

# Executive Summary

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

*Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights [Humanrights.gov](http://Humanrights.gov)  
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## Executive Summary – China

The constitution provides for freedom of “religious belief,” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities.” The government applies the term “normal religious activities” in a manner that does not meet international human rights standards for freedom of religion. The government’s respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom deteriorated.

The constitution says that no state, public organization, or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion. 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. Some religious and spiritual groups are outlawed. Tibetan Buddhists in China are not free to venerate the Dalai Lama openly and encounter severe government interference in religious practice (see Tibet section). Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members are required to be atheists and are generally discouraged from participating in religious activities.

During the year the government’s repression of religious freedom remained severe in Tibetan areas and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The government continued to implement measures strictly regulating religious activity and severely limited religious freedoms in Tibetan areas and in the XUAR.

Registered religious groups provided social services throughout the country, and certain overseas faith-based aid groups were allowed 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.

There were reports of societal 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 consistently urged the government to expand the scope of religious freedom in accordance with the rights codified in the constitution and internationally recognized norms. U.S. officials criticized abuses of religious freedom, acknowledged positive trends, and met with religious believers, family members of religious prisoners, and religious freedom defenders. The embassy protested the imprisonment of individuals on charges related to their religious practices and other abuses of religious freedom. 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. On August 18, the secretary redesignated the country as a CPC.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

A 2007 survey conducted by researchers in Shanghai concluded that 31.4 percent of citizens ages 16 and over were religious believers. According to estimates based on survey data, approximately 200 million nationals are Buddhist, Taoist, or worshippers of folk gods. 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.” It is difficult to estimate the number of Buddhists and Taoists because they do not have congregational memberships, and many practice exclusively at home. A 2007 public opinion poll found that 11 to 16 percent of adults identified themselves as Buddhists, and less than 1 percent of adults identified themselves as Taoists.

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. According to SARA there are approximately 36,000 Islamic places of worship (more than half of which are in the XUAR), more than 45,000 imams, and 10 Islamic schools in the country. Some Muslim communities have designated separate mosques for female worshippers. There are 10 predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in the country. The 2000 census reported 20.3 million members of predominantly Muslim nationalities, of which 96 percent belonged to three groups: Hui, 9.8 million; Uighurs, 8.4 million; and Kazakhs, 1.25 million. Hui Muslims are concentrated primarily in the Ningxia Hui

Autonomous Region, Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. Uighur Muslims live primarily 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 Christians to be between 23 and 40 million, accounting for no greater than 3 percent of the population. Seventy percent of Christians are female, and 67 percent have been baptized, according to the Blue Book. The Pew Research Center estimated in 2007 that 50 million to 70 million Christians practiced in unregistered religious gatherings, also known as “house churches.”

In June 2010 SARA reported the official Protestant population to be 16 million. Government officials stated that there were more than 50,000 Protestant churches registered under the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the state-approved Protestant patriotic association, and 18 TSPM theological schools. A CASS study found that 70 percent of Protestants worship in registered churches, while the remaining 30 percent worship in unregistered churches or private residences.

According to SARA more than six million Catholics worship in sites registered by the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA). In 2009 the Holy Spirit Study Center in Hong Kong estimated there were 12 million Catholics on the mainland. According to the Blue Book, there were 64 official Catholic bishops, 2,700 priests, 5,000 nuns, over 6,300 churches and meeting places, 10 seminaries, and nine preseminaries in 2010. Of the 97 dioceses in the country, 40 reportedly did not have an officiating bishop in 2007, and in 2009 an estimated 30 bishops were over 80 years of age.

Local governments have legalized certain religious communities and practices in addition to the five nationally recognized religions, 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 of 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 provides for freedom of religious belief, but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities,” a term applied in a manner that

falls 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 to hold a religious belief. 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.

Certain religious or spiritual groups are banned by law. Individuals belonging to or supporting banned groups have been imprisoned or administratively sentenced to Reeducation Through Labor (RTL) on charges such as “distributing evil cult materials” or “using a heretical organization to subvert the law.” The criminal law defines banned groups as “evil cults.” 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 the society.” There are no public criteria for determining, or procedures for challenging, such a designation. The government maintained a ban on 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 considered 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 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 advisory body that provides advice to the central government from business leaders, academics, and other segments of society.

