

## News Update on Religion and Church in China September 18 – November 30, 2015

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*The “News Update on Religion and Church in China” appears regularly in each issue of Religions & Christianity in Today’s China (RCTC). Since the editorial staff learns of some items only later, it can happen that there are chronological overlaps between “News Updates” of two consecutive issues of RCTC. In these cases stories referred to in earlier “News Updates” will not be repeated. All “News Updates” can be found online at the website of the China-Zentrum ([www.china-zentrum.de](http://www.china-zentrum.de)). – The last “News Update” (RCTC 2015, Nos. 3-4, pp. 3-44) covered the period March 4 – September 28, 2015.*

September 18, 2015:

### **Xinjiang: Many dead following attack on coal mine**

According to reports from the US-based broadcaster *Radio Free Asia (RFA)*, the first to report on the incident, at least 50 people were killed and 50 others were wounded by attackers armed with knives at the Sogan coal mine in Bay (Baicheng) in the Aksu Prefecture of Xinjiang. It took almost two months for the Chinese government to confirm that the attack had occurred, and the government only acknowledged it on November 14 – the day after the terrorist attack in Paris. On November 20, the government news agency *Xinhua* mentioned that there were 16 dead – 11 civilians, 3 policemen and 2 members of the security forces. Most of the victims were apparently Han Chinese coal miners. The attack took place amid preparations for state celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Autonomous Region of Xinjiang on October 1, 1955. On November 20, *Xinhua* reported that police had shot and killed 28 of the terrorists who had fled into the mountains. One had turned himself in to the authorities. *Xinhua* said that “the terrorist group was directly guided by an overseas extremist group” and was headed up by two local men by the name of Musa Tohniyaz and Mamat Aysa. Already on October 16, *RFA* had quoted a local government official as having identified relatives of these two men (among whom were three women and two children) and of one other Uyghur man as being suspects in the attack. The official suggested that one probable motive for the attack could be retaliation for being harassed by the local government in the course of its campaign to root out religious extremism. While – as has been reported by *RFA* and by other sources – many in foreign countries, as well as exiled Uyghur groups have been blaming the repressive policies of China in Xinjiang for the ever-growing wave of violence in the Region, President Xi Jinping, in comments made while attending the G20 summit meeting in Antalya on November 15, called for the world to stop using “double standards” when speaking of global terrorism (*Ming Pao* Sept. 25; *Radio Free Asia* Sept. 22, 30; Oct. 8, 16; *South China Morning Post* Nov. 23; *UCAN* Nov. 16; *Xinhua* Nov. 20).

September 28, 2015:

## “Climate Pilgrims” march in Hong Kong



Climate pilgrims on their way. Photo: Ucan.

On September 28, two hundred and fifty persons of various faith traditions – Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, followers of the Baha’i and Sikh religions as well as Brahma Kumaris (Daughters of Brahma) – met together on Lantau Island for a climate pilgrimage. The pilgrimage was organized by the Hong Kong Interfaith Climate Network in preparation for the World Climate Summit scheduled to begin in Paris on November 30. Similar activities took place all around the world. Ciara Shannon, chairperson of the Interfaith Climate Network Hong Kong, said: “The People’s Pilgrimage for Climate Action is a positive and peaceful way for people of all faiths and none to call for a strong and ambitious UN climate deal and 100 per cent clean energy.” In her comments, she made a reference to *Laudato Si’*, the encyclical letter of Pope Francis, as well as to the Islamic Declaration on climate change. The Hong Kong climate march paused at a number of sites, accompanied by reflections given by Bhikkhu Phap Kham, director of the Asian Institute for Applied Buddhism, by the Rev. Catherine Graham of Hong Kong’s St. John’s Anglican Cathedral and by Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha Chi-shing, spiritual director of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Commission for Justice & Peace.

Ciara Shannon also referred to the Global Catholic Climate Movement, which had collected signatures to be presented in Paris prior to the beginning of the UN Climate Change Conference. The Hong Kong Network had also supported the January Declaration of the Colloquium of Six Religious Leaders of Hong Kong on the topic of climate change (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Oct. 17; <http://catholicclimatemovement.global>; see also *RCTC* 2015, No. 2, p. 14).

September 30, 2015:

## Chinese Foreign Ministry responds to the friendly gesture of the Pope – “China is sincere about improving relations with the Vatican”

During his flight back to Rome on September 27 at the conclusion of his visit to the U.S.A., Pope Francis told journalists that he loves the Chinese people and that he hopes for a possibility of good relations. Hong Lei, spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, told the *Global Times* on September 29: “China is sincere about improving relations with the Vatican and has made consistent efforts [toward this goal].” The state-run newspaper also reported on the Pope’s wish to visit China which he had expressed during his return flight from Korea in August of 2014, and on his telegram to President Xi on that occasion. The article, which also addresses the open question of episcopal appointments, nevertheless sees détente between China and the Vatican as being within the realm of possibility, since both sides have changed a lot over the years. *Global Times* cited an earlier statement by Yang Fenggang of Purdue University, U.S.A., an expert in religious studies, who sees evidence of certain similarities between the two leaders, namely, that Pope Francis comes from a developing country and is taking steps to address the need for reform and the problem of corruption in the Church. Wang Meixiu, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences who specializes in Catholicism, was quoted as saying: “Underground churches and the lack of authority of some bishops have become a problem which can impact the stability of Chinese society. We cannot solve those problems without the Vatican’s involvement” (*Global Times* Sept. 30). – See: *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 140-143 (in German); *RCTC* 2015, Nos. 3-4, p. 43.

