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SEMESTRALE DI LIBERTÀ RELIGIOSA, LAICITÀ, DIRITTI DAL 1978

Documenti

L'abuso sulla persona
nelle religioni

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Legge federale elvetica sul divieto di dissimulare il viso

Introduzione di Alessandro Cupri

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L'Assemblea federale elvetica ha decretato il 1° gennaio 2025 l'entrata in vigore della legge, ampiamente dibattuta negli ultimi anni a livello mediatico e dottrinale, sul divieto di dissimulare il viso. L'iniziativa legislativa ha coinvolto in maniera diretta, attraverso un'iniziativa popolare, gli aventi diritto al voto, che hanno approvato tale divieto con una maggioranza del 51,21%, ascrivendolo così all'interno del dettato costituzionale all'articolo 10a.

All'interno dei confini federali elvetici, quindi, non è consentito in nessuno spazio pubblico ovvero in nessun luogo anche privato ma accessibile al pubblico – gratuitamente o a pagamento – coprire il volto non rendendosi riconoscibile (art. 2 co. 1). La *ratio* di tale scelta di politica legislativa emerge con chiarezza. Nell'ottica oltralpe l'identificazione dei tratti, salvo non vi sia una comprovata necessità strettamente collegata alla libertà di espressione e di riunione autorizzata dalla autorità competente che non sacrifichi però ordine pubblico e sicurezza nei luoghi già menzionati, costituisce un bene di rango costituzionale (legge RS 311.6 art. 2 co. 3).

Il mancato rispetto del divieto di dissimulazione del volto prevede l'esercizio dell'azione penale, di competenza dei singoli cantoni, e una multa fino a mille franchi (cfr. art. 3). La legge in oggetto prevede fattispecie in cui il divieto di dissimulazione non trova applicazione (per un elenco completo si rimanda all'art. 2 co. 2), al fine di controbilanciare vari interessi in gioco, non da ultimo la libertà religiosa. Su questo orizzonte di senso si muove la deroga alla proibizione in relazione ai luoghi di culto. Infatti, la legge RS 311.6 ha ritenuto che all'interno



dei luoghi di culto presenti all'interno dei singoli cantoni sia consentito indossare qualsiasi copricapo.

Risulta necessario sottolineare un dato non marginale: seppur le legge (formalmente) si rivolga a qualsiasi soggetto senza alcuna distinzione, appare chiaro che alcune categorie di soggetti risultino maggiormente colpite da un divieto di una simile portata. Si fa riferimento alle comunità musulmane e in particolare alle donne che decidono di indossare il velo – *burqa* o *niqab* – per motivi religiosi. Tale divieto, anche dai lavori preparatori, sembra indirizzarsi proprio in questa direzione, rispecchiando un certo grado di intolleranza su spinta di alcune frange politiche maggiormente conservatrici e refrattarie all'ingresso di usanze religiose o culturali differenti da quelle dei nativi.

È proprio dal dibattito precedente alla votazione della legge segnalata in questo numero di *Coscienza e Libertà* che si comprende quanto da ultimo affermato. Le argomentazioni si muovono su differenti piani di senso. Il primo profilo riguarda specificamente la necessità di tutelare le condizioni di base per una convivenza civile, sostenendo che il velo integrale ostacolerebbe l'integrazione e accrescerebbe le divisioni in una società multiculturale. La seconda argomentazione invece riguarda la primaria quanto irrinunciabile necessità di garantire l'ordine pubblico e la sicurezza, ponendo a fondamento l'idea che il velo impedisce l'identificazione immediata di chi lo indossa, costituendo altresì un vero e proprio ostacolo nella prevenzione di potenziali minacce terroristiche. Infine, è stato sottolineato l'obiettivo di promuovere la parità di genere, affermando che l'uso del velo integrale non possa considerarsi una scelta libera, ma piuttosto il risultato di pressioni culturali, e che un divieto federale avrebbe contribuito a rafforzare i principi di uguaglianza, tutelando così la dignità femminile.

Di segno contrario, è possibile qui riportare la posizione invece assunta dai detrattori dell'iniziativa divenuta poi legge confederale, i quali hanno contestato la necessità di un intervento costituzionale, ritenendo che le normative esistenti già garantissero le condizioni per una convivenza civile e una corretta integrazione sociale. Non solo, in aggiunta a quanto detto, si è sostenuto che l'introduzione di un divieto costituzionale avrebbe esagerato la portata di un fenomeno marginale, rischiando di stigmatizzare ulteriormente un gruppo religioso minoritario. Oltre a ciò, gli oppositori della legge avevano evidenziato soprattutto con riguardo al tema della parità di genere che l'ordinamento giuridico svizzero già prevedeva, all'art.



181 del Codice penale, la repressione delle condotte coercitive, incluse quelle che impongono l'uso del velo integrale, e che un divieto inserito in Costituzione avrebbe potuto, paradossalmente, determinare l'effetto contrario, ossia una maggiore segregazione delle donne che indossano il velo, limitando la loro partecipazione alla vita sociale.

Posizione queste che hanno entrambe del vero. È un dato altrettanto evidente che rimane compito di qualsiasi Stato democratico e laico trovare il punto di equilibrio – senza dubbio operazione complessa – tra istanze dei nativi e istanze di chi arriva. Inevitabilmente porta con sé la ricerca – complessa – di una *liaison* tra differenti richieste ma sempre con lo sguardo diretto e proiettato al futuro, integrando nuovi schemi senza però rinunciare alla tutela delle diverse identità presenti nella geometria variabile della democraticità ordinamentale.



Legge federale sul divieto di dissimulare il viso (LDDV)

del 29 settembre 2023 (Stato 1° gennaio 2025)

L'Assemblea federale della Confederazione Svizzera,
visto l'articolo 123 capoverso 1 della Costituzione federale (Cost.)¹;
visto il messaggio del Consiglio federale del 12 ottobre 2022²,
decreta:

Art. 1 Oggetto e campo d'applicazione

¹ La presente legge disciplina l'attuazione del divieto di dissimulare il proprio viso (art. 10a Cost.).

² La legge non si applica:

- a. a bordo di aeromobili civili in Svizzera e all'estero;
- b. nei locali che servono alle relazioni diplomatiche e consolari o che sono utilizzati per scopi ufficiali da beneficiari istituzionali di cui all'articolo 2 capoverso 1 della legge del 22 giugno 2007³ sullo Stato ospite.

Art. 2 Divieto di dissimulare il viso

¹ Nei luoghi pubblici o privati aperti alla collettività gratuitamente o a pagamento è vietato dissimulare il viso in modo da renderne irriconoscibili i tratti.

² Il divieto non si applica a chi dissimula il viso:

- a. nei luoghi di culto;
- b. per proteggere o ripristinare la salute propria o di terzi;
- c. per garantire la sicurezza personale;
- d. per proteggersi dalle condizioni climatiche;
- e. per seguire le usanze locali;
- f. a scopi artistici o di intrattenimento;
- g. a scopi pubblicitari.

³ Nella misura in cui la sicurezza e l'ordine pubblici non sono pregiudicati, l'autorità competente può inoltre autorizzare la dissimulazione del viso in luoghi pubblici se:

RU 2024 620

¹ RS 101

² FF 2022 2668

³ RS 192.12

- a. è necessaria alla protezione della persona che esercita il diritto fondamentale alla libertà di opinione e di riunione; o
- b. rappresenta una forma di espressione figurativa dell'opinione.

Art. 3 Disposizione penale

¹ Chi viola il divieto di cui all'articolo 2 è punito con la multa sino a 1000 franchi.

² Il perseguimento penale spetta ai Cantoni.

Art. 4 Modifica di un altro atto normativo

...⁴

Art. 5 Referendum ed entrata in vigore

¹ La presente legge sottostà a referendum facoltativo.

² Il Consiglio federale ne determina l'entrata in vigore.

Data d'entrata in vigore: 1° gennaio 2025⁵

⁴ La mod. può essere consultata alla RU **2024** 620.

⁵ DFC del 6 nov. 2024.



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Note: The cover image depicts a true-to-life reconstruction of the persecution faced by CAG Christians. To ensure the safety and privacy of Christians and their families, most names in this report are pseudonyms. Pseudonyms are marked with an asterisk (*) in the upper right corner for distinction.



2024 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE CHINESE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT'S PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH OF ALMIGHTY GOD

1. Overview

In 2024, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) continued advancing its campaign for the “Sinicization” of religion. On January 1, it enacted the *Patriotic Education Law of the People’s Republic of China*¹, further tightening its control and suppression of religious practices. Many churches were forced to display pro-CCP slogans, replace Sunday worship with performances of “Red Songs”², and substitute sermons on the Bible with lectures on the history of the CCP’s rise to power. House churches that refused to join the state-controlled Three-Self Church were persistently labeled as “cults” and shut down. Church leaders faced severe accusations and heavy sentences under fabricated charges such as “fraud”³, “illegal business operations”⁴, and “inciting subversion of state power”⁵. Imams who taught the Quran were also publicly arrested and taken into custody⁶. The persecution and crackdown on The Church of Almighty God (CAG) became even more severe in 2024. Internal CCP documents revealed that Xi Jinping attached “great importance” to these operations and “issued multiple directives” to suppress the church. In August 2023, the CCP Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission issued a secret directive to launch a three-year “Tough Battle”⁷ targeting The Church of Almighty God starting in 2024. The directive mandated

1 Xi Jinping Is Not Trying to Make Christianity More Chinese (January 16, 2024, Christianity Today)

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/2024/01/china-christianity-xi-religion-policy-sinicization/>

2 China’s Patriotic Education Law Further Cracks Down on Religious Freedom (January 05, 2024, VOA)

<https://www.voanews.com/a/7428359.html>

3 西安丰盛教会被控“诈骗罪”一案将召开庭前会 [Xi’an Church of Abundance “Fraud” Case Pretrial Conference to Be Convened] 自由亚洲电台 (January 26, 2025, RFA)

<https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/xinwenkuaixun/2025/01/26/jz-human-rights-family-church-china/>

4 芜湖迦密山教会案今日开庭审理 [Wuhu Mount Carmel Church Case Goes to Trial] 民生观察 (August 2, 2024, CRLW)

<https://msguancha.com/a/lanmu13/2024/0802/23659.html>

5 Elder Zhang Chunlei Sentenced to Five Years in Prison (August 1, 2024, CSW UK)

<https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/08/01/press/6285/article.htm>

6 Yunnan Muslims Protest Outside Government Building as Imam Detained (December 16, 2024, RFA)

<https://www.rfa.org/english/china/2024/12/16/china-yunnan-muslims-protest-imam-detained/>

7 CCP Launches 3-Year “Tough Battle” Against The Church of Almighty God (April 02, 2024, Bitter Winter)

<https://bitterwinter.org/ccp-launches-3-year-tough-battle-against-the-church-of-almighty-god/>

coordination by party committees and political and legal affairs commissions at all levels, with close cooperation from various political and legal units, the United Front departments, and the local governments. The objectives were to “dismantle domestic organizational structures,” “drastically reduce the current membership,” and “effectively curb overseas expansion.” The directive emphasized a “comprehensive suppression targeting key CAG members.” Following the directives, nationwide investigations targeting CAG members began in January 2024, with large-scale arrests continuing from June onward. According to incomplete statistics, at least 19,053 individuals were arrested throughout the year, marking the highest number in recent years. Of those arrested, 2,175 were sentenced, with 1,051 receiving sentences of three years or more, 168 individuals sentenced to seven years or more, with the longest term being 14 years. At least 24 church members died as a result of persecution.

The Church of Almighty God, established in 1991, is the fastest-growing house church in China and has been a primary target for eradication by the CCP authoritarian regime. In 2000, the CCP leadership issued secret orders to “do more and say less, and silently crush it without drawing attention.” In 2014, the CCP openly declared that “no retreat until it is completely eradicated.” The CCP also claimed that “beating to death counts as nothing but suicide” and “better to wrongfully kill a thousand than let a single one escape.” After the outbreak of COVID-19, the CCP intensified its crackdown instead of easing it. In 2024, the number of arrests was more than triple that of 2019 before the pandemic, and the number of sentences of seven years or more doubled compared to 2019. From 2011 to 2024, nearly 480,000 CAG members were detained by CCP authorities. Records indicate that at least 293 individuals have died as a result of persecution since the church was established.

In 2024, the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) released reports⁸ that repeatedly highlighted the CCP’s ongoing persecution of The Church of Almighty God. The reports documented cases of detained church members and referenced cases of the CCP’s transnational repression⁹ targeting CAG members in Spain.

8 USCIRF Annual Report (2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE U.S. COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM)
<https://www.uscirf.gov/annual-reports>

9 CECC Annual Report (CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA ANNUAL REPORT, December 2024, CECC)
<https://www.cecc.gov/sites/evo-subsites/cecc.house.gov/files/2024-12/2024-CECC-Annual-Report.pdf>



2. Summary of the Nature of the CCP's Persecution

(1) Nationwide Unified Action to Comprehensively Investigate CAG Christians

2024 marks the first year of the CCP's three-year "Tough Battle" against The Church of Almighty God. At the beginning of the year, a nationwide special operation was launched to comprehensively investigate CAG Christians in preparation for mass arrests. According to internal CCP documents, authorities were instructed to fully utilize "video surveillance tracking, facial recognition, communication records, medical visit records, payment methods, and shopping consumption data." A combination of "special case investigations, big data screening, targeted household visits, and public reporting" was used to conduct a sweeping search for CAG Christians. Concurrently, officials from villages, townships and neighborhoods, local police station officers, and grid management personnel should undergo specialized training, and joint investigation teams should be formed with Cyberspace Administration, Civil Affairs, Education, and Women's Federation departments to conduct comprehensive searches of CAG Christians. The goal was to ensure that "no township is left out, no village is overlooked, no group is missed, no household is ignored, and no individual is omitted." Special attention was given to tracking CAG Christians in hiding, while also identifying their relatives and friends and contacts to determine whether they shared the same faith. The findings were entered into the public security "information management system," and key CAG Christians identified in the investigation were placed under "close surveillance and strict control." Furthermore, ten cities were designated as pilot areas for these operations: Daqing in Heilongjiang, Baiyin in Gansu, Changzhi in Shanxi, Tai'an in Shandong, Nanyang in Henan, Tongling in Anhui, Jiaxing in Zhejiang, Chenzhou in Hunan, Chuxiong in Yunnan, and Guigang in Guangxi. The experiences from these pilot operations were later promoted nationwide.

At the beginning of 2024, the CCP issued a classified document instructing schools and kindergartens across the country to carry out investigations into Christians from The Church of Almighty God. Schools were required to fill out registration forms with relevant information while keeping the secret investigations strictly confidential.

In Shandong Province, multiple police vehicles—including those belonging to special police units—entered schools for investigations. Armed police officers entered classrooms, demanding students disclose whether their family members were involved in suspicious activities such as preaching the gospel or attending gatherings. Officers even

used heart rate scanners to identify “suspicious” students and forced them to reveal their parents’ names.

In Henan Province, some schools forced students to complete religious belief assessment forms¹⁰ as part of the investigation into CAG Christians. Several universities required all students to stand in front of cameras and loudly, clearly recite blasphemous statements against Almighty God. Those who refused or did not read clearly were reported to public security authorities, placed under police surveillance and interrogation, and some were directly taken into custody by the police.

(2) Nationwide Unified Arrest Operations and On-the-Spot Arrests, Marking the Highest Number of Arrests Since the First CAG Annual Report

Following the sweeping investigation operations, nationwide unified arrest operations intensified in the second half of 2024. According to incomplete statistics, the total number of CAG members arrested throughout the year reached 19,053. In some regions—such as parts of Shanxi, Henan, and Anhui—nearly all members in the entire church communities were arrested, with almost no church leaders and co-workers spared. Many CAG Christians went missing or lost contact, making it impossible to determine the actual number of arrests.

Since September 2020, when the CCP launched a three-year “General Battle¹¹” aimed at “fully destroying” The Church of Almighty God, the number of arrests has surged, exceeding 10,000 per year for three consecutive years. However, The Church of Almighty God has not been eliminated. According to internal CCP documents, the Church still has a membership of millions, prompting authorities to escalate repression with a “Three-Year Tough Battle” to “completely eradicate” the Church. 2024 marked the first year of this campaign, with a 53% increase in arrests compared to 2023, setting a record high since its first annual report in 2017.

10 Henan Universities Force Students to Record Anti-religion Videos as Political Task, Persecuting Those Who Refuse (February 8, 2025, ADHRRF)

<https://en.adhrrf.org/persecuting-those-who-refuse.html>

11 CCP Launches 3-Year “Tough Battle” Against The Church of Almighty God (April 02, 2024, Bitter Winter)

<https://bitterwinter.org/ccp-launches-3-year-tough-battle-against-the-church-of-almighty-god/>

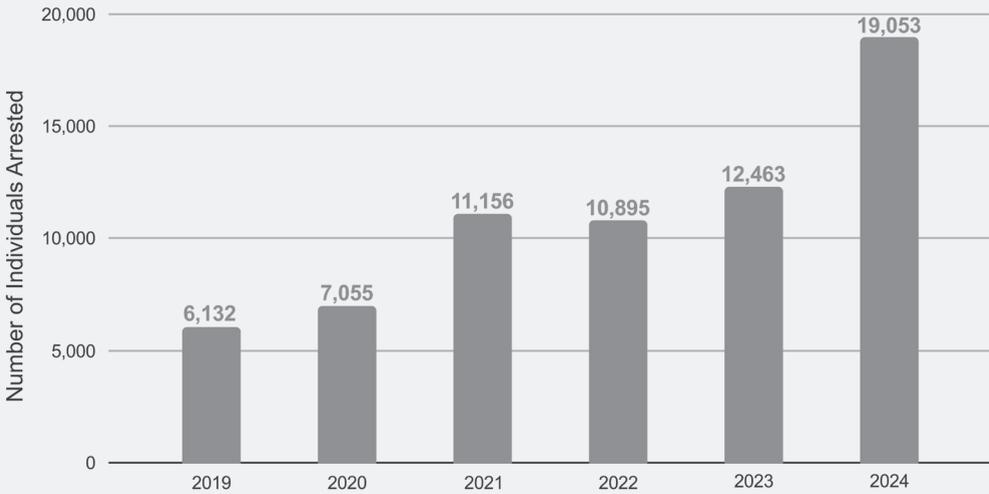


Chart 1: Comparison of Arrests From 2019 to 2024

Anhui Province recorded 3,925 arrests throughout the year. Six cities reported over 300 arrests each, with 562 arrests in Huainan City alone.

Henan Province saw 2,692 arrests throughout the year. Following the investigation and screening operations in the first half of the year, 2,365 were arrested between June and December, accounting for 88% of the annual total.

Shandong Province recorded 2,448 arrests, with 2,145 of them happening in the second half of the year—88% of the annual total. From June to September, 449 church members were arrested in Jining, Qingdao, Weifang, and Yantai. In October, an additional 353 arrests occurred in Yantai and Weihai, followed by 713 more arrests across the province in November and December.

Jiangsu Province saw 1,801 arrests. On February 25, a unified operation in Changzhou, Yangzhou, Wuxi, Nanjing, and other four cities led to at least 111 arrests. In July alone, 101 church members were arrested in Xuzhou, and 275 were arrested throughout the year in Suqian.

Zhejiang Province recorded 1,088 arrests in 2024, with 1,065 of them (98% of the annual total) occurring between June and December. On July 29 and 31, authorities arrested 24 CAG Christians in Zhuji, including three elderly believers in their 80s and one 90-year-old. During interrogations, police threatened them aggressively, saying, “We don’t care if you’re 70 or 90, we’ll finish you off!” On September 19, 20 and 24, at least 112 CAG Christians were arrested in a unified operation in Jinhua, followed by 98 more arrests on October 24.

Shanxi Province reported 1,021 arrests throughout 2024, with 810 of these arrests—representing 79% of the total—occurring in the second half of the year. Between October and December, at least 142 CAG Christians were arrested in Jincheng alone. In

Changzhi, one of the pilot cities for the “Tough Battle”, almost the entire congregation of the Church was arrested, with very limited information available.

In Guangdong Province, from April 23 to 25, authorities in Guangzhou deployed over 3,000 police officers in a unified arrest operation, resulting in at least 135 CAG members arrests and 88 missing.

In Shanghai, on September 5 and 6, police launched a unified operation, arresting at least 156 CAG Christians.

Table 1: Number of Arrests and Sentences in Different Provinces, Autonomous Regions, and Municipalities in 2024

Province / Municipality / Aut. Region	Arrested	Total Sentenced	Sentenced to 3 Years or More	Sentenced to 7 Years or More	Persecuted to Death	Subjected to Torture	Subjected to Forced Indoctrination
Total	19,053	2,175	1,051	168	24	2,042	7,720
Beijing	75	13	9	0	1	4	3
Tianjin	259	37	15	0	0	4	2
Hebei	153	3	1	1	0	10	42
Shanxi	1,021	47	13	1	1	18	601
Inner Mongolia	84	13	12	0	0	5	16
Liaoning	39	22	7	2	0	4	10
Jilin	829	71	34	8	2	208	336
Heilongjiang	372	21	3	0	0	26	52
Shanghai	212	0	0	0	0	3	152
Jiangsu	1,801	236	99	17	2	376	597
Anhui	3,925	120	68	8	3	685	2,144
Zhejiang	1,088	224	114	25	0	32	656
Fujian	253	28	15	9	0	27	89
Jiangxi	472	45	26	4	0	155	308
Shandong	2,448	423	152	11	3	247	570
Henan	2,692	180	64	4	2	117	1,033
Hubei	305	26	9	1	3	0	71
Hunan	488	20	15	0	0	0	199
Guangdong	754	323	236	52	1	26	415
Guangxi	367	72	49	18	1	7	109
Hainan	23	0	0	0	0	1	14
Chongqing	186	16	8	0	0	15	107
Sichuan	283	90	25	4	1	2	44



Province / Municipality / Aut. Region	Arrested	Total Sentenced	Sentenced to 3 Years or More	Sentenced to 7 Years or More	Persecuted to Death	Subjected to Torture	Subjected to Forced Indoctrination
Guizhou	29	7	4	0	0	0	3
Yunnan	208	61	32	0	3	6	46
Shaanxi	553	37	25	1	1	40	38
Gansu	132	38	16	2	0	20	48
Qinghai	1	0	0	0	0	3	8
Ningxia	1	2	0	0	0	1	7
Xinjiang	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable

(3) Harsh Sentences and Heavy Fines at Record Highs

According to internal CCP documents, when deploying three-year “Tough Battle” campaign, top CCP authorities directed the Supreme People’s Court to take the lead, with the Supreme People’s Procuratorate and the Ministry of Public Security coordinating efforts, to specifically address the issue of the lack of legal grounds for imposing severe convictions and heavy sentences on Christians of The Church of Almighty God. They were tasked with formulating countermeasures, issuing new legal application opinions, and revising judicial interpretations of Article 300 of the *Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China* to intensify sentencing and penalties. This method of increasing penalties through “guiding opinions” and “legal interpretations” has been repeatedly used, notably in 2001 and 2020. In 2024, courts across China cited the *Interpretation on Several Issues Concerning the Application of Law in Handling Criminal Cases of Organizing and Using Cult Organizations to Undermine the Enforcement of Law issued by the Supreme People’s Court and the Supreme People’s Procuratorate* as the legal basis for sentencing CAG Christians to prison. This “Interpretation” considers the number of religious items possessed by CAG Christians—such as the quantity of church books and audiovisual materials, the quantity of faith-related content stored on their electronic devices and storage media, the number of the characters in documents, as well as the duration of audio and video files—as factors for sentencing.

Subsequently, the number of convicted CAG Christians, the percentage of harsh sentences, and the amount of fines imposed have surged. In 2024, the number of cases where CAG believers were sentenced to eight years or more surged to 76—more than double the number in 2023. Among them, 27 were sentenced to ten years or more, with the longest

sentence reaching fourteen years, and the highest fine imposed reaching 180,000 RMB. Due to the CCP's strict information blockade, the actual situation is even more severe. A CAG Christian sought appeals through a well-known lawyer, but after meeting with the case-handling judge, the lawyer replied, "They won't allow me to defend you. If I insist, I'll be charged with the same crime and sentenced to the same prison term as you."

In 2024, Guangdong and Guangxi had the highest proportion of harsh sentences nationwide. Of the 168 CAG members sentenced to seven years or more across China, 70 were from Guangdong and Guangxi, accounting for 42% of the total.

Zhao Chengcheng*, a CAG member from Xinjiang, was wanted by authorities for her faith and went into hiding. In September 2023, she was arrested by Gansu police and extradited back to Xinjiang, where she was sentenced to fourteen years in prison in 2024.

On February 28 and 29, 2024, in eight separate rulings, the People's Court of Haizhu District in Guangzhou City sentenced some CAG members who have been detained since the mass "September 1" arrests in 2022. In one ruling where 12 church members received prison terms, two mid-level leaders and one lay believer were heavily sentenced to eleven years each. In the second half of 2024, 33 CAG Christians in Guangdong's Qingyuan City were sentenced collectively with harsh sentences and heavy fines. The shortest sentence was three years, while the longest was eleven years. Among them, one gospel worker was heavily sentenced to eleven years with a fine of 150,000 RMB, one church leader was heavily sentenced to ten years with a fine of 150,000 RMB, and a lay believer in his 60s was heavily sentenced to eight years. Seventeen others were heavily sentenced to six years or more. The total fines imposed on these 33 CAG members reached 2,535,000 RMB.

On March 8, 2024, the People's Court in Fujian's Sanming City sentenced 11 CAG members in a group trial. Two of them who were coerced into signing the "Three Statements" to renounce their faith received sentences of less than seven years in prison, while the remaining nine were heavily sentenced to seven years or more.

On April 15, 2024, the People's Court in Jiangsu's Xuzhou City handed down heavy sentences to nine CAG members. One was sentenced to eight years and six months with a fine of 65,000 RMB, one to eight years with a fine of 60,000 RMB, while the remaining seven were sentenced to prison terms ranging from four years and six months to five years.

On June 27, 2024, the People's Court of Yuzhou District in Guangxi's Yulin City harshly sentenced 18 CAG members in a group trial. Among them, one church leader was heavily sentenced to ten years with a fine of 50,000 RMB; four were sentenced to nine years with a fine of 30,000 RMB each; six were sentenced to seven years and two months, with a fine of 20,000 RMB each; and the rest received terms ranging from three to five years and three months.

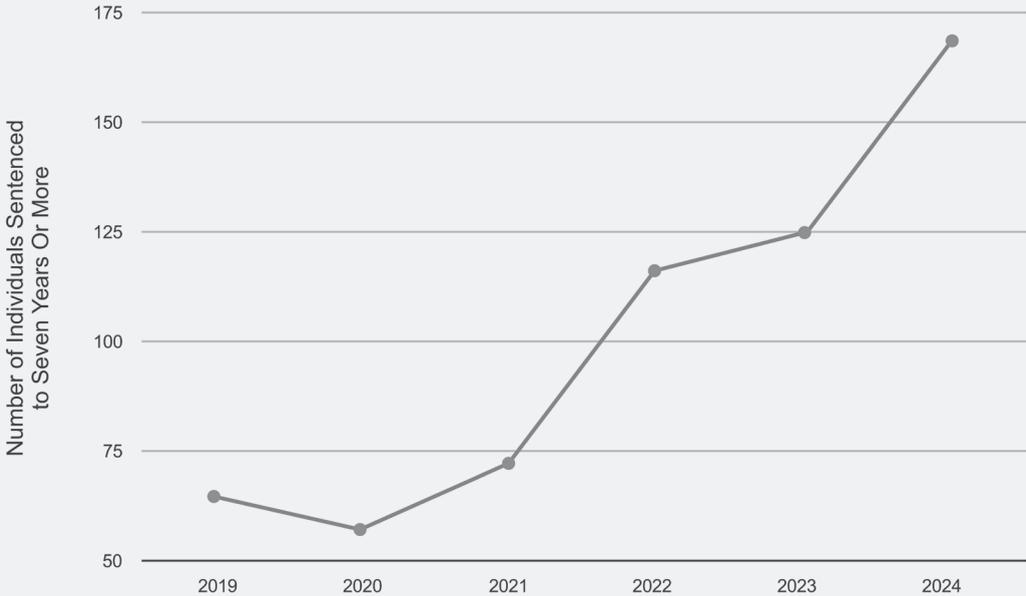


Chart 2: Number of Individuals Sentenced to Seven Years or More (2019–2024)

In August 2024, Wu Hualian*, a CAG lay believer from Anhui Province, was harshly sentenced to eight years in prison and fined 100,000 RMB.

On September 12, 2024, the People’s Court of Shujiang District in Zhejiang’s Taizhou City, issued heavy sentences to 13 CAG Christians arrested during the “June 15” operation in 2023. Two church leaders were sentenced to twelve years and six months and eleven years, respectively, while three lay believers received terms ranging from seven years and six months to eight years and six months. On August 29, 2024, the People’s Court in Linhai City imposed heavy sentences on five CAG members. Among them, two church leaders received 11-year and 9-year sentences respectively, while three lay believers were sentenced to terms ranging from five years to seven years and eight months. During the “June 15” operation in 2023, Zhejiang authorities deployed nearly 7,000 police officers in 83 counties, cities and districts to put nearly 1,400 CAG members under arrest.

On December 10, 2024, the People’s Court of Laiwu District in Shandong’s Jinan City sentenced 23 CAG members in a collective ruling. Among them, three upper-level leaders were harshly sentenced to twelve years in prison with a fine of 120,000 RMB each. A church member responsible for hosting was heavily sentenced to ten years with a fine of 100,000 RMB.

(4) Torture, Brainwashing, and Mistreatment Result in at Least 24 Deaths

According to incomplete statistics, the number of CAG members subjected to torture and forced indoctrination in 2024 was 9,762, marking a 67% increase from 5,832 in 2023.

To force CAG Christians to renounce their faith in Almighty God, the CCP leadership has demanded the nationwide implementation of “education and transformation work” (namely, brainwashing) and set quotas for transformation. In pursuit of these quotas, authorities across the country subject arrested CAG Christians to violent “transformation” and brutal interrogation methods, including reverse handcuffing, hanging by handcuffs, electric shocks, exhausting an eagle, smoke suffocation, waterboarding, starvation, horse stance, prolonged standing, and extended exposure to high-volume, extended-length propaganda videos slandering The Church of Almighty God, as well as prolonged detention, molestation, and sexual humiliation. Police threatened CAG Christians, saying, “We cannot change your beliefs, but we can destroy your bodies!”

For sentenced CAG Christians, the CCP imposes “transformation” quotas. Those who refuse to sign statements denying and blaspheming God are subjected to prolonged mistreatment, including strict control, severe beatings, electric shocks, and increased forced labor, leading to disability, mental breakdowns, and even deaths. One CAG Christian in Xinjiang, for refusing to plead guilty and sign the “Three Statements” to renounce her faith, was placed under strict control and subjected to electric shocks with an electrified glove and forced to wear integrated handcuffs and shackles, causing severe ankle ulcers. Another CAG Christian was sentenced to 13 years in prison and kept under strict control for the first eight years for refusing to admit guilt. The prison authorities did not end the strict control until she was tormented to the point where she felt it was better to die than to live and she signed the “Three Statements.”

CAG Christian Xue Qing* was kept in custody for a month. Upon her release, she lost the ability to speak, stand, and recognize her family, with one of her ribs broken. The 21-year-old CAG Christian Li Chengyong* went on a hunger strike in the detention center. In response, the police handcuffed his limbs to a bed for two months. He was forced to eat, drink, defecate and urinate on the bed, resulting in a mental disorder. Another CAG Christian was tortured to the point of mental breakdown in brainwashing sessions and took her own life by hanging on the day after she was released.

