Some unregistered religious groups were subjected to increased restrictions--including, in some cases, intimidation, harassment, and detention. However, the degree of restrictions varied significantly from region to region, and the number of religious adherents, in both registered and unregistered churches, continued to grow rapidly, and in some areas, with little official interference. In some regions, registered and unregistered churches were treated in a similar fashion by the authorities. In regions with high concentrations of Catholics, relations between the Government and the underground church loyal to the Vatican remained tense. However, citizens worshiping in officially sanctioned churches, mosques, and temples reported little or no day-to-day interference by

the Government. The Government's efforts to maintain a strong degree of control over religion, and its crackdown on groups that it perceived to pose a threat, continued. Overall, however, in the two decades since the Cultural Revolution, when all forms of religion were banned, there has been a loosening of government controls and a resurgence in religious activity.

Despite the Government's decision to suspend the U.S.-China bilateral human rights dialog in May 1999, the Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and U.S. Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang made a concerted effort to encourage religious freedom. In Washington and in Beijing, in public and in private, U.S. officials repeatedly urged the Government to respect citizens' rights to religious freedom. U.S. officials protested and asked for further information about numerous individual cases of abuse, and urged China to resume a dialog with the Dalai Lama. The deterioration of religious freedom in China was a key factor in the U.S. decision to introduce once again a resolution critical of China's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Section I. Government Policies on Freedom of Religion

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups.

The Criminal Law states that government officials who deprive citizens of religious freedom may, in serious cases, be sentenced to up to 2 years in prison; however, there are no known cases of persons being punished under this statute.

The state arrogates to itself the right to recognize and thus to allow to operate particular religious groups and spiritual movements. The State Council's Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) is responsible for monitoring and judging the legitimacy of religious activity. The RAB and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) United Front Work Department (UFWD), both of which are staffed by officials who are rarely if ever religious adherents, provide policy "guidance and supervision" over implementation of government regulations on religious activity, including the role of foreigners in religious activity.

During the period covered by this report, the Government continued, and in some areas, intensified a national campaign to enforce 1994 State Council regulations and subsequent provincial regulations that require all places of worship to register with government religious affairs bureaus and to come under the supervision of official "patriotic" religious organizations. During a September 1999 speech, President Jiang Zemin noted the Party's policy on freedom of religious belief but also called for stronger leadership over religious work and intensified management of religious affairs. He added that "we should energetically give guidance to religion so that it will keep in line with the Socialist society and serve ethnic unity, social stability, and modernization." The need for vigilance against allegedly hostile foreign forces bent on Westernizing or splitting the country, containment of religious "cults," the further adaptation of religion to socialist imperatives, strengthening the "rule of law" in managing religious affairs, enhanced political and ideological education for religious figures, and increased vigilance against growing religiosity in the Party and governing and military circles are identified as areas in need of work in the January 20, 2000 document, "Several Policy Issues Concerning Current Religion Work," which was issued in conjunction with a national meeting of the RAB. On March 11, 2000, the Party's flagship newspaper, the People's Daily, published a commentary on religious affairs work. The article urged all party members to "promote atheist thought in a positive way and persist in educating the masses of various ethnic groups with the Marxist perspective on religion." While the commentary also called on the Party to protect "citizens' freedom of religious belief," it warned that "hostile forces

outside [China's] borders and separatist forces are taking advantage of ethnicity and religion to bring about political infiltration and the separation of the motherland."

The Government officially permits only those Christian churches affiliated with either the Catholic Patriotic Association/Catholic Bishops Conference or the (Protestant) Three-Self Patriotic Movement/Chinese Christian Council to operate legally. There are six requirements for the registration of venues for religious activity: possession of a meeting place; citizens who are religious believers and who regularly take part in religious activity; an organized governing board; a minimum number of followers; a set of operating rules; and a legal source of income. There are five officially recognized religions--Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism. Some groups registered voluntarily, some registered under pressure, while authorities refused to register others. Unofficial groups claimed that authorities often refuse them registration without explanation. The Government contends that these refusals were mainly the result of inadequate facilities and meeting spaces. Many religious groups have been reluctant to comply with the regulations out of principled opposition to state control of religion or due to fear of adverse consequences if they reveal, as required, the names and addresses of church leaders. In some areas, efforts to register unauthorized groups are carried out by religious leaders and civil affairs officials. In other regions, registration is performed by police and RAB officials, concurrently with other law enforcement actions.

On October 31, 1999, as part of the Government's anti-Falun Gong crackdown, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a decision to ban all "cults," including the Falun Gong, under Article 300 of the Criminal Law. The Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate also provided "explanations" on applying existing criminal law to the Falun Gong. The law, as applied following these actions, specifies prison terms of 3 to 7 years for cult members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications. Under the law, cult leaders and recruiters can be sentenced to 7 years or more in prison. Several groups were declared "cults" and banned under the decision, including Christian, Buddhist, and various qigong groups. The Government banned Falun Gong in July 1999, but some Falun Gong leaders, who were arrested after the July ban, were tried and convicted under the anti-cult law in late 1999.

Religious Demography

According to an official government white paper, there are over 200 million religious adherents, representing a great variety of beliefs and practices. Official figures from late 1997 indicate that there are at least 3,000 religious organizations, 300,000 clergy, and 74 religious schools and colleges. There are also more than 85,000 approved venues for religious activities. Most religious adherents profess Eastern faiths, but tens of millions adhere to Christianity. According to estimates, 75 percent of the population practices some form of traditional folk religion (worship of local gods, heroes, and ancestors). Approximately 8 percent of the population are Buddhist, approximately 1.4 percent are Muslim, an estimated 0.4 percent belong to the official Catholic Church, an estimated 0.4 to 0.8 percent belong to the unofficial Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church, an estimated 0.08 percent to 1.2 percent are registered Protestants, and perhaps 2.4 to 6.5 percent worship in house churches that are independent of government control. There are no available estimates of the number of Taoists. However, according to a 1997 government publication, there are over 10,000 Taoist monks and nuns and over 1,000 Taoist temples.

The widespread traditional folk religion has revived in recent years and is tolerated to varying degrees as a loose affiliate of Taoism, or as an ethnic minority cultural practice; at the same time, however, folk religion has been labeled as "feudal superstition," and local authorities have destroyed thousands of local shrines.

Buddhists make up the largest body of organized religious believers. The Government estimates that there are more than 100 million Buddhists, most of whom are from the dominant Han ethnic group. However, it is difficult to estimate accurately the number of Buddhists because they do not have congregational memberships and often do not participate in public ceremonies. The Government reports that there are 13,000 Buddhist temples and monasteries and more than 200,000 nuns and monks. In some areas, local governments enforced strictly regulations on places of worship, particularly on illegally

constructed Buddhist temples and shrines.

According to government figures, there are 20 million Muslims, 35,000 Islamic places of worship, and more than 45,000 imams nationwide.

The unofficial, Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church claims a membership far larger than the 5 million persons registered with the official Catholic Church. Precise figures are difficult to determine, but Vatican officials have estimated that there are as many as 10 million adherents. According to official figures, the government-approved Catholic Church has 69 bishops, 5,000 clergy, and about 5,000 churches and meeting houses. There are 60,000 baptisms each year. The Government so far has refused to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and there is no Vatican representative in the country.

The Government maintains that there are between 10 and 15 million registered Protestants, 18,000 clergy, over 12,000 churches, and some 25,000 registered Protestant meeting places. According to foreign experts, perhaps 30 million persons worship in Protestant house churches that are independent of government control, although estimates by some house church groups range as high as 80 million.

Estimates of the number of Falun Gong practitioners vary widely; the Government claims that there may be as many as 2.1 million adherents of Falun Gong (or Wheel of the Law), also known as Falun Dafa; followers of Falun Gong estimate that there are over 100 million adherents worldwide. Some experts estimate that the true number of adherents lies in the tens of millions. Falun Gong blends aspects of Taoism, Buddhism, and the meditation techniques and physical exercises of qigong (a traditional Chinese exercise discipline) with the teachings of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi (a native of China who is currently living abroad). Despite the mystical nature of some of Li's teachings, Falun Gong does not consider itself a religion and has no clergy or places of worship.

Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government tends to perceive unregulated religious gatherings as a potential challenge to its authority, and during the period covered by this report it moved swiftly against houses of worship outside its control that grew too large or espoused beliefs that it considered threatening to "state security." Police closed "underground" mosques, temples, and seminaries, as well as large numbers of Catholic churches, and Protestant "house churches," many with significant memberships, properties, financial resources, and networks, and banned groups that it considered "cults." Some places of worship were destroyed. Leaders of unauthorized groups are often the targets of harassment, interrogations, detention, and physical abuse.

In the past, official tolerance for religions considered to be traditionally Chinese, such as Buddhism and Taoism, has been greater than that for Christianity, and these faiths often face fewer restrictions than the other recognized religions. As these non-Western faiths have grown rapidly in recent years, there are signs of greater government concern and new restrictions, especially on syncretic sects.

The Government continued, and in some places, intensified a national campaign to enforce 1994 State Council regulations and subsequent provincial regulations requiring all places of religious activity to register with government religious affairs bureaus and come under the supervision of official, "patriotic" religious organizations. There are reports that despite the rapidly growing religious population, it is difficult for new places of worship to be registered even among the five officially recognized faiths. The Government has restored or replaced churches, temples, mosques, and monasteries damaged or destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and allowed the reopening of some seminaries. Implementation of this policy has varied from locality to locality. However, there are far fewer temples, churches, or mosques than existed 50 years ago (before the Cultural Revolution), despite the recent increase in number of religious believers. The difficulty in registering new places of worship has led to crowding in many existing places of worship.

Some bishops in the official Catholic Church are not recognized by the Holy See,

although many have been recognized privately. In January 2000, bishops of the official Catholic Church, without consulting the Holy See, ordained 5 new official church bishops on the same day that the Pope consecrated 12 new Roman Catholic bishops in Rome. Some bishops of the official church reportedly refused to attend the Beijing ceremony, which they saw as a deliberate affront to the Vatican. However, the May 7, 2000 ordination service of Bishop Zhao Fengchang began with a statement that the Vatican had approved the ceremony. There are many long-standing vacancies in the official Catholic administration, particularly among bishops, and there are reports that the RAB and the official church patriotic association are pressuring the church to fill the vacancies quickly. However, some bishops who are ordained without Vatican recognition are not fully accepted by church members and other clerics, even in the official church. The Government's refusal to allow the official Catholic Church to recognize the religious authority of the Papacy has led many Catholics to refuse to join the official Catholic Church on the grounds that this refusal denies one of the fundamental tenets of their faith.

There are thriving Muslim communities in some areas, but government sensitivity to concerns of the Muslim community is limited. In November 1998 a Qing dynasty mosque was destroyed in Chengdu's Muslim quarter to make way for a boulevard near an expanded city square despite strong opposition from the city's Muslim population; the mosque had been the center of Muslim life in Chengdu. The construction of a new mosque over a complex of retail establishments further offended the community. As of June 2000, no construction upon the site of the Qing dynasty mosque had yet occurred; the imam, or leader, of the mosque that was demolished was ordered to leave Chengdu and has been forbidden to engage in religious work. The new officially sanctioned mosque over the retail complex has been attended only lightly since its opening.

The Government took some steps designed to show respect for the country's Muslims, such as offering congratulations on major Islamic holidays. When an official newspaper in Guangzhou published a picture of the kaaba in Mecca next to an unrelated photograph of a cloned pig in March 2000--outraging local Muslims, who cited the Muslim view of pigs as unclean--the authorities disciplined the editor, and the newspaper published an apology. The Government permits, and in some cases subsidizes, Muslim citizens who make the Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. However, testimony before the congressionally mandated Commission on International Religious Freedom in March 2000, as well as other reports, stated that many Muslims of the Uighur minority are not allowed to go on pilgrimage. According to credible reports, including written testimony to the Commission, on one occasion, hundreds of Uighurs with tickets and passports were denied permission to board an airplane to go on Hajj, as they were not part of the state quota. According to official government statistics, more than 45,000 Muslims have made the pilgrimage in recent years--5,000 in 1998. There have been nongovernmental reports that fewer persons participated in 1999 and 2000; according to some estimates less than 2,500 went in each of those years. According to some reports, the major limiting factors for participation in the Hajj were the cost, controls on passport issuance, and corruption of the officials responsible for overseeing pilgrims' travel for the Hajj.

In some areas where ethnic unrest has occurred, particularly among Central Asian Muslims (and especially the Uighurs) in Xinjiang, officials continue to restrict the building of mosques. However, in other areas, particularly in areas traditionally populated by the non-Central Asian Hui ethnic group, there is substantial religious building construction and renovation. After a series of violent incidents in Xinjiang beginning in 1997 and continuing into 2000, including reported bombings in Xinjiang and other parts of the country attributed to Uighur activists, police cracked down on Muslim religious activity and places of worship accused of supporting separatism, and local authorities issued regulations further restricting religious activities and teaching. Restrictions on Muslim religious practice in Xinjiang remain tight, and the authorities continue to restrict the religious education of youths under the age of 18.

Provincial-level Communist Party and government officials repeatedly called for stronger management of religious affairs and the separation of religion from administrative matters in Xinjiang. For example, the official Xinjiang Legal Daily reported that in recent years a township in Baicheng county had found cases of "religious interference" in judicial,

marriage, and family planning matters. In response, the authorities began conducting monthly political study sessions for religious personnel. In addition, they required every mosque to record the number of attendees and names of those attending each day's activities. The official "Xinjiang Daily" reported that Yining County reviewed the activities of 420 mosques, and implemented a system of linking ethnic cadres to mosques in order to improve vigilance against "illegal religious activities." The article stated that the county's persistent ideological propaganda efforts had led a group of 24 women to shed their veils and "raise their level of civilization." The educational campaign reportedly also had led young ethnic couples who had married illegally by means of an Islamic betrothal ceremony to seek civil marriage certificates.

There were numerous reports in the official media of efforts by the authorities to confiscate "illegal religious publications" in Xinjiang. One report explained that such publications discussed "holy war" and "holy war history," promoted pan-Islamism, pan-Turkism, and ethnic separatism; and "fanned the flames of religious fanaticism." According to a July 2000 report of the International Coalition for Religious Freedom, since April 1996, only one publisher, the Xinjiang People's Publication House, has been allowed to print Muslim literature in Xinjiang.

The increase in the number of Christians has resulted in a corresponding increase in the demand for Bibles. During 1999 the Government approved the printing of more than 3 million Bibles, and there currently are more than 22 million Bibles in print. One printing company that is a joint venture with an overseas Christian organization printed over 2.3 million Bibles during 1999, including Bibles in Braille and minority dialects, such as Korean, Jingbo, Lisu, Lahu, Niao, and Yao. Although Bibles can be purchased at some bookstores, they are not readily available and cannot be ordered directly from publishing houses by individuals. However, they are available for purchase at most officially recognized churches, and many house church members buy their Bibles from churches without incident. Nonetheless, some underground Christians hesitate to buy Bibles at official churches because such transactions sometimes involve receipts that identify the purchaser. Foreign experts confirm reports of chronic shortages of Bibles, mostly due to logistical problems in disseminating Bibles to rural areas, though the situation has improved in recent years due to improved distribution channels, including to house churches. Customs officials continue to monitor for the "smuggling" of Bibles and other religious materials into the country. There have been credible reports that the authorities sometimes confiscate Bibles in raids on house churches.

The authorities permit officially sanctioned religious organizations to maintain international contacts that do not entail "foreign control." What constitutes "control" is not defined. Foreigners are not permitted to conduct missionary activities, but foreign Christians currently are teaching English and other languages on college campuses with minimum interference from authorities as long as their proselytizing is low key. There were reports that in early 1999 the Government issued a circular to tighten control over foreign missionary activity in the country. Regulations enacted in 1994 codified many existing rules involving foreigners, including a ban on proselytizing by foreigners, but for the most part allow foreign nationals to preach to foreigners, bring in religious materials for their own use, and preach to Chinese citizens at churches, mosques, and temples at the invitation of registered religious organizations.