October 7, 2015:

## Official Chinese website notes that the selection of the clergy and the division of the dioceses in China is not matter of “foreign groups”

On October 7, an article entitled “Uncle Xi speaks on religion,” appeared on the website *Zhongguo Xizang wang* (*China Tibet Online*) and was picked up the next day by the site *Zhongguo minzu bao* (*China Ethnic News*). The article analyzed statements about religion made by President Xi Jinping – in particular, statements from his speech at the Central Conference on the United Front Work on May 20, 2015. The article says that, according to President Xi, one of the basic principles of China’s policy on religion is the “adherence to the principle of autonomous self-government.” With an apparent swipe at the Catholic Church (without naming it), it explains that autonomous self-government of the Church means that “the Chinese themselves take care of the training and selection of the clergy as well as the division and the management of religious dioceses, so certain groups abroad no longer need to break their heads over this question.” The article stresses that autonomous self-government does not mean, however, just to do whatever you want to do; rather, “Uncle Xi” said that religions should be actively guided to adapt to socialism.

The Catholic news agency *UCAN* was of the opinion that, with that article, China’s Communist Party was sending a signal that controls over the Catholic Church and over other religions were going to be intensified. The appointment of bishops and the division of dioceses are central points of contention between the Vatican and China ([www.mzb.com.cn](http://www.mzb.com.cn) Oct. 8; [www.tibet.cn](http://www.tibet.cn) Oct. 7; *UCAN* Oct. 9).

For other aspects of Xi's May 20 talk, see the entry of November 20–21, 2015 (Sinicization of religious work) and the German translation of an interview with Liu Peng in *China heute* 2015, No. 4, pp. 226–231 (strengthening the rule of law in religious work).

**October 8, 2015:**

### **Exhibit of works of Castiglione opens in Taiwan**

To mark the 90th anniversary of Taipei's National Palace Museum, among the largest in the world, an exhibition was opened featuring the works of the famous Italian Jesuit missionary Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766). Castiglione was active in China for 51 years and died in Beijing. He served as court painter to several emperors and was instrumental in making Western painting known in China. He was also known for his ability to integrate Western oil painting with Chinese ink painting (*AsiaNews* Oct. 12).

**October 11, 2015:**

### **Chinese Hajjis return from Mecca**

According to the Chinese Islamic Association (CIA), which is the central organizer of this pilgrimage for China, 14,500 pilgrims from the People's Republic of China took part in this year's Hajj to Mecca. Saudi Arabia fixes the quota of pilgrims from every country who are permitted to travel to Mecca each year. According to a representative of the CIA, each pilgrim has to pay around 38,000 Yuan for the Hajj. Three Chinese pilgrims were among those wounded when a construction crane toppled onto the Great Mosque in Mecca on September 11, an accident in which more than 100 persons lost their lives (*China Daily* Sept. 14; *Global Times* Aug. 25; *Xinhua* Oct. 11).

**October 11–16, 2015:**

### **“Secret” visit by a Vatican delegation in Beijing for a second round of discussions**

According to *UCAN*, which reported on the delegation visit – an event handled discretely by both sides – the six-member Vatican delegation was composed of representatives of the Secretariat of State as well as of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The news agency then gave some further information which they had received from Fr. Jeroom Heyndrickx, CICM, of the Verbiest Institute at Louvain: According to Fr. Heyndrickx, the rumor had spread that both sides had agreed to leave aside – for the time being – negotiations on the more “thorny questions,” such as the release from prison of Bishop Su Zhimin, the clarification of the status of the excommunicated bishops or the normalizing of the situation of Bishop Ma Daqin of Shanghai, and to focus instead on an agreement on the question of the appointment of bishops. Fr. Heyndrickx reported that on October 14 the Vatican delegation visited Bishop Li Shan of Beijing (recognized by Rome and Beijing), and the next day visited the National Seminary, where they were received by the (illegitimate) Bishop Ma Yinglin, Chairman of the official Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference, which is itself not recognized by Rome. Fr. Heyndrickx saw both visits as positive signals that the negotiations had gone well.

Neither the contents and progress of the talks nor the names of those involved were made public. According to *UCAN*, the October meeting was the second to take place following the resumption of formal talks in June of 2014. On October 28, Cardinal Secretary of State Parolin confirmed to Vatican



Radio that the visit of the Vatican delegation to Beijing had taken place. When questioned about the progress of the talks, he said, “The very fact that we are able to talk to each other is a significant step.” He added, all that is being done, is being done in order to reach an understanding and to have normal relations also with China, as with most other countries in the world (*Radio Vaticana* Oct. 29; *UCAN* Oct. 16, 22).

