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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Jubilee Campaign, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

The Targeting of Christian Faith Leaders for Arbitrary Detention in China

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue on the report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Jubilee Campaign wishes to urgently draw the Council's attention to the concerns regarding China's continuing and widespread practice of arbitrary detention. In recent years we have witnessed a continuation of this practice which gravely undermines human rights, rule of law, and international standards.

Christian Leaders and Believers

Provincial and local government authorities continue to arbitrarily detain Christian leaders and believers; meanwhile, prison officers deny many of these detainees attorney visits or contact with their families. In some cases, prisoners of conscience are refused medical treatment and receive harsh sentences disproportionate to their alleged crimes. Other Christians are detained for prolonged pre-trial detention while their cases are repeatedly postponed.

In its Religious Freedom in the World Report 2021, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) states "the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has one of the most pervasive and effective state-run engines of religious control currently in operation anywhere in the world".¹

According to Open Doors, China scored 77/100 persecution points.² For indicator 6.3, "How many Christians have been detained without trial for faith-related reasons?", China ranks sixth with an estimated 100 such recorded incidents. China ranks third for indicator 6.4 with approximately 100 Christians "hav[ing] been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons".³ It must be noted, however, that Open Doors includes the following caveat: "nearly all totals include the use of several 'symbolic numbers' (e.g., 10*, 100*, 1000*, or 10,000*), and that the numbers presented are much lower than in reality." For example, "a symbolic number of 10 could in reality be much more than 10, but the real number is uncertain; the same applies for the other symbolic numbers".

Jubilee Campaign wants to highlight the following cases:

Elder Wu Jiannan

On 24 December 2021, Deyang's Jinyang District People's Procuratorate approved the arrest of Elder Wu Jiannan of Qingcaodi Church in Sichuan province, charging him with "fraud."

Elder Wu's defense lawyer attempted to visit the detention centre twice to speak with his client in accordance with the law, but authorities denied his visitation request. The detention centre insisted that Elder Wu's attorney was not permitted to advise his client as his case might involve national security and state secrets, a common tactic to justify the denial of myriad prisoners' access to defense.

Wu Tingmin, the father of Wu Jiannan, posted an article titled "A Father's Appeal: Please Release My Son" on the Chinese social media platform Weibo in May 2023. "Today I want to speak up for the persecution and injustice my son Wu Jiannan underwent because of his Christian belief," he wrote. According to Wu, his son has been held in the detention center for over a year without any word of an upcoming trial.⁴

¹ Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), *Religious Freedom in the World Report 2021: Executive Summary*, April 2021.

² Open Doors World Watch Research, *China: Full Country Dossier*, December 2022.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ ChinaAid, "Qingcaodi Church: Elder Wu Jiannan's Father Calls for Son's Release", 5 May 2023.

Pastor Hao Zhiwei

On 31 July 2019, authorities arrested Pastor Hao Zhiwei of Egangqiao Church, a house church in Ezhou, Hubei province, because she refused to join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). After more than two and a half years' imprisonment, Echeng District Court sentenced her to eight years for "fraud" on 11 February 2022. The government's justification for Pastor Hao's sentence was that she participated in evangelism and received offerings without approval from TSPM and China Christian Council (CCC). Pastor Hao decided to appeal after the trial. On 12 December 2022, Ezhou City Intermediate People's Court issued a final decision in response to her appeal, deciding to uphold the original verdict.

Church of the Rock

Church of the Rock (Panshi Church) is a house church located in Huinong District, Shizuishan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. On 5 December 2021, police and national security agents from Huinong District Public Security Bureau raided the church during its Sunday service at a remote one-level venue. Elderly Christians were asked to write down their personal information and leave. Authorities transported the remaining worshippers to the police station for interrogation. The following day, evangelist Geng Zejun was administratively detained for 15 days under the charge of "disturbing social order." His wife Hao Ying, along with Luo Shiping, Ye Ningfang, Zhu Junying, and Wang Sufang, were administratively detained for 10 days. On 4 January 2022, at 8:30 am, police summoned Geng Zejun again, only half a month after his release. When his family called the police station, they were informed that Geng had been criminally detained on suspicion of "organizing and funding illegal gatherings." He was formally arrested on 25 January under the aforementioned charge, and the other five detained Christians were presented the same charge and subsequently released on bail.

