

## News Update on Religion and Church in China June 29 – October 15, 2014

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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 2014, No. 3, pp. 3-11) covered the period April 3 – June 29, 2014.*

**June 29, 2014:**

### **National Seminary – Beijing: Graduation ceremony cancelled after student priests refuse to concelebrate with illegitimate bishop**

The graduation ceremony for the 2nd M.A. Class and the conferring of B.A. degrees on members of the 11th Advanced Studies Class at the National Catholic Theological Seminary in Beijing were scheduled for June 29. As reported by the Catholic news agency *UCAN*, students protested when the seminary announced that on the occasion of the graduation, all faculty and students were to participate, and concelebrate if priests, at the Eucharist at which Bishop Ma Yinglin, Chairman of the official Bishops’ Conference and Rector of the National Seminary since 2010, was to be the main celebrant. Bishop Ma was ordained a bishop in 2006 without papal mandate. The students also rejected the seminary’s proposal that Bishop Fang Xingyao, Chairman of the Patriotic Association, should be the main celebrant because he had participated in many illegitimate ordinations. Thereupon the graduation ceremony was canceled and the graduates returned to their home dioceses without diplomas. The Executive Vice-Rector of the seminary, Fr. Li Shuxing, told *UCAN* that the diplomas would be forwarded to the students at a later date (*UCAN* July 17; [china.ucanews.com](http://china.ucanews.com) July 16).

According to a report of the State Administration [Bureau] for Religious Affairs (SARA), on June 25, under the leadership of Bishop Ma Yinglin, the graduates made a “patriotic visit” to the SARA. Among other things, on that occasion the Vice-Director of the SARA, Zhang Lebin, exhorted them that as spiritual personnel they should clearly exhibit characteristics of Chinese culture, so that the Catholic Church could send down deep roots into Chinese soil ([www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn) June 26).

July 1, 2014:

## Demonstrations in Hong Kong

On the 17th anniversary of the return of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China, half a million people took to the streets to protest for greater democracy in Hong Kong. There were several arrests. See the article in *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 145-149 (in German).

July 1–4, 2014:

## Official Panchen Lama visits Tibet

The state news agency *Xinhua* said that these visits have become an “annual event.” The official 11th Panchen Lama, born in 1990 and appointed to the role by the government, according to *Xinhua* is “one of the two most revered Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism.” He is also Vice Chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association and member of the Standing Committee of the National Political Consultative Conference (PCC). During his visit to Tibet, among other activities he took part in rituals in the Jokhang and Sera monasteries. He also met with members of the regional PCC (*Xinhua* July 4). A boy confirmed by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama disappeared in 1995 at the age of 6 years.

July 3, 2014:

## Pope appoints first Malaysian of Chinese descent as Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur

After his appointment, 50 year old Fr. Julian Leow Beng Kim emphasized to the media the importance of dialogue with other religions. Like most of the 985,000 Catholics in Malaysia, until now the archbishops of Kuala Lumpur have been of Indian descent. Approximately a quarter of all Malaysians are of Chinese descent. Fr. Leow also spent some time in Taiwan learning Mandarin (*Vatican Insider* July 3).

July 3–14, 2014:

## Steep drop in number of participants from Tibet at the Kalachakra initiation in India

UCAN has reported that due to more stringent restrictions imposed by the Chinese authorities this year, there were only about 150 Tibetans from the PR China among the 150,000 Buddhists from all over the world who took part in the Kalachakra initiation conducted by the Dalai Lama in Ladakh. As noted in a report published on April 1 by Human Rights Watch [HRW], since 2012 China has repeatedly denied Tibetans re-entry at the border between Nepal and China (i.e., the Tibet Autonomous Region). With this policy, China is apparently trying to discourage Tibetans from making the pilgrimage to India to participate in major events with the Dalai Lama, HRW wrote. In 2012 there were around 7,000 Tibetans from the PR China, who traveled to India for the Kalachakra initiation; for the first time, upon their return to Tibet, hundreds of them were taken into custody and interrogated, HRW said (Human Rights Watch, *Under China's Shadow. Mistreatment of Tibetans in Nepal*, April 1, pp. 37-38; *New York Times* April 7, 2012; UCAN July 16). – See also the entry of September 19, 2014.

July 4 / September 9, 2014:

## Pastor Zhang Shaojie (Nanle) is sentenced to 12 years in prison – more sentences handed down against members of his congregation



Pastor Zhang Shaojie in February 2014. Photo: ChinaAid.

Pastor Zhang Shaojie was convicted of fraud and gathering a crowd to disrupt public order. Bob Fu, of the organization ChinaAid, called the unusually long sentence the harshest to be handed down against a pastor since the Cultural Revolution. Two other members of his congregation, Zhang Cuijuan and Zhao Junling, were sentenced on September 9, 2014, to one and a half and one year in prison respectively for gathering a crowd to disrupt public order. Pastor Zhang's congregation belongs to the official Protestant Church. According to ChinaAid, Zhang Shaojie was also chairman of the local Protestant "Three-Self Church" of Nanle (Henan Province) as well as a member of the Political Consultative Conference of Nanle County. On November 16/17, he and more than 20 other members of the congregation were taken into custody. It seems that

the real reason for the church's conflict with the authorities had to do with a disputed plot of land (*AFP* July 4; *AP* July 4; *UCAN* Sept. 18; *www.chinaaid.org* Aug. 4 and 21; Sept. 12; see also: *RCTC* 2014, No. 1, p. 15).