October 13 / November 9, 2015:

## Tibetan exile organization reports mass expulsions and other acts of repression against monasteries in Driru County

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) in Dharamsala has reported that in Pekar (Chinese: Baiga) Township in Driru (Biru) County in the Tibet Autonomous Region's Nagqu Prefecture, for three days beginning from September 27, the head of the county government visited Jada Gaden Khachoeing Nunnery and expelled one hundred out of a total of two hundred nuns from the nunnery. The expelled nuns were prohibited, under threat of serious consequences for their families, to wear their habits at home or to go to other areas to continue their studies. The authorities have also adopted rules which would force even registered nuns over 50 years of age to leave their monasteries and move into retirement homes, the TCHRD said.

These measures were preceded on September 19, 2015, by the adoption of Document No. 224 of the Party and the government of the Driru County, which calls for an intensified purification and reform of religious institutions in the county. According to the TCHRD, which reported on the document, it contains the following provisions: the finances and activities of all religious institutions are to be closely monitored. Both monks and nuns will now be required to take part in weekly political education sessions. The county government has the sole right to appoint reincarnations and other prominent religious figures. Reincarnated and other prominent religious personalities are barred from the traditional practice of using their mediation skills in resolving local disputes. Monks who were accepted into the monasteries beyond the quotas permitted by the government are to be expelled. According to the TCHRD, officials who fail to implement these measures will be warned or punished with salary withdrawal and/or dismissal.

The TCHRD wrote that Driru County is considered by the Chinese authorities to be particularly unstable. It said that it knows of 104 Tibetans in Driru County who since 2012 have been arbitrarily arrested, tortured, imprisoned or have disappeared; four of them have disappeared permanently and four have died in police custody ([www.tchrd.org](http://www.tchrd.org) Oct. 13; Nov. 9).

October 19–24, 2015:

## Patriotic course in Guizhou for leading official Catholic clergy – Administration for Religious Affairs urges “steadfast adherence to the autonomous self-government” of the Church

According to information provided on its own website, the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) has organized a tour to southwest China's Guizhou Province for a 25-member group of bishops, priests, sisters and lay people. At the event marking the official launch of the tour, Chen Zongrong, deputy director of SARA, spoke about the meaning of the “love for the country and love for the Church” and how to persevere with it even more in the new situation. He added that the main expression of this love in the current phase is: to firmly implement the religious policy of the Party, to reinforce one's own [i.e., the governing board's] self-construction, to persevere in moving in the

direction of Sinification, democratic governance of the Church and service to society. Chen urged the church leaders to adhere unwaveringly to the principle of autonomous self-government of the Church [meaning: independent from Rome].

The chairmen, vice-chairmen and secretaries-general of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the official Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference as well as Church representatives from some other important provinces and cities took part in the trip. According to the SARA report, the trip also included a concelebrated Mass in the cathedral of the "Guizhou Diocese" ([www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn) Oct. 27; see: *UCAN* Oct. 30).

**October 21–23, 2015:**

## Message of Pope Francis to international Ricci Congress

Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin has sent a telegram on behalf of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, to Msgr. Nazzareno Marconi, the Bishop of Macerata/Italy, on the occasion of the international congress on the Jesuit Fr. Matteo Ricci. Macerata is the native city of Matteo Ricci. The congress on the topic "New perspectives in the studies on Matteo Ricci" was organized by the University of Macerata and the Confucius Institute of Macerata and held from 21 to 23 October. In his text, the Pope expressed his appreciation for the initiative, "intended to facilitate detailed study of the missionary work and cultural activity carried out by Fr. Ricci, born in Macerata and a friend of the dear Chinese people." The Holy Father also expressed the hope that "the memory of such a zealous man of the Church, attentive to social changes and committed to interweaving relations between the European and Chinese cultures, may reaffirm the importance of dialogue between cultures and religions in a climate of mutual respect and with a view to the common good" ([www.jesuiten.org](http://www.jesuiten.org) Oct. 22; [www.news.va/en](http://www.news.va/en) [*Vatican Information Service*] Oct. 22; [www.diocesimacerata.it/news/25-in-evidenza/443-telegramma-del-santo-padre-francesco-per-il-convegno-internazionale-a-macerata-su-p-matteo-ricci.html](http://www.diocesimacerata.it/news/25-in-evidenza/443-telegramma-del-santo-padre-francesco-per-il-convegno-internazionale-a-macerata-su-p-matteo-ricci.html)).