Religious groups independent of the five official government patriotic religious associations have difficulty obtaining legal status and can be vulnerable to coercive and punitive action by the Religious Affairs Bureau, the Public Security Bureau (PSB) and other party or government security organs.

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.

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 of 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 subsidized 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 were included in examinations of graduates of all religious schools. Both registered and unregistered religious groups reported 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 remained independent of the CPA and operated unofficially. The CPA has allowed the Vatican discreet input in selecting some bishops, and an estimated 90 percent of CPA bishops have reconciled with the Vatican. Nevertheless, in some locations local authorities reportedly pressured 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, were required to register with the government. According to several unregistered religious groups, an additional prerequisite is obtaining official cosponsorship of the registration application by the local official religious affairs bureau, rather than a technical or other bureau. These groups often also were required to affiliate with one of the five patriotic religious associations. Unregistered charity groups, of any sort, are not permitted to openly raise funds, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property.

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

Under Article 33 of the Regulations on Religious Affairs, if a religious structure is to be demolished or relocated, the party responsible for demolishing the structure is to 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.

Registered religious organizations are allowed to compile and print religious materials for internal use. In order 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 limited distribution of Bibles to TSPM/Chinese Christian Council entities such as churches, church bookshops, and seminaries. Individuals could not order Bibles directly from publishing houses. Members of unregistered churches reported that the supply and distribution of Bibles were inadequate, particularly in rural locations. There were 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 had opened in the country.

Under the Regulations on Religious Affairs and other regulations on publishing, religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles and Qur'ans, 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 that children may participate in religious activities. The teaching of atheism in schools is allowed. In the XUAR there were widespread reports of prohibitions on children participating in religious activities. However, children have been observed in mosques and at Friday prayers in parts of the XUAR. The Xinjiang Implementing Measures on the Law on the Protection of Minors instruct those under 18 to not look at materials with content related to "evil cults" and imposes penalties on adults who "force" minors to participate in religious activities.

The law does not prohibit religious believers from holding public office. However, the CCP has stated that its members who belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion. The labor law states that job applicants shall not face discrimination in job hiring based on factors including religious belief. Some religious adherents opposed 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](http://www.state.gov).)

Foreign residents who belonged to religious groups not officially recognized by the government were 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.

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

Many prisoners and detainees were not permitted religious observance.

### **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 deteriorated.

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 practice. These activities included assembling for religious worship, expressing religious beliefs in public and in private, and publishing religious texts.

The government stated that it did not detain or arrest anyone solely because of his or her religion. In parts of the country, local authorities tacitly approved of or did not interfere with the activities of unregistered groups. In other areas local officials punished the same activities by restricting activities and meetings, confiscating and destroying property, or imprisoning leaders and worshippers. In some parts of the country, authorities charged religious believers unaffiliated with a patriotic religious association with various crimes, including “illegal religious activities” or “disrupting social stability.” Local authorities often used administrative detention or confinement at RTL camps to punish members of unregistered religious or spiritual groups.

According to *China News Weekly*, the country had 22 “ankang” institutions (high-security psychiatric hospitals for the criminally insane) directly administered by the Ministry of Public Security. Unregistered religious believers and Falun Gong adherents were among those reported to be held with mentally ill patients in these institutions. 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 NGOs and international media reported that detentions of Falun Gong practitioners continued to increase around sensitive dates. Some neighborhood communities reportedly were instructed to report on Falun Gong members to officials; monetary rewards were offered 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 to three years in RTL camps. Unconfirmed reports from overseas Falun Gong-affiliated advocacy groups estimated that thousands of adherents in the country had been sentenced to RTL.

In December Xintan village authorities in Shandong Province broke up preparations for an outdoor Christmas celebration, reportedly destroying sound equipment and injuring worshippers. Local religious affairs officials said they cancelled the event because it violated the government ban on worship outdoors.