In recent years, some local authorities, especially in northeastern China, have subjected worship services of alien residents to increased surveillance and restrictions. In other areas, authorities have displayed increasing tolerance of religious practice by foreigners. Weekly services of the foreign Jewish community in Beijing have been held uninterrupted since 1995 and High Holy Day observances have been allowed for more than 15 years. In September 1999, with the support of local authorities, the Shanghai Jewish community was allowed to hold a service in an historic Shanghai synagogue, which had been restored as a museum, for the first time since 1949. Local authorities indicated that the community could use the synagogue in the future for special occasions on a case-by-case basis. The community has used the synagogue three times, most recently for Passover services in April 2000. Upon the city's request, the Shanghai Rabbi and the community have submitted a list of additional holidays that they would want to celebrate.

Official religious organizations administer local Bible schools, 54 Catholic and Protestant seminaries, 9 institutes to train imams and Islamic scholars, and institutes to train Buddhist monks. Students who attend these institutes must demonstrate "political reliability" and all graduates must pass an examination on their theological and political knowledge to qualify for the clergy. Some young Uighur Muslims study outside of the country in Muslim religious schools. The Government has stated that there are 10 colleges conducting Islamic higher education and 2 other Islamic schools in Xinjiang operating with government support.

The Government permitted limited numbers of Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and Buddhist clergy to go abroad for additional religious studies. In most cases, funding for these training programs is provided by foreign organizations. Both official and unofficial Christian churches have problems training adequate numbers of clergy to meet the needs of their growing congregations. Due to the restrictions on religion between 1955 and 1985, no priests or other clergy in the official churches were ordained; most priests and pastors serving currently were trained either before 1955 or after 1985. Most religious institutions depend on their own resources. Frequently religious institutions run side businesses selling religious items, and at times they run strictly commercial businesses (restaurants are popular). Contributions from parish members are common among both the Catholics and Protestants. Sometimes the State will fund repairs for temples or shrines having cultural or historic significance. There are some reports that government funds are allocated only to registered churches, depending upon how independent they are perceived to be--those deemed too independent reportedly have their budgets cut. Due to government prohibitions, unofficial churches have particularly significant problems training clergy or sending students to study overseas, and many clergy receive only limited and inadequate preparation.

The law does not prohibit religious believers from holding public office; however, most influential positions in government are reserved for Party members, and Communist Party officials state that Party membership and religious belief are incompatible. Party membership also is required for almost all high level positions in government and in state-owned businesses and organizations. The Communist Party reportedly has issued two circulars since 1995 ordering Party members not to adhere to religious beliefs and ordering the expulsion of Party members who belong to religious organizations, whether open or clandestine. There were reports that the Government issued a circular in early 1999 to remind Party cadres that religion was incompatible with party membership, a theme reflected in authoritative media during the summer of 1999. For example, President and CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin said in a September 1999 speech that "party members of all ethnic groups must have a firm faith in socialism and communism, cannot believe in religion, cannot take part in or organize religious activities, and cannot take part in feudal superstitious activities." Muslims allegedly have been fired from government posts for praying during working hours. The "Routine Service Regulations" of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) state explicitly that servicemen "may not take part in religious or superstitious activities." Party and PLA military personnel were expelled for adhering to the Falun Gong spiritual movement, which the Government has banned as a "cult." However, according to government officials, many local Communist Party officials engage in some kind of religious activity; in certain localities, as many as 20 to 25 percent of Party officials engage in religious activities. Most officials who practice a religion are Buddhist or practice a folk religion. Religious figures, who are not members of the CCP, are included in national and local government organizations, usually to represent their constituency on cultural and educational matters. The National People's Congress (NPC) includes several religious leaders, including Pagbalha Geleg Namgyai, a Tibetan "living Buddha," who is a vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC. Religious groups also are represented in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a forum for "multiparty" cooperation and consultation led by the Chinese Communist Party, which advises the Government on policy.

The Government teaches atheism in schools. The participation of minors in religious education is prohibited by regulation. However, enforcement varies dramatically from region to region, and in some areas large numbers of young people attend religious services at both registered and unregistered places of worship.

Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the period covered in this report, unapproved religious and spiritual groups came under greater scrutiny--and, in some cases, harsh repression--even as officially sanctioned religious activity went largely unaffected. There were government actions that violated internationally recognized norms regarding freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech. Although there was no significant change in the central government's official policy toward religious freedom, the unremitting campaign against Falun Gong and other "heretical cults," plus frequent exhortations by senior leaders to "strengthen religious work," had an inevitable spillover effect.

Between 1997 and 2000, there were reported bombings in Xinjiang and other parts of the country attributed to Uighur activists. The authorities responded with a harsh crackdown on Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region that failed to distinguish between those involved with illegal religious activities and those involved in ethnic separatism or terrorist activities. It is therefore difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments are aimed primarily at religious expression. The Yili Intermediate Court sentenced Turhan Saidalamoud, Nurahmet Niyazi, and Krubanjiang Yusseyin to death in September 1999 for "illegal religious proselytizing," murder, and manufacturing explosives, according to a foreign press report that cited official media. The same press report said that Alim Younous, Dulkan Rouz, and Turhong Awout were convicted and executed in Urumqi for murder, robbery, and the illegal manufacture, transportation, and storage of arms, ammunition, and explosives. Alim Yanous allegedly had set up a "party of Allah" in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, "with the aim of splitting national unity and setting up an Islamic power." According to a February 2000 report by Human Rights Watch, the pace of executions and imposition of long prison terms for suspected separatists in Xinjiang increased during 1999, and there were more frequent public sentencing rallies during the year. Human Rights Watch also reported tightening of control over the teaching materials, curriculums, and leadership of mosques and religious schools in 1999, and that six imams from Hotan City and Karakash County were detained toward the end of 1999 in part for non-compliance with religious regulations and for failing to teach government policy at religious meetings.

An official newspaper in Xinjiang reported in October 1999 that a cleric at a mosque in Karakash (Moyu) County in southern Xinjiang had mentioned the term "holy war" before crowds numbering more than 2,000. The cleric also reportedly had interfered with marriage and other administrative matters. The mosque allegedly became "a hotbed for illegal religious activities and separatism." The article ran under the headline "Take Care of Anyone Who Conducts Illegal Religious Activities," but did not state how the unnamed cleric described in the story had been "taken care of." Several employers in Lop County were fined in September 1999 for laxity in opposing illegal religious activities and for harboring wanted men, including those promoting "holy war."

There is a great deal of variation in how the authorities deal with unregistered religious groups. In certain regions, government supervision of religious activity is minimal, and registered and unregistered churches are treated similarly by authorities, existing openly side by side. In such areas, many congregants worship in both types of churches. In other regions, particularly where considerable unofficial and official religious activity takes place, local implementing regulations call for strict government oversight of religion, and authorities have cracked down on unregistered churches and their members. Implementing regulations, provincial work reports, and other government and Party documents continued to exhort officials to enforce vigorously government policy regarding unregistered churches. Since 1998, Guangzhou has had highly restrictive religious regulations. In 1999 Zhejiang province promulgated new religious affairs regulations that stipulated that "illegal" property and income would be confiscated from those who "1) preside over or organize religious activities at places other than those for religious activities or at places not approved by a religious affairs department; 2) do missionary work outside the premises of a place of religious activity; and 3) sponsor religious training activities without obtaining the approval of a religious affairs department at or above the county level." Regulations in Guangxi, Shanghai, and Chongqing also call for strict government oversight. In April 2000, the Fujian provincial government convened a

meeting of religious affairs workers in order to exhort them to "ensure stability in religious circles and lead religious circles in making new and greater contributions to Socialist material and spiritual civilization." At the meeting, a provincial leader also called on all religious affairs workers to "firmly establish a Marxist outlook on religion."

In some areas, security authorities used threats, demolition of unregistered property, extortion of "fines," interrogation, detention, and at times beatings and torture to harass unofficial religious figures and followers. Authorities particularly targeted unofficial religious groups in Beijing and the provinces of Henan and Shandong, where there are rapidly growing numbers of unregistered Protestants, and in Hebei, a center of unregistered Catholics.

However, many family churches, generally made up of family members and friends, and which conduct activities similar to those of home Bible study groups, are tolerated by the authorities as long as they remain small and unobtrusive. Family churches reportedly encounter difficulties when their memberships become too large, when they arrange for the use of facilities for the specific purpose of conducting religious activities, or when they forge links with other unregistered groups.