**October 24–25, 2015:**

## Fourth World Buddhist Forum (WBF) in Wuxi

More than a thousand participants from 52 countries took part in the event. The Forum – like the three previously held World Buddhist Forums – was organized by the Chinese Buddhist Association (CBA) and the China Religious Culture Communication Association, an organization under the umbrella of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA). Speaking at the closing event, Wang Zuo'an, the director of SARA, said that the state considered the event to be of great importance. In his opening speech, Master Xuecheng, chairman of the CBA, called on Buddhists all over the world to cultivate an exchange between the different Buddhist traditions, between different religions and between Buddhism and modern science and technology. One Forum panel discussion dealt with the theme: "Buddhism and New Media." In another panel discussion, the 25 year old state-appointed Panchen Lama spoke on the formation of young monks and on the importance of monastic discipline, saying that young monks need to learn self-control and resistance to external temptations. According to *China Daily*, he spoke of the phenomena of roaming monks, many of whom have broken monastic precepts, and said that they remain a challenge and a problem which the religion needs to monitor and rectify. In the face of great social change, he exhorted monks of Tibetan monasteries to adapt themselves to these new times and to the new society (website Buddhist World Forum: [www.wbfls.org](http://www.wbfls.org); *China Daily* Oct. 25).

October 29, 2015:

## Changes in China's birth control policy: One-child policy abolished

At its annual General Assembly, the Central Committee of China's Communist Party decided that, in future, all couples in China are to be allowed to bring a second child into the world. The corresponding change in the law is expected to be adopted by the National People's Congress in March of 2016 and then implemented by the provincial governments. Previously, it was already legal for rural families to have a second child if the first was a girl. The one-child policy had already been eased a few years ago with a ruling that married couples, who themselves were both only children, were permitted to have a second child. And from 2013, families where only one of the two parents was an only child would also be allowed to have two children. – Many families in the countryside did not comply with the requirements and had several children, which resulted either in heavy fines or in many illegal existences when births were not registered. Children born beyond the quota allowed by the state have no legal civil status. The one-child policy, introduced in the late 1970s, led to an increase of selective, sex-based abortions; this, in turn, resulted in a disproportionately high number of male births. The policy also led to a rapidly aging population without adequate government support and even labor shortages. Many women were traumatized at being forced by the authorities to undergo abortions and sterilization against their wills. – In recent years, relatively few couples have submitted applications for permission to have a second child. According to an October 30 article in the *South China Morning Post*, the high cost of living, limited health care, enormous costs for a child's education, deteriorating air quality as well as the pressure to support the elderly have kept many couples from thinking about having another child. Experts are of the opinion that, from a demographic point of view, the change in the one-child policy has come too late – the damage is already done. The new policy is more of a political and humanitarian character than a cure for demographic ills, thus the experts. The projected increase in population growth, rather lower than expected, would not be sufficiently large to alter the age pyramid or put an end to the shrinking workforce (*South China Morning Post* Oct. 29, 30; Nov. 16; *Xinhua* Oct. 29; Nov. 19).

October 30, 2015:

## Buddhist sect founder Wu Zeheng sentenced to life imprisonment

A court in Zhuhai has sentenced Wu for “organizing/using a cult to undermine implementation of the law” (12 years), “rape” (life), “fraud” (14 years) and “production and sale of harmful food products” (6 years). In addition, the court imposed a fine of 7.15 million yuan (1.13 million U.S. dollars). Three of Wu's followers were sentenced to prison terms of 3 or 4 years. The Hong Kong-based organization Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) described the fine imposed against Wu in a closed trial as “excessively harsh and grossly unjust.” The state news agency *Xinhua* said, however, that among other things, Wu had convinced women to sleep with him by claiming that he was able to give them supernatural powers; he was also said to have accumulated 6.7 million Yuan in ill-gotten profits.

In the early 1990s, Wu Zeheng founded the Buddhist-inspired group Huazang zongmen. In 1999 he published an open letter calling for government reforms. In 2000 he was sentenced to 11 years in prison for economic crimes. According to the website [www.chinachange.org](http://www.chinachange.org), following his release in 2010 he was placed under house arrest in Zhuhai, but still found ways to build up his religious following, “attracting thousands of believers around the world.” In July 2014, he and dozens of his supporters were arrested in raids on several companies and on various houses belonging to the Huazang zongmen

movement (www.chinachange.org Nov. 3; www.chrdnet.com Nov. 5; *UCAN* Nov. 2; *Xinhua* Oct. 31). – See: *RCTC* 2015, Nos. 3-4, p. 31.

### End of October 2015:

## Reports: Campaign to forcibly remove crosses in Zhejiang has subsided – but at least 20 Christians are still being detained in unknown locations

*UCAN* reported in an article on October 29 that since September the campaign by the authorities in Zhejiang Province to tear down crosses from Christian buildings has subsided. On October 30, China Aid quoted a local Christian as saying that the Cross removals have mostly come to an end. Since the beginning of 2014, roof and steeple crosses had been removed from more than 1,500 Protestant and Catholic churches in the province.

