

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU) 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

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

The constitution states that Chinese citizens enjoy “freedom of religious belief” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities.” The government applies this term in a manner that does not meet international human rights standards for freedom of religion and routinely enforces other laws that restrict religious freedom. The constitution also proclaims the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. However, only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Protestant) are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services. The government’s respect for religious freedom declined during the year, particularly in Tibetan areas and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

The government emphasized state control over religion and restricted the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents when these were perceived, even potentially, to threaten state or Chinese Communist Party (CCP) interests, including social stability. Local authorities often pressured unaffiliated religious believers to affiliate with patriotic associations and used a variety of means, including administrative detention, to punish members of unregistered religious or spiritual groups. In some parts of the country, however, local authorities tacitly approved of or did not interfere with the activities of unregistered groups. In February the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) and five other organs jointly published an opinion supporting religious organizations’ involvement in disaster relief and social service activities, ostensibly opening new avenues for faith-based organizations to provide aid to the public.

There were reports of societal and employment discrimination based on religious affiliation, ethnicity, belief, or practice. Both Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists reported increased societal discrimination, especially around sensitive periods.

The Department of State, the embassy, and consulates general in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Wuhan have repeatedly and publicly expressed concerns and pressed for the expansion of religious freedom in China. U.S. officials consistently urged the government to adhere to internationally

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

recognized rights of religious freedom, protested abuses of religious freedom, acknowledged positive trends, and met with members of religious communities, including those being persecuted for their beliefs. The embassy protested the imprisonment of individuals on charges related to their religious practices and other abuses of religious freedom. The Department of State also brought religious leaders and scholars to the United States to deepen their understanding of the role of religion in American society. Since 1999 the secretary of state has designated the country as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. In August 2011, the secretary of state redesignated the country as a CPC.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to Bureau of Statistics information as of November 1, 2010, the population of mainland China is 1,339,725,000. In its report to the United Nations Human Rights Council during its Universal Periodic Review in February 2009, the government stated that there were “more than 100 million followers of different religious faiths and the religious population is steadily increasing.” However, accurate estimates of the numbers of religious believers vary widely depending on the source. For example, a 2007 survey conducted by East China Normal University states that 31.4 percent of citizens aged 16 and over, or 300 million people, are religious believers. The same survey estimates that there are 200 million Buddhists, Taoists, or worshippers of folk gods, although accurate estimates are difficult to make because many adherents practice exclusively at home.

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

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

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

to 2010 Pew Research Center estimates, there are 67 million Protestant Christians, of whom 23 million are affiliated with the TSPM.

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

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

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

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution states that Chinese citizens have “freedom of religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities,” a term applied in a manner that falls well short of international human rights standards for freedom of religion. The constitution does not define “normal.”

The government has signed, but not ratified, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provides all individuals the right to “adopt a religion or belief” of choice and manifest belief through “worship, observance, and practice.” The constitution provides for the right to hold or not hold a religious belief and states that state organs, public organizations, and individuals may not discriminate against citizens “who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion.” It is not possible to take legal action against the government on the basis of the religious freedom protections afforded by the constitution. Criminal law allows the state to sentence government officials to up to two years in prison if they violate religious freedom. There were no reported cases of such prosecutions during the year.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

CCP members are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. Members who belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion. The vast majority of public office holders are CCP members.

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

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

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

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

The 1998 Religious Affairs Regulations and 2005 Regulations on Social Organizations allow official patriotic religious associations to engage in activities such as building places of worship, training religious leaders, publishing literature, and providing social services to local communities. The CCP's United Front Work Department, SARA, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs provide policy guidance and supervision on the implementation of these regulations. Most leaders of official government religious organizations serve in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a CCP-led body that provides advice to the central government from business leaders, academics, and other segments of society.

Since 2005 SARA has acknowledged, through a policy posted on its Web site, that family and friends have the right to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study, without registering with the government. However, authorities regularly harass and detain small groups that meet for religious purposes in homes and other locations.

On March 1, 2010, regulations issued by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange went into effect, outlining requirements under which all domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including religious organizations, may be permitted to receive donations in foreign currency. The regulation requires documented approval by SARA of donations from foreign sources to domestic religious groups of over one million RMB (\$152,997).

The government subsidizes the construction of state-sanctioned places of worship and religious schools.

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

The government and the Holy See have not established diplomatic relations, and the Vatican has no representative in the country. The CPA does not recognize the authority of the Holy See to appoint bishops; approximately 40 Catholic bishops remain independent of the CPA and operate unofficially. The CPA has allowed the Vatican discreet input into selecting some bishops, and an estimated 90 percent of CPA bishops have reconciled with the Vatican. Nevertheless, in some locations

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

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

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

The government allows social service work by registered religious groups, including Catholic, Buddhist, and Protestant organizations.

In February the State Administration of Religious Affairs, the United Front Work Department, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and the Taxation Bureau jointly published an opinion supporting religious organizations' involvement in disaster relief and social service activities. The opinion also states that overseas donations received by religious organizations are tax deductible or qualify for tax exemptions if the funds are used for charitable activities.

Under Article 33 of the Regulations on Religious Affairs, if a religious structure is to be demolished or relocated because of city planning or construction of key projects, the party responsible for demolishing the structure should consult with the religious affairs bureau and the religious group using the structure. If all parties agree to the demolition, the party conducting the demolition should agree to rebuild the structure or provide compensation equal to the appraised market value of the structure. In some cases, officials do not hold developers accountable to these regulations or collude with them in their demolition plans.

Registered religious organizations are allowed to compile and print religious materials for internal use. To distribute religious materials publicly, an organization must follow national printing regulations, which restrict the publication and distribution of literature with religious content. The government limits distribution of Bibles to TSPM/Chinese Christian Council entities such as

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

churches, church bookshops, and seminaries. Individuals cannot order Bibles directly from publishing houses. Members of unregistered churches report that the supply and distribution of Bibles are inadequate, particularly in rural locations. There are approximately 600 Christian titles legally in circulation. According to a foreign Christian source, in the last 10 years, an estimated 200 Christian bookstores and nine domestic Christian publishers have opened in the country.

Under the Regulations on Religious Affairs and other regulations on publishing, religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles and Qurans, may be confiscated and unauthorized publishing houses closed. There were reports that XUAR regulations banned Uighur-language editions of the Bible.

In 2005 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that parents were permitted to instruct children under the age of 18 in religious beliefs and children may participate in religious activities. However, officials in the XUAR also stated in 2005 that minors must complete nine years of compulsory education before they can receive religious education. The Xinjiang Implementing Measures on the Law on the Protection of Minors imposes penalties on adults who “force” minors to participate in religious activities. The teaching of atheism in schools is allowed.

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

Some religious adherents oppose the state’s family planning policy for reasons of religious belief and practice. The country still maintains strict birth limitation policies. (See section 1.f. of the Country Report on Human Rights Practices for China, available at www.state.gov.)

Foreign residents who belong to religious groups not officially recognized by the government are generally permitted to practice their religions. The constitution states that official government religious bodies are not “subject to any foreign domination.” According to the Rules for the Implementation of the Provisions on the Administration of Religious Activities of Aliens within the Territory of the People’s Republic of China, foreigners may not proselytize, conduct religious activities at unregistered venues, or conduct religious activities with local citizens at temporary religious venues. A 2011 Central Committee of the Communist Party directive to universities provides guidance on how to prevent proselytizing among university students by foreigners.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

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

According to the law, criminals have the right to believe in a religion and maintain their original religious beliefs while in custody. In practice, some prisoners and detainees of faith were told to recant their beliefs.

In October the government passed legislation banning institutions from performing involuntary mental health examinations and inpatient treatment except in cases in which patients express an intent to harm themselves or others. Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law, passed in March, include a provision for appealing compulsory medical treatment decisions. Some critics maintain that the law still does not provide meaningful legal protections for Falun Gong practitioners, underground religious adherents, and others sent to psychiatric facilities for political reasons.

The government does not observe any religious holidays as national holidays.

Government Practices

There were reports of abuses of religious freedom, including religious prisoners and detainees. The government's respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom fell well short of internationally recognized standards.

During the year religious affairs officials and security organs scrutinized and restricted the religious activities of registered and unregistered religious and spiritual groups. The government harassed, detained, arrested, or sentenced to prison a number of religious adherents for activities reported to be related to their religious beliefs and practice. These activities included assembling for religious worship, expressing religious beliefs in public and in private, and publishing religious texts.

