



China



Christians sit in the rubble of their ruined church building

Image Source: [China Aid](#)

Christianity is officially allowed to exist in China only under the close control of the government. Christians may worship legally only as part of the national, state-controlled churches, and their activities are restricted and sometimes arbitrarily curtailed. Even members of these churches suffer discrimination; because religious belief is incompatible with membership of the Communist Party, they are barred from almost all high-level jobs.

China's unregistered "house churches" exist in constant danger of official repression. The Communist government regards them as "unstable social elements". Their members may be subject to violent attack, and leaders are often arrested and thrown into jail, where they may be beaten or tortured.

Seventy children attending a house-church summer camp in Xinjiang, China, were rounded up for questioning in a police raid in July 2012. Seven of their teachers were locked up in a local detention centre.

In November 2012 nine Christians, who were providing free medical services and sharing the Gospel with those they treated, were detained by police in Inner Mongolia. Two of them were sentenced to serve time in "re-education-through-labour" prison camps, and their medical equipment was confiscated.

Christianity has a long history in China. It was first introduced no later than the sixth century, probably by Orthodox Christians. Catholics arrived in the thirteenth century, and Protestant missionaries from 1807. Under their influence the number of Christians increased rapidly, leading to waves of persecution.

All missionaries were expelled in 1949, and the Communist government sought to bring organised Christianity under state control. But during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) Christian activity was forced underground, and the house church movement was born. After restrictions were somewhat relaxed in the late 1970s the churches began to grow rapidly.

Despite worsening persecution today, increasing numbers of Chinese people are still coming to Christ. Although reliable figures are not available, the authorities admit there are around 50 million Christians in unregistered churches, in addition to the same number in the official denominations. The real number may be twice as high.

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