Some Protestant house church groups reported more frequent police raids of worship services and detentions than in previous years. In addition, according to press reports, in 1999 more than 20 unregistered Catholic churches were demolished, some with explosives, by the authorities in Changle and other localities in Fujian province. The churches were destroyed on the grounds that they had been built without the required permit or had been built with the wrong type of permit (such as with a permit for a building other than a church). Most of the churches reportedly were built by local congregations with the aid of remittances from relatives working abroad.

On the same day in October 1999 police disrupted services with nearly simultaneous raids on two of Guangzhou's most prominent house churches--those of pastors Samuel Lamb and Li Dexian. Li and his wife, along with an Australian missionary, were detained for several hours, and Li's church was ransacked by the police. Bibles were confiscated from his congregation and members of the congregation reportedly were threatened. Pastor Li was detained again in April 2000 for 15 days, during which time he was forced into a crouch for three days, unable to sleep or use toilet facilities, with his wrists and ankles manacled together. Li also has been detained on other occasions and reports that in some instances he was beaten. According to credible reports, on May 16, 2000, seven house churches were raided in Guangdong province. According to a press release of Christian Solidarity International, more than 10 house church leaders were arrested in the raids. Several house churches also were closed by the authorities.

The Jianghuai Morning Daily in Anhui province reported that on April 9, 2000, police detained 47 members of the unregistered Full Scope Church. According to the newspaper, six church leaders were to face criminal charges for organizing an "illegal sect," while eight others likely would receive "administrative" (usually meaning reeducation-through-labor) sentences. The leader of the Full Scope Church, Xu Yongze, subsequently was released from prison in late May 2000, 2 months after he should have been released upon the expiration of his 3-year sentence. Although he was released from a labor camp, it is unclear whether Xu remains subject to some restrictions.

In some regions, coexistence and cooperation between official and unofficial churches, both Catholic and Protestant, is close enough to blur the line between the two. However, in some areas relations between the two churches remain hostile. In Hebei, where perhaps half of the country's Catholics reside, friction between unofficial Catholics and local authorities continued. Hebei authorities have been known to force many underground priests and believers to make a choice of either joining the "patriotic" church or facing punishment such as fines, job loss, periodic detentions, and, in some cases, having their children barred from school. Some were forced into hiding. In September 1999, police, allegedly at the instigation of the local official Catholic Church in Wenzhou, instructed 12 underground Catholic church leaders--including Bishop Lin Xili, Chen Nailiang, and Wang Zhongfa--to go to a hotel, where they were pressured to join the official Catholic

church. There were reports in May 2000 that local authorities in Zhejiang province had closed down seven Catholic churches because they failed to join the official Catholic Church. In May 2000, Father Jiang Shurang, an underground priest in Zhejiang province, was sentenced to 6 years in prison for illegally printing Bibles and other religious material. There also are reports of divisions within both the official Protestant church and the house church movement over issues of doctrine; in both the registered and unregistered Protestant churches, there are groups with conservative views and groups with more unorthodox views. In some areas there are reports of harassment of churches by local religious affairs bureau officials which is attributed, at least in part, to financial issues. For example, although regulations require local authorities to provide land to church groups, some local officials may try to avoid doing so by denying registration. Official churches may also face harassment if local authorities wish to acquire the land on which a church is located. In addition to refusing to register churches, there are also reports that religious affairs bureau officials have requested illegal "donations" from churches in their jurisdictions as a means of raising extra revenue.

The Party's Central Committee issued a document on August 16, 1999, calling on the authorities to tighten control of the official Catholic Church and to eliminate the underground Catholic Church if it does not bend to Government control. The Commission on International Religious Freedom also reported that in recent months, there has been increasing pressure by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association on underground Catholic bishops to join the official church, and that the authorities have reorganized dioceses without consulting church leaders. The Government in 1993 shortened the required number of years of seminary training for priests.

The Hong Kong press reported that the Guangdong provincial government had issued a circular ordering authorities to increase the monitoring of Christian and Muslim activities. On March 25, 2000, police raided a house church service in Jilin and confiscated the Bible and camera of a foreigner who was in attendance. The foreign Christian subsequently was fined, and one local official described the house church service as a "heretical religious activity."

Tibetan Buddhists outside of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) appear to face significant restrictions and are subject to patriotic education campaigns. On October 24, 1999, three Tibetan Buddhist monks, Sonam Phuntsok, Agya Tsering, and Sonam, were arrested at Dargye monastery in western Sichuan province. The three reportedly were suspected of being in contact with exile groups, and of supporting the Dalai Lama. These arrests reportedly were linked by the Government to the bombing of a medical clinic on October 7. Their detention sparked a large local protest later in the month, during which police reportedly fired into the crowd and injured demonstrators. (A discussion of government restrictions on Tibetan Buddhism in the TAR can be found in the Tibet annex to this report.)

The Government has waged a severe political, propaganda, and police campaign against the Falun Gong spiritual movement during the period covered by this report. On July 22, 1999, three months after 10,000 Falun Gong adherents had demonstrated peacefully in front of the Zhongnanhai leadership compound in Beijing, the Government officially declared Falun Gong illegal and began a nationwide crackdown. Around the country, tens of thousands of practitioners were rounded up and detained for several days--often in open stadiums--under poor and overcrowded conditions, with inadequate food, water, and sanitary facilities. Practitioners who refused to renounce their beliefs were expelled from schools or fired from jobs. Some detainees were government officials and Communist Party members. A few high-ranking practitioners were forced to disavow their ties to Falun Gong on national television. Government officials who are practitioners were required to undergo anti-Falun Gong study sessions, and were prohibited from Falun Gong activities; some were expelled from the Party for refusing to recant their beliefs. There were reports that local government leaders and heads of institutions in the northeast were summoned to Beijing or fired if too many persons under their jurisdictions participated in Falun Gong demonstrations. There were also reports that Public Security Bureau forbade the renting of apartments to Falun Gong practitioners. On July 29, 1999 the Government issued a warrant for the arrest of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi, who was

charged with holding demonstrations without appropriate permits and disturbing public order. The Government requested INTERPOL's assistance in apprehending Li, who resides abroad, but INTERPOL declined to assist, on the grounds that the offense was not a crime recognized under the INTERPOL charter, and that the request was political in nature. Late in the year, President Jiang Zemin announced that the campaign against the Falun Gong was one of the "three major political struggles" of 1999.

In July 1999, the Government also launched a massive anti-Falun Gong propaganda campaign that for weeks dominated the nightly news with details of Falun Gong's alleged crimes and the effectiveness of the Government's effort to crush the group. Special programs revealing the Falun Gong's alleged "evil nature" featured testimonials by self-proclaimed former practitioners recounting how they had been duped by the "cult." The media campaign continued through the end of 1999, with articles appearing regularly though with far less frequency than at the campaign's height. The Government also seized and destroyed Falun Gong literature, including over 1 million books, in well publicized sweeps of homes and bookstores. Police in Dandong City, Liaoning province, reported that they had arrested six workers and a factory boss for printing outlawed Falun Gong material. According to a November 1999 official press report, the Qinghai People's Publishing House was suspended by the State Press and Publication Administration for printing four Falun Gong books in January 1999, and those responsible reportedly were punished.

Authorities attempted to shut down Falun Gong Internet websites. According to a press report, an attack on a foreign-based website was traced to government security departments. A Hong Kong based human rights group reported that a Falun Gong website designed and operated in Jilin by computer engineer Zhang Haitao was shut down on July 24, 1999, and that Zhang was arrested July 29, 1999. According to Amnesty International, Zhang Ji, a computer science student, was arrested in Heilongjiang and charged with using the Internet to spread "subversive information" after sending e-mails to Canada and the United States about mistreatment of Falun Gong practitioners. There have been reports that Falun Gong practitioners living in other countries have received virus-infested e-mail messages.

On October 28, 1999, several Falun Gong practitioners held a clandestine press conference for foreign reporters in which they described an increase in harassment and in physical abuse by the police. Many of the practitioners involved later reportedly were arrested; the authorities questioned some of the foreign journalists who attended the press conference and temporarily confiscated their press credentials and residence permits. Several foreign reporters also were detained briefly on April 25, 2000, after having taken photographs of police detaining Falun Gong demonstrators on Tiananmen Square. Foreign tourists routinely had their film and videotape confiscated after recording (often inadvertently) some of the detentions.