In parts of the country, local authorities tacitly approved of or did not interfere with the activities of unregistered groups. Guangdong officials, for example, increasingly allowed unregistered places of worship to hold services provided that they remained small in scale and did not disrupt social stability. In other areas, local officials punished the same activities by restricting activities and meetings, confiscating and destroying property, physically assaulting and injuring

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

participants, or imprisoning leaders and worshippers. In some parts of the country, authorities charged religious believers not affiliated with a patriotic religious association with various crimes, including “illegal religious activities” or “disrupting social stability.” Local authorities often pressured unaffiliated religious believers to affiliate with patriotic associations and used administrative detention, including confinement and abuse at Reeducation Through Labor (RTL) camps, to punish members of unregistered religious or spiritual groups.

Over the course of the year, the government’s repression of religious freedom remained severe in the XUAR and other Tibetan areas, particularly during “sensitive periods.”

Official tolerance for groups associated with Buddhism, except for Tibetan Buddhism, and Taoism, was greater than that for groups associated with other religions. The government continued to restrict the growth of unregistered Protestant church networks and cross-congregational affiliations.

According to *Legal Daily*, the MPS directly administered 24 high-security psychiatric hospitals for the criminally insane (also known as *ankang* facilities). Unregistered religious believers and Falun Gong adherents were among those reported to be held solely for political or religious reasons in these institutions, along with mentally ill patients. Regulations for committing a person to an *ankang* facility were not clear, and detainees or their families were afforded few formal mechanisms for effectively challenging public security officials’ determinations of mental illness or the administrative sentencing of individuals to *ankang* facilities. Some patients in these hospitals reportedly were given medicine against their will and sometimes forcibly subjected to electric shock treatment.

It remained difficult to confirm some aspects of reported abuses of Falun Gong adherents. International Falun Gong-affiliated nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international media reported that detentions of Falun Gong practitioners continued to increase around sensitive dates. Authorities reportedly instructed some neighborhood communities to report Falun Gong members to officials and offered monetary rewards to citizens who informed on Falun Gong practitioners. Falun Gong-affiliated NGOs alleged that detained practitioners were subjected to various methods of physical and psychological coercion in attempts to force them to deny their belief in Falun Gong. Falun Gong sources estimated that since 1999, at least 6,000 Falun Gong practitioners had been sentenced to prison. Falun Gong adherents also have been subjected to administrative sentences of up

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

to three years in RTL camps. Reports from overseas Falun Gong-affiliated advocacy groups estimated that thousands of adherents in the country had been sentenced to RTL. The media reported allegations of Falun Gong practitioners held without trial at the Masanjia Labor Camp in Liaoning Province.

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

In June 11-year-old Uighur Muslim Mirzahid Amanullah Shahyari died while in the custody of Korla police following a raid on an unregistered religious school in Nurbagh Township, Shayar County, in Aksu Prefecture. Authorities forced his mother to bury his body, which showed signs of torture, without the remains undergoing Islamic burial rites.

Wang Yonghang, a lawyer who openly advocated for religious freedom and defended Falun Gong practitioners, was subjected to torture in prison, where he has been serving a seven-year sentence since 2009 for “using a cult to undermine implementation of the law.” As of June, he was reportedly suffering from multiple ailments, including tuberculosis, internal fluid buildup, and paralysis below the waist.

In April 2011 authorities forced two unregistered churches in Guangzhou to close and detained their leaders after they unsuccessfully tried to hold Easter services, according to foreign media. However, authorities indicated that members of the congregations could continue to meet in smaller groups of no more than 10. The detained leaders have since been released but officials continue to impose these restrictions.

In April police in Ye County, Henan Province, detained seven house church Christians and later accused them of being members of the banned group, “the Shouters,” a charge they denied. In October the Ye County Procuratorate indicted them on charges of “using a cult meeting to interfere with law enforcement.”

In May authorities in Shunle County, Kashgar Prefecture, sentenced Uighur Muslim Sidik Kurban to 15 years in jail and five years’ deprivation of political rights for overseeing illegal home-based religious schools throughout the region. In

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

June authorities in Hotan Prefecture sentenced Uighur Muslim Hebibullah Ibrahim to 10 years for selling “illegal religious materials.”

In June police raided an unsanctioned Islamic religious school in Hotan. Twelve children, two school staff, and three policemen reportedly were injured in the raid. Police reportedly arrested 47 people in a subsequent crackdown following the raid on accusations of owning illegal publications and disturbing social stability.

Ablikim Abduyeyim, son of Uighur Muslim activist Rebiya Kadeer, remained in prison at year’s end. Alim Abdureyim, another son of Rebiya Kadeer, was released in December, but his movements are reportedly restricted and he is not allowed to leave Urumqi.

In July officials consecrated Joseph Yue Fusheng as a bishop in Harbin without Vatican approval. Government officials ordered seven priests in Heilongjiang Province who disagreed with the ordination to leave their parishes. Separately in Shanghai, authorities consecrated Thaddeus Ma Daqin as an auxiliary bishop with Vatican and CPA approval. Following the consecration, Ma announced that he was resigning from the CPA to focus on his religious duties. Officials detained him following the service and reportedly held him at Sheshan Catholic Seminary. His subsequent whereabouts remained unclear at year’s end, but various sources said he remained under detention by government security officials. All autumn classes at the seminary were cancelled. Catholic news sources reported that in December, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Association revoked his position as bishop, leaving 95-year-old Shanghai Bishop Alyosius Jin, the leader of one of China’s most important dioceses, without an approved successor. Some unofficial Catholic clergy remained in detention, in particular in Hebei Province. Harassment of unregistered bishops and priests continued, including government surveillance and repeated short detentions.

In July 2011 Guangzhou’s Haizhu District People’s Court sentenced lawyer Zhu Yubiao to two years’ imprisonment for possessing Falun Gong books and DVDs, according to online reporting. Zhu, who previously handled Falun Gong cases, had been held in police custody since August 2010 on charges of “using a cult to undermine the law.” Although Zhu was scheduled to be released in August, authorities transferred him to Sanshui Law School, where Falun Gong practitioners reportedly attend mandatory study sessions.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

In September authorities in Inner Mongolia sentenced Sun Yuefen and Ren Zhimin to two years in an RTL camp after they offered free medical services and evangelized to patients. Other Christian participants in the activities also faced detention.

In October authorities detained Falun Gong practitioner Chen Linfen in Fujian's Zhangzhou No. 1 Detention Center after three police and one staff member of the local Residence Committee ransacked her house and confiscated Falun Gong books, according to online accounts.

In November Beijing police arrested Zhang Fengying during a grocery shopping trip after she spoke to local residents about the benefits of practicing Falun Gong, according to her daughter. Zhang was later charged with "using an evil cult" to undermine law enforcement.

There was no new information about the November 2011 arrest of Falun Gong practitioner Tan Kaiqing or the August 2011 arrests of Liu Shaozai and Mai Weilian, also Falun Gong practitioners.

In December police in at least nine provinces arrested approximately 1000 adherents of the Church of the Almighty God, also known as Eastern Lightning, for aggressively proselytizing and manipulating fear of an apocalypse on December 21 to further their aims. The government, which has labeled the millenarian sect an "evil cult," launched a media campaign against its members for rumor mongering and swindling people.

On December 8, overseas media reported that police seized Christian missionary Cao Nan and 10 others while Cao was preaching in Shenzhen's Lizhi Park during new Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's visit to the city. One week later, police seized and then detained Cao for 13 days after he returned to the park to preach.

At year's end, Alimujiang Yimiti, the Uighur leader of an unregistered Christian church, continued to serve a 15-year sentence for "illegally providing state secrets or intelligence to foreign entities." In August a Beijing-based attorney attempted to meet with him, but was ultimately denied access. He was sentenced in December 2009 by the Kashgar Prefecture Intermediate People's Court; his appeal was denied in March 2010.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

At year's end, Buddhist Zen Master Wu Zeheng continued to face harassment, close monitoring, and restrictions on his movement by authorities in Guangdong Province's Zhuhai City, according to overseas media and religious groups.

In December Shanghai security officials raided an unofficial Protestant church and detained a South Korean pastor, threatening him with deportation.

Security officials frequently interrupted outdoor services of the unregistered Shouwang church in Beijing and temporarily detained members attending those services. Authorities restricted the freedom of movement of Shouwang's head pastor and his family and several other leaders during the year. The church continued to be unable to access a property it purchased for the purpose of holding religious services; at various times the church's Web site was blocked.

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

Officials continued to hold anti-cult education sessions and propaganda campaigns. In Wugang City, Hunan Province, local government officials held over 30 events related to "evil cults" and disseminated publications during Chinese New Year, warning against Falun Gong and house churches. Officials required families to sign statements guaranteeing that they would not take part in the "evil cult" activities involving Falun Gong and house churches as a prerequisite for registering their children for school.

