



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

China

China – CHN39805 – Heilongjiang –
Catholics – Arab Spring
6 February 2012

1. In addition to the reports referred to in CHN38095, are there any reports about the targeting or mistreatment of Catholics in Heilongjiang Province?

The Catholic community in Heilongjiang appears to be quite small: 35,000 in 1986 according to Tony Lambert¹, 60,000 according to the Guide to the Catholic Church in China 2008² and 0.6% of the population (230,000) according to the Christian guide *Operation World*.³

Only three reports, all dated from 2004-05, could be located that mention the targeting or mistreatment of Catholics in Heilongjiang Province.

A 2006 report published on the catholic website Ignatius Insight mentioned that „unregistered’ Catholics in Heilongjiang feel they have suffered for the Church in refusing to join the „registered’ Catholic Church in China. The report states:

[t]he relationship between the two communities is strained in some provinces, such as Hebei, Fujian, Zhejiang, **Heilongjiang**, and Jiangxi. The relationship between the two communities is strained because unregistered Catholics feel that, unlike their registered church counterparts, they have suffered for the Church by refusing any affiliation with the Communist-run state.⁴

In May 2005 the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom reported that “[c]lergy in Hebei, Fujian, and **Heilongjiang** provinces were harassed, detained and arrested during the past year”. The report also noted that in 2004-05, nationally there were at least 20 Catholic bishops or priests under arrest, imprisoned or detained.⁵

A profile of the catholic bishop Wei Jingyi on the Asia News website mentions that he was arrested in Heilongjiang in March 2004 but was released nine days later without charge.⁶

¹ Lambert, Tony 2006, *China's Christian Millions*, 2nd ed, OMF Publishing, Monarch Books, London, p.249.

² Charbonnier, Fr Jean 2008, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China 2008*, China Catholic Communications, Singapore, p.143

³ Johnstone, Patrick & Mandryk, Jason 2001, „China’, *Operation World*, 6th ed, Paternoster Lifestyle, Cumbria, p.172

⁴ Clark, A.E., 2006, „Two Chinese Churches? Or One? An Interview with Fr. Daniel Cerezo, Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus’, Ignatius Insight website, June

http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2006/aclark_chinesechurch_jun06.asp – Accessed 6 February 2012

⁵ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2005, *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom*, May, p.58

<http://www.uscifr.gov/countries/publications/currentreport/2005annualRpt.pdf#page=1> – Accessed 6 February 2012,

⁶ „Mgr Wei Jingyi (Profile)’ 2005, Asia News website, 8 September

<http://www.asianews.it/index.php?art=4077&l=en#> – Accessed 6 February 2012

2. Are there any reports that as a result of the Arab uprising there has been a crackdown by the Chinese government on unregistered Christian churches in China in March/April/May 2011, in relation to China generally or Heilongjiang specifically?

A number of media reports mention that as a result of the Arab uprising (also referred to as the Arab Spring or Jasmine Revolution) there was a crackdown on dissent by the Chinese Government including on unregistered Christian Churches. None of these reports mention Heilongjiang specifically and only two are related to the period March-May 2011.

An 18 April 2011 radio interview from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation mentions in its introduction that „Chinese Christians are among the latest to be targeted’ by government repression as a result of the Arab uprisings, however, this is not elaborated on in the following interview.⁷

A 16 April 2011 AFP article reported that police rounded up and later released dozens of followers from the Shouwang underground church from a public meeting place in Beijing and confined others to their homes. This was reportedly one week after a similar police action rounded up 170 followers of the same church, which had been unable to find a permanent premise. According to human right group China aid, the police action was linked to a more widespread Government crackdown on dissent brought about by the Jasmine Revolution.⁸ An 11 April 2011 National Public Radio article and also reported on the police action against the Shouwang church and noted claims from China Aid that the Shouwang church incident was part of a wider trend of the Chinese Government forcing unregistered churches from their premises.⁹