Practitioners defied government efforts to prevent them from entering Beijing. Protests (by individuals or small groups of practitioners) at Tiananmen Square occurred almost daily during the period covered by this report. Demonstrations also continued around the country. Police quickly broke up demonstrations, at times kicking and beating protestors, and detained them. In September 1999, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) reported that at least 300 adherents were arrested in 9 cities in 1 week. In late October, the pace of detentions picked up as practitioners converged on Beijing and began a series of peaceful, low-key protests of a pending decision by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to ban all cults. Most protests were small and short-lived as expanded police units quickly detained anyone who admitted to being or appeared to be a practitioner. In late October, a Party official stated that 3,000 persons from around the country were detained in police sweeps of Beijing for nonresidents. On November 16, 1999, during a visit by the UN Secretary General, more than 12 practitioners who unfurled a Falun Gong banner were detained forcibly at Tiananmen Square. On November 30, 1999, Vice Premier Li Lanqing stated that authorities detained over 35,000 practitioners between July 22 and October 30 1999 (the Government later clarified Li's statement, noting that the figure represented the total number of confrontations of police with adherents and that many persons had multiple encounters with police). Hundreds of

practitioners reportedly were arrested at Tiananmen Square in February 2000 during lunar New Year protests, forcing a brief closure of the Square. Large numbers were arrested while protesting on March 5 (opening of the National People's Congress), April 25 (the anniversary of the 1999 Zhongnanhai demonstration), and May 11 (reportedly Falun Gong founder Li Hongzhi's birthday). Authorities also briefly detained foreign practitioners (it remains unclear whether the authorities were aware that such persons were foreigners). On November 24, 1999, four foreign practitioners were detained in Guangzhou; the foreigners were released a few days later and expelled from the country, while Chinese citizens detained with them remained in custody. On December 15, three Chinese nationals with foreign residency were detained in Shenzhen for visiting other Falun Gong practitioners; they were given 15 days of administrative detention. In February 2000, a U.S. citizen practitioner was detained for 3 days.

During the period covered by this report, there were numerous credible reports of police involvement in beatings, detention under extremely harsh conditions, torture (including by electric shock and by having hands and feet shackled and linked with crossed steel chains), and other abuses of detained Falun Gong practitioners. Police often used excessive force when detaining peaceful protesters, some of them elderly or accompanied by small children. There are credible reports that estimate at least 24 practitioners have died while in police custody since July 1999. Zhao Jinhua, of Shandong province, reportedly was detained on September 27, 1999, while meditating. Over the next 10 days, police reportedly tortured Zhao using rubber batons and electric shocks. On October 7, she died reportedly due to injuries suffered while in detention. The official media reported that Zhao had died of a heart attack. Similarly, Gao Xianmin died in police custody on January 17, 2000. Gao was detained with a group of fellow practitioners in Guangzhou on December 31, 1999. Credible reports indicate that Gao was tortured while in custody, including by having high-density salt water forced into his stomach. Police gave no explanation for his death. On February 17, 2000, 60-year-old Chen Zixiu was detained in Weihai as she attempted to travel to Beijing to join peaceful protests. Over the next few days, her family received word from another detainee that Chen was being beaten. On February 21, local police informed the family that Chen had died. Family members report that her body was covered with bruises and her teeth and nose were broken. According to press reports, Zhou Zhichang, a practitioner imprisoned in Heilongjiang Province since September 1999, died in custody in May 2000, after an 8-day hunger strike. On October 27, 1999, police in Heilongjiang province stated that Chen Ying, an 18-year-old practitioner of Falun Gong who died while in police custody in August, had jumped to her death from a moving train. Zhao Dong also allegedly jumped from a train while in police custody; he reportedly died in late September 1999.

Although the vast majority of practitioners detained were later released, those identified by the Government as "core leaders" were singled out for particularly harsh treatment. On October 25, 1999, the official media reported that at least 13 Falun Gong leaders had been charged with stealing and leaking state secrets. On October 31, 1999, as part of the Government's anti-Falun Gong crackdown, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a decision to ban "cults," including Falun Gong, under Article 300 of the Criminal Law. Under the decision, cult members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications can receive prison terms of 3 to 7 years. Cult leaders and recruiters can be sentenced to 7 years or more in prison. On November 3, days after action by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to ban all cults under the Criminal Law, authorities used this law to charge 6 Falun Gong leaders, some of whom, it is believed, were arrested in July 1999. On November 8, the Government confirmed that 111 practitioners had been charged with serious crimes including disturbing social order and stealing state secrets. On December 26, a Beijing court sentenced four adherents for using a cult "to obstruct justice, causing human deaths in the process of organizing a cult, and illegally obtaining state secrets." Li Chang, a former Public Security Ministry official, was given 18 years in prison; former Railways Ministry official Wang Zhiwen was sentenced to 16 years. Two other prominent adherents, Ji Liewu and Yao Jie, received 12 years and 7 years, respectively. According to an international human rights organization, the Ministry of Justice required attorneys to obtain government permission to represent Falun Gong adherents. Amnesty International reports that some lawyers have been prevented from entering pleas of "not guilty" for practitioners. Human rights organizations estimate

that as many as 300 people have been sentenced to prison terms of up to 18 years for involvement with Falun Gong.

Many other practitioners were sentenced administratively, without trial, to up to 3 years in reeducation-through-labor camps. According to credible estimates, as many as 5,000 may have received such sentences. According to credible reports, authorities also have started confining some practitioners to psychiatric hospitals. Amnesty International reported that, on January 20, 2000, a Changguang Police Station spokesman confirmed that about 50 "extremist" Falun Gong practitioners had been placed in a psychiatric hospital near Beijing, and cited reports from Falun Gong practitioners that the practitioner's families were asked for fees to cover living expenses in the hospital. Amnesty International also reports that practitioners were taken to psychiatric hospitals in Jiaozhou, Shandong, Province, in September 1999, and in Xinxiang, Henan, in December 1999.

Religious groups that preach beliefs outside the bounds of officially approved doctrine (such as the imminent coming of the Apocalypse, or holy war) or that have charismatic leaders often are singled out for particularly severe harassment. Some observers have attributed the unorthodox beliefs of some of these groups to undertrained clergy. Others acknowledge that some individuals may be exploiting the reemergence of interest in religion for personal gain. Police continued their efforts to close down an underground evangelical group called the "Shouters," an offshoot of a pre-1949 indigenous Protestant group. The Government also initiated a general crackdown on other groups it considered "cults." In September 1999, 31 members of the "Cold Water Religion" reportedly were arrested in Lianping County, Guangdong; 3 of the group's churches reportedly were destroyed. Liu Jiaguo, leader of the Supreme Deity sect, was executed in October 1999. He was convicted on charges of raping 11 women and of defrauding cult members.

The crackdown on "cults" intensified later in the year, with press reports stating that restrictions would be tightened on several "cults" and various Christian groups. The Zhong Gong qigong group, which reportedly had a following rivaling that of Falun Gong, was banned under the anti-cult application of the Criminal Law, and its leader, Zhang Hongbao, was charged with rape, forgery, and illegal crossing of boundaries. Zhong Gong, like other qigong groups, teaches that the body's vital forces, or qi, can be harnessed for healing purposes and spiritual growth through meditation and spiritual exercises. According to a news report, a local Zhong Gong leader in Zhejiang Province, Chen Jilong, was convicted in January 2000 of illegally practicing medicine and was sentenced to 2 years in prison. Two leaders of other qigong groups also reportedly were arrested, and the Government banned the practice of qigong exercises on public or government property. This has created an atmosphere of uncertainty for many, of not most, qigong practitioners, and there are reports that some qigong practitioners now fear practicing or teaching openly. There were reports that 14 unofficial Christian groups and a Buddhist organization were branded by the Government as "evil sects," as well.