In November Hunan Province authorities reportedly initiated a campaign against Christians and Falun Gong adherents, targeting families for "refuse cult" activities. More than 200 Christians and Falun Gong practitioners in Beishan Village, Longhui County, were subjected to a "study class" with lessons on disseminating "anti-cult" information. As part of the campaign, more than 11,000 local residents reportedly were forced to sign guarantees prohibiting them from participating in religious and spiritual activities.

On November 5, Guangzhou resident Tan Kaiqing, a Falun Gong practitioner, was arrested. At year's end she reportedly was detained at the Haizhu District PSB.

In August police in Dianbai County, Guangdong Province, detained Falun Gong practitioners Liu Shaozai and Mai Weilian, according to online accounts. In October the local Procuratorate, the government body that handles prosecutions in criminal cases, approved their arrest warrant, and they were transferred to a detention facility.

Guangdong Buddhist leader and businessman Wu Zeheng, who was convicted of economic crimes in 1999 after sending open letters to the country's leadership



calling for political reform and was released in February 2010 after 11 years' imprisonment, remained under police surveillance, according to online reports. These reports also stated that police beat him during a Buddhist ceremony in May.

In April 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. As of December, officials continued to impose these restrictions on at least one of the congregations.

In July 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."

There was no new information on Falun Gong practitioners Zeng Jiagang and Zeng Libo, whose whereabouts remained unknown following online reports that Guangzhou police took them from their homes in August 2010 and confiscated computers and books on Falun Gong.

Pastor Yang Rongli, Zhang Huamei, and Wang Xiaoguang of the Golden Light branch of the unregistered Linfen church network in Shanxi Province continued to serve prison sentences. Five other members of the congregation were released from RTL in August. They were imprisoned in November 2009 for "illegally occupying agricultural land" and "assembling a crowd to disrupt traffic," charges members of the congregation and other observers believed to be related to a dispute with local authorities over the land on which their church was built.

At year's end Alimjiang 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." He was sentenced in December 2009 by the Kashgar Prefecture Intermediate People's Court; his appeal was denied in March 2010. In 2008 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled that his detention was in violation of international standards of due process.

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. Father Li Huisheng from Xiwanzi Diocese, Hebei Province, continued to serve a seven-year sentence imposed in 2006 for "inciting the masses against the government." There was no new information about the welfare or whereabouts of unregistered Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin, who remained unaccounted for since his reported detention in 1997.

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.

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."

In April two Uighur Muslims were sentenced to three years' imprisonment for "engaging in illegal religious activities" and "publishing and distributing illegal religious materials."

Two sons of Uighur Muslim activist, Rebiya Kadeer, remained in prison.

Security officials frequently interrupted outdoor services of the unregistered Shouwang church in Beijing and temporarily detained members attending those services. On Easter international media reported that security officials blocked 500 worshippers from leaving their homes and detained more than 36 for attempting to attend religious services. Authorities restricted the freedom of movement of Shouwang's head pastor 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.

In January police reportedly stopped Wang Yi, who runs the large Autumn Rain house church in Chengdu, at the Chengdu airport along with three other church members when they were preparing to board a flight to Shenzhen to attend an evangelical conference in Hong Kong. While the other church members eventually were permitted to depart, Wang, an active defender of Christians' rights, reportedly was not allowed to leave the mainland to participate. In May, as a gesture of support for Beijing's Shouwang Church, Wang Yi reportedly joined other house church pastors in sending an open letter or "citizens' petition" to the National People's Congress, seeking a resolution of the church-state conflict and a guarantee of religious freedom.

On March 30, international media reported that the government's CPA ordained without Vatican approval Liang Jiansen as Bishop of Jiangmen Archdiocese in Guangdong Province.

On July 14, the CPA ordained Joseph Huang Bingzhang as Bishop of Guangdong's Shantou Archdiocese without Vatican approval. Foreign media indicated that the government reportedly took into custody and forced four bishops from the region to attend the ordination ceremony. Other online reports indicate that Zhuang Jianjian, the Vatican-appointed bishop of Shantou, was held

under house arrest for over a month in advance of Huang's ordination. On July 16, the Vatican stated that his ordination was illegitimate and added that "the Holy See does not recognize him... and he lacks authority to govern the Catholic community of the diocese" and excommunicated him. The Vatican also excommunicated Father Paul Lei Shiyin, who was ordained bishop of Leshan on June 29 without papal mandate.

