



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

China

China – CHN36264 – Liaoning Province –
Christians – Registered churches –
Proselytising
3 March 2010

1 Please advise whether proselytising is encouraged by the registered churches?

The information indicates that overt/public forms of proselytising are not encouraged by registered churches. However, sources indicate that low-level evangelism (one-to-one contact and invitations to church to family and friends) is encouraged by registered churches.¹ Registered churches are subject to legal restrictions which limit proselytism/evangelism.² The latest US Department of State (USDOS) religious freedom report states that: “The Government permits proselytism in registered places of worship and in private settings, but does not permit it in public, in unregistered places of worship, or by foreigners.”³ According to the latest annual report of the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), authorities often punish Protestants who proselytise with administrative detention, including re-education through labour.⁴

Government restrictions on proselytising are imposed by the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the China Christian Council (CCC), which are the official (and overlapping) state-led organisations that represent and manage Protestants in China.⁵ According to the CECC report, “[r]egistered congregations are subject to state monitoring of church members, interference in clergy appointments, mandatory political study sessions for pastors, and restrictions on doctrine and topics for preaching.”⁶ The 2009 USDOS religious freedom report states that the TSPM have “restrictions” on evangelism and baptism.⁷ The 2007 USDOS religious freedom report mentions the “TSPM’s admonition against proselytism”.⁸

Despite the restrictions on proselytism, the number of Christians in China, both registered and unregistered, continues to grow. In response to the question of who does evangelism and what form it takes, an article from *Amity News Service* (which communicates the news and views

¹ Sutterlin, J. 2005, ‘Frequently asked questions about the Protestant church in China’, Amity News Service website, June <http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page=1150> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 5.

² Galli, M. 2004, ‘The Chinese Church’s Delicate Dance’, *Christianity Today*, 11 January <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/november/30.68.html> – Accessed 26 February 2010 – Attachment 1.

³ US Department of State 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 – China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)*, 26 October – Attachment 2.

⁴ US Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2009, *Annual Report 2009*, 10 October, p. 132 – Attachment 3.

⁵ US Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2009, *Annual Report 2009*, 10 October, p. 132 – Attachment 3; Galli, M. 2004, ‘The Chinese Church’s Delicate Dance’, *Christianity Today*, 11 January <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/november/30.68.html> – Accessed 26 February 2010 – Attachment 1.

⁶ US Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2009, *Annual Report 2009*, 10 October, p. 135 – Attachment 3.

⁷ US Department of State 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 – China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)*, 26 October, Section 2 – Attachment 2.

⁸ US Department of State 2007, *International Religious Freedom Report 2007 – China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)*, 14 September, Section 2 – Attachment 4.

of the CCC⁹) states: “Chinese Christians are encouraged to demonstrate Christ’s love in the way they live, and most evangelism happens in one-to-one contacts. Evangelism also occurs when non-believers come to churches, either invited by friends or relatives or drawn by a special service or religious event.”¹⁰ Likewise, a 2001 article on the World Council of Churches website notes that although “evangelism of the church...is largely confined to church buildings”, lay preachers emphasise that “[b]earing fruit is a mark of a good Christian”. The article states that Christians therefore “work very hard in bringing family members and friends to church”.¹¹ There is no indication that believers are encouraged to publicly proselytise.

Information also indicates that the implementation of rules and regulations can vary between localities. An October 2006 *Washington Post* article, in reporting that “proselytizing outside of church” is forbidden, also noted that the implementation of regulations varied between regions in China and often depended “on the relationship between local officials and church leaders”.¹²

2 Is there any information of treatment of Christians who proselytise in Liaoning?

In China generally, sources report that authorities often punish Protestants who proselytise, through administrative detention, including re-education through labour.¹³ One recent incident of mistreatment against a Christian who had engaged in proselytism in Liaoning was found in the sources consulted. According to the 2007 annual report of the non-profit Christian organisation, China Aid Association, in March 2007 Ms Guo Changrong was arrested for “preaching the Gospel to the village party secretary”. Ms Changrong was reportedly sentenced to one year of education through labour.¹⁴ No further information on the treatment of Christians who proselytise in Liaoning was found in the sources consulted.

General background information on the situation of Christians in Liaoning province is provided in *Research Response CHN34437*, dated 5 March 2009.¹⁵ No further incidents of recent mistreatment of Christians in Liaoning were found in the sources consulted in the response. The response provides excerpts from the 2006 edition of *China’s Christian Millions* which gives some background information on Christians in Liaoning province. The author, Tony Lambert, describes the “explosive” growth in the number of Christians in Liaoning

⁹ <http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page=460>

¹⁰ Sutterlin, J. 2005, ‘Frequently asked questions about the Protestant church in China’, Amity News Service website, June <http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page=1150> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 5.

¹¹ Speicher, S. 2001, ‘The Protestant Church in China: “We have not passed this way before”’, 21 February <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/01/01feat-e.html> – Accessed 2 March 2010 – Attachment 6.

¹² Fan, Maureen 2006, ‘In China, Churches Challenge the Rules; Bold Congregations Risk Official Wrath’, *The Washington Post*, 1 October – Attachment 7.