China Aid, citing local sources, reported that between August 25 and October 24, 2015, in the cities of Wenzhou and Jinhua, at least 20 Protestant Christians who had resisted cross removals have been placed under “residential surveillance in a designated location.” (For further details on this form of *incommunicado* detention see the entry of November 12, 2015). It is unknown where these individuals are being held, China Aid reported. It said that the authorities deny them access to their lawyers on the grounds that they are suspected of having illegally obtained and passed on state secrets. According to China Aid, among those being detained in this manner are Pastor Huang Yizi of the Fengwo Church (who had been released from prison on August 1, 2015, only to be rearrested on September 12) and the Beijing lawyer Zhang Kai and his two assistants. Zhang Kai had founded the group “Lawyers for Protection of the Cross” to offer legal advice to Protestant congregations in Zhejiang who wanted to protect their crosses. On August 25, he was arrested on charges of, among others, leaking state secrets to foreign organizations (www.chinaaid.org Oct. 30; *UCAN* Oct. 29).

### November 7, 2015:

## Summit meeting between Xi Jinping and Ma Ying-jeou in the run-up to the presidential elections in Taiwan and speculation about the position of Taiwan in the current Sino-Vatican negotiations

On November 7, the historic, first ever meeting between a President of the People’s Republic of China and a President of the Republic of China on Taiwan took place in Singapore. Even as the summit meeting between Xi Jinping and Ma Ying-jeou was taking place, in Taiwan the election campaign for the presidential elections on January 16, 2016 was in full swing. Although neither the summit nor the Taiwanese elections directly involve the Vatican, some observers saw the potential impact of both on the Sino-Vatican relations. They said that the People’s Republic of China has no interest in harming Taiwanese President Ma and his Kuomintang party, which represents a policy of rapprochement with Beijing, by establishing diplomatic relations with the Vatican. This could change, however, should the presidential candidate in Taiwan, Tsai Ing-wen, whom the polls indicate is in the lead, win the election on 16 January 2016. Tsai’s Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) tends to favor Taiwan’s independence from Mainland China. Francis Kuo, writing for *UCAN*, said that if Tsai wins the election and steers Taiwan on a course towards independence, some observers think that Beijing probably will pressure the Holy See to break off its diplomatic relations with Taiwan. In tandem with Tsai Ing-wen, Philip Chen



Chien-jen, a Catholic and an independent, is running for the office of vice president. The Holy See is one of the few political entities in the world still maintaining diplomatic relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan, and Beijing insists on the termination of those relations as a precondition of normalizing its own relations with the Vatican (*UCAN* Nov. 6, 10, 17, 20).

November 8, 2015:

## Chinese “underground” priest dies in mysterious circumstances



Pedro Yu Heping. Photo: Internet.

On November 11, police informed relatives that the body of underground Catholic priest, Father Pedro Yu Heping, had been discovered in the Fen River at Taiyuan (Shanxi) on November 8. The circumstances of his death were unclear, however those who knew him well absolutely ruled out any possibility of suicide. According to the Chinese Catholic website *Tianzhujiao zaixian*, the police investigation had not been completed as of November 26.

Fr. Pedro Yu Heping was born in Shanxi in 1974. He studied in the underground seminary of Baoding and was ordained a priest in 2004. He belonged to the Diocese of Ningxia in the underground. From 2001 he studied in Spain, where he obtained a Master's Degree in Canon Law and a further degree in Catholic Social Teaching. He returned to China in 2007. Fr. Yu had been one of the co-founders of the popular Catholic website *Tianzhujiao zaixian* in the early 2000s. According to *UCAN*, in recent years he busied himself with the editing of a theological journal and also spent his time on research of theological and cultural themes. He gave retreats and formation workshops and also accompanied young Catholics on various service projects in outlying regions of China (*AsiaNews* Nov. 16; [www.cardinalkungfoundation.org](http://www.cardinalkungfoundation.org) Nov. 13; [www.chinacath.com](http://www.chinacath.com) Nov. 13 [information superseded by an update on November 26]; [www.china.ucanews.com](http://www.china.ucanews.com) Nov. 16; *UCAN* Nov. 16). – See also *China heute* 2015, No. 4, pp. 208-210 (in German).

November 9, 2015:

## Party chief of Tibet calls for action against “two-faced” Party cadres who believe in a religion and secretly follow the Dalai Lama

A ruling party with 87 million members will only be able to preserve its unity, combat strength, cohesive force and purity when there is observance of political discipline, said Chen Quanguo, Party chief of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), in an interview published in the “Chinese Newspaper for Discipline Inspection and Control.” This is especially important in Tibet, Chen said. He stressed that the Party must strictly investigate and punish those party cadres who “in the question of true and false ‘have two faces,’ whose understanding of nationalities is incorrect, and who pretend they do not believe in a religion, when in fact they secretly do believe.” He demanded the same thing for cadres who are “followers of the clique of the 14th Dalai Lama, who take part in infiltration, who travel abroad to worship the Dalai Lama and to take part in [his] Dharma gatherings and Sutra lectures, and who send their own children to schools of the Dalai Lama clique.” According to Chen Quanguo, this year in the TAR there already have been investigations into 19 cases of breach of discipline and 20 persons have been

punished (*Zhongguo jijian jiancha bao* Nov. 9, according to [www.csr.mos.gov.cn/content/2015-11/09/content\\_19075.htm](http://www.csr.mos.gov.cn/content/2015-11/09/content_19075.htm) ; [www.chinadigitaltimes.net](http://www.chinadigitaltimes.net) Nov. 11).