The government reportedly sought the forcible return of ethnic Uighurs living outside the country and continued to prosecute those who had been forcibly returned. Media reports indicate that in January, China sentenced two Uighurs who had been forcibly returned from Cambodia in December 2009 to life in prison.

Some individuals and groups affiliated with religious communities claimed that the government took their land without adequate compensation in accordance with the Religious Affairs Regulations. In February local officials authorized the demolition of the Xin'an Three-Self Church in Huaibei city, Anhui Province. Officials later attempted to coerce church leaders into signing settlement documents agreeing to the demolition.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

Pressure from authorities on large unregistered churches in Guangdong Province continued. In March Guangzhou police cut off electricity and the water supply to the 1,000-member Guangfu House Church on the grounds that the recently purchased Baiyun District facility was used for illegal gatherings, according to overseas media. Police also summoned Guangfu's pastor for questioning. The congregation was subsequently forced to meet in hotels that sometimes canceled the reserved space because of police pressure.

In June Ministry of State Security officials shut down a training program in Guangdong's Foshan Municipality that was run by the Chinese Theological Society, a group of Hong Kong theological educators, according to online accounts.

In Guangdong's Dongguan Municipality, police and religious authorities shut down house churches in the city's Huangjiang, Tangxia, and Gaobu townships in August, according to overseas media, prompting house church ministers to submit an application for administrative review requesting that municipal government officials repeal the local Religious Affairs Bureau decision.

In the XUAR, the government's concerns over "separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism" contributed to repressive restrictions on religious practices of Uighur Muslims. Authorities often failed to distinguish between peaceful religious practice and criminal or terrorist activities. It remained difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted those seeking political goals, the right to worship, or criminal acts. Uighur sources reported increased pressure in official campaigns to dissuade women from wearing religious clothing and men from wearing beards. Uighur sources also reported that recipients of public welfare stipends were asked to sign a pledge not to cover their faces for religious reasons. Hui Muslims in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces engaged in religious practice with less government interference than did Uighurs.

Media reported that Muslims could apply online or through local official Islamic associations to participate in the Hajj. According to media reports in the country, approximately 13,800 Muslim citizens participated in the Hajj in the fall, flown on 41 specially arranged Hajj charter flights, although this number included Islamic association and security officials sent to monitor Muslim citizens and prevent unauthorized pilgrimages. Uighur Muslims separately reported difficulties taking

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

part in state-sanctioned Hajj travel due to the inability to obtain travel documents in a timely manner, difficulties in meeting criteria required for participation in the official Hajj program run by the Islamic Association of China, and quotas on the number of travelers from the country imposed by Saudi Arabia. The government took measures to limit the ability of Uighur Muslims to make private Hajj pilgrimages outside of the government-organized program.

In February Chinese authorities launched a week-long campaign to prevent illegal religious activities through the use of “patriotic education.”

In July and August authorities in the XUAR imposed stricter controls on religious practices during Ramadan. The government barred teachers, professors, civil servants, and Communist Party members from fasting and attending religious services at mosques. Local authorities reportedly fined people for studying the Quran in unauthorized sessions, detained people for “illegal” religious activities or carrying “illegal” religious materials, and stationed security personnel in and around mosques to restrict attendance to local residents. According to Uighur social media sites, in December authorities in Yengisher County forced all of the Uighur teachers at the August First Middle School to sign letters pledging not to believe in religion or participate in religious activities.

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

Islamic schools in Yunnan Province were reluctant to accept ethnic Uighur students out of concerns that they would bring unwanted attention from government authorities and negatively impact school operations.

Tight restrictions on the exchanges of monks among Tibetan Buddhist monasteries affected the quality of Tibetan religious education. Ethnic Han who wished to study Tibetan Buddhism in Tibetan areas often were denied permission for long-term study there.

Several religious groups reported that authorities rejected their applications for registration because the groups had not affiliated with an official patriotic religious association. Respect for SARA’s policy permitting family and friends to meet at home for worship, including prayer and Bible study, without registering with the government was uneven at the provincial, county, and local levels. In various

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

areas throughout the country, local officials disrupted religious meetings in private homes, detained participants, and confiscated materials and equipment.

The government rejected repeated applications to register the Bimo shamanistic religion, practiced by many of the eight million ethnic Yi living in southwest China. This limited the Yi people's ability to preserve their religious heritage.

Officials employed a combination of persuasion, coercion, and physical abuse to pressure unofficial churches to affiliate with the TSPM.

Authorities often confiscated Bibles in raids on house churches. Customs officials continued to monitor the importation of Bibles and other religious materials. In the XUAR, government authorities at times restricted the sale of the Quran.

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

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

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

The Falun Gong also reported several incidents of the government's interference with its activities abroad. According to NGO reports, the Shen Yun Performing Arts Company, and several media outlets, government officials pressured venues and governments in a number of countries to limit the broadcast time of Falun Gong-associated radio stations and cancel or otherwise delay Shen Yun music and dance performances.

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

Although authorities required CCP members to be atheists and generally discouraged them from participating in religious activities, their attendance at

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

official church services in Guangdong Province was reportedly growing, as authorities increasingly chose to turn a blind eye to their attendance.

For information on North Korean refugees in China, please see the U.S. Department of State's *2012 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in China* and the *2012 International Religious Freedom Report on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Because religion, culture, and ethnicity are often tightly intertwined, it is difficult to categorize many incidents specifically as examples of ethnic or religious intolerance. Religious and ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims, experienced discrimination throughout the country because of both their religious beliefs and their status as ethnic minorities with distinct languages and cultures. In the XUAR, tension between Han Chinese and Uighur Muslims continued during the year. Tensions also continued among ethnic and religious groups in Tibetan areas, including Han, Hui, Tibetan Buddhists, and Tibetan Muslims.

Despite the labor law's provisions against discrimination in hiring based on religious belief, some religious believers reported that they believed their employers openly discriminated against them. Some Protestant Christians claimed they were terminated by their employers due to their religious activities. Muslims in the XUAR reported that they lost their positions and were detained by authorities for praying in their workplaces.

In November, in Zhenping County, Henan Province, a Han Chinese man reportedly lifted the veil of a Uighur Muslim girl, resulting in clashes between 1,000 Uighurs and local riot police. Police subsequently detained several of the rioters.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Department of State, the embassy in Beijing, and the consulates general in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Wuhan regularly urged government officials at the central and local levels to implement stronger protections for religious freedom. The U.S. ambassador met with members of

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

religious groups and religious freedom defenders and highlighted religious freedom in public speeches and private diplomacy with senior officials. At the same time, government pressure led some religious leaders to decline requests for meetings with U.S. government officials. The Department of State, the embassy, and the consulates general regularly called upon the government to release prisoners of conscience, including religious prisoners. The U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue, held in July, included a discussion of religious freedom.

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

Since 1999 the secretary of state has designated the country as a “Country of Particular Concern” under the IRFA for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. In August 2011, the secretary redesignated the country as a CPC and extended existing economic measures in effect against the country under the IRFA related to restrictions on exports of crime control and detection instruments and equipment (Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, P.L. 101-246).

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

TIBET 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

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

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

The government's respect for and protection of religious freedom in the TAR and other Tibetan areas deteriorated markedly, with a substantial increase in official interference in religious practice, especially in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries. Repression was severe throughout the year, but tightened further in the lead-up to and during politically sensitive and religious anniversaries and events. Official interference in the practice of Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions continued to generate profound grievances. An increasing number of Tibetans self-immolated during the year. The government routinely denigrated the Dalai Lama, whom most Tibetan Buddhists venerate as a spiritual leader, and blamed the “Dalai clique” and “other outside forces” for instigating the 83 self-immolations by Tibetan monks, nuns, and laypersons that reportedly occurred during the year. Chinese authorities often publicly associated Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with “separatism” and pro-independence activism, and characterized disagreement with religious policy as seditious behavior.

There were numerous reports of societal discrimination, including of Tibetans who encountered discrimination in employment, obtaining hotel accommodation, and in

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

business transactions, but because Tibetan Buddhists' ethnic identity is closely linked with religion, it can be difficult to categorize incidents solely as examples of either purely ethnic or religious intolerance. Many Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns reported that they wore regular civilian clothes as opposed to their monastic robes when traveling in other parts of China in order to avoid being targeted for discrimination or arbitrary police checks.