The government demanded that the Vatican revoke the excommunications of the two bishops. On July 25, Xinhua published a statement from SARA which called the excommunications "extremely unreasonable and rude" and stated that "the majority of priests and believers will more resolutely choose the path of independently selecting and ordaining its bishops, and the government will continue to support and encourage such practice."

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. Guangzhou's Liangren Church, forced to close under pressure from public security officials in August 2010, was unsuccessful in its search for a new location to hold services, according to online reports. During the year members of the Liangren congregation at times worshiped outdoors to protest their removal from their rented facilities.

The government generally enforced legal and policy restrictions on religious freedom, particularly in the XUAR and Tibetan areas. 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.

At a meeting of the XUAR Social Management Committee held on December 6, XUAR Chairman Nur Bekri said that the management of religion was an important part of social management. Bekri urged the committee to search actively for innovative approaches to religious management and put forward practical measures to ensure that religious activities were conducted in an orderly manner. Bekri also said the management committee must increase the rectification of illegal religious activities in the XUAR to eradicate the fundamental roots of religious extremism. He asked authorities to strengthen daily management of religious activities, increase the work capability of religious management at the grassroots level, and improve the legal system in religious management.

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. Hui Muslims in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces engaged in religious practice with less government interference.

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 13,700 Muslim citizens participated in the Hajj in the fall, flown on 41 specially arranged Hajj charter flights. Uighur Muslims separately reported difficulties taking part in state-sanctioned Hajj travel due to inability to obtain travel documents in a timely manner, difficulties meeting criteria required for participation in the official Hajj program run by the Islamic Association of China, and quotas on the number of travelers allowed 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 July authorities in Zhejiang Province reportedly expelled ethnic minority Muslim high school students from school for attending a mosque, according to a report on an overseas Uighur advocacy group's Web site. Authorities expelled the students after they were caught in Muslim prayer. The NGO reported that "the school said that they had been engaged in illegal religious activities."

Islamic schools in Yunnan Province refused to accept ethnic Uighur students.

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

Several religious groups reported that applications for registration were rejected 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 several reported cases, local officials disrupted religious meetings in private homes.

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

SARA announced in January that it would "guide" Protestants worshipping at unregistered churches into worshipping at government-sanctioned ones during the year. According to an agenda published on SARA's Web site, SARA aimed to help the activities of Protestant churches proceed in a "normal and orderly" way.

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 sales of the Qur'an.

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 obtaining passports or official approval to study abroad.

Blogs of a number of religious groups and individuals were periodically blocked during the year.

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

The government reportedly sought the forcible return of ethnic Uighurs living outside the country.

In May Shanghai authorities permitted the Ohel Rachel Synagogue to receive visitors for the duration of the Shanghai World Expo, which ended on October 31. The synagogue is part of the Shanghai Education Commission compound. The use rights the Shanghai Jewish Community enjoyed during the Expo were not renewed by year's end.

For information on North Korean refugees, please see the U.S. Department of State's *2011 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in China* and the *2011 International Religious Freedom Report on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*.

## **Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom**

During the year three Catholic bishops were ordained with the approval of both the Vatican and the official Chinese Catholic church. On November 30, Father Peter Luo Xuegang was ordained coadjutor bishop of Yibin Diocese in Sichuan Province. On May 20, Monsignor John Lu Peisen was ordained bishop of Yanzhou, Shandong Province. Bishop Lu, a longtime seminary professor, was approved by the Holy See and the government. On March 30, Father Paul Liang Jiansen was ordained as Bishop of Jiangmen, with both papal approval and government recognition.

Sichuan-registered church contacts noted that the provincial government had encouraged the church to assist in providing social services, particularly in areas that had suffered from the 2008 earthquake. The same contacts noted that they have been developing close ties with congregations in Hong Kong, Taiwan, the

United States, and South Korea and were able to use contributions from these countries to finance local development projects, including church construction.

Although CCP members are required to be atheists and generally are discouraged from participating in religious activities, their attendance at official church services in Guangdong Province was reportedly growing, as authorities increasingly chose to turn a blind eye to their attendance.