**November 11, 2015:**

## Survey: promotion of Chinese NGOs by foreign organizations has declined sharply due to proposed new legislation

A survey of 200 Chinese NGOs, the results of which were presented at Beijing on November 11, 2015, has revealed that the promotion and support of such organizations by foreign NGOs and foundations has declined sharply in the year 2015. For some time now, the work of foreign NGOs in China has been severely hampered by new laws. Among them, in particular, is the Law on National Security (see *China heute* 2015 No. 3, p. 148), a proposed law on cyber security and in particular on the possibility that new regulations for foreign NGOs will be taking effect in the first half of 2016 (on this topic see: *China heute* 2015, No. 2, p. 84; No. 3, pp. 173f.). According to the present draft of this law, foreign NGOs in China will be required to register – in itself a daunting task, given the sheer complexity of the Chinese bureaucratic process. Also provided for in the proposed law is intensive supervision of all foreign NGOs, under which they will be required to obtain government permission for all of their activities and also for all money transfers from abroad into the accounts of Chinese NGOs. Taken together, these measures will be very effective in putting a curb on the possible activities of foreign NGOs in China. Once the law goes into effect, the police and the organs of state security will have very broad powers for monitoring, regulating and controlling the operations of foreign NGOs in China. In anticipation of these provisions foreign NGOs have already sharply reduced their activities in China (*China Development Brief* Nov. 19; *EU-China Newsletter* 2015, No. 5).

Jan Kwee

**November 12, 2015:**

## Amnesty International publishes report on torture in China's criminal justice system

The use of torture to force confessions continues to be widespread among police, even though it is prohibited by both the Criminal Procedure Law and the Police Law. That is the conclusion reached by Amnesty International in its report *No End in Sight. Torture and Forced Confession in China*. Among the causes for these abuses, Amnesty counts above all the lack of independence of the judiciary, excessive powers held by the security authorities, obstructions blocking the work of lawyers and a lack of a legal definition of torture. According to Amnesty, the extraction of confessions through torture remains entrenched in pre-trial detention, in particular in political cases, such as those involving dissidents, ethnic minorities or religious activities.

In recent years the authorities have increasingly used a new form of *incommunicado* detention that was formalized in law in 2013 when revisions to China's Criminal Procedure Law (Article 73) took effect – the “residential surveillance in a designated location” (指定居所监视居住). The law provides for this form of detention for suspects charged with crimes relating to national security, terrorism or serious corruption and bribery. Since prisoners detained in residential surveillance in a designated location have no contact with the outside world, Amnesty says that they are exposed to an increased risk of torture and ill-treatment. According to Amnesty, there are currently 12 lawyers, arrested during the recent crackdown on human rights lawyers that started in July 2015, who are being held in residential surveillance in a designated location ([www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/2730/2015/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/2730/2015/en/); see:

RCTC 2015, Nos. 3-4, pp. 27-28). In addition, according to China Aid, in Zhejiang Province at least 20 Protestant Christians have been subjected to this form of detention due to their resistance to government removal of crosses from church buildings (see entry of End of October 2015).

**November 17–18, 2015:**

## Hong Kong conference on the “Fusion of the Catholic Church and Society in China”

The conference was the fifth in a series of conferences on “The Role and Influence of Christianity in Chinese Society.” It was organized by the state-run Renmin University in Beijing and two Catholic research institutions – the Yuan Dao Study Society (Hong Kong) and the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies (Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province). The conference participants were composed of specialists from Mainland universities and academies, scientifically engaged Catholic priests, sisters and lay people as well as several Protestant theologians from the Mainland and from Hong Kong. Also participating were representatives of several official Mainland entities: the United Front Work Department, the journal *Zhongguo zongjiao* of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), etc.

The meeting began with a forum on the topic of religion and international relations. This was followed by a series of presentations on the topics of active integration of the Chinese Catholic Church in society and the potential contribution of Christianity toward building the rule of law in China. Another session was on today’s society and the inculturation of the Church’s evangelization. Participants in the last forum dealt with the topic of consecrated life under the pressure of secularization.

A report in the newspaper *Zhongguo minzu bao* (*China Ethnic News*), which is under the umbrella of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, highlighted the opening speech of Hong Kong’s Bishop, John Cardinal Tong. Tong said the Church has long regarded inculturation as something essential. But he stressed that inculturation must be a natural process, something which emanates from the local Church itself. It must be avoided that external forces should force things on the local Church which do not correspond with the spirit of the Gospel, Cardinal Tong said (*Fides* Nov. 20; [www.mzb.com.cn](http://www.mzb.com.cn) Nov. 24 u.a.). – See also the entry of November 20–21, 2015.