July 7, 2014:

## Two years after his episcopal consecration, Shanghai's Bishop Ma Daqin continues to be restricted in his freedom and may not exercise his functions as bishop

Auxiliary Bishop Ma is under a kind of house arrest since his July 7, 2012 consecration in the Cathedral of Shanghai when, at the conclusion of the Mass, he publicly announced his withdrawal from the Patriotic Association. According to retired Hong Kong bishop Cardinal Zen, who wrote of Ma in his blog on July 6, Bishop Ma has told the Holy Father in a message that he should not be afraid to tell the truth for fear that it might cause further damage to his (Bishop Ma's) situation (*AsiaNews* July 10).

July 10, 2014:

## Family planning authority: 29 provinces have relaxed the one-child policy

According to a statement at a press conference made by Yang Wenzhuang, a representative of the National Commission for Health and Family Planning, 29 provinces of China – that is, all but the Autonomous Regions of Tibet and Xinjiang – have now implemented the new birth planning policy. The

policy stipulates that any couple of which at least one partner is an only child may have two children. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress enacted the policy in December of 2013. Until then, to be allowed to have two children the requirement was that both partners be single children. Yang said, however, that even with this change the basic principle of family planning has not changed because China is still the most populous country in the world (*Xinhua* July 10).

July 14–18, 2014:

## Official Catholic bodies meet on the question of theological seminaries: 88 teachers approved

The Commission for Vocations and the Working Group for the Approval of Teaching Personnel of the Patriotic Association and the official Bishops' Conference together with leaders of the Catholic theological seminaries have met in Jilin. Two officials of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) also attended the meeting. The assembly approved the qualifications of 88 teachers of the “nationwide 8 seminaries” [of the 10 official Catholic seminaries, those of Shanghai and Taiyuan are closed due to conflict with the authorities]. This means that, on average, 11 teachers were approved for each seminary. In addition, the assembly also adopted the “Measures for Applying for the Qualification to Award Academic Degrees at Catholic Philosophical and Theological Seminaries (For Trial Implementation)” 天主教神哲学院申请学位授予资格办法 (试行). Six other documents concerning the faculties and the academic degrees of the seminaries had already been published on December 18, 2013, on the website of the official Catholic governing bodies ([www.chinacatholic.cn](http://www.chinacatholic.cn) Dec. 18, 2013; Aug. 12, 2014). With this, the Catholic bodies fulfilled the specifications of two documents of the SARA, which came into force on January 1, 2013, namely, the “Measures for the Recognition of the Status, Titles, and Appointment of Teaching Personnel at Institutes for Religious Education” and the “Measures for the Awarding of Academic Degrees by Institutes for Religious Education.” The other official religious organizations have also published similar regulations as, for example, the Protestant governing bodies did on May 26, 2014.

July 17, 2014:

## Bomb threat against the Cathedral of Guangzhou

After the Guangzhou police received a bomb threat against the cathedral and two other locations, the church was thoroughly searched but no bomb was found. According to the newspaper *Nanfang dushibao*, on July 17 a 35 year old man was taken into custody who confessed to having made the threatening phone calls under the influence of alcohol. The security situation in the southern Chinese city was tense at the time because two days earlier, on July 15, in an arson attack on a bus two people were killed and more than 30 were injured (*Nanfang dushibao* July 19; [china.ucanews.com](http://china.ucanews.com) July 17).

July 21 / August 14, 2014:

## After a clash in which at least 50 members of the congregation were injured, the cross atop the Salvation Church (Wenzhou) is taken down

According to various sources, on July 21 some 500–600 uniformed police officers and demolition workers clashed with 300 of the church's faithful, who were guarding the Salvation Church in order



The Salvation Church in Shuitou some time before the dismantling of its cross.  
Photo: ChinaAid.

to prevent the authorities from taking down the cross from its place atop the steeple. The report on this clash was carried by, among others, the U.S.-based organization ChinaAid and Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post*. In the mêlée, police and other personnel armed with shields and metal batons injured between 50 and 100 believers, some of them seriously. One 78 year old man suffered a fractured skull. On August 2, Huang Yizi, one of the church's pastors, was arrested; according to the arrest notification of August 28, he was charged with disturbing the social order by assembling crowds. On August 14, the authorities finally succeeded in tearing down the cross. The Protestant Salvation Church (Jiu'entang) in Shuitou, Pingyang County, Wenzhou City (Zhejiang Province) belongs to the official government-approved Protestant church. In Zhejiang Province, since the beginning of 2014, as part of its operation "Three remodelings, one demolition," the provincial government of Zhejiang has demolished a number of "illegal" religious buildings or

parts of buildings, particularly in the area of Wenzhou City, and forcibly removed numerous crosses from the roofs and steeples of Christian churches (*New York Times* July 28; *Sinosphere Blogs New York Times* July 24; Aug. 14; *South China Morning Post* July 22; *The Telegraph* Aug. 26; [www.chinaaid.org](http://www.chinaaid.org) July 25; Aug. 13 and 19; Sept. 9).