There were many religious detainees and prisoners in addition to the thousands of Falun Gong practitioners detained during the period covered by this report. In some cases, public security officials have used prison or reeducation-through-labor sentences to enforce religious affairs regulations. Qin Baocai and Mu Sheng, colleagues of Protestant house church leader Xu Yongze, continue to serve reeducation-through-labor sentences. The Government's 1997 White Paper on Religious Freedom stated that Xu had violated the law by promoting a cult, preaching that the Apocalypse was near, and asking worshipers to wail in public spaces for several consecutive days. Group members deny these charges. On August 18, 1999, eight house church leaders--Zhao Dexin, Yang Xian, Miao Hailin, Chen Zide, Li Wen, Han Shaorong, and two others--reportedly were arrested in Henan. On August 24, 1999, 40 house church members reportedly were arrested in Fengcheng, Henan. Among those detained were David Zhang (Rongliang) and Zheng Shuqian of the Fengcheng church group; both church leaders were sentenced to reeducation-through-labor. According to a Hong Kong human rights organization, on March 2, 2000, 15 members of the China Evangelistic Fellowship were arrested while holding a service in Nanwang City, Henan province. Two of the group's leaders, Jiang Qinggang and Hao Huaiping, reportedly faced reeducation-through-labor sentences. The director of the Government's Religious Affairs Bureau had labeled the fellowship publicly

as a "cult" at the end of 1999. In December 1999, Shen Yiping and three other Fellowship leaders were sentenced to reeducation-through-labor for being "cult leaders."

The whereabouts of Roman Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin, whose followers reported that he was arrested in 1997, remained unclear. Underground Catholic sources in Hebei claimed that he still was under detention, while the Government denied having taken "any coercive measures" against him. Reliable sources reported that Bishop An Shuxin, Bishop Zhang Weizhu, Father Cui Xing, and Father Wang Qunjun remained under detention in Hebei; Bishop Liu reportedly remained under house arrest in Zhejiang province. According to a Freedom House report, in the last half of 1999, four Catholic Bishops reportedly were detained or arrested for refusing to join the official church or for conducting unauthorized services. The four were Bishop Jia Zhiguo (of Hebei province, on August 15); Bishop Xie Shiguang (of Fujian province, in mid-October); Bishop Lin Xili (of Zhejiang province, on October 28); and Bishop Han Dingxiang (of Hebei province, around December 1). All of the bishops reportedly were arrested for refusing to join the official church or for conducting unauthorized services. In January 2000, Father Hu Duo reportedly was detained in Hebei; according to a Human Rights Watch report, authorities that month also reportedly detained, beat, and fined an unknown number of underground Catholics in Baoding, Hebei. In Fuzhou, Fujian province, a large group of police arrested 80-year-old underground Catholic Bishop Yang Shudao on February 10, 2000. The Government denied that the elderly Bishop is being detained, claiming that he is receiving medical treatment. Underground Catholic Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang of Shanghai remained under surveillance and often had his movements restricted. Roman Catholic Bishop Zeng Jingmu, who was released from a labor camp in 1998, reportedly remains under house arrest.

During the beginning of the period covered by this report (the last 6 months of 1999), the Government's respect for religious freedom deteriorated markedly, especially for the Falun Gong and Tibetan Buddhists, and the Government's repression and abuses continued during the first 6 months of 2000. There were no indications of a relaxation of the Government's restrictions on religious freedom, or of its crackdown on Falun Gong, as of mid-2000.

Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section II. Societal Attitudes

The communities of the five official religions--Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Catholicism, and Protestantism--coexist without significant friction. However, in some parts of the country, there is a tense relationship between registered and unregistered Christian churches. In other areas, the two groups coexist without problems. In general the majority of the population shows little interest in the affairs of the religious minority beyond visiting temples during festivals or churches on Christmas Eve. Religious/ethnic minority groups such as Tibetans and Uighurs experience societal discrimination, but this is not based solely on their religious beliefs. Traditionally, there also has been tension between the Han and the Hui, a Muslim ethnic group.

Section III. U.S. Government Policy

The Department of State, U.S. officials in Beijing, and the Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang make a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in the country, using both focused external pressure on abuses and support for positive trends within the country. In exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, diplomatic personnel consistently urge both central and local authorities to respect citizens' rights to religious freedom. U.S. officials protest vigorously whenever there are credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination, in violation of international laws and standards, and request information in

cases of alleged persecution where the facts are incomplete or contradictory. At the same time, U.S. officials make the case to the country's leaders that freedom of religion can strengthen, not harm, the country. The U.S. Embassy and consulates also collect information about abuses and maintain contacts in China's religious communities with a wide spectrum of religious leaders including bishops, priests, ministers of the official Christian churches, and Taoist and Buddhist leaders. U.S. officials also meet with leaders and members of the unofficial Christian churches. The Department of State's nongovernmental contacts include experts on religion in China, human rights organizations, and religious groups in the United States. The Department of State is sending increasing numbers of Chinese religious leaders and scholars to the U.S. on international visitor programs to see first hand the role that religion plays in the United States. The Embassy also brings experts on religion from the United States to China to speak about the role of religion in American life and public policy.

In May 1999, the Chinese government suspended the official U.S.-China bilateral human rights dialog. The suspension, which remains in effect, has limited the U.S. Government's ability to express concerns about religious freedom to Chinese officials. At times, government officials have refused to grant meetings to U.S. embassy officials who intended to raise religious freedom or other human rights issues. Despite these limitations, U.S. officials in Washington and Beijing have continued to protest individual incidents of abuse. For example, Embassy officials have continued to seek clarification about the status of Roman Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin. On numerous occasions, both the Department of State and the Embassy in Beijing protested government actions taken against Falun Gong followers, including the temporary detention of thousands of adherents in July 1999 and the sentencing of four group leaders later in the year. In May 2000, senior embassy officials urged the Chinese to release Pastor Xu Yongze, whose reeducation-through-labor sentence expired in March 2000. Consulate Guangzhou officials also protested to local officials the detention and harassment of Pastor Li Dexian. State Department officials called in senior Chinese embassy officials in Washington to protest the January detention of Roman Catholic Bishop Yang Shudao.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

TIBET

(This section of the report on China has been prepared pursuant to Section 536 (b) of Public Law 103-236. The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)-hereinafter referred to as "Tibet"--to be part of the People's Republic of China. Preservation and development of Tibet's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage and protection of its people's fundamental human rights continue to be of concern.)

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief; however, the Government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibet. Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism. Although the authorities permit some traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, those activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent, such as religious activities that are perceived as advocating Tibetan independence, including displaying the Dalai Lama's picture, or any form of separatism (which is described as "splittist"), are not tolerated and are promptly and forcibly suppressed.

The Chinese Government strictly controls access to and information about Tibet, and it is difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations; however, repression of religious freedom continued, and the Government's record of respect for religious freedom deteriorated during the period covered by this report.

The Government continued its "patriotic education" campaign aimed at enforcing compliance with government regulations and either cowing or weeding out monks and nuns who refuse to adopt the Party line and remain sympathetic to the Dalai Lama (the leading religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism). The "patriotic education" campaign also is

intended to increase the Government's control over the Tibetan Buddhist establishment. The "patriotic re-education" of monks and nuns, which began in 1996 in Lhasa area monasteries and in subsequent years was intensified and extended throughout Tibet and to monasteries outside of the TAR, continued but at a lower level of intensity. A new round of political education classes in monasteries began at the end of 1999 in Lhasa and in some smaller monasteries in more remote parts of the TAR. However, the current pattern of classes several times per week or per month seems less frequent than previously. Many persons, including monks and nuns, were arrested by authorities while attempting to protest peacefully or for refusing to abide by rules applied by government authorities in Buddhist monasteries, including the renunciation of the Dalai Lama and the acceptance of the unity of China and Tibet. Many others remain in detention, some serving long prison terms, for similar offenses. There were reports of imprisonment and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism, and the death of prisoners; at least two major monasteries were closed for part of the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Government continues to make a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibet, by urging central government and local authorities to respect religious freedom in Tibet, by protesting credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination, by discussing cases with the authorities, and by requesting information about specific incidents.

Section I. Government Policies on Freedom of Religion

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups. The Government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibet. Although the authorities permit some traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, those activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent, such as religious activities that are perceived as advocating Tibetan independence, including displaying the Dalai Lama's picture, or any form of separatism (which is described as "splittist"), are not tolerated and are promptly and forcibly suppressed.