**November 19, 2015:**

## China Aid: Court in Shandong denies appeal hearing of businessman convicted on cult charges

Because he was found in possession of literature distributed by the “Local Church” (Difang jiaohui 地方教会), on December 16, 2014, Christian businessman Yan Shubing was sentenced to four years in prison for “using a cult organization to undermine implementation of the law.” According to China Aid, in early October 2015, his application for appeal to have the sentence overturned was dismissed by a court in Linyi, Shandong Province ([www.chinaaid.org](http://www.chinaaid.org) Nov. 19).

The “Local Church” movement – so called because it represents a belief that there should be only one Christian church in every place – was initiated in China during the 1920s and 1930s by Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. The movement has been known by different names – the “Little Flock,” among others – and has spread internationally.

November 20–21, 2015:

## International conference in Beijing: “The Way toward the Sinicization of Christianity”

Representatives from politics (the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the Party as well as national and local offices of the State Administration for Religious Affairs), from the social sciences and from the Protestant church took part in the conference. The conference was organized by the Institute of World Religions (IWR) and by the Center for the Study of Christianity of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, by the Chinese Association for Religious Studies (connected with the IWR) and by the two official Protestant governing bodies of the city of Beijing.

In his opening speech, IWR Director Zhuo Xinping said that the fusion of Christianity and Chinese culture had already begun back in the Tang period. He stressed that such fusion did not mean self-isolation, but rather the renewal of outstanding elements of other cultures in the Chinese nation and the embodiment of Chinese culture in the lives of China's Christians. Liu Xianchuan, of Beijing's local Bureau for Religious Affairs, explained that the “Sinicization of Christianity” was a theme common to science, politics and the church. He expressed the hope that the conference would serve as a guide for the Chinese Church with regard to its future development and give recommendations for the political decisions of the government. According to Pastor Shan Weixiang of the China Christian Council, the path toward the Sinicization began with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, which freed Chinese Christianity from being labeled a foreign teaching. According to conference reports in *Fuyin shibao* (*Gospel Times*) and *Zhongguo minzu bao* (*China Ethnic News*), other presentations dealt with aspects of the Sinicization of Christianity in the fields of spirituality, family ethics, and in the doctrine of salvation ([www.gospeltimes.cn](http://www.gospeltimes.cn) Nov. 22; [www.mzb.com.cn](http://www.mzb.com.cn) Nov. 24).

There have been controversial discussions on the theme of the “Sinicization of Christianity” in China since 2014. On 20 May 2015, Party chief Xi Jinping called for the Sinicization of religious work. For more on this topic, see also the entry of November 17–18, 2015, and *China heute* 2015, No. 3, pp. 162–164 (in German).

November 25, 2015:

## *Xinhua*: Three supporters of the “Lord God Sect” sentenced to imprisonment due to involvement in “cult activities”

Huang Caiqiong was sentenced to four, Li Meiying to three and Nie Qunying to two years imprisonment. According to the judgment of the court in Hezhou (Guangxi), the three had distributed pamphlets for the Lord God Sect and organized meetings. The court also charged that in February of 2014, Huang and Nie had brought a man to the point of dedicating his two daughters (both minors) to the “service of the Lord God.” The missing girls were separately rescued by the police six and eight months later, the judgment said.

The Christian-inspired Lord God Sect (*Zhushenjiao* 主神教) was founded in Anhui in 1993. It has an apocalyptic doctrine of salvation. It preaches the creation of a “divine kingdom” and has charismatic leaders who claim divinity. The group was outlawed in 1998. The sect's founder, Liu Jianguo, was executed for rape in Henan in 1999. At the end of 2012, the Dui Hua Foundation, based in San Francisco, said that it has information on approximately 52 individuals who have been imprisoned in connection with the Lord God Sect, 16 of them had been convicted in the four previous years and were still in prison. In October of 2012 three female followers of the sect were sentenced to prison terms in Teng County (Guizhou) on charges of “organizing/using a cult to undermine implementation of the law”

(AFP Dec. 31, 2001; *Xinhua* Nov. 25; www.duihuaresearch.org Dec. 12, 2012; www.duihuaresearch.org/2014/07/identifying-cult-organizations-in-china.html).

**November 25, 2015:**

## **Matteo Ricci Prize awarded to Fr. Angelo Lazzarotto, PIME**

The prize is awarded by the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences of the Catholic University of Milan (Sacred Heart). At the award ceremony Fr. Lazzarotto delivered a presentation on the topic “The relevance of Matteo Ricci for relations between Rome and Beijing.” The 90-year-old PIME missionary has lived in Hong Kong for many years and is an acknowledged expert on the Catholic Church in China. He dedicated the award to the “Christian people of China, who have worked so hard within the complex context of the situation of the Church to make the dream of Father Ricci a concrete reality.”