The U.S. government repeatedly urged Chinese authorities at multiple levels to respect religious freedom for all faiths and allow Tibetans to preserve, practice, teach, and develop their religious traditions. The U.S. government raised individual cases and incidents with the Chinese government. U.S. government officials urged the Chinese government to engage in constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives, as well as to address the policies that threaten Tibet's distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity and are a primary cause of grievances among Tibetans. U.S. government officials have submitted more than 10 requests for diplomatic access to the TAR since the last official U.S. visit to the area in May 2011, but none was granted. The government occasionally barred U.S. diplomatic personnel from visiting Tibetan areas for which permission was not required, particularly during anniversaries and periods Chinese authorities deemed "sensitive." In the TAR and most other Tibetan areas, the ability of U.S. diplomatic personnel to speak openly with Tibetan residents and members of the monastic community was severely restricted.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to official data from China's sixth decennial national census, conducted in November 2010, the TAR's 2,716,400 ethnic Tibetans make up 91 percent of the TAR's total population. Official census data also show ethnic Tibetans constituting 1.8 percent of the total population of Gansu Province, 24.4 percent in Qinghai Province, 2.1 percent in Sichuan Province, and 0.3 percent in Yunnan Province.

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

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

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

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

According to the State Council Information Office's 2011 White Paper "Sixty Years Since Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," the TAR has over 1,700 "venues for religious activities and about 46,000 monks and nuns." While no recent data on the number of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in other Tibetan areas of China are available, according to a 2009 article in the People's Daily (the official newspaper of the CCP), altogether in the TAR and in Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces, there are 3,000 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with 120,000 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

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

The government's 2005 White Paper on Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities states, "Organs of self-government in autonomous areas, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and relevant laws, respect and guarantee the freedom

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

of religious belief of ethnic minorities and safeguard all legal and normal religious activities of people of ethnic minorities.” Organs of self-government include governments of autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties.

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

During a January 4 official meeting on stability maintenance, TAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo announced that Party cadres and government officials would be routinely stationed at all TAR temples and monasteries to strengthen monastery management. A February 15 report in the *Global Times*, a commercially focused newspaper affiliated with the official daily of the CCP Central Committee, announced that Monastery Management Committees (MMC) headed by Party and government officials had been established in each of the TAR’s 1,787 monasteries. General monastery affairs in TAR monasteries, which in the past had been managed by Democratic Management Committees (DMCs) staffed primarily by monks from the respective monasteries, are now overseen by MMCs and Monastery Government Working Groups (also composed of governmental officials and Party members). In accordance with official guidelines for monastery management, leadership of and membership in the various committees and working groups is restricted to “politically reliable, patriotic, and devoted monks, nuns, and Party and government officials.” Government-selected monks have primary responsibility for conducting “patriotic education campaigns” at each monastery. In some cases, the government has established “official working groups” at monasteries, and religious affairs and public security officials personally lead the patriotic education.

In Tibetan areas outside the TAR, provincial, prefectural, county, and local governments have stationed CCP cadres and established police stations or security offices on the premises of or adjacent to many monasteries. Some local governments outside the TAR have adopted the MMC model of monastery management. On April 4, the government of Luhuo (Draggo) County in Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, announced that a 24-member MMC composed

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

of 13 government officials and 11 monks had been established at the restive Draggo Monastery to oversee its management directly.

As part of its ongoing public campaign to denigrate the Dalai Lama, the Chinese Government has consistently accused the “Dalai clique” and “other outside forces” of instigating Tibetan self-immolations, alleging that they are attempts to “split” China. As recently as November 16, the spokesperson for China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the self-immolations were orchestrated by the Dalai Lama group, that “China condemns self-immolation as against national laws, Buddhist teachings, and human conscience,” and that “such despicable acts should be condemned by all.” Premier Wen Jiabao expressed some sympathy for self-immolating young monks during a March 14 press conference at the close of the National People’s Congress in Beijing, saying they were “innocent,” that he was “deeply distressed by their actions,” and that China respected “the religious freedom of our Tibetan compatriots, and their religious faith is protected by the law.” He then reverted, however, to the standard rhetoric, stating that the Central Tibetan Administration in India was “a theocracy, the purpose of which is to separate Tibet and other Tibetan areas from the motherland.”

In a December 2011 article published in *Qiushi Online* (an official journal of the CCP Central Committee), Zhu Weiqun, Executive Deputy Director of the UFWD, reiterated the principle that party members “must not be allowed to have religious faith,” particularly those cadres involved in religious work. On May 24, the official *Tibet Daily* newspaper reported that the TAR CCP Discipline Inspection Commission had promulgated a circular criticizing current and retired Party members and government workers who “lack political acuity, solid ideals, and a firm belief, and who are ambivalent in their understanding and wavering in their attitude on major issues of right and wrong, especially in the anti-separatism struggle, even openly following the Dalai Lama,” and calling on Party organizations to “follow the law in strictly punishing party member-cadres who believe in religion, go abroad to worship the Dalai Lama, participate in religious activities, and have other behaviors that violate political discipline.”

As of 2007 (the most recent year for which official data are available), approximately 615 Tibetan religious figures held positions in provincial and lower-level People’s Congresses (PCs) and committees of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in the TAR. The CPPCC is a political advisory body that nominally serves to allow non-CCP delegates to participate in the administration of state affairs. Although CCP cadres are not permitted to practice

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

religion, Tibetan religious figures who hold government positions (for example, on the local NPC or CPPCC) are permitted to practice Buddhism. The government-recognized 11th Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, who is distinct from the Dalai Lama-recognized 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, is the vice president of the Buddhist Association of China and a member of the CPPCC.

Rules and regulations provide the ostensible legal basis for government control over and authoritative reinterpretation of Tibetan religious traditions. The Management Measures on Reincarnation, issued by SARA, codify government control over the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including reincarnate lamas. The regulations stipulate that city governments and higher political levels can deny the required permission for a lama to be recognized as a reincarnate, or “tulku.” Provincial-level or higher governments must approve reincarnations, while the State Council reserves the right to deny the recognition of reincarnations of high lamas, often referred to by the Chinese term “Living Buddhas,” of “especially great influence.” Regulations state that no foreign organization or individual can interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas, and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within the country. The government maintains a registry of officially recognized reincarnated lamas.

The TAR Implementation of the Religious Affairs Regulations (the “Implementing Regulations”), also issued by SARA, assert state control over all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious groups, venues, and personnel. The TAR government has the right under the Implementing Regulations to deny any individual’s application to take up religious orders. The Implementing Regulations codify the practice of controlling the movement of nuns and monks, requiring them to seek permission from county-level religious affairs officials to travel to another prefecture or county-level city within the TAR to “practice their religion,” engage in religious activities, study, or teach.

In Tibetan Buddhism, a key component of religious education is to visit different monasteries and religious sites in the region and abroad to receive specialized training from experts in particular theological traditions. The Implementing Regulations require that monks who travel across county or provincial lines for religious teaching or study must obtain permission from the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) of both the sending and receiving counties. Such restrictions sometimes also apply to monks visiting other monasteries within the same county for short-term study or teaching. Tibetan Buddhist monks say that these restrictions have resulted in a decline in the quality of monastic education.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

The Implementing Regulations also give the government formal control over the building and management of religious structures and the holding of large-scale religious gatherings, each of which requires official permission. The TAR maintains tight government control over the use of Tibetan Buddhist religious relics and maintains that the relics, as well as the religious buildings and institutions themselves, are state property.

In an attempt to counter claims that religious freedom is not protected in Tibet, the government issued a White Paper in 2011 entitled “Sixty Years Since Peaceful Liberation of Tibet,” which states that “freedom of religious belief of all ethnic groups is respected and protected in Tibet. All religions, all sects are equal in Tibet. The Living Buddha reincarnation system, unique to Tibetan Buddhism, is fully respected. People are free to learn and debate Buddhist doctrines, get ordained as monks, and practice Buddhist rites.”

The last round of talks between officials from the UFD and envoys of the Dalai Lama was held in January 2010. Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltzen, who had served as the Dalai Lama’s representatives in several rounds of talks with Chinese officials, resigned effective June 1, citing the “deteriorating situation in Tibet” and the difficulty of conducting “substantive dialogue.”

There are no national official religious holidays. However, the Shoton Festival, originally a religious festival, is celebrated as a weeklong official holiday in the TAR.

Government Practices

There were numerous and severe abuses of religious freedom, including incarceration of religious prisoners and detainees. Monasteries were increasingly forbidden to deliver traditional educational and medical services to the people of their communities, and official intimidation was used to compel acquiescence and preserve a facade of stability.