A 12 April 2011 article from Radio Free Asia, translated on the China Aid website, reports on the violent harassment of two house church leaders by police and states that „[a]fter an internet campaign to provoke a "Jasmine Revolution" peaceful protest in China, the jittery authority had heightened the pressure they exerted upon house churches’.¹⁰

A 20 July 2011 article from Ecumenical News International states that as a result of the Arab Spring the Chinese government defied the Vatican by ordaining its own bishops to the Catholic Church amid more widespread repression. The article states:

Recent international events have acutely aggravated Beijing’s fears, Vaz-Pinto says. Last year’s Nobel Peace Prize for dissident Chinese writer Liu Xiaobo came as a shock to Beijing, she said, prompting some of the strongest official propaganda since Mao-Tse Tung’s Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and „70s.

Within a month, she noted, the state church defied Rome with the ordination in Chengde. The timing wasn’t a coincidence, Vaz-Pinto said, nor were two more

⁷ Hutton, Will & Moore, Ali 2011, „China fears people’s revolution: analyst’, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 18 April <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2011/s3195026.htm> – Accessed 6 February 2012

⁸ „China detains underground church followers: group’ 2011, AFP, 16 April <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iLyWWBWo7jSKZsWbfA-xSO1JcqNw?docId=CNG.1fadce69d7428ade496268a62ebd3821.2e1> – Accessed 3 February 2012

⁹ Lim, Louisa 2011, „China Cracks Down On Christians At Outdoor Service’, National Public Radio, 11 April <http://www.npr.org/2011/04/11/135305676/china-cracks-down-on-christians-at-outdoor-service> – Accessed 6 February 2012

¹⁰ „Police Seriously Injured Two Christian Leaders in Shaanxi and Henan with Electric Baton and Block Door with Bricks’ 2011, China Aid website, Source: Radio Free Asia, 12 April <http://www.chinaaid.org/2011/04/police-seriously-injured-two-christian.html> – Accessed 6 February 2012

ordinations that followed the “Arab Spring” of pro-democracy movements in the Arab world, which brought down the longtime dictators of Tunisia and Egypt.

China’s fear that the Arab movements could inspire dissidents on its own soil is evident in what Phelim Kine, senior Asia researcher at Human Rights Watch in New York, called the “worst spike in repression in China since the aftermath” of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.¹¹

An 11 January 2012 article from The Christian Post also states that the Chinese Government stepped up its suppression of religious groups including unregistered Christians as a result of the Arab Spring.¹²

¹¹ „What’s behind China’s hard line against Catholics?’ 2011, Ecumenical News International (ENI), 20 July

¹² Oleszczuk, Luiza 2012, „Religious Groups Facing Increased Persecution Across China, Experts Say’, The Christian Post, 11 January <http://www.christianpost.com/news/religious-groups-facing-increased-persecution-across-china-experts-say-66744/> – Accessed 2 February 2012

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([http://immibelweh03/NXT/gateway.dll/cisnet_bacis/cisnet_bacis_chn_frame/bacis_cx269268?f=templates\\$fn=document-frameset.htm\\$q=%5Brank,100%3A%5Bdomain%3A%5Band%3A%5Bstem%3A%5Band%3AC hina%20arab%20spring%5D%5D%5D%5D%5Bsum%3A%5Bstem%3AChina%20arab%20spring%20%5D%5D%5D%5D\\$x=server\\$3.0#LPHit1](http://immibelweh03/NXT/gateway.dll/cisnet_bacis/cisnet_bacis_chn_frame/bacis_cx269268?f=templates$fn=document-frameset.htm$q=%5Brank,100%3A%5Bdomain%3A%5Band%3A%5Bstem%3A%5Band%3AC hina%20arab%20spring%5D%5D%5D%5D%5Bsum%3A%5Bstem%3AChina%20arab%20spring%20%5D%5D%5D%5D$x=server$3.0#LPHit1))
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United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2005, *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom*, May
<http://www.uscifr.gov/countries/publications/currentreport/2005annualRpt.pdf#page=1> –
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