### **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.

According to overseas press reports, in September unknown assailants violently attacked a Catholic nun and priest in Sichuan's Kangding Diocese after they requested that two church properties, which had been confiscated from the diocese in the 1950s, be returned to their original owners. Local sources told the press that Sister Xie Yuming suffered wounds to the head and the chest and was still in the hospital. Father Huang Xusong suffered minor injuries.

### **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 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.

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. In September the ambassador hosted an iftar (evening meal during Ramadan) for Muslim guests, including imams from the country. The Department of State nominated a number of religious leaders and scholars from the country to participate in its International Visitor Leadership Programs related to the role of religion in American society. The Department of State also introduced government officials to officials from U.S. government agencies who engaged with American religious communities and members of 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. On August 18, 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).

## **Executive Summary - Tibet**

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 provides for religious freedom for all citizens but in practice, the government generally enforced other laws and policies that restricted religious freedom. The PRC constitution states that Chinese citizens “enjoy freedom of religious belief” and bans the state, public organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion. It protects “normal religious activities,” but does not define the word “normal.” Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members are forbidden from holding religious beliefs and from participating in religious activities.

The CCP demands that religion “adapt to socialism.” Tibetan Buddhists, like other religious people in China, face an array of restrictions on religious education, training of clergy, and conduct of religious festivals. These restrictions, which complement the atheism taught in schools, are resented by many religious people who view them as part of a systematic effort by the CCP to eradicate religious belief.

There was a marked deterioration in the government's respect for and protection of religious freedom in the TAR and other Tibetan areas, including increased restrictions on religious practice, especially in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries. Repression tightened in the lead-up to and during politically and religiously sensitive anniversaries and events, such as the third 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 90th anniversary of the founding of the CCP on July 1, the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6, and the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the "peaceful liberation" of Tibet on July 19. Official interference in the practice of Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions generated profound grievances and contributed to a series of self-immolations by Tibetans. The government continued to vilify the Dalai Lama, whom most Tibetan Buddhists venerate as a spiritual leader, and blamed the "Dalai clique" and "other outside forces" for instigating the March 2008 unrest in Tibetan areas and subsequent acts of protest, including self-immolations by Tibetan monks, nuns, and laypersons that occurred throughout the year. The government repeated its assertion of authority over the approval of all reincarnations of Tibetan Buddhist lamas and the supervision of their education. Chinese authorities often associated Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with pro-independence activism and characterized disagreement with religious policy as seditious behavior.

Government and CCP control over religious practice and the day-to-day management of monasteries and other religious institutions tightened, especially during the second half of the year. This was particularly pronounced in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture (T&QAP), home of Kirti Monastery, which saw the highest concentration of self-immolations. Progressively heavy-handed measures were implemented to compel acquiescence, convey the appearance of popular support, and prevent public protest in many Tibetan areas. Tibetan Buddhist monasteries were increasingly hindered from delivering the 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 decline of monastic educational standards.

There were reports of societal discrimination, including of Tibetans who encountered discrimination in employment, obtaining hotel accommodation, and in business transactions, but since Tibetan Buddhists' ethnic identity is closely linked with religion, it can be difficult to categorize incidents solely as examples of ethnic or religious intolerance.

The U.S. government repeatedly urged Chinese authorities at multiple levels to respect religious freedom for all faiths and allow Tibetans to preserve, practice, 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 address the policies that threaten Tibet's distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity and that are a primary cause of grievances among Tibetans. Despite numerous requests for permission to travel to the TAR, U.S. diplomatic personnel were only permitted one visit during the year. U.S. diplomatic personnel were occasionally barred from visiting Tibetan areas for which permission was not required, particularly during sensitive anniversaries and periods of unrest. 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**

Most ethnic Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority practices Bon, an indigenous religion, and a very small minority practices Islam, Catholicism, or Protestantism. Many Tibetan government officials and CCP members 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 a 2009 People's Daily (the official newspaper of the CCP) article, there are 3,000 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with 120,000 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns in the TAR and in Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The constitution provides for religious freedom for all citizens, but other laws and policies restrict religious freedom. The constitution states that Chinese citizens "enjoy freedom of religious belief." It bans the state, public organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion. The constitution protects "normal religious activities" but does not define

“normal.” 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 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’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. Local branches of the UFWD, SARA, and the Buddhist Association of China coordinate implementation of religious policies by Democratic Management Committees (DMCs) in monasteries. Regulations restrict leadership of DMCs to “politically reliable, patriotic, and devoted monks, nuns, and government officials.” The government stations CCP cadres and has established police stations on the premises of many monasteries. The government also supports the development of the “3+1” education model in some monasteries. Under this model, local village committees, family members, and DMCs ensure that monks and nuns cooperate with regular political education.