Progressively more heavy-handed measures were implemented to compel acquiescence, convey the appearance of popular support, and prevent public protest in many Tibetan areas. At various times during the year major monasteries in the TAR and other Tibetan areas were surrounded by security forces. Students, monks, laypersons, and others in many Tibetan areas were detained after calling

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

for freedom, human rights, and religious freedom, and expressing their support for the Dalai Lama and solidarity with individuals who had self-immolated. In the lead-up to the 18th Party Congress and the related central leadership transition, security measures taken by authorities across the Tibetan Plateau contributed to a further deterioration of religious freedom. Tibetan Buddhist monasteries were increasingly hindered from delivering the religious, educational, and medical services they traditionally provided to their communities, as well as from carrying out environmental protection, a traditional element of both religious and conservation practice. Continued restrictions on the exchange of monks between monasteries resulted in the reported decline of monastic educational standards. In the second half of the year, it became nearly impossible for Tibetans, particularly monks and nuns from outside the TAR, to enter the TAR, and officials expelled from TAR monasteries many monks and nuns originally from Tibetan areas outside the TAR.

Repression was severe throughout the year, but tightened further in the lead-up to and during politically and religiously sensitive anniversaries and events, such as the 15-day observance of Tibetan New Year (Losar), which started February 22; the fourth anniversary of the protests and riots in Tibetan areas that began on March 10, 2008; the observance of “Serf Emancipation Day” on March 28; the Dalai Lama’s birthday on July 6; the celebration of China’s National Day on October 11; and the 18th National Party Congress and related central leadership transition, which commenced on November 8.

Government and CCP control over the day-to-day management of monasteries further tightened, and the government exercised its authority over the approval of all reincarnations of Tibetan Buddhist lamas and the supervision of their education. Chinese authorities often publicly associated Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with “separatism” and pro-independence activism and characterized disagreement with religious policy as seditious behavior.

Tibetan monks, nuns and laypersons increasingly self-immolated, often at or near a monastery and usually resulting in death. The self-immolations, which began in February 2009, gained momentum over the course of the year, with at least 83 reported self-immolations by Tibetan Buddhist clergy and laypersons across the Tibetan Plateau. While each of the 12 individuals who self-immolated in 2011 was believed to be current or former monks or nuns, laypersons made up nearly half of those who committed the act in 2012. Six self-immolations took place in the TAR.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

More than 20 of the 83 self-immolators were affiliated with Kirti Monastery and other monasteries and nunneries located in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture (T&QAP), where many self-immolations occurred in 2011 and where repression was ongoing and particularly intense. An especially alarming surge in self-immolations took place from October through early December, when 43 Tibetan monks, nuns and laypersons reportedly self-immolated, including 18 in Gansu Province (which had previously seen only two such incidents), 16 in Qinghai Province, six in Sichuan Province, and three in the TAR. For example, Tamdin Dorje, the grandfather of the 7th Gungtung Rinpoche, an important and highly revered young reincarnate lama, self-immolated October 13 near Tsoe Gaden Choeling Monastery in Hezuo (Tsoe) County, Gannan (Kanlho) TAP, Gansu Province. On November 25, Sangay Dolma, a young nun from the Gonshul Nunnery, self-immolated outside a government building in Duohemao (Dokarmo) Township, Zeku County, Malho (Huangnan) TAP, Qinghai Province. Many of the self-immolators, including a large number of laypersons, were reported to have been clutching photos of the Dalai Lama and calling for religious freedom and the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet as they set themselves alight. The vast majority of these incidents resulted in death.

In late November, Tsering Woesser, a well-known poet and blogger based in Beijing, posted on her blog the final words of 18 Tibetan self-immolators, including those of Tenzin Khedup, a 24-year-old former monk who died after self-immolating with his friend Ngawang Norphel on June 20 in Zaduo Township, Chenduo (Tridu) County, Yushu (Yulshul) TAP, Qinghai Province. (An English-language translation was later posted by the Netherlands-based online community Global Voices.) Tenzin Khedup left behind a recording lamenting his inability to help Tibetan culture and religion, and stating that he and others chose to self-immolate "for the sake of our Tibetan race" and for the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet.

Authorities continued their crackdown on Kirti Monastery in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP, where in March 2011 up to 1,000 residents protested the violent beating by police of Kirti monk Phuntsog, the first Tibetan to commit self-immolation since 2009. Hundreds of monks were removed from the monastery, and some were forced to return to their hometowns. At least 14 current and former monks and laypersons affiliated with Kirti Monastery, including a number of teenagers, self-immolated during the year. According to Tsering Woesser, Tsultrim Gyatso, a senior monk from Detsa Monastery in Haidong (Tsoshar) TAP, Qinghai Province, died January 22 after being tortured by security officers in Gonghe

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

(Chabcha) County, Hainan (Tsolho) TAP, Qinghai Province. Tsultrim was arrested in July 2011, reportedly in connection with a 2006 trip he made to India to attend Kalachakra, a Buddhist teaching conference convened by the Dalai Lama, and his participation in a peaceful protest in March 2008.

In a number of self-immolation cases, security personnel reportedly beat, kicked, or otherwise physically abused individuals as they burned. For example, video footage obtained by the U.S. non-governmental organization (NGO) International Campaign for Tibet shows armed police kicking former Andu monk Losang Jamyang after he set himself on fire on the main street of Aba County Town, Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP, Sichuan Province on January 14. When local Tibetans gathered, police reportedly fired into the crowd, blinding one woman and injuring several others. Losang Jamyang died a few days later.

On January 23, security forces in Luhuo (Draggo) County, Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province fired at a crowd of protesters, wounding at least 32 and killing at least one – Norpa Yonten, a 49-year-old layperson – overseas media and human rights groups reported. According to some reports, the protesters were demonstrating against the arbitrary detention of Tibetans and calling for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet and for additional self-immolations if Tibetans' concerns were ignored. According to a report published by the exile Tibetan website Phayul.com, Tsering Gyaltzen, a monk from Draggo Monastery in Luhuo County, died February 9 from injuries sustained after being beaten by police who were arresting him for allegedly participating in the January 23 protest.

According to a July 16 Phayul.com report, police stopped Pema Norbu, a monk from Lhopu Monastery in Changdu (Chamdo) Prefecture, TAR, at a checkpoint en route to his hometown and beat him to death.

The overseas NGO Tibet Center for Human Rights and Democracy reported that Karwang, a monk from Nyagrong Monastery in Xinlong (Nyagrong) County, Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, died after being tortured in police custody in May or June. The police had detained him on suspicion of hanging posters calling for freedom for Tibet.

On November 6, Phayul.com reported that four monks from Draggo Monastery and the abbot of Gochen Monastery, a reincarnate lama, received prison sentences of five to seven years for their alleged participation in the January protest,

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

reportedly after months of incommunicado detention. The specific charges against them and their current whereabouts remained unknown at year's end.

The whereabouts and well-being of Kelsang Wangchuk, whom authorities beat when he self-immolated in Aba County Town, Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP, in October 2011, remained unknown.

The U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) Political Prisoner Database (PPD) recorded 595 Tibetan political prisoners imprisoned in Tibetan areas as recorded in the PPD database on March 15, 2013. The actual number of Tibetan political prisoners and detainees was believed to be much higher, but the lack of access to prisoners and prisons, as well as the dearth of reliable official statistics, made this impossible to determine. An unknown number of prisoners was held under the reeducation through labor system, to which the Public Security Bureau (PSB) can commit people for up to three years without judicial review. Of the 595 Tibetan political prisoners tracked by the CECC, 571 were detained between March 10, 2008, and December 31, 2012, and 24 were detained before the outbreak of protests in Lhasa and other Tibetan areas on March 10, 2008. Of the 571 Tibetan political prisoners who were detained on or after March 10, 2008, 270 were held in Sichuan Province, 137 in the TAR, 62 in Gansu Province, 101 in Qinghai Province, and one in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, according to PPD information. Males accounted for 86 percent of cases (492 cases), females made up 9 percent (53 cases), and gender information was unavailable for 5 percent (26 cases). Tibetan Buddhist monks, nuns, and teachers made up 54 percent (306 cases) of the 571. Sentence information available in the PPD for 150 of the 571 cases from March 10, 2008, onward showed 144 fixed-term sentences ranging in length from one to 20 years (with an average sentence of six years and eight months), and six cases in which prisoners were sentenced to life imprisonment or death with a two-year reprieve (death sentences were usually commuted to life imprisonment if a prisoner committed no new crimes). Officials were not responsive to requests for information regarding detained Tibetans.

Authorities across Tibetan areas continued to detain arbitrarily Tibetan monks and laypeople for indefinite periods of time. Several of these detentions appeared to be linked to the government's attempts to punish those suspected of being associated with self-immolations or those who refused to cooperate with official demands to hand over the remains of self-immolation victims.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

An editorial that appeared in the December 3 *Gansu Daily* noted that the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and the Ministry of Public Security had jointly issued the *Opinion on Handling Cases of Self-Immolation in Tibetan Areas According to Law*, which criminalizes various activities associated with self-immolation, including "organizing, plotting, inciting, compelling, luring, instigating, or helping others to commit self-immolation," each of which may be prosecuted as "intentional homicide." According to the *Opinion*, the motive of self-immolators is "generally to split the country," and the act itself constitutes criminal behavior, as it poses a threat to public safety and public order. The *Opinion* states that "ringleaders" will be targeted for "major punishment."