On 13 July, Geng Zejun was tried by Huinong District Court in Shizuishan. The trial was conducted via video and lasted nearly seven hours. Geng refused to cooperate with the authorities to plead guilty; meanwhile, his lawyer defended his innocence. The prosecution requested a sentence of imprisonment for a period of eleven months. In mid-August, Geng was sentenced to 15 months, and his co-defendants Luo Shiping and Wang Suwang were both sentenced to six months, plus confiscation of bibles, hymn books, over 250,000 yuan (~\$36,853), and other items.

On 19 March 2023, authorities released Church of the Rock pastor Geng Zejun after he completed his sentence.⁵

Nu ethnicity

Five Christians who had been detained since August 2022 for leading Bible studies were released on bail by the authorities in China's Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province on 7 May 2023.

Three ethnic Nu men from the local area, Wang Shunping, Nu Sangdeng, and San Luobo, and two women from other parts of China, Hua Xiuxia and Dong Mengru, were detained for allegedly 'organising and sponsoring an illegal gathering' in early August 2022, which in reality consisted of prayer and free Bible and music lessons for young people.

Four other Christians who took part in the Bible study were taken into custody on 12 January 2023, however they were released five days later.⁶

Shengjia Church

⁵ ChinaAid, "Pastor Geng Zejun Released from Prison", 23 March 2023.

⁶ ChinaAid, "Wang Shunping Officially Arrested", 30 September 2022.

In August 2023, local police arrested an elder of Shengjia Church for “illegal business operations.” He is the fifth member of Shengjia Church to be arrested under this charge.

The defendant’s sister, Zhu Qiaoling, and his brother, Zhu Longjiang, had already been detained on 24 May 2023. On 10 August, Zhu Longfei’s family received a detention notice from the public security bureau stating that the defendant was arrested on the same charges as his siblings and held in the same detention center.

Deng Yanxiang, Wang Weicai, Zhu Longjiang, and Zhu Qiaoling were all detained for alleged “illegal business operations.”⁷

Conclusion & Recommendations

The continuation of arbitrary detention in China demands immediate and robust attention from the international community. The Human Rights Council's commitment to upholding human rights, justice, and the rule of law is indispensable in addressing these urgent concerns. By standing firmly against arbitrary detention and holding those responsible accountable, the Council will send a resounding message that human rights are not negotiable and that the world's commitment to justice remains unshaken.

With consideration of the above violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, Jubilee Campaign proposes that the following recommendations be raised to the People’s Republic of China by the United Nations Human Rights Council and its Member States:

1. Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
2. Cease the arbitrary arrest of human rights defenders, religious leaders and believers and Respecting the right to freedom of religion or belief;
3. Release unconditionally and with immediate effect all those detained for religious activities;
4. Incorporate into domestic policy the protections of religious freedoms outlined in international conventions and accords to which China has acceded;
5. Remove vague language and discriminatory provisions in domestic legal framework which stigmatize faith communities and mischaracterize them as abnormal, extremist, separatist, and/or dangerous;
6. Extend legal recognition to other faith communities in China, including folk and indigenous religions, and spiritual practices;
7. Cease the practice of arbitrarily and violently raiding houses of worship and the arrest of faith leaders for their leadership of religious communities and their legitimate resistance to the Chinese government’s encroachment upon the rights and liberties thereof;
8. Combat corruption in China’s judiciary by allowing for independent and impartial judicial decisions; and provide equal opportunities for legal remedy to individuals whose rights have been violated.

⁷ ChinaAid, “Five Coworkers Arrested in Shengjia Church Case”, 16 August 2023.