In a December 16 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.

The last round of talks between officials from the UFWD and envoys of the Dalai Lama was held in January 2010. As of 2007 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 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, 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.

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.

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 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.

Since mid-March, authorities have carried out a prolonged and intense crackdown at Kirti Monastery in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP, where up to 1,000 local residents staged a peaceful demonstration to protest the violent beating by police of a Kirti monk named Phuntsog, who set himself on fire on March 16 (he died the next day). Authorities subsequently removed hundreds of monks from the monastery, forcing some to return to their hometowns. Several hundred monks who remained in the monastery were required to spend months in small-group indoctrination sessions led by approximately 100 government officials dispatched to the monastery for that purpose.

At least 12 reported self-immolations by Tibetan Buddhist clergy and laypersons occurred during the year. Eight of the 12 were affiliated with Kirti and other monasteries and nunneries located in Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP, where repression was ongoing and particularly intense. Of the remaining four self-immolations, three took place in Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, and one in the TAR. Many of the self-immolators 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. Security personnel reportedly beat, kicked, or otherwise physically abused some individuals as they burned. For example, according to sources cited by the U.S. nongovernmental organization (NGO) International Campaign for Tibet, after 17-year-old Kirti monk Kelsang Wangchuk set himself on fire on the main street of Aba (Ngaba) County Town, Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP, on October 3, he was quickly surrounded by authorities who extinguished the flames and beat him before removing him to an undisclosed location. Kelsang Wangchuk's whereabouts remained unknown at year's end.

On August 30, the official Xinhua News Agency reported the People's Court of Ma'erkang (Barkham) County in Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP convicted three monks from Kirti Monastery of "intentional homicide" in connection with Phuntsog's self-immolation in March. The court sentenced Tsering Tenzin and Tenchum to 13 and 10 years in prison, respectively, for allegedly instigating and assisting Phuntsog's self-immolation. In a separate trial, another Kirti monk, Phuntsog's uncle Drongdru, was sentenced to 11 years in prison on similar charges.

Official interference in monastic life and religious practice in Tibetan areas increased markedly during the year. "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 renewed intensity and frequency at

monasteries and nunneries across the Tibetan Plateau. The “innovative monastery management” system, which began permanently stationing government officials at monasteries in the TAR midyear, had spread to some monasteries in Tibetan areas of Sichuan province by the end of the year. Government-selected monks had primary responsibility for conducting patriotic education at each monastery. In some cases, the government established “official working groups” at monasteries, and religious affairs and public security officials personally led the patriotic education. 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, are believed by many observers to be among the primary sources of discontent among Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, and the impetus behind such acts of protest as self-immolation.

The first reported case of house church persecution in the TAR occurred around the National Day holiday in early October. The U.S.-based NGO China Aid Association reported Lhasa authorities detained 11 members of a Protestant house church for nearly a month. During this time, authorities reportedly insulted and beat church members and confiscated a large number of Tibetan-language Bibles.

Based on information available from the political prisoner database of the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), as of September 1, 527 Tibetan political prisoners were imprisoned in Tibetan areas. 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 were held under the Reform Through Labor system, to which the Public Security Bureau (PSB) can commit people for up to two years without judicial review. Of the 527 Tibetan political prisoners tracked by the CECC, 483 were ethnic Tibetans detained on or after March 10, 2008, and 44 were Tibetans detained prior to March 10, 2008. Of the 483 Tibetan political prisoners who were detained on or after March 10, 2008, 264 were believed or presumed to be detained or imprisoned in Sichuan Province, 160 in the TAR, 23 in Gansu Province, 34 in Qinghai Province, one in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, and one in Beijing Municipality. There were 113 persons serving known sentences, which ranged from one-and-a-half years to life in prison; the average sentence length was seven years and two months. Of the 113 persons serving known sentences, 62 were monks, nuns, or Tibetan Buddhist teachers.