Soon thereafter, a number of friends, relatives, and associates of self-immolators across the Tibetan Plateau were detained, arrested, or sentenced. For example, on December 9, the Xinhua News Agency reported that police had detained Kirti Monastery monk Lorang Konchok and his nephew, Lorang Tsering, and accused them of instigating eight self-immolations since 2009. Phayul.com reported December 14 that Chinese officials arrested five Tibetan monks and nuns in connection with the December 9 self-immolation of 17-year-old Bhenchen Kyi, a student in Zeku (Tsekhog) County, Malho (Huangnan) TAP, Qinghai Province. The whereabouts of the five Tibetans are unknown.

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

According to contacts in Yajiang (Nyagqu) County, Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, prominent Buddhist figure Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, who is serving a life sentence in a Sichuan prison on separatism, firearms, and explosives charges that he has denied since 2002, is suffering from heart disease and circulatory problems.

According to the Dharamsala-based Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), security officials in Xiahe (Sangchu) County, Gannan (Kanlho) TAP, Gansu Province, detained Bora Monastery monks Sanggyal Gyatso, Kalsang Lodroe, Sonam, and Tashi Gyatso on March 23. Their whereabouts and the charges against them remained unknown at year's end. However, two days earlier, security officials reportedly detained 40 Bora Monastery monks after 100 Bora monks marched in front of government buildings carrying Tibetan flags and pictures of the Dalai Lama. After fellow monks assembled to demand that the 40 be released, police reportedly made the detainee

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

monks sign “personal statements” admitting their “mistakes” and then released them.

Khenpo Gyewala, abbot of the Gyegyel Zogchen Monastery and founder of a school serving local children in Zaduo (Zatoe) County, Yushu (Yushul) TAP, Qinghai Province, was sentenced April 6 to a two-year prison term on unspecified charges, according to the TCHRD. The abbot had disappeared March 8 and was held incommunicado for twenty days after students and teachers at his school protested an official prohibition of celebrating a religious festival.

The government detained, convicted, and/or sentenced a number of Kirti monastery monks throughout the year. For example, according to an October 1 Radio Free Asia (RFA) report, the government sentenced Kirti monks Lobsang Tsultrim and Lobsang Jangchup in early September to 11 and eight years’ imprisonment, respectively. The two teenagers had been detained since March in connection with their alleged involvement in the March 9 self-immolation of fellow Kirti monk Gepey.

Chinese authorities reportedly detained hundreds of Tibetans who attended an important Buddhist teaching conference in India convened by the Dalai Lama from December 31, 2011, to January 10. Detainees, many of whom had traveled to India legally with valid travel documentation, were reportedly detained as they reentered China or in the months following their return and forced to attend “political education” sessions while in detention. According to sources cited by RFA, on May 26 Chinese border officials forcibly sent back to Nepal nine Tibetan pilgrims who had attended the Kalachakra and were attempting to return to China. Chinese authorities reportedly severely beat the pilgrims and detained them for a week before handing them over to Nepalese officials. There were also continued reports that Chinese border security forces detained Tibetans seeking to cross the border from Tibet to Nepal for religious purposes. Such detentions reportedly lasted as long as several months and sometimes took place without formal charges.

There have been no updates to the case of Christian house church persecution that occurred in early October 2011 in Lhasa, TAR, when Lhasa authorities reportedly detained 11 members of a Protestant house church for nearly a month, insulted and beat church members, and confiscated Tibetan-language Bibles.

According to various reports, between 500 and “several thousand” students at a medical college in Gonghe (Chabcha) County, Hainan TAP, Qinghai Province,

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

staged a demonstration on November 26, reportedly protesting a booklet that had been distributed at the college that contained inflammatory statements about self-immolation, the Dalai Lama, and bilingual education. Local police officers reportedly responded with force, injuring as many as 20 students. On December 12, Phayul.com reported that eight of the students received five-year sentences for their alleged roles in the November 26 protest and that the school remained under strict surveillance.

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

Local contacts reported that government authorities issued an order banning the celebration on February 9 of Dechen Shingdrup, an important local religious festival held at Gyegyel Zogchen Monastery in Zaduo Township, Chenduo (Tridu) County, Yushu (Yulshul) TAP, Qinghai Province. That day, approximately 1,000 local citizens and monastery students reportedly staged a march protesting the cancellation of the festival. Khenpo Gyewala (also known as Lama Gewa), the monastery's abbot and head of its school, was briefly detained by local officials on February 10, but was released after 800 students protested demanding his release. He was again detained March 8 and reportedly sentenced to two years' imprisonment on unknown charges.

A May 24 circular promulgated by the TAR CCP Discipline Inspection Commission banned Party members, cadres, government officials, and students from participating in "religious activities," singling out the important Tibetan Buddhist religious festival of Saga Dawa, and called for strict punishment of those who disobeyed. According to the circular, "no CCP members, state functionaries, or students are allowed to participate in "Saga Dawa" or other religious activities. The circular went on to say that regardless of the modes of participation, once discovered, the participants themselves would be strictly punished, and the major leaders of their employment units would be held accountable. It stated that CCP members, the leading cadres at all levels in particular, should actively perform

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

their duties, and educate and guide their family members and people around them not to participate in “Saga Dawa” and other religious activities.

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

The number of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns in monasteries and nunneries fluctuated significantly, due in part to religious personnel leaving their monasteries and nunneries to avoid government-imposed “patriotic education” and “legal education” campaigns, forced denunciations of the Dalai Lama, and other acts they felt constituted a betrayal of their religious beliefs. Authorities in the TAR and other Tibetan areas tightened enforcement of long-standing regulations forbidding monasteries and nunneries from accepting individuals under the age of 18 for training. The government reportedly continued to remove from monasteries and nunneries monks under the age of 18, unregistered monks and nuns, and monks and nuns who came from other areas. Nevertheless, monasteries and nunneries in some areas routinely accepted minors into their training programs.

Monasteries were prohibited from operating schools, although some continued to do so. Children were removed from schools attached to monasteries and enrolled in public schools or provided no alternative arrangements. During the year, local authorities continuously pressured parents, especially those who were CCP members or government employees, to withdraw their children from monasteries in their hometowns, private schools attached to monasteries, or Tibetan schools in India. In some cases local authorities confiscated identity documents of parents

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

whose children were studying at Tibetan schools in India as a means of forcing the parents to return their children to China. In the absence of such documents, the parents risked losing their jobs.

Official rhetoric denigrating the Dalai Lama intensified during the year. On March 24, online commentary carried by China's state-run Xinhua news agency equated the Dalai Lama's policies to those of the Nazis during the Holocaust, calling him a "tricky liar skilled in double dealing." An article that appeared in the August 5 edition of the Lhasa-based Party daily *Xizang Ribao* bemoaned the fact that CCP propaganda on Tibetan issues had failed to cause "the Dalai clique" to abandon its plot to "split the motherland." During a November 13 press briefing, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson called the Dalai Lama "a political exile engaged in separatist activities under the guise of religion."

Although some government officials have maintained there is no law against possessing or displaying pictures of the Dalai Lama, multiple sources reported that open veneration of the Dalai Lama remained prohibited and that officials, who considered the images to be symbols of opposition to the CCP and the state, removed pictures of the Dalai Lama from monasteries and private homes. The county government in Tongren (Rebkong) County, Malho (Huangnan) TAP, Qinghai Province, released an official policy statement on September 17 prohibiting all "cultural enterprises" from selling photographs of the 14th Dalai Lama. The government also continued to ban pictures of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama and the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize as the 11th Panchen Lama. The Implementing Regulations state, "religious personnel and religious citizens may not distribute books, pictures, or other materials that harm the unity of the nationalities or endanger state security." Some officials deemed photos of and books by or about the Dalai Lama and Gedun Choekyi Nyima to be materials that violated the Implementing Regulations.

Nevertheless, many Tibetans displayed photos of the Dalai Lama and Gedun Choekyi Nyima in their homes, in lockets, and on cellular telephones. The ability of Tibetans to display the Dalai Lama's picture varied regionally and with the political climate. In Tibetan areas outside the TAR, visitors saw pictures of the Dalai Lama prominently displayed in private homes, shops, and monasteries, although monks reported they would temporarily remove such photos during inspections by officials from the local RAB or other agencies. As one homeowner in Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, stated: "Asking us to take down our pictures of the Dalai Lama is the greatest insult you can make to a Tibetan."