See also the entry for July 30 / 31, 2014; *RCTC* 2014, No. 3, pp. 3-4; articles and documentation in *China heute* 2014, No. 2, pp. 72-75, 91-93 and No. 3, pp. 143-145, 165-170 (in German).

### July 24, 2014:

## Pope Francis expresses to the chairman of the Bishops' Conference of Taiwan his sadness for the Magong plane accident and his closeness to the victims' relatives

On behalf of the Holy Father, Cardinal Secretary of State Parolin sent a telegram of condolences to the Archbishop of Taipei, Hung Shan-chuan. Forty-eight people died during the course of a July 23 emergency landing at the Magong airport on the Penghu Islands.

### July 28 / September 21, 2014:

## Many dead in bloody incidents in Xinjiang

According to the news agency *Xinhua*, in an attack in the Shache (Yarkant) County, in the Prefecture of Kashgar, 37 civilians were killed and 94 injured; police "gunned down 59 terrorists" and arrested 215 others. However, Rebiya Kadeer, president of the Uyghur World Congress in exile, spoke in an interview with *Radio Free Asia* of a "massacre" in which Chinese security forces killed at least 2,000 Uyghurs; she said that the trigger was a march by Uyghurs on a police station to protest, among other things, the shooting dead of a family of five by the police in a dispute over the wearing of traditional headscarves.

*Xinhua* reported that on September 21, “40 rioters” died in attacks in the Luntai (Bügür) County in the Bayingolin Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture in Xinjiang when they either blew themselves up or were shot by the police; six civilians, two police officers and two auxiliary policemen were also killed and 54 civilians were wounded. According to *Xinhua*, the leader of the attackers was a man by the name of Memet Turson, who was said to have been influenced by religious extremism; he was shot dead by the police.

On September 12, three men with Uyghur sounding names were sentenced to death for leading a terrorist organization and intentional homicide and a fourth was sentenced to life imprisonment. According to *Xinhua*, they had been involved in a terrorist attack at the train station of Kunming, where on March 1, 2014, 31 civilians were killed with knives and 141 were injured. On August 23, eight “terrorists” with Uyghur sounding names were executed, including three who had been convicted of planning an attack on Tian’anmen Square on October 28, 2013, in which three people died.

Henryk Szadziewski, of the U.S.-based Uyghur Human Rights Project, said that Beijing had “legitimate security concerns,” but he feared that the Uyghurs’ civil rights would be further eroded by the crack-downs (*Radio Free Asia* Aug. 5; *The Telegraph* July 20; *Xinhua* Aug. 2 and 23; Sept. 12, 21 and 25; www.chinadaily.com.cn Sept. 25).

July 28, 2014:

## Fire destroys 142 year old Cathedral of Ningbo (Zhejiang Province)



*The Cathedral of Ningbo during and after the fire. Photos: www.chinacatholic.org.*

Eleven fire trucks battled to extinguish the flames during the early morning hours. The only parts of the church left standing were the outer walls and the bell tower. No one was injured. For the moment, it was not clear what caused the fire. The church, built in 1872 by French missionaries, was used in later years by the Communist Party as a revolutionary base. In 1980 the building was returned to the Church. It is registered as a national monument. According to reports by *UCAN*, the Church in Ningbo was also affected by the cross demolition campaign in Zhejiang Province. At least two churches in the city were ordered to take down their crosses. It seems unlikely, however, that there was any connection between that campaign and the devastating fire in the Cathedral (*UCAN* July 28; www.chinacatholic.org July 28).

July 28 – August 1, 2014:

## State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) conducts study course for young and middle-aged Catholic representatives – ending with a concelebrated Mass

As *UCAN* learned from the participants, almost all of the official bishops were present. According to SARA's website, it was the "highest ranking course for Catholic personalities" in years. One bishop told *UCAN* that at the beginning of the course, 15 or 16 bishops informed the cadres that the liturgy should not be politicized and that they would not concelebrate [given the presence of illegitimate and excommunicated bishops]. Finally, however, all were forced to participate in the Eucharistic celebration in the South Church on the last day, although six or seven of the bishops did not extend their hands [at the moment of Consecration], nor did they receive Holy Communion, the same bishop said. He remarked that it was not a problem that the authorities demanded their participating in the course, but that forced concelebration was not only an act of disrespect for the Church and for tradition but was also a politicization of the faith and of the liturgy. One priest, however, told *UCAN* that his own bishop had not seen any fault in the concelebration (*china.ucanews.com* Aug. 11; *www.sara.gov.cