

# Report Analyzing Seven Secret Chinese Government Documents



Produced By  
Center for Religious Freedom

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The CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, a self-sustaining project within Freedom House, is at the forefront of a national campaign to promote religious freedom worldwide. Since its inception in 1986, the Center, under the directorship of human rights lawyer Nina Shea, has reported on the religious persecution of individuals and groups abroad, and undertaken advocacy on their behalf in the media, Congress, the State Department and the White House. It also sponsors investigative field mission and presses official Washington for overall religious freedom in China, Sudan, Vietnam, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and elsewhere. The Center for Religious Freedom is a membership organization that publishes a bimonthly newsletter, periodic reports, and press releases on religious persecution.

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## OVERVIEW

These documents, labeled “Top Secret” or “Confidential” detail the goals and actions of China’s national, provincial and local security officials in repressing religion. They were issued between April 1999 and October 2001.

This compilation of documents, some from the highest sources of Chinese government, provide irrefutable proof that the crackdown un-registered religious groups continues. Gong Shengliang and one of his associates in the “South China Church” (see Document 7) is currently under sentence of death, many of his supporters have been tortured to testify against him falsely.

Photocopies of three of the documents were provided by an official of China’s Ministry of State Security. Photocopies of the others were provided by other officials in different positions within China’s public security organizations. The official at China’s Ministry of State Security has subsequently left his position and gone into hiding. These officials were sympathetic to repressed religious groups. Copies of the documents, along with translations, were provided to Freedom House’s Center for Religious Freedom by Mr Shixiong Li and Mr. Bob Fu of the New York based Committee for Investigation on Persecution of Religion in China. A full translation, with explanatory notes, can be found on the Center’s web page [www.freedomhouse.org/religion](http://www.freedomhouse.org/religion), or can be emailed.

The Center for Religious Freedom asked the distinguished, and now exiled Chinese government writer and journalist Su Xiaokang to comment on whether he believes the documents are genuine. Mr. Su is the editor of *Democratic China* and a board member of Human Rights in China. He says that he believes that the documents are “genuine” based on the diction used, the subject matter covered, and the use of the Chinese Communist Party’s format.

China’s new tactic of labeling religious groups as so-called “cults” and then cracking down on them intensifies the repression of non-approved religion. After China stopped treating religious offences as counter-revolutionary, religious offences were treated as a type of civil offense, punishable by fines, or by minimal incarceration. This would be comparable to a “misdemeanor” in America (though punishable by possibly three years in a labor camp). With the introduction of the laws regulating “heretical cults” in October 30, 1999, religious offences can now be classified as threatening national security, comparable to a “felony” in America, and punishable by life sentences or even death. This tactic has been increasingly employed in the last two years, and government spokespersons maintain that believers are not being repressed by restrictive religious laws, but are criminals disrupting public and social order laws.

The result of these developments has been a marked deterioration in religious freedom in China over the last year and in particular since Congress approved PNTR. China has not ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Chinese government has not provided information or permitted unhindered access to religious leaders who are in prison, in detention, under house arrest, or under surveillance.

The heightened crackdown may stem from frustration and political insecurity as authorities observe the astonishing revival of religion throughout China particularly through unsanctioned

groups. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, China's Christian churches, registered and underground, Catholic and Protestant, have been experiencing explosive growth. Thirteen million Protestants are registered with the government. Unregistered Protestants may number over 50 million, in house-churches, so named because services are held in houses.

Along with the current crackdown, China's government is pushing an aggressive public relations campaign to convince the West that there is no religious persecution in China, that whatever incidents of repression occur are either the unauthorized acts of "overzealous cadres" or else necessary measures against dangerous criminals, cultists and practitioners of "abnormal" religious activities. Leveling rape charges is a favored way of morally discrediting Christian pastors.

China continues to arrogate to itself the rights to determine religious doctrine, determine what is Christian heterodoxy, and designate religious leaders in direct violation of the international human rights covenant that it has signed.

Religious leaders cannot preach outside of their own area. They and their venue must be approved by the government. Religious services and members are subject to monitoring. Sermons must stick to approved topics under penalty of arrest. Seminaries and schools for theological training exist but are tightly controlled: Students, the Chinese authorities believe, must be "politically reliable." Children are barred by law from being baptized, educated in religion or attending public worship services. Registration requires that churches desist from speaking about the Second Coming of Christ, the gifts of the Spirit, the story of Creation in Genesis, certain sections of the Catholic Catechism and the evils of abortion. For Catholics, registration also means severing ties with the Vatican; submitting to bishops appointed by the communist government, not the Pope; and rejecting the spiritual authority of the Pope. The "Patriotic" Protestant churches have to be organized in the same undifferentiated church body. Many unregistered places of worship have been shut down or bulldozed in recent years. Bibles and other religious literature can only be printed with government permission, and legally obtained through government-approved sources.

President Bush has repeatedly stressed the importance of freedom in China (March 4, 2001, May 5, 2001). There are indications that when President Bush raised these issues with President Jiang Zemin at the APEC meeting in Shanghai in October 2001, the Chinese leadership was impressed by his commitment. Knowing of America's growing criticism of religious persecution in China, Religious Affairs Bureau Chief Ye Xiaowen and other Chinese officials are taking pains to conceal the extent of the ongoing crackdown against churches and religious groups in China. Mr. Ye has made recent comments saying that China was pursuing a more nuanced approach to controlling religion. Other times Chinese officials have talked about a "golden period" of religious freedom in China.

These documents offer irrefutable proof that the crackdown against unauthorized religious groups and attempts to control religious expression in China are in fact harsh, determined, and emanating from the highest levels. At the same time, the documents betray a palpable anxiety on the part of Communist party and government officials about

the rapid growth of unregistered Christian churches and other religious groups – which, the documents reveal, are even attracting “inner circles” of the communist party and government.

## DOCUMENT 1

This document, on identifying and banning “cultic organizations,” dated April 30, 2000, is a notice “Ministry of Public Security [2000] No.39” from The Ministry of Public Security of the Peoples’ Republic of China and it is classified as a “secret document.” It is addressed to all Public Security offices and bureaus of all provinces, autonomous regions, cities, and the Xinjiang production and construction regiments, and is intended to clarify and implement decisions from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, and the Supreme Court and the Supreme Procuratorate.

Copies of the document were to be sent to General Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, the General Office of the State Council, the Central Committee of Political and Legal Commission, the Supreme Court, the Supreme Procuratorate, the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the State Bureau of Religious Affairs, the Legal Office of the State Council, and the Party Committee of Ministry of Public Security.

The particular directives on which it draws are “Opinion On Relevant Issues Concerning Dealing With some Socially Harmful Qi Gong Organizations” issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council” (Central Directive [2000] No.5), the “ Decisions On Banning of Cult Organizations, Preventing and Punishing Cult Activities” issued by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress,” and the “Interpretations On Relevant Issues on the Application of the Law Concerning Dealing With Criminal Cases Involving Organizing and Utilizing Cult Organizations” issued by Supreme Court and the Supreme Procuratorate.

Consequently it reflects Chinese government policy at the very highest levels.

Its focus is on “Various Issues Regarding Identifying and Banning of Cultic Organizations.” It describes as a cult:

- a. Those which set up illegal organizations in the name of religion, Qigong, etc.
- b. Those which deify their leaders.
- c. Those which initiate and spread superstitions and heterodox beliefs.
- d. Those that utilize various means to fabricate and spread superstitions and heterodox [or cultic] beliefs to excite doubts and deceive the people, recruit and control its members by means.
- e. Those that engage in disturbing social order in an organized manner that brings injury to the lives and properties of the citizens.

The identification of “cults” is assigned to the Public Security Bureaus. Such cults will be banned and their assets seized. Any houses in which they meet will be sealed and confiscated. The organizers will be subjected to criminal investigation while the ordinary members will not be charged if they were “deceived.”

With this document is an attachment dated July 12, 2001, that lists “Seven cults identified in the documents issued by General Office of the Central Committee of CCP and by the General Office of the State Council” and “Seven Cults identified by the Ministry of Public Security.” Of these groups, with estimated memberships in the hundreds of thousands, ten are broadly Christian, several with congregations in the United States, two are Buddhist, one is the “Unification Church” (formed by Rev. Moon) and the final one is the “Children of God” or “The Family,” which is well known in the West.

The documents are notable for their crudeness in understanding the religions they purport to describe. To give but two examples. Li Chang-shou, a leader in the “Shouter” church, is accused of changing the words of the Bible from “Call upon the name of the Lord,” to asking the believers to cry out “ Lord Chang-shou.” However, Chang-shou (Cangshou) can mean “always receiving” and in Chinese the sound of these two words can also mean “enjoy.” So “changshou zhu” can mean “enjoy the Lord” as well as “Lord Cangshou.” Li Chang-shou is also accused of having twisted the doctrines of Christianity by claiming, “Christ is I, and I am Christ.” It is likely that he was referring to Paul’s letter to the Galatians: “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20), a text which can be heard in any American church.

Since these Chinese security officials are ignorant of the Bible, they misinterpret the basic Christian claim that Christ is in the believer, and falsely accuse a group of “deifying its leader.” More particularly, this officially atheist state and its officially atheist security officials are setting themselves up as the arbiters of true religious doctrine and, on this basis, imprisoning and torturing religious believers.

## DOCUMENT 2

This document is from the office of the Department of Public Security of Anhui Province, dated March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and classified as “Confidential.” It is a February 21, 2001, speech by Sun Jianxin, the Vice Director of the Department, and deals with implementing decisions from a national meeting of the Public Security Bureaus. It focuses on China’s national security issues including political dissident groups, the crackdown on Falun Gong and on underground Protestant and Catholic churches, as well as tactics of intelligence gathering both domestically and overseas.

The speech repeatedly refers to the use of “secret agents” to infiltrate “cults,” underground Catholics, businesses, joint ventures, people with ‘complicated political backgrounds,’ prestigious colleges and universities and other organizations:

“Secret forces are the heart and soul in covert struggles and the crucial magic weapon in our battle against and victory over the enemy. The level of secret forces construction decides the quality of the intelligence information and intensity and strength of

reconnaissance. All public security authorities should solidly establish the thought of “focusing on present struggles while persevering in long-term struggles” and make sure that the construction of secret forces goes on as well. They should make overall plans and appropriately distribute forces and work, and eventually build up a system of secret forces with various forms at different levels, in which the secret agents are its main part, and friends, spies, informants and liaison personnel are the supporting part. We should actively build up secret forces, fill in the blanks to make the structure of secret forces more plausible and their qualities and function dramatically improved in regard to the following prominent individuals and organizations: important individuals, key objects, complicated areas and the front that needs controlling, etc. – especially the key and professional members of “Falungong,” the illegal organizations, the underground Catholics, cults; key members and important individuals from harmful *qigong* organizations, “joint ventures of three-part investments” (“*san zi*), with complicated political backgrounds, private enterprises and business companies, as well as the more prestigious and influential colleges and universities. The public security authorities of the province, cities and counties should find and train a group of “extraordinary” (*jian zi*) special spies who have wide range of detecting activities and can keep cool in any unexpected situation and who can also penetrate into the inner circle of the suspects or near them to reconnoiter, grasp and control the crucial front.”

The speech also betrays some paranoia. It also raises particular concerns about public unrest upon China’s entry into the WTO:

“The hostile elements in our province may increase their illegal activities as we are joining the WTO, and further opening up and the antagonistic powers abroad would provide more support and give more money to the key members of the ‘democratic movement’.”

“We also need to pay close attention to those issues that may have obvious effects on social stability, such as finance, state-owned business companies which have gone through reform, deficit or bankruptcy, and those companies that may experience a huge impact from our joining the WTO.”

The West is seen as particularly promoting unrest in China at this time:

“The hostile Western powers headed by the USA have hastened to carry on their strategies of “westernizing” (*xi hua*), “segregating” (*fen hua*), and “impairing” (*ruo hua*) our country. They have gathered anti-China and ant-Communist forces and have striven to build up a power domain all around our country in an attempt to form an “Asian and Pacific group security system” (*ya tai ji ti an quan ti xi*) led by the USA so as to tie us up. The hostile organizations both in our country and abroad have shifted their focus to the inside of our country and have hastened their infiltration through various methods, such as via foundations or academic delegations, and all kinds of media.”

Such western support is tied to democracy movements (“Democratic Party of China”) and also to religious ones, especially Falun Gong:

“With the intervention and support from the USA and Taiwan, the cult organization “Falungong” has speeded up its collusion with the antagonistic powers and openly defies our government. It has become a political tool used by the antagonistic powers.”

With Falun Gong, the speech says that in the previous year, 30 people [“Falungong members] have had sentences passed against them, over 255 have been educated through forced labor (*lao jiao*), 949 were arrested for criminal offences (*xing ju*) and 1016 were arrested for security concerns (*zhi ju*), and that China’s Ministry of Public Security had praised their work.

Another particular concern is the repression of unregistered Catholics. It says that as China and the Vatican were engaged in negotiation over diplomatic relations, the Province’s security officials, together with the United Front [the Communist Party body charged with implementing religion policy in China] and the government department of religion began a major crackdown to control and “convert” Catholics.

When the Vatican canonized Chinese saints on October 1, 2000, the Bureau also tightened its security:

“As China and the Vatican discussed establishing diplomatic relations, the public security bodies in the entire province, together with the United Front (*tong zhan*) and religion department, began to search, educate, convert, reconnoiter and control some key members of the underground Catholics. They discovered the whereabouts of some important individuals and found out the movement of the key members of the underground Catholics. With regard to the “canonization” on October 1 by the Vatican authority in Rome, the public security bodies in each area took an initial step and began to tighten the security and control in advance, successfully preventing illegal activities that might have been triggered by the event and protecting social stability during this sensitive period.”

The speech also claims that the Vatican incites Chinese Catholic to rebel:

“After its effort of canonization was rejected by our government, the Vatican is still waiting for any opportunity to intervene with the internal affairs of the Catholic churches in our country. They will draw the patriotic religious believers up to them and incite them to rebel. They will also provide support to the underground Catholics to sabotage the stability in the Catholic churches [registered with the government]. Under their influence, the key members of the underground Catholic churches may speed up their connection and resume their activities.”

Despite the efforts it outlines, the speech gives evidence that the government campaign of repression against religious groups is unsuccessful:

“The struggle against “Falungong” is long and complicated because the situation is still critical and the tasks are arduous.”



“Some of the cult organizations came back from the ashes (*si hui fu ran*) and resumed their activities. Though having been banned by the public security bodies in the past few years, some cults, like “Mainland China Administrative Executive Station” (*zhong hua da lu xing zheng zhi shi zhan*), the “Disciples” (*men tu hui*), “All Powerful God” (*quan neng shen*), “Total Scope Church” (*quan fan wei jiao hui*), and “the Shouters” (*hu han pai*) etc., have not stopped their illegal activities. Their key members have either altered their techniques or divided into small groups but are still busy clandestinely making connections. They actively conducted large-scale so-called “training sessions” and frequently held “communication” meetings (*jiao tong hui*) attempting to regroup the old members and waiting for the right time to carry out their plots. Some cult organizations attempt to infiltrate our party and government organizations to seek protection and to start businesses for the purpose of “supporting churches with business” (*yi shang yang jiao*). Those tendencies mentioned above really deserve our close attention.”

### DOCUMENT 3

Document 3 is dated 1999 and designated "Classified: Secret." It is a notice of the Public Security Bureau from Anhui province on "Further Strengthening of the Investigation Work on the Cultic Organization 'Almighty God.'"

The group appears to be the same as the "Real God" group whose founder is identified as Zhao Weishan, and is a splinter of the Shouter Christian charismatic movement. The document notes that the Public Security police began to investigate the group in earnest in 1998. It is a call to continue these efforts as the police note the group continues to grow and spread across China.

The document implies that the police are losing control of religion in the face of the burgeoning movement and suggests that they are taking some heat from high-level officials. It resembles a pep talk in tone: "Comrades, we have already stepped into a new era. Let us take this meeting as the crux, unify our thoughts, get excited, strengthen our confidence, conduct solid work and make more and bigger contributions in maintaining the social and political stability in the entire province in the new era so that the party committee and the government can feel relieved and the people are satisfied."

### DOCUMENT 4

Document 4, dating from October 9, 2001, is the most recent document in the compilation. It is an announcement of the Shijiazhuang Public Security Bureau that transmits a speech of the previous year (September 14, 2000) on the "Real God" Christian church (a spin-off of the charismatic Christian movement, the "Shouters"). The speech is given by the deputy director of the religion section of the Public Security of Hebei Province. The announcement was to all political defense sections of the public security bureaus at municipal and county and district levels. It is marked "Confidential."

There is no explanation in the document as to why there was over a year delay in issuing the announcement except for the obvious reason that the concerns of the speech were still relevant. The speech declares that "leaders from the central government, the provincial government and the Ministry of State Public Security attach great importance to the banning the cult 'Real God,' which it finds rivals Falun Gong "in terms of the extent of its spread and the dangers it has created to society."

The speech cites various high level communist officials stating the urgency of crushing the group: Significantly it begins by quoting Hu Jin-tao, designated as the successor of President Jiang Zemin (and touted by some China observers as a member of a younger, more liberal generation of communist party leaders). Hu instructs the government to "deal with it [Real God church] according to law in a timely manner." The Minister of Public Security seems less concerned with the law: "smash the cult quietly," he is quoted ordering in the speech. The Deputy-Secretary of the provincial party committee is quoted instructing police to "round up the whole gang at one strike." The speaker states that the "key" is to "get rid of the core of the cult, and to completely destroy its organizational system," and notes that "the open trial is not appropriate for this cult case."

The speech betrays a palpable panic on the part of communist party and government officials about the rapid growth of the group. It notes that Real God spread from Henan province to 22 other provinces and places, attracting "thousands" of followers, since 1991. Despite efforts to ban the group, the speaker notes that "Real God is still quite active in our province."

It reveals that, aside from its popularity, the authorities know little about the group: "Overall our intelligence work has not touched deep into the core of this cult organization to such a point of a break-through, placing us on the defensive. Generally we lack deep and meticulous investigation and comprehensive analysis and research." Central Politburo member Luo Gan is quoted as admitting "We have not learned much about this cult organization." The speaker states authorities do not know the group's communication network, sources of funding or overseas contacts, and directs the public security police to find the answers.

Part of the official panic may be attributed to the fact that "inner circles" of the communist party and government officials have secretly joined the Christian group. Rather than the intelligence police having infiltrated the group, as the speech reveals, the group has infiltrated the party, and the government: "First, the cult begins to infiltrate into inner circles of the party, government and the 'Three Self-Patriotic Movement' (TSPM), aside from recruiting members from massive people, so as to speed up its spread and enlarge its structure." At a later point, the speaker instructs officials to find out who among them are members of the group.

The speech relies on stock communist party phrases and analysis to explain the danger posed by the group. At one point he asserts that the group is bad for the economy: "The spread of the cult and its illegal activities have seriously disturbed the daily life and

production of massive people." Later, he warns of a political concern that the church will "seriously endanger the rule of the Party, and socialist system as a result."

The document reveals new intelligence about a ecumenical movement between underground Catholics and the charismatic Protestant group: "What is more noteworthy, this cult is hastening its efforts to infiltrate underground Catholic churches so as to increase its strength by uniting with other underground powers. Tangshan public security authority discovers that underground Catholics in areas such as Zunhua, Fengnan and Qianan have joined in hand with this cult."

The speaker also reveals that "some of its top-level core members have been 'elites' of 'June 4' students protest movement of 1989."

In addition to spreading "superstitious heresy," the group is accused of illegally praying for world peace, printing publications, and developing a diocesan, parish and prayer group-like organizational structure -- all normal church activities in the West: "Some misled believers were leaving Shijiazhuang and Baoding for Beijing for 'praying for peace.'" "They also set up an underground printing house, having printed and distributed large amounts of propaganda material." "The cult 'Real God' has a very tight organizational system, ranking in order from 'Real God,' mainland work district, provincial work district, big parish, small parish, section, church and platoon (or 'cell group')."

It describes in some detail the length to which church leaders and activists go to avoid arrest, noting that members use public phone booths, rather than calling from cell or land lines; provide lodgings for leaders who must be constantly on the move; and keep meeting places secret.

The speaker outlines measures to be taken against the group, including surveillance, the deployment of special undercover agents, the gathering of "criminal evidence," interrogation, and arrest, as well as confiscating property. It reads like a counter-intelligence plan.

That officials felt overwhelmed by burgeoning religion beyond its control and regulation is evident in the final directive of the speech: "This special combat of banning the cult will be underway in our province if large-scale Catholic illegal gathering does not take place, and Falun Gong adherents do not cause new trouble." The overall tone of the speech and the fact that it is being disseminated again a year after it was delivered betrays an official sense that Beijing is losing its battle to control religion.

#### DOCUMENT 5

Document 5 is a digest of Public Security Bureau meetings in Heilongjiang Province during the month of August 2000. It is dated September 4, 2000, and marked "Top Secret."

This document chronicles the near daily preoccupation by the Public Security Bureau with concerns about controlling and "cracking down" on various unauthorized religious groups.

It lists a day-by-day summary of activities, meetings and concerns of the police. It reveals that public security authorities were seriously concerned with developing better strategies for stopping the groups. The religious groups most frequently cited are Falun Gong and Real God church.

For example, in an excerpt from August 8, it states: "The Department sent personnel to accompany Wang Xiaoxi, deputy director of the Department, to Daqing city and Harbin city to listen to reports on how the two cities are cracking down on the cult Falun Gong and to make intensive discussion on the long-term strategies for handling Falun Gong."

#### DOCUMENT 6

This is a document classified "Top Secret" which outlines, according to security officials, the nature and activities of the "Real God" group. As noted in the margins of the original document, it is incomplete because the person who was photocopying it had to stop when someone came in.

#### DOCUMENT 7

This is a "Document For the General Squad of Domestic Security and Defense of the Beijing Bureau of Public Security," marked State Defense Number [2001] 530, classified "Top Secret," and dated August 9, 2001. It bears the official seal of the General Squad of National Security and Defense of Beijing Bureau of Public Security. Its purpose is to describe the "South China Church," which it labels as an "evil cult," and the Chinese government's attempts to repress it. The document orders "the security squad, surveillance squad, domestic defense squad, relics protection squad and all the local public security offices" to carry out the arrest of its leader, Gong Shengliang, and other top leaders of the church and to complete the "complete demolition of [the church's] organizational system." Given the document's source, it is inconceivable that this directive did not originate at the highest levels of the Chinese government.

The South China Church is known within the Chinese underground Christian community and to churches in the United States. Founded by Gong in 1991 as a break-off group from Peter Xu's All Ranges Church "Quan Fan Wei" [also known as the "Total Scope Church" or "Born Again" movement], it is a large evangelical congregation estimated to have at least 50,000 members in eight provinces in China. It is respected among many underground Chinese Christians. Pastor Gong is well known within Chinese Christian circles as a third-generation Christian from a pious family, married with several children. Gong was in hiding for several months after the Public Security Bureau placed him on a most wanted list for unauthorized religious activity. After being held in the Jingmen detention center in his native Hubei Province, he has now been sentenced to death along with one of his co-leaders. Several members of the church have written that they were tortured by Chinese security officials to testify falsely against him. (copies of their letters are on file at Freedom House).