Many monks and nuns remained in detention due to their alleged involvement in the March 2008 unrest or other acts of protest in the years since. More than 80 nuns reportedly were detained in Sichuan Province after March 2008; their whereabouts remained unknown.

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

In March a local court sentenced Reincarnate Lama Jangchub and Monk Pesang of Jophu Monastery, Jiangda (Jomda) County, Changdu (Chamdo) Prefecture, TAR, to prison terms of three years and two-and-one-half years, respectively, reportedly for their participation in demonstrations protesting government seizure of land belonging to the monastery.

Jigme Guri, a monk and former DMC deputy chairman from Labrang Monastery, Xiahe (Sangchu) County, Gannan (Kanlho) TAP, Gansu Province, was detained August 20 by police officers who reportedly raided his hotel room in Hezuo (Tsu) City, Gansu Province, seizing computer equipment and dozens of portraits of the Dalai Lama. In 2008 Jigme Guri recorded a YouTube video detailing abuses he allegedly suffered at the hands of prison officials during previous detentions. By his own account, the prison beatings left him unconscious for six days and required two hospitalizations. At year's end, Jigme Guri remained in detention and the charges against him were unknown.

Jamyang Jinpa, a monk from Labrang Monastery who had been detained in 2008 for protesting against and refusing to participate in compulsory "patriotic education," died April 3 reportedly of injuries suffered during severe beatings and torture inflicted by local security forces at the time of his detention.

As many as 300 monks from Sichuan Province's Kirti Monastery were reportedly detained in connection with their alleged participation in protests that followed the self-immolation of monk Phuntsog on March 16, and while several were formally charged, convicted, and/or sentenced, the whereabouts of many others remained unknown. On May 2, the Aba (Ngaba) County People's Court sentenced Kirti monks Lobsang Dhargye and Kunchok Tsultrim to three-year prison terms, reportedly for the crime of inciting splitting of the state. Another Kirti monk, Lobsang Rinchen, was reportedly detained May 9; his whereabouts and the charges against him were unknown. On May 19, Chinese authorities arrested Kirti monk Lobsang Choephel, reportedly for failing to follow orders during a "patriotic education" session. His whereabouts were unknown at year's end.

Karma Monastery in Gama (Karma) Township, Changdu (Chamdo) Prefecture, TAR, was the target of increasingly stifling official pressure during the year. Early in the year, RAB and UFWD officials began forcing Karma monks to comply with

onerous religious licensing requirements, requiring them to obtain “religious venue,” “legal representative,” “religious teacher,” and “reincarnate lama” licenses. Karma monks reportedly refused to comply with the requirement, rejecting the licenses as irrelevant to the practice of their religion. An unoccupied “party activities center” that had recently been built to accommodate “patriotic and legal education” sessions for residents of Gama Township was bombed on October 26. According to the overseas NGO Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), local officials held Karma Monastery monks responsible for the building’s destruction and subsequently subjected them to detention, surveillance, and harassment. On October 29, two Karma Monastery abbots and seven monks were reportedly arrested for refusing to denounce the Dalai Lama or to cooperate with patriotic education at the monastery. A former Karma Monastery monk, Tenzin Phuntsog, died on December 6, five days after setting himself on fire, reportedly to express solidarity with local monks.

There were continued reports that the government 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. Some Tibetans who returned from Nepal reportedly suffered torture while incarcerated or otherwise in official custody, including electric shock, exposure to cold, and severe beatings, as well as being forced to perform heavy physical labor. Security forces routinely subjected prisoners to “political investigation” sessions and punished them if they were deemed insufficiently loyal to the state. According to TCHRD, on July 5 local security officials interrogated monks at Dargye Monastery in Sichuan’s Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, paying particular attention to monks who had been to India. Monks Lobsang Choejor and Jampa Wangchug, each of whom had spent several years studying at Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in India, were reportedly removed from their monastery and placed in detention at the Ganzi County Detention Center. It was not known whether formal charges had been brought against them.