A female CAG member in Guangdong Province was repeatedly beaten by several police officers with wooden sticks and leather belts until two sticks were broken, causing bruises all

over her body. The police also took photos of her private parts while insulting her, sealed her mouth with tape, and inserted lit cigarettes into her nostrils. The police tortured another female CAG Christian in Guangxi by inserting needles halfway into her fingernails. After pulling out the needles, they filled her wounds with chili water. She then was dragged into the men’s restroom by male police officers who later molested her.

A CAG Christian in Henan Province was subjected to violent brainwashing for 30 days. During this period, the police subjected her to torture methods such as sleep deprivation and beatings, breaking two of her ribs. A 17-year-old CAG Christian in Anhui Province was subjected to the “Exhausting an Eagle” torture for seven days and nights.

Table 2: Brief Information of CAG Christians Persecuted to Death in 2024 (Nine Cases Selected Only)

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Date of Arrest	Date of Death	Circumstances of Death
1	Wang Yuxia	F	61	10/2024	10/17/2024	Six days after her arrest, the police claimed she had died of a “sudden heart attack.” However, her remains showed signs of trauma—her face was bruised and swollen, one eye had a darkened bruise around the socket, her neck was tilted to one side, and one of her legs was broken, with the foot twisted outward.
2	Wang Fuhua	F	49	10/2024	10/20/2024	After her arrest, she was held in a hotel for nine days and nine nights of secret interrogations. On the morning of the tenth day, the police claimed she had died of a “sudden heart attack.”
3	Ni Caihong*	F	56	04/2024	05/05/2024	She was held in a brainwashing facility for secret interrogation. Despite knowing that she had hypertension and heart disease, the police subjected her to the torture of “Exhausting an Eagle” (sleep deprivation) for six days and five nights. On the sixth day, she cried out in pain from a headache and collapsed, convulsing. The police refused to provide medical aid, and she passed away two hours later. The doctor stated that she died of hypertension, and the death certificate listed the cause as sudden death.
4	Feng Enhui*	F	53	06/2022	06/30/2024	She was held in extended detention for over two years, during which the police prohibited family visits and subjected her to forced indoctrination, coercing her to renounce her faith. As a result, her blood pressure once spiked to 220 mmHg. One day two years later, she fell critically ill, suspected of suffering a cerebral hemorrhage. By the time she was taken to the hospital, she was in a deep coma with dilated pupils. Resuscitation efforts failed, and she was pronounced dead.
5	Qin Mei*	F	79	05/2024	06/14/2024	Suffering from coronary heart disease and multiple chronic illnesses, she was in a severely weakened state when arrested. In the detention center, her dentures were confiscated, making it nearly impossible for her to eat. Because she refused to sign the “Three Statements” renouncing her faith, she was punished by being forced to sit on a hard wooden plank for 13 hours a day, with her legs crossed, hands on her knees, and back straight without moving. She passed away 21 days later.



No.	Name	Sex	Age	Date of Arrest	Date of Death	Circumstances of Death
6	Zhong Shengliang*	M	69	07/2022	03/11/2024	Before his arrest, he had Stage 3 hypertension, lung disease, myocardial infarction, and cerebral infarction. After being sentenced, the prison refused to admit him due to his condition, but the court forcibly enforced the sentence. Two months later, he died in prison. Surveillance footage showed that in the three days before his death, he pleaded for help five times but received no emergency aid.
7	Yuan Huixin*	F	68	01/2022	04/20/2024	Before her arrest, she had breast nodules. While in the detention center, she repeatedly requested medical treatment but was denied. Nine months later, she fainted due to severe illness and was granted medical parole. A medical examination confirmed late-stage breast cancer with bone metastasis. Just as her condition began to stabilize, she was re-imprisoned without access to her medication, which led to her worsening health and ultimately her death in prison.
8	Sun Zhihua*	M	50	11/2019	02/21/2024	Sentenced to five years and six months, he died in custody after falling headfirst from the top bunk. The judicial authorities ruled it as a "suicide," yet the prison authorities guarded his body and didn't allow his family to see or inspect it.
9	Dong Xinglan*	F	38	07/2024	07/13/2024	Just over a month before her arrest, she had undergone surgery for hyperthyroidism, and doctors warned that she could not discontinue her medication. After her arrest, she was held in a brainwashing facility and denied access to her medication. On the morning of the 13th day, she died. The police refused to allow her family to view her remains or surveillance footage from before her death, leaving the cause of death unknown.

(5) CCP's Persecution Against CAG Christians in Hong Kong and Taiwan

Under the "one country, two systems" framework, religious and human rights freedoms in Hong Kong have been deteriorating. Since 2017, with the CCP forcefully implementing the Hong Kong Extradition Bill and the Hong Kong National Security Law, Hong Kong has eventually become a second mainland China. Christians from The Church of Almighty God have been subjected to questioning, tracking, threats, harassment, and even forced disappearances.

CAG Christians have been followed when going out and encountered spies while preaching the gospel. Their family and friends in mainland China have faced frequent harassment or even arrests by the police in attempts to force CAG members to return to China. Several CAG Christians who participated in the filming of gospel movies produced by the Church were strictly interrogated at customs when traveling back and forth between Hong Kong and the mainland. Two of them disappeared after being interrogated—one had previously revealed that she was under surveillance and in danger.

CAG member Su Xi^{12*} had a friend who was taken and interrogated by the Ministry of State Security officers. The authorities even prepared Hong Kong and Macao Travel Permits for Su Xi's siblings and demanded that they travel to Hong Kong to "find" Su Xi. Another CAG Christian, Li Jiamei^{13*}, was labeled an "anti-CCP leader" by the CCP for frequently preaching the gospel in public. To avoid implicating her family, she was forced to divorce her husband.

As early as 2017, *Ta Kung Pao* and *Wen Wei Po*, the two mouthpieces of the CCP, launched aggressive campaigns to attack and smear The Church of Almighty God, publicizing CAG Christians' personal information. After the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law, a large number of Hong Kong residents fled the city, including many CAG Christians.

Even CAG believers living in Taiwan are not spared. Their personal details and the information of the CAG communities they belong to have been inexplicably obtained by the CCP, while their relatives in mainland China continue to face harassment, threats, and even detention. Many CAG believers have reported that their families in China were forced to register their home addresses in Taiwan under the pretext that "if the mainland attacks Taiwan, the Chinese government will be able to protect them." One CAG Christian was stopped at customs, where an officer directly addressed her by the name she uses in the church and claimed to have full records of all CAG members, including their names and faith status. Some CAG believers' family members were even arrested upon returning to China after visits to Taiwan. Some CAG Christians who acted as extras in gospel movies produced by The Church of Almighty God have had their families in mainland China interrogated by the Ministry of State Security personnel. Authorities have persistently investigated these Christians and monitored all their phone calls to family members.

Another CAG Christian, Li Xinyi*, who currently resides in Taiwan, has been targeted by the CCP since 2019 for playing roles in some movies produced by The Church of Almighty God. Police frequently harassed her parents in mainland China, using both threats and persuasion, and accused her of being "anti-CCP and anti-government." They told her parents that if she returned to China and signed statements to renounce her faith, the government would forgive her—otherwise, her entire family would be implicated; her relatives' children would lose their opportunity to attend college and find employment. In 2023, even as Li

12 Revealed: The CCP's Secret Persecution of Christians in Hong Kong (Part 1) (January 20, 2025, Sino Euro Voices) <https://sinoeurovoices.com/news/20500>

13 Revealed: The CCP's Secret Persecution of Christians in Hong Kong (Part 2) (January 20, 2025, Sino Euro Voices) <https://sinoeurovoices.com/news/20763>

Xinyi's father was in the late stages of cancer, the police continued to harass the family at their home. Overwhelmed, her parents repeatedly called her, urging her to comply with the police's demands. Her relatives, fearing their children might be implicated, frequently blamed her. Under this immense family pressure, Li Xinyi was forced to stop performing in church films. Even when her father passed away, she did not dare return to China.

(6) CCP's Transnational Repression of CAG Christians

Another key aspect of the three-year "Tough Battle" campaign is the crackdowns on The Church of Almighty God abroad. The Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission of the CCP issued a secret directive, ordering the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Public Security to develop special action plans targeting CAG abroad. The directive calls for "strengthening intelligence collecting," closely monitoring "the residences and movements" of key overseas church members, and carrying out operations to "strike and dismantle" CAG communities outside China, "intimidate core members, squeeze the space for their development, and weaken their operational capabilities." The directive also emphasizes that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and relevant embassies and consulates should "strengthen research and response strategies in key countries such as South Korea and the Philippines", in order to prevent CAG's growth abroad.

Multiple internal CCP documents reveal that the 2024 comprehensive investigation into CAG includes specific initiatives targeting its members abroad. Local authorities issued "Overseas Investigation Data Collection Forms," requiring public security agencies to intensify surveillance efforts overseas, "carry out investigations in key foreign regions and countries", and utilize big data technology to uncover communications between domestic and overseas members.

Monitoring "the Residences and Movements" of Overseas CAG Christians

On October 7, 2024, the online human rights magazine *Bitter Winter* revealed that since 2022, the website "Daaixq," which is suspected of having ties to Chinese intelligence agencies, has published 12 batches of confidential information about CAG Christians¹⁴ who sought asylum in Italy. The leaked data includes their status as CAG asylum seekers, lawsuit dates,

14 A Scandal in Italy: Lists of Church of Almighty God Members Seeking Asylum in Italy Published in China (October 07, 2024, Bitter Winter)
<https://bitterwinter.org/a-scandal-in-italy-lists-of-church-of-almighty-god-members-seeking-asylum-in-italy-published-in-china/>

court ruling numbers, court jurisdictions, historical case numbers, and even their residential addresses in Italy, affecting 22 individuals. The website blatantly stated: “We will continue to update the list of those illegally involved in asylum lawsuits until these illegal individuals voluntarily return to China...”

The website “Daaixq” has also published 27 batches of identity information of CAG Christians who fled to South Korea seeking refugee status, affecting a total of 87 individuals. It further unlawfully disclosed the cast lists of those playing roles in the movies produced by The Church of Almighty God in South Korea, as well as the names and addresses of key church members in the United States—information that is typically not publicly available.

A CAG Christian¹⁵ who had sought asylum in Italy but was denied had no choice but to return to China. Upon arriving at the airport, she was immediately arrested, subjected to torture and violent forced indoctrination. The police not only had detailed knowledge of her return itinerary but also knew the private gathering locations she attended in Italy and the Christians she had met with. They tried to coerce her into revealing further details about CAG in Italy.

Holding Mainland Relatives Hostage to Force Overseas CAG Members to Return

In January 2020, CAG Christian Zheng Mingzhen* and her husband fled to South Korea to escape persecution by the CCP for their belief in Almighty God. After their performances for the Church were made public online, the CCP police began harassing their relatives in mainland China, repeatedly threatening that they had already collected information on the couple’s situation in South Korea and would find a way to bring them back. In October 2024, Zheng Mingzhen’s mother-in-law was arrested, and her whereabouts remain unknown.

In 2016, CAG member Chen Nuo* fled overseas due to persecution for his belief in God. Since then, his family in mainland China has been subjected to harassment and threats every year. The village chief repeatedly questioned them about Chen Nuo’s situation abroad. On August 24, 2024, the village chief visited Chen Nuo’s elderly father again, warning him, “If you don’t bring your son back, your pension and grain subsidies will be cut off, and your son’s property ownership certificate will be confiscated!” As a result, the elderly man lost his only source of income and was left struggling to survive.

After CAG believer Zhong Cheng* fled overseas, his mother in China was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison, followed by five years of surveillance and control. She

15 Denied Asylum in Italy, Church of Almighty God 6. Member Was Arrested and Tortured in China (January 16, 2025, Bitter Winter)
<https://bitterwinter.org/denied-asylum-in-italy-church-of-almighty-god-member-was-arrested-and-tortured-in-china/>

remains under strict control, with police telling her, “You’re serving the prison term for your son.”

In 2021, CAG Christian Liu Chang* escaped abroad, but shortly after, the police visited her parents, claiming they had discovered that Liu Chang was practicing her faith and preaching the gospel overseas, and that they had received an order from the provincial public security department to take her parents into custody. Liu Chang’s father was criminally detained for 37 days before being released on bail, while her mother remains missing to this day.

One CAG member, who had performed as an extra in a movie produced by the Church overseas, was arrested upon returning to China and sentenced to two years in prison. She was placed under long-term surveillance by a so-called “Overseas Task Force.” Another Christian, also an extra in some CAG movies, was arrested upon returning and given a harsh sentence of four years and six months—shockingly, the basis for her sentencing was the number of views the movies had received on YouTube.