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

The prohibition against celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6 was enforced. Authorities in many Tibetan areas confiscated or defaced photographs of the spiritual leader in monasteries and private residences.

Authorities in the TAR prohibited the registration of names for children that included one or more of the names of the Dalai Lama or certain names included on a list of blessed names approved by the Dalai Lama.

Since the May 27 self-immolation in Lhasa of two young Tibetans from Sichuan and Gansu Provinces (the first instances of self-immolation in Lhasa in recent years), Tibetans from outside the TAR, particularly monks and nuns, have largely been banned from traveling to the TAR without first acquiring special official travel documents that are difficult to obtain. This not only made it impossible for Tibetans to make pilgrimages to sacred religious sites in the TAR, but also obstructed land-based travel to India through Nepal. In addition, many non-local Tibetan monks, nuns and laypersons who had been working or staying at TAR monasteries for as long as 15 years were expelled.

China further strengthened its border controls during the year, and Tibetans encountered substantial difficulties in traveling to India via Nepal for religious purposes. Many Tibetans, including monks and nuns, sought to travel to India for such religious purposes as seeking an audience with the Dalai Lama, an important rite for Tibetan Buddhists, or continuing their studies with key Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders and teachers. In many cases, PSB officials refused to approve the passport applications of Tibetans, even though citizens from other ethnic groups were able to receive passports from the same offices without undue delays. This was particularly true for Tibetan Buddhist religious personnel. Some attributed the passport restrictions to an official effort to hinder travel for religious purposes.

There were also instances in which authorities confiscated previously issued passports of Tibetans. In some cases, prospective travelers were able to obtain a passport only after paying substantial bribes to local officials, or promising not to travel to India or criticize the Chinese government or the Party while overseas. Sources reported that on the Tibet-Nepal border, the government increased its border patrols to prevent Tibetans from crossing the frontier without permission, and some alleged the Chinese government exerted pressure on the government of Nepal to forcibly return Tibetan refugees.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

Tibetan Buddhist monks reported government restrictions on the ability of monks to travel and conduct exchanges with other monasteries severely damaged the quality of monastic education. In addition, many experienced teachers were in exile in India and elsewhere, older teachers were not replaced, educated young monks were not promoted due to lack of political credentials, and those who remained in Tibetan areas outside the TAR had difficulty securing permission to teach in other parts of China, abroad, or even within the TAR. Many monks who were expelled from their Lhasa monasteries after March 2008 have not returned, and some reported having been prevented from joining new monasteries. The heads of most major schools of Tibetan Buddhism – including the Karmapa, Sakya Trizin, and Gyalwa Menri Trizin – all resided in exile and maintained close ties with the Dalai Lama. The Karmapa, leader of Tibetan Buddhism’s Karma Kagyu school and one of its most influential religious figures, stated he left because the government controlled his movements and refused to allow him to go to India to be trained by his spiritual mentors or allow his teachers to come to him. According to sources, with a few exceptions, the overall number of monks and nuns in monasteries and nunneries remained at significantly lower levels than before the unrest of March 2008.

Authorities closely supervised the education of young reincarnate lamas approved by the government and, in a major deviation from the traditional custom, government officials, rather than religious leaders, managed the selection of their religious and lay tutors.

In recent years, DMCs at several large monasteries began to use funds from the sale of entrance tickets or pilgrims’ donations – and, in some cases, from government-controlled DMC-run hotels, shops, and restaurants – for purposes other than the support of monks engaged in full-time religious study under the government policy of monastery self-sufficiency. According to sources, although local government policies designed to attract tourists to religious sites have provided some monasteries with extra income, such activities also interfered with and deflected time and energy from the monasteries’ provision of traditional services, such as religious instruction and education, community medical care, and the performance of religious rites and ceremonies for the local Tibetan community.

Spiritual leaders reportedly encountered difficulty reestablishing historical monasteries in rural areas, due in part to government denials of permission to build and operate religious institutions. Officials in some areas contended these religious venues drained local resources and served as a conduit for political

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. However, in some areas the government restored monasteries to promote tourism and boost revenue.

Security forces continued to block access to and from important monasteries, including those in the Lhasa area of the TAR and in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP and Ganzi (Kardze) TAP. A heavy police presence within and surrounding the monasteries restricted the movement of monks and prevented "unauthorized" visits, including those by foreign diplomats, journalists, and other observers.

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

The whereabouts of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, recognized by the Dalai Lama and the vast majority of Tibetans as the 11th Panchen Lama, remained unknown. The government refused requests by international observers to visit Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who turned 23 years old on April 25, and asserted that his identification as the 11th Panchen Lama was "illegal." At a March 2010 press conference, TAR Chairman Pema Choling said Gedun Choekyi Nyima and his family were "reluctant to be disturbed" and wanted to live "an ordinary life." The government continued to insist Gyaltsen Norbu, whom it selected in 1995, was the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation. According to numerous Tibetan Buddhist monks in China, UFWD and RAB officials frequently pressured monks to attend sessions presided over by Gyaltsen Norbu. For example, when he visited the TAR in July, monks and villagers were officially ordered to greet him. According to a *People's Daily* article, during a February 10 meeting Premier Wen Jiabao asked Gyaltsen Norbu to play a more important and active role in safeguarding the unification of the motherland and promoting ethnic unity. Gyaltsen Norbu made his first trip outside mainland China during the year, delivering an April 26 address at the 3rd World Buddhist Forum in Hong Kong.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

The government severely restricted contact between several important reincarnate lamas and the outside world. For example the 11th Pawo Rinpoche, whom the 17th Karmapa recognized in 1994, remained under official supervision at Nenang Monastery in the TAR. Foreign delegations have repeatedly been refused permission to visit him.

Sources reported security personnel targeted individuals in monastic attire for arbitrary questioning and other forms of harassment on the streets of Lhasa and other cities and towns. Many Tibetan monks and nuns chose to wear non-religious garb to avoid such harassment when traveling outside their monasteries and around China. Several Tibetan monks reported it remained difficult to travel outside their home monasteries, with officials frequently denying permission for outside monks to stay temporarily at other monasteries for religious education.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

Many ethnic Han Buddhists were interested in Tibetan Buddhism and donated money to Tibetan monasteries and nunneries. Tibetan Buddhist monks frequently visited Chinese cities to provide religious instruction to ethnic Han Buddhists. In addition, a growing number of ethnic Han Buddhists visited Tibetan monasteries in the summer, although the central government imposed restrictions that made it difficult for ethnic Han Buddhists to conduct long-term study at monasteries in ethnic Tibetan areas.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government, including the Department of State, the U.S. embassy in Beijing, and the U.S. consulate general in Chengdu, made a sustained and concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibetan areas. U.S. government officials at the most senior levels urged China to ease restrictions on religious freedom, including repressive policies in Tibetan areas that have led to self-immolations. U.S. government officials repeatedly raised Tibetan religious

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

freedom issues with Chinese government counterparts at multiple levels, including expressing concern over and seeking further information on individual cases and incidents of religious persecution or discrimination. U.S. officials also raised these concerns during the U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue, at which the United States special coordinator for Tibetan issues delivered formal closing remarks.

On January 24 and December 5, the special coordinator for Tibetan issues released statements expressing grave concern over mounting self-immolations, reports of violence and heightened tensions in China's Tibetan areas, and noting that the dramatic expansion of Chinese policies that control religious life and practice were "counterproductive," created tensions, and threatened the "distinct religious, cultural and linguistic identity of the Tibetan people." The special coordinator called on the Chinese government to "resume substantive, results-oriented dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives to address the underlying grievances of China's Tibetan population" and to "permit Tibetans to express their grievances freely, publically, peacefully, and without fear of retribution."

Speaking before the 19th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, on March 2, the special coordinator noted that "the United States remains gravely concerned about recent violence and continuing tensions in Tibetan areas of China," and renewed her call for China's government to "respect the fundamental freedoms of religion and expression of all of its citizens, including members of ethnic minorities." The secretary of state raised concerns about the human rights situation in Tibet and the escalating number of Tibetan self-immolations in a September 27 meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi.