¹³ US Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2009, *Annual Report 2009*, 10 October, p. 135 – Attachment 3.

¹⁴ China Aid Association 2008, *Annual Report of Persecution by the Government on Christian House Churches within Mainland China: January 2007 – December 2007*, February, p.7 <http://chinaaid.org/pdf/2007%20persecution%20report/caa%202007%20annual%20persecution%20report%20english.pdf> – Accessed 4 March 2009 – Attachment 8. Also see: Xi, L. 2007, ‘Beijing Christian Arrested for Spreading Gospel’, China Aid Association website, source: *Epoch Times*, 6 April http://www.chinaaid.org/qry/page.taf?id=105&function=detail&sbtblct_uid1=649&nc=a36d1dbe0dc34d373037b39f963d8247 – Accessed 2 March 2010 – Attachment 9.

¹⁵ RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response CHN34437*, 5 March – Attachment 10.

since the Cultural Revolution. According to the publication there are “over 1400 registered churches and meeting points” in Liaoning.¹⁶

Research Response CHN33443, dated 5 June 2008, contains reports on the detention and mistreatment of Christians in Shenyang.¹⁷ These occurred in late 2002 and early 2003, and involved members of unregistered (house) churches. The response also contains excerpts from the 2006 CECC annual report which states that some Communist Party members in Liaoning province disagreed with the view that high numbers of religious adherents (especially Christians) among Party members was a danger. They believed instead that it was time to allow Party members to believe in and practice religion.¹⁸ This indicates that there may be a degree of official leniency towards Christianity in the province.

Nevertheless, a recent article in *The Independent* does illustrate that the public promotion of Christianity in Liaoning remains prohibited. The November 2009 article reports on plans for China’s first Bible theme park (a tourism project costing \$US659 million) to be built in Liaoning province. Hong Kong based businessman Moon-lam Leung, a devout Christian, said the Harmony World park would feature high-tech attractions to tell the stories of Chinese and Western civilisation. The article notes that “Leung admitted having to tread carefully as authorities had made clear that while the development was allowed, promotion of the Christian faith was strictly banned.”¹⁹

List of Attachments

1. Galli, M. 2010, ‘The Chinese Church’s Delicate Dance’, *Christianity Today*, 11 January <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/november/30.68.html> – Accessed 26 February 2010.
2. US Department of State 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 – China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)*, 26 October.
3. US Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2009, *Annual Report 2009*, 10 October.
4. US Department of State 2007, *International Religious Freedom Report 2007 – China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)*, 14 September.
5. Sutterlin, J. 2005, ‘Frequently asked questions about the Protestant church in China’, Amity News Service website, June <http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page=1150> – Accessed 18 February 2009.
6. Speicher, S. 2001, ‘The Protestant Church in China: “We have not passed this way before”’, 21 February <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/01/01feat-e.html> – Accessed 2 March 2010.
7. Fan, Maureen 2006, ‘In China, Churches Challenge the Rules; Bold Congregations Risk Official Wrath’, *The Washington Post*, 1 October. (FACTIVA)

¹⁶ Lambert, T. 2006, *China’s Christian Millions*, OMF Publishing, Monarch Books, London, 2nd ed, pp. 261-262 – Attachment 14

¹⁷ RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response CHN33443*, 5 June – Attachment 11.

¹⁸ US Congressional – Executive Commission on China 2006, *Annual Report 2006*, 20 September, p.94. <http://www.cecc.gov/pages/annualrpt/annualrpt06/religion.php> – Accessed on 11 January 2006 – Attachment 12.

¹⁹ ‘Businessmen to build China’s first Bible theme park’ 2009, *The Independent*, 24 November <http://www.independent.co.uk/incoming/businessmen-to-build-chinas-first-bible-theme-park-1826554.html> – Accessed 2 March 2010 – Attachment 13.

8. China Aid Association 2008, *Annual Report of Persecution by the Government on Christian House Churches within Mainland China: January 2007 – December 2007*, February
<http://chinaaid.org/pdf/2007%20persecution%20report/caa%202007%20annual%20persecution%20report%20english.pdf> – Accessed 4 March 2009.
9. Xi, L. 2007, 'Beijing Christian Arrested for Spreading Gospel', China Aid Association website, source: *Epoch Times*, 6 April
http://www.chinaaid.org/qry/page.taf?id=105&_function=detail&sbtblct_uid1=649&_nc=a36d1dbe0dc34d373037b39f963d8247 – Accessed 2 March 2010.
10. RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response CHN34437*, 5 March.
11. RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response CHN33443*, 5 June.
12. US Congressional – Executive Commission on China 2006, *Annual Report 2006*, 20 September <http://www.cecc.gov/pages/annualrpt/annualrpt06/religion.php> – Accessed on 11 January 2006.
13. 'Businessmen to build China's first Bible theme park' 2009, *The Independent*, 24 November <http://www.independent.co.uk/incoming/businessmen-to-build-chinas-first-bible-theme-park-1826554.html> – Accessed 2 March 2010.
14. Lambert, T. 2006, *China's Christian Millions*, OMF Publishing, Monarch Books, London, 2nd ed.