Fr. Lazzarotto was born May 14, 1925, in Falzè di Pave (Treviso) and was ordained a priest for the Milan Missionaries (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions – PIME in Italy). In 1957, after encounters with missionaries returning home after their expulsion from China, he began his career in Hong Kong, where he served, among other things, as rector of the Catholic Centre. In 1965 he returned to Italy following his election to the general council of his Institute. Upon his return to Hong Kong in 1979, Fr. Lazzarotto, together with the present Cardinal John Tong, established the diocesan Holy Spirit Study Centre as a center for research on the situation of the Church in China. In 1985 he returned to Italy for good, only to be appointed Rector of the International Mission Seminary at Urbaniana University in Rome. Each year he would return to China for a research trip, until 2011 when he was refused entry into China. Fr. Lazzarotto has published a rich body of works on the Church in China. The International Matteo Ricci Prize was first awarded in 1999 (*Eglises d'Asie* Dec. 2; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Nov. 21; www.unicatt.it).

**November 26, 2015:**

## **Journalist Gao Yu released from prison**

Last April, the 71-year-old woman journalist Gao Yu, who, among others, had also worked for the radio broadcaster *Deutsche Welle*, was sentenced to seven years imprisonment. Now, as the result of an appeal hearing, her sentence has been reduced from seven to five years. Since she is suffering from a serious heart disease, for the time being she will be serving her sentence “outside the prison.” Gao Yu was arrested in 2014 on a charge of “betraying state secrets.” She was accused of having passed on an internal party document to a foreign website in 2013. Foreign governments and human rights organizations have repeatedly criticized her condemnation and sentence as being politically motivated. Hong Kong’s diocesan Justice and Peace Commission is just one organization among many that have taken a stand in demanding her release (www.faz.net Nov. 26; www.spiegel.de Nov. 26; www.zeit.de Nov. 26; see also *RCTC* 2015, Nos. 3-4, p. 34).



November 26, 2015:

## ***China Daily*: Chinese NGOs are becoming increasingly involved in foreign countries**

According to data provided by Huang Haoming, deputy head of the Chinese NGO umbrella organization CANGO, as quoted by the *China Daily*, Chinese NGOs have recently been involved in an increasing number of projects abroad. Thus far, nearly 100 leading Chinese NGOs and foundations have completed projects abroad, mainly in Southeast Asia and Africa, but now even in the U.S.A., as well as in European and South American countries. Although in years past Chinese NGOs primarily became involved in disaster relief efforts abroad, now they are also increasingly carrying out regular development projects in other countries. At present, there are currently some 4,600 foundations and approximately 600,000 charitable organizations. The Chinese government will probably soon adopt a new law dealing with such charities, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo cishan fa* 中华人民共和国慈善法, aimed at providing government support for these types of organizations. It is expected that in future many such organizations will also be active abroad. The *Asia Foundation*, a US-based international development NGO, has in the meantime published a handbook offering useful information as a support for those Chinese NGOs which want to carry out projects abroad (*China Daily* Nov. 26; *EU-China Newsletter* 2015 No. 5).

Jan Kwee

November 30, 2015:

## **Zhu Weiqun recalls the identification of the state-appointed Panchen Lama 20 years ago – “The reincarnation of Living Buddhas falls under the sovereignty of China”**



The official 11th Panchen Lama Gyaltsen Norbu, appointed by Beijing 20 years ago, during the Fourth World Buddhist Forum in Wuxi (see the entry of October 24–25, 2015). Photo: bodhi.takungpao.com.

In a commentary published in *Huanqiu shibao* (*Global Times*), a newspaper close to the Party, Party politician Zhu reminded its readers of the day of November 29, 1995, when the 11th (official) Panchen Lama was identified by the drawing of lots from the “Golden Urn” in Lhasa. Zhu said that the event was of great importance not only for Buddhism, but also as an “expression of the sovereignty of the Chinese central government over Tibet as well as of its highest decision making authority regarding the reincarnation of Living Buddhas.” He declared that, “just the way it is with the reincarnation of the Dalai Lamas,” the search for and the identification of the Panchen Lamas is a matter which falls under Chinese sovereignty – as has been the case since the 18th century. Zhu said that at the beginning of 1995, the 14th Dalai Lama “arbitrarily” recognized a child as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. In doing so, he disturbed the search process introduced by the central government and showed his “true face” as a separatist and as a destroyer of Tibetan Buddhist tradition, so Zhu. The

14th Dalai Lama has often said that he alone has the authority to decide on his own reincarnation, Zhu remarked. But in fact, said Zhu, the reincarnation of a Living Buddha is not a purely religious matter but it is “above all an important local political event for Tibet” which gives expression to China’s sovereignty over Tibet (<http://opinion.huanqiu.com/1152/2015-11/8069191.html>).

Zhu Weiqun heads the Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs of the Political Consultative Conference (PCC). Since 2013, the government-appointed Panchen Lama also has an official political role as a member of the PCC Standing Committee. The then six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized by the present Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, was taken away by the Chinese authorities on May 18, 1995, to an unknown location. See also: *RCTC* 2015, Nos. 3-4, pp. 3-4, 16, 21, as well as the entries of October 24–25 and of November 9, 2015.

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