Although authorities permitted many 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.

The government stated there were no limits on the number of monks in major monasteries and that each monastery’s DMC could decide independently how many monks the monastery could support. In practice, however, the government imposed strict limits on the number of monks in major monasteries, particularly in

the TAR and Sichuan's Ganzi (Kardze) TAP. One method used by local authorities to restrict the growth of the number of monks in some monasteries was to impose restrictions on the construction of new housing in a monastery, requiring that each dwelling bear an address plate issued by the local government. Local RABs also frequently refused to issue official clergy permits or monk permits.

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, unregistered monks under the age of 18 remained in residence at some monasteries.

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 frequently 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 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.

In March 2010 newly appointed TAR Chairman Pema Choling (Baima Chilin) called the Dalai Lama, venerated by most Tibetan Buddhists as a spiritual leader, "the most important cause of instability in Tibet." On March 10, the 52nd anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising, the Dalai Lama announced he was relinquishing his formal political position in the Tibetan exile community. He maintained his role as a spiritual leader to Tibetan Buddhists inside and outside China.

Some government officials maintained there was no law against possessing or displaying pictures of the Dalai Lama, but rather that most Tibetans chose not to do so. However, multiple sources reported 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 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.

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

Authorities 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 unrest in March 2008, monks and nuns in several Tibetan areas reported they were not permitted to leave their home monasteries. Restrictions on the movement and travel of monastic personnel hindered their access to opportunities for advanced religious education. Such restrictions, together with regulations on the transfer of religious resources between monasteries, also weakened the strong traditional ties between large monasteries in the TAR and affiliated monasteries in other Tibetan areas.

Authorities closely supervised the education of young reincarnate lamas approved by the government. The education of the current Reting Rinpoche, who was born on October 3, 1997, differed significantly from that of his predecessors. Historically, the Reting Rinpoche occasionally acted as the regent and had a role in the recognition of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. For the current Reting Rinpoche, government officials, rather than religious leaders, managed the selection of his religious and lay tutors – a major deviation from the traditional custom.

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. 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, the overall number of monks and nuns in monasteries and nunneries remained at significantly lower levels than before the unrest of March 2008.

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 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.

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. Some Tibetans traveled to India to join religious communities and escape the increased controls over religious practice being implemented at monasteries and nunneries in Tibetan areas. 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, high-ranking religious figures were able to obtain a passport only after promising not to travel to India. In other cases, Tibetans were only able to obtain passports after paying substantial bribes to local officials. However, during the year, hundreds of Tibetans, including monks and nuns, managed to travel to India via third countries, with many ultimately seeking refugee status. Some Tibetans who traveled to India were reportedly subject to lengthy interrogations by Chinese PSB officials upon return. 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.

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 22 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, UFD and RAB officials frequently pressured monks to attend sessions presided over by Gyaltsen Norbu, who also conducted prayer services in Yushu (Yulshul) TAP, Qinghai Province, following the April 2010 earthquake. In August Gyaltsen Norbu, who lives in Beijing, made a highly publicized 13-day tour of monasteries in Gansu Province, including a stay at

Labrang Monastery in Xiahe (Sangchu) County, Gannan (Kanlho) TAP. According to a report in the official Xinhua News Agency, Gyaltzen Norbu “reminded local Buddhists to abide by the law, uphold national unity, and conduct themselves in accordance with Buddhist doctrines.”

The government did not provide any information on Lama Chadrel Rinpoche, who reportedly remained under house arrest for leaking information about the selection of the Panchen Lama.

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 a particular monastery 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 repeatedly raised Tibetan religious freedom issues, including expressing concern over and seeking further information on individual cases and incidents of religious persecution or discrimination with Chinese government counterparts at multiple levels, including during the bilateral U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue and the U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue. U.S. government officials urged 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 are a primary cause of grievances among Tibetans.

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. U.S. government officials repeatedly requested diplomatic access to the TAR but only one TAR visit was approved, and that visit was closely controlled and monitored. 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, ostensibly for their own safety, or being refused transportation on public buses to Tibetan areas outside the TAR that were ostensibly open to foreign visitors. U.S. diplomatic personnel have not been permitted to visit the TAR since April.