The Government continued its harsh rhetorical campaign against the Dalai Lama, the most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism, and his leadership of a "government-in-exile". The official press continued to criticize vehemently the "Dalai clique" and, in an attempt to undermine the credibility of his religious authority, repeatedly described the Dalai Lama as a "criminal" who was determined to split China. Both central government and local officials often insist that dialog with the Dalai Lama is essentially impossible and claim that his actions belie his repeated public assurances that he does not advocate independence for Tibet. Nonetheless, the Government asserts that the door to dialog and negotiation is open as long as the Dalai Lama publicly affirms that Tibet is an inseparable part of China and that Taiwan is a province of China.

The Government claims that since the end of the Cultural Revolution, it has contributed sums in excess of \$40 million (300 to 400 million rmb) toward the restoration of tens of thousands of Buddhist sites, which were destroyed before and during that period. The Government funding of restoration efforts ostensibly was done to support the practice of religion, but also was done in part to promote the development of tourism in Tibet. Most recent restoration efforts are funded privately; Samye monastery near Lhasa airport is the only large site currently known to be enjoying government-funded restoration efforts.

Religious Demography

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism to some degree. Many ethnic Tibetan government officials and Communist Party members practice Buddhism. Chinese officials state that Tibet has more than 46,300 Buddhist monks and nuns and approximately 1,787 monasteries, temples, and religious sites. Officials have used these same figures for

several years, though there are credible reports that the numbers of monks and nuns have dropped at many sites, especially since the beginning of the "patriotic education" campaign, which has resulted in the expulsion from monasteries and nunneries of many monks and nuns who refused to denounce the Dalai Lama or who were found to be "politically unqualified" to be monks or nuns. The numbers represent only the Tibet Autonomous Region; thousands of monks and nuns live in other Tibetan areas of China, including parts of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai Provinces.

While officials state that there is no Falun Gong activity in the TAR, reports indicate that there are small numbers of practitioners of Falun Gong present in the region, among the ethnic Han population. There were reports that a few practitioners of Falun Gong have been detained in Tibet since Falun Gong was banned in July 1999.

Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Buddhist monasteries and proindependence activism are closely associated in Tibet, and the Government has moved to curb the proliferation of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, which it charges are a drain on local resources and a conduit for political infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. The Government states there are no limits on the number of monks in major monasteries and that each monastery's democratic management committee decides on its own how many monks the monastery can support. However, these committees are government-controlled; and in practice, the Government generally imposes strict limits on the number of monks in major monasteries. The Government has the right to disapprove any individual's application to take up religious orders; however, these restrictions are not always enforced.

Monasteries continue to house and train young monks. Although by regulation monks are prohibited from joining a monastery prior to the age of 18, many younger boys in fact continue the tradition of entering monastic life. However, many young novices, who traditionally served as attendants to older monks while receiving a basic monastic education and awaiting formal ordination, have been expelled from monasteries in recent years for being underage; the fact that these novices were not regular members of the monasteries has allowed authorities to deny that there has been a significant decline in the numbers of monks.

The Government continued to oversee the daily operations of major monasteries. The Government, which does not contribute to monasteries' operational funds, retains management control of the monasteries through the government-controlled democratic management committees and the local religious affairs bureaus. During 1999 the Tibet Autonomous Region Religious Affairs Bureau confirmed that all RAB officers are members of the Communist Party, and that Party members are required to be atheists; however, it is not possible to confirm that members of the local RAB's are atheists. Regulations restrict leadership of management committees of monasteries to "patriotic and devoted" monks and nuns and specify that the Government must approve all members of the committees. At some major monasteries, government officials also sit on the committees. Despite these government efforts to control the Buddhist clergy and monasteries, antigovernment sentiment remains strong.

In January 2000, officials closed the Tsurphu monastery (the home of the Karmapa, the highest ranking lama of Tibetan Buddhism's Karma Kargyu school) to visitors after the Karmapa's flight to India. Many other persons, including lay persons, were questioned in connection with the Karmapa's escape. There were reports that several high ranking TAR officials were called to Beijing after the escape to account for their actions. According to the Tibet Information Network (TIN), authorities replaced monks on the monastic management committee at Tsurphu after the Karmapa's escape, while other monks were admonished to improve their "political attitudes" or face further "patriotic education" sessions. Officials and monks at the monastery reportedly were under investigation by the authorities. The dramatic departure of the Karmapa added to tensions and increased the authorities' efforts to control monastic activity in the TAR. Consequently, it has also made the authorities pay more attention to illegal border crossings. There were reports that in May 2000, as many as 50 Tibetan students returning to Tibet from India were arrested at

the Nepal-China border. The TIN reported that the Reting Monastery near Lhasa was closed to visitors in May 2000 after the arrest of eight monks for protesting the authorities' selection of 2-year-old Sonam Phuntsog in January 2000 as the seventh reincarnation of the Reting Rinpoche. The TIN also reported that the Taglung Drag monastery in Lhasa municipality was threatened with closure and its monks with expulsion if they refused to denounce the Dalai Lama after monks from the monastery shouted pro-independence slogans in two separate incidents in March and August 1999. According to TIN, "patriotic education" activities were increased, and 16 of 24 monks reportedly left the monastery in September 1999 rather than denounce the Dalai Lama.

Agya Rinpoche, former Abbott of Kumbum monastery, and a senior Tibetan religious leader and official at the Deputy Minister level, left the country in November 1998. In a hearing held in March 2000 organized by the Commission on International Religious Freedom, he stated that his reasons for leaving Tibet were that he was forced to denounce the Dalai Lama and his religion and that the Government demanded a heightened role for him in legitimizing Gyaltzen Norbu, the boy recognized by the Government as the Panchen Lama.

The Government continued its "patriotic education" campaign aimed at enforcing compliance with government regulations and either cowing or weeding out monks and nuns who refuse to adopt the Party line and remain sympathetic to the Dalai Lama (the leading religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism). The "patriotic education" campaign also is intended to increase the Government's control over the Tibetan Buddhist establishment. The campaigns, which have been largely unsuccessful in changing Tibetans' attitudes, are aimed at controlling the monasteries and expelling supporters of the Dalai Lama. The campaigns require monks to be "patriotic" and sign a declaration agreeing to reject independence for Tibet; reject Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama; reject and denounce the Dalai Lama; recognize the unity of China and Tibet; and not listen to the Voice of America. According to some reports, monks who refused to sign were expelled from their monasteries and were not permitted to return home to work. Others were forced to leave their monasteries after failing to pass exams associated with the campaigns, and still others left "voluntarily" rather than denounce the Dalai Lama. Government "work teams" remain in some monasteries and conduct classes that monks are required to attend on a regular basis. Topics include relations between Tibetans and Han Chinese, Tibet's historical status as a part of China, and the role of the Dalai Lama in attempting to "split" the country. Portraits of Gyaltzen Norbu, the boy selected by the Government to be the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, were on prominent display in some monasteries, as were sets of rules governing religious activity. The Government still banned pictures of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama. There has been intense resistance to the campaigns. Both monks and lay Buddhists deeply resented the Government's efforts. The campaign has disrupted religious activities severely in many monasteries and prompted monks and nuns to flee to India. Approximately 3,000 Tibetans enter Nepal each year to escape conditions in Tibet, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees; one-third of these refugees claim that they left because of the "patriotic reeducation" campaigns.

The Government approved the selection of 2-year-old Sonam Phuntsog on January 16, 2000 as the seventh reincarnation of the Reting Rinpoche. A Tibetan government official stated that officials supervising religion should ensure that the boy "loves the Communist Party of China, the Socialist country, and Tibetan Buddhism" and that he would help to "preserve the unity of the Chinese nation." The Dalai Lama, who normally must approve the selection of important religious figures such as the Reting Rinpoche, did not recognize this choice; many of the monks at Reting monastery reportedly did not accept the child as the Reting Rinpoche.

The Government continued to insist that the boy it selected in 1995 is the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation. The authorities tightly control all aspects of his life, and he has appeared publicly in Beijing only on rare occasions. The Panchen Lama is Tibetan Buddhism's second most prominent figure, after the Dalai Lama. His public appearances were marked by a heavy security presence. At all other times, the authorities strictly limit

access to the boy.

The ban on the public display of photographs of the Dalai Lama continued, and such pictures were not readily available except through illegal means. Some monasteries and many individuals displayed them privately, but in the spring of 2000 Lhasa area neighborhood committees began sending teams to the homes of ordinary citizens to confiscate books about and pictures of the Dalai Lama. This restriction is in effect in Tibetan areas outside the TAR. Although a few shops still quietly sell his photograph, outside the TAR the vast majority of monasteries no longer display his photo.