Throughout the year, the ambassador, the assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, and the assistant secretary for democracy, human rights and labor repeatedly and consistently raised U.S. concerns over China's counterproductive Tibet policies with senior Chinese government interlocutors in Beijing and Washington, D.C. During an October 29 online forum, the ambassador urged the Chinese government to "meet with the representatives of the Tibetan people to address and re-examine some of the policies that have led to some of the restrictions and the violence and the self-immolations." In an interview broadcast November 27 on CNN, the ambassador expressed concerns about the heightened tensions in Tibetan areas and said the United States was constantly urging the Chinese government to re-examine "policies that threaten the linguistic identity, the cultural identity, and religious identity of the Tibetan people." In his December

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

10 International Human Rights Day statement, the ambassador expressed concern about “constraints on the religious freedom and practices of Tibetans,” and said he was “deeply saddened by the increasing frequency of self-immolations in Tibetan areas of China.” U.S. government officials urged counterparts in the Chinese government to engage in constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives, and to address the policies that threaten Tibet’s distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity and constitute a primary cause of grievances among Tibetans. In addition, diplomatic personnel at the U.S. embassy coordinated closely on Tibet issues with counterparts at over a dozen foreign embassies and missions in Beijing.

U.S. diplomatic personnel maintained contact with a wide range of religious leaders and practitioners in Tibetan areas to monitor the status of religious freedom, although travel and other restrictions made it more difficult to visit and communicate with these individuals than in previous years. Following the outbreak of violent protests in Qinghai Province in January, diplomatic personnel from the U.S. embassy in Beijing traveled to Qinghai and Gansu Provinces to monitor the situation and attempt to visit affected monasteries. In late September the ambassador visited two monasteries in Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP. U.S. diplomatic personnel from the embassy and the consulate general in Chengdu made several trips throughout the year to visit monasteries and nunneries in Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces, including Sichuan’s restive Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP and Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, although travel was sometimes prevented.

U.S. government officials have submitted more than 10 requests for diplomatic access to the TAR since the last official visit in May 2011, but the Chinese government has not granted any of them. The TAR and some other Tibetan areas were largely closed to foreign visitors for much of the year, and unpublished restrictions on travel by foreigners to the TAR and some other Tibetan areas often resulted in U.S. diplomats and other foreigners being turned back at police roadblocks, allegedly for their own safety, or being refused transportation on public buses to Tibetan areas outside the TAR that were ostensibly open to foreign visitors.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

HONG KONG 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), as well as other laws and policies, protect religious freedom, and in practice the government generally respected religious freedom. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year. Falun Gong practitioners reported an increase in harassment by one pro-Beijing group.

There were few reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

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

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the Census and Statistics Department, the population is 7 million. Information Services Department data note that approximately 43 percent of the population practice some form of religion. The two most prevalent religions are Buddhism and Taoism, often observed in the same temple. There are approximately 1.5 million Buddhists and Taoists, 480,000 Protestants, 363,000 Roman Catholics, 20,000 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), 220,000 Muslims, 40,000 Hindus, 10,000 Sikhs, and 5,000-6,000 Jews. Confucianism is also prevalent, although few believers practice Confucianism as a formal religion. There are between 300 and 500 practitioners of Falun Gong, a self-described spiritual discipline.

There are approximately 600 Taoist and Buddhist temples (including temples affiliated with Tibetan Buddhist schools), 800 Christian churches and chapels, five mosques, seven synagogues, one Hindu temple, and one Sikh temple.

There are approximately 1,400 Protestant congregations, representing 50 denominations, including Baptists, Lutherans, Seventh-day Adventists, Anglicans, Christian and Missionary Alliance groups, the Church of Christ in China,

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

Methodists, and Pentecostals. The Hong Kong Catholic Diocese recognizes the Pope. A bishop, priests, monks, and nuns serve Catholics and maintain links to the Vatican.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Basic Law and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. Since transferral of sovereignty from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China (PRC) on July 1, 1997, the Basic Law provides the legal framework for the HKSAR. Under "one country, two systems," the HKSAR has a high degree of autonomy in all matters except foreign relations and defense. Under the Basic Law, the HKSAR has autonomy in the management of religious affairs. The Basic Law calls for ties between the region's religious groups and their mainland counterparts to be based on "nonsubordination, noninterference, and mutual respect." The Basic Law states that residents have freedom of conscience; freedom of religious belief; and freedom to preach, conduct, and participate in religious activities in public.

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

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

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

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

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

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

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

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

The government observes Christmas and the Buddha's birth as public holidays.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom, and the government generally respected religious freedom in practice. However, there were reports of restrictions on the Falun Gong.

Falun Gong representatives asserted that mainland authorities pressured the HKSAR to restrict the group's activities in the region. The PRC government banned the Falun Gong under an "anti-cult" provision in the criminal law in 1999. Practitioners also reported that relevant authorities in Hong Kong consistently denied them access to public facilities they wished to rent for functions, usually because administrators reported the facilities to be booked previously. According

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

to Falun Gong representatives, when they tried to rent commercial space, the Beijing authorities also pressured owners not to rent.

Falun Gong representatives maintained regular information displays in high-traffic areas and conducted public protests against the repression of fellow practitioners outside the HKSAR. They reported a significant increase in harassment from a pro-Beijing group called the Hong Kong Youth Care Association beginning immediately before the July inauguration of Hong Kong Chief Executive C.Y. Leung. Falun Gong leaders reported that the police did not protect their practitioners when the association's members harassed them. Other spiritual movements, including Xiang Gong and Yan Xin Qigong, were free to practice.

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

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Beyond increasing harassment of Falun Gong practitioners, there were few reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Senior government leaders often participated in large-scale events held by religious organizations.

The Jewish community reported few acts of anti-Semitism during the year. However, the Jewish community expressed concerns regarding the hate-filled sermons of visiting speakers before some gatherings of Hong Kong's generally peaceful Muslim community.

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

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

Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant communities participated in a range of social services, including welfare, elder care, hospitals, and other charitable activities.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

The Taoist community requested that Lao-tse's birthday be made a public holiday. The imam of one of Hong Kong's major Muslim communities suggested in the media that Eid al-Fitr be made a public holiday as well.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

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

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

MACAU 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The Basic Law of the Macau Special Administrative Region (Macau SAR) and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year.

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

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

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the Government Statistics and Census Service, the population is 568,700. The Government Information Bureau reports that nearly 80 percent of the population practices Buddhism. There are approximately 30,000 Roman Catholics (of whom over half are foreign domestic workers and expatriates residing in Macau) and more than 8,000 Protestants. Smaller religious groups include Bahais (estimated at 2,500 persons); Muslims (estimated at 400 persons); and a small number of Falun Gong practitioners (estimated at 50 persons).

There are approximately 40 Buddhist temples, as well as dozens of village temples and houses dedicated to Buddhist deities; 30 Taoist temples; three Catholic cathedrals, 18 Catholic churches and 56 Catholic chapels within diocesan buildings; approximately 70 Protestant churches; four Bahai centers; and one mosque.

Protestant denominations include Baptist, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches. There are also evangelical groups and independent local churches.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

An estimated 70 Protestant churches with 4,000 members conduct services in Chinese; approximately 4,000 worshippers attend every Sunday. An estimated 500 Protestants attend services conducted in foreign languages.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

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

Article 34 of the Basic Law states, “Macau residents shall have freedom of religious belief, and freedom to preach and to conduct and participate in religious activities in public.” Article 128 of the Basic Law stipulates, “the government, consistent with the principle of religious freedom, shall not interfere in the internal affairs of religious groups or in the efforts of religious groups and their believers to maintain and develop relations with their counterparts outside Macau or restrict religious activities which do not contravene the laws of the Special Administrative Region.”

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

The 1998 Freedom of Religion and Worship Law (Freedom of Religion Law), which remained in effect after Macau’s 1999 transfer of sovereignty to the PRC, provides for freedom of religion, including privacy of religious belief, freedom of religious assembly, freedom to hold religious processions, and freedom of religious education.

The Freedom of Religion Law allows religious groups to register directly with the Identification Bureau, which is required under the law to receive and process registrations. Applicants must supply name, identification card number, contact information, group name, and a copy of the group’s charter to register. Religious groups can apply to media organizations and companies to use mass media (television, radio, etc.) to preach, and such applications generally are approved. Registration is not required to conduct religious activities, and it does not automatically confer tax-exempt status or other advantages.

CHINA (INCLUDES TIBET, HONG KONG, AND MACAU)

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

The Macau government provides financial support for the establishment of schools, childcare centers, clinics, homes for the elderly, rehabilitation centers, and vocational training centers run by religious groups. The Macau Inter-University Institute (later renamed the University of Saint Joseph), which is affiliated with the Catholic University of Portugal, offers a Christian studies course that includes Catholic seminary students from the Mainland.

The government observes Christmas, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and Buddha's Birthday as public holidays.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

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

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

Officers from the consulate general in Hong Kong occasionally met with leaders of religious groups and spiritual organizations in the region, as well as with academics from the University of Saint Joseph to discuss religious freedom.