Overseas Surveillance and “Intensified Intelligence Collecting”

He X-zheng traveled through France, Portugal, the United States, Canada, and Spain from 2015 to 2024, repeatedly calling The Church of Almighty God’s hotline, claiming to be a CAG believer and seeking contact with the communities of the Church there. However, investigations revealed that he was actually a police officer from the National Security Brigade in Yunnan. As early as 2008, he infiltrated Christian gatherings in mainland China by disguising himself as a CAG Christian, leading to the arrests and sentencing of nearly all the CAG members who had interacted with him.

A man surnamed Chen was found in a refugee camp in the Netherlands in September 2024, attempting to collect information about CAG Christians. He tried to gather information about CAG Christians through casual conversations and covert inquiries. Investigations confirmed that he is active in the local Chinese community and has close ties with the CCP. Another man, surnamed Dong, has been inquiring about the addresses, numbers, and personal information of CAG members in multiple refugee camps in the same country. He has even paid informants to monitor the movements of these individuals. In addition, he uses another name publicly.

On June 14, 2024, a court ruling in Rome stated that South Korean national O Myung-ok was a Chinese “special agent¹⁶.” O Myung-ok had infiltrated CAG gatherings in South Korea

16 Unholy Alliances: Korean Christian Fundamentalists and Chinese Intelligence United Against Refugees from China (October 17, 2024, Bitter Winter)
<https://bitterwinter.org/unholy-alliances-korean-christian-fundamentalists-and-chinese-intelligence-united-against-refugees-from-china/>

and secretly recorded footage under the pretense of being a truth seeker¹⁷. She later published the passport details of over 70 CAG members seeking refugee status in South Korea on a website she managed. Her surveillance, covert filming, and smear campaigns against The Church of Almighty God have never stopped.

Using So-called “Anti-xie jiao” Organizations and Websites to Attack and Discredit CAG

Like other persecuted religious groups¹⁸, The Church of Almighty God has been targeted by so-called “anti-xie jiao” organizations and websites overseas as part of the CCP’s transnational repression.

From 2016 to 2024, O Myung-ok, repeatedly cooperated with the CCP under the guise of “anti-xie jiao” activism, organizing staged protests¹⁹ in South Korea to pressure the government into deporting CAG Christians who had fled there.

Following O Myung-ok, Pastor Jin X-sik, president of the Korean Christian Heresy Counseling Center Association, also launched campaigns to smear and defame The Church of Almighty God under the guise of “anti-xie jiao” efforts. In 2024, he deliberately traveled from South Korea to Spain, where he held a seminar and issued a statement urging the Spanish government to deport Christian refugees. In response, Chinese “anti-xie jiao” websites such as “Daaixq” and “jxzlmwz” rallied behind him, even claiming that he had successfully persuaded²⁰ a Spanish lawyer to stop representing CAG Christians in their asylum cases. Furthermore, Jin lobbied the governments of Germany, Mongolia, and other countries to deport CAG asylum seekers.

Internal CCP documents explicitly call for the coordination of various “anti-xie jiao” platforms to launch propaganda campaigns against The Church of Almighty God. The so-called “anti-xie

17 Court of Rome: Church of Almighty God Members Deserve the “Highest Form of Protection” as Refugees (June 27, 2024, Bitter Winter)
<https://bitterwinter.org/court-of-rome-church-of-almighty-god-members-deserve-the-highest-form-of-protection-as-refugees/>

18 Special Report 2021 - China: Transnational Repression Origin Country Case Study: China conducts the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive campaign of transnational repression in the world (2021, Freedom House)
<https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression/china>

19 They Are Coming! CCP Sends Again Relatives of Church of Almighty God Refugees to Korea to Stage False Demonstrations (July 17, 2019, ADHRRF)
<https://en.adhrrf.org/they-are-coming-ccp-sends-again-relatives-of-church-of-almighty-god-refugees-to-korea-to-stage-false-demonstrations.html>

20 Unholy Alliances: Korean Christian Fundamentalists and Chinese Intelligence United Against Refugees from China (October 17, 2024, Bitter Winter)
<https://bitterwinter.org/unholy-alliances-korean-christian-fundamentalists-and-chinese-intelligence-united-against-refugees-from-china/>

jiao” organizations and websites operated by figures like Pastor Jin X-sik and O Myung-ok have frequently been questioned or even confirmed to have ties to the CCP.

3. Conclusion

Since coming to power, the CCP—an atheist regime—has relentlessly suppressed all religious beliefs, particularly seeking to pursue, intercept, and even eradicate Christ, who has expressed the truth, along with those who follow Him. Since 1991, Almighty God, Christ of the last days, has uttered tens of millions of words that have deeply moved those who read them. In just over three decades, Almighty God’s words have spread from China to nations around the world. This sparks deep fear and intense hatred within the CCP. As early as 2000, the CCP secretly ordered that The Church of Almighty God be “silently knocked down.” Since Xi Jinping took office, repression and persecution against The Church of Almighty God has escalated to unprecedented levels. Secret directives such as “uproot them entirely and wipe them out in one sweep” have been issued, alongside campaigns including the “Hundred-Day Battle,” “Knock-on-the-Door Operation,” “Thunderbolt Operation,” “Three-Year General Battle,” “Three-Year Tough Battle,” and transnational repression. The CCP treats defenseless Christians of The Church of Almighty God as high-profile enemies of the state. Domestically, it deploys all available police forces and utilizes the world’s largest surveillance system, along with the most extensive network of atheist forced indoctrination facilities, to arrest, detain, and “transform” CAG Christians. Externally, it engages in cross-border and transnational pursuits of CAG Christians who have fled overseas. In 2024, China faced widespread natural and man-made disasters, economic collapse, starvation, and despair across the country. Yet, despite these internal and external crises, the CCP remains fixated on its top priority: repression and eradication of The Church of Almighty God. It stops at nothing—resorting to beating, siege, and confinement—to persecute all CAG Christians to death. In recent years, The Church of Almighty God has continued exposing the persecution it has suffered, providing Western governments, religious scholars, and human rights organizations with critical documentation on religion and human rights in China. These reports have reshaped global understanding of China’s religious freedom. To further raise awareness of the facts, we are now publishing partial data on the persecution of CAG members in 2024. We hope this will draw greater global attention to human rights in China and that persecuted Christians will receive support from recipient governments and the international community.