Some 1,000 religious figures hold positions in local people's congresses and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. However, the Government continues to insist that Communist Party members and government employees adhere to the Party's code of atheism. During the period covered by this report, in Lhasa and other areas the authorities increased restrictions on religious activities, prohibiting government and Communist Party officials from going into monasteries, visiting the Jokhang temple, having altars in their homes, participating in religious activities during the Tibetan New Year, or placing new prayer flags on their roofs (a traditional practice during the Tibetan New Year). There were also reports during the spring of 2000 that some government employees were forbidden to make donations to monks and nuns in Lhasa. In some areas, private citizens also were prohibited from engaging in traditional New Year's activities such as placing prayer flags on the top of Bumpari, a mountain near Lhasa, burning incense, and making the traditional "lingkor" (pilgrimage circuit around the sacred sites of Lhasa) during the festival of Sagadawa in June 2000. Government employees reportedly were threatened with dismissal if they made the "lingkor." According to credible reports, there were instances in which the authorities threatened to terminate the employment of Tibetan government employees who sent their children to receive a religious education in India, and in which authorities searched the homes of government workers for religious objects or pictures of the Dalai Lama.

Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom

Tibetan Buddhism came under additional attack during the period covered by this report. In August 1999, according to an Amnesty International report, two monks from the Taglung Drag monastery were detained as part of a protest involving monks and nuns after shouting proindependence slogans during a cultural performance held in conjunction with the National Minority Games. In late December 1999, 14-year-old Ugyen Trinley Dorje, recognized by both the Government and the Dalai Lama as the Karmapa, left Tibet secretly and fled to India, reportedly to seek religious education. He stated that he left because of controls on his movements and the refusal either to allow him to go to India to be trained by his spiritual mentor or to allow his mentor to come to him. The Karmapa, who is the third most well respected and influential religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism, arrived in India in early January, 2000. Shortly after his departure, the seat of the Karmapa, the Tsurphu monastery, was raided. Authorities arrested at least two persons from the monastery. There was also a Tibet Information Network report that the Karmapa's parents were placed under surveillance. Government officials denied that there were any arrests at the Tsurphu monastery or that the Karmapa's parents have faced restrictions of any kind.

There were numerous arrests of monks charged with distributing or possessing pictures of the Dalai Lama or with having links to exile groups; some of these reports came from areas outside of the TAR. In a Tibetan area of Sichuan province, at least five monks were arrested over the summer and fall of 1999 for engaging in such activities. According to TIN, in July 1999, new restrictions were imposed by the authorities to prevent celebration of the Dalai Lama's birthday. Reports indicate that Tibetans were forbidden to hold traditional incense-burning ceremonies anywhere in Lhasa, and that all places of worship were closed. Authorities also detained three monks on October 1, 1999 after a peaceful protest near the Potala palace in Lhasa.

A foreign nongovernmental organization reported in June 2000 that Tashi Rabten, a monk at Thenthok monastery, died on May 1, 2000, after falling from a third floor window after

interrogation by government officials. He allegedly protested the removal of the Dalai Lama's photographs during a raid of the monastery. Three other monks who also protested the removal of the photos allegedly were beaten severely.

In July 1999, Phuntsok Legmon, age 16, and Namdrol, age 21, two monks who had been detained and reportedly had been beaten severely the previous March after demonstrating in Barkhor Square in Lhasa, were sentenced to 3 and 4 years respectively in Drapchi prison.

A large number of monks and nuns have been detained and/or imprisoned. A number of individual such cases were cited by the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture in his report to the 56th session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in the spring of 2000. The director of the Prison Administration Bureau told a visiting foreign delegation that there were over 100 monks and nuns imprisoned in the TAR's three prisons, of whom 90 percent were incarcerated for "endangering state security." There were reports of imprisonment and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism, and the death of prisoners; at least two major monasteries were closed for part of the period covered by this report. There are credible reports from a number of prisons that prisoners accused of political offenses who resisted political reeducation imposed by prison authorities, particularly demands to denounce the Dalai Lama and accept Gyaltsen Norbu, the boy recognized by the Government as the Panchen Lama, also were beaten. The TIN reports severe beatings of several nuns serving long prison sentences, including Ngawang Choezon and Puntsog Nyidrol. Nun Ngawang Sangdrol also was beaten severely on multiple occasions and held in solitary confinement for an extended period, according to credible reports. Her prison sentence was extended for a third time in 1998, for taking part in demonstrations in prison, to a total of 21 years. Ngawang Sangdrol's health is reportedly poor, although government officials have claimed that her health is fine. The TIN reported that Gyaye Phuntsog, a 68-year-old monk from Qinghai province, may have been deprived of food and sleep for several days during his interrogation, prior to his release on medical parole during the summer of 1999. Several sources report that he is now unable to walk without the use of crutches.

Prisoners have resisted political reeducation imposed by prison authorities, particularly demands to denounce the Dalai Lama and accept the Panchen Lama appointed by the Government. According to the TIN, punishments meted out to uncooperative prisoner leaders have resulted in hunger strikes among female prisoners on at least two occasions at Drapchi prison. Officials also resort to lengthening periods of solitary confinement to isolate demonstrators.

The Government continued to hold Gendun Choekyi Nyima, who the Dalai Lama recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama, along with his family. Government officials have claimed that the boy is being held for his own protection and that he lives in Tibet and attends classes as a "normal schoolboy." The location of Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his family remains unknown, and all requests from the international community for access to the boy to confirm his whereabouts and his wellbeing have been refused. The Government denied press reports in November 1999 that Gendun Choekyi Nyima died and was cremated secretly; however, the Government continued to refuse international observers access to the boy. The majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama; refugee monks in January 2000 told a foreign official that they believe that virtually all Tibetans hold this view. Tibetan monks have claimed that they were forced to sign statements pledging allegiance to the boy the Government selected as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. The Communist Party also urged its members to support the "official" Panchen Lama, and the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party committees at both the regional and city levels had pictures of the boy printed for use in public and private religious displays.

According to credible reports, Chadrel Rinpoche, who was accused by the Government of betraying state secrets while helping the Dalai Lama choose the incarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama, has been held in a secret compound of a Sichuan prison where he has been separated from other prisoners, denied all outside contacts, and restricted to his cell since his 1997 sentence to 6 years' imprisonment after a trial that was closed to the public. The

Government told a visiting foreign delegation that he is "fine physically."

The Chinese Government strictly controls access to and information about Tibet, and it is difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations; however, repression of religious freedom continued, and the Government's record of respect for religious freedom deteriorated during the period covered by this report.

During the period covered by this report, many foreign groups, including NGO's and tourists, reported increasing restrictions on movements. Two NGO's, Medecins Sans Frontieres and the Tibet Heritage Fund, were threatened with expulsion. Restrictions on travel also were reported during the period covered by this report. The Government tightly controlled visits by foreign officials and official foreign visitors had few opportunities to meet local Tibetans not previously approved by the local authorities.

Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section II. Societal Attitudes

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism. Although the Christian population in Tibet is extremely small, there is societal pressure aimed at converts, some of whom reportedly have been disinherited by their families.

Section III. U.S. Government Policy

The Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the Consulate General in Chengdu are making a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibet. In regular exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, diplomatic personnel consistently urge both central government and local authorities to respect religious freedom in Tibet. Embassy officials protest and seek further information on cases whenever there are credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination. Diplomatic personnel stationed in the country also regularly travel to Tibet to monitor conditions, including the status of religious freedom. However, the Special Coordinator for Tibet and a member of her staff were denied visas to travel to Tibet during the period covered by this report. U.S. officials maintain contacts with a wide spectrum of religious figures, and the Department of State's nongovernmental contacts include experts on religion in Tibet and religious groups in the United States. The Embassy, including the Ambassador and other senior officers, raised with government officials the cases of religious prisoners and reports of religious persecution. Senior embassy officials meet regularly with the head of the Religious Affairs Bureau and raised cases during those discussions. Cases raised by the Embassy include those of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, Abbot Chadrel Rinpoche, Ngawang Sangdrol, and other Tibetan monks and nuns. Other embassy officers raised specific cases in meetings with officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau and the United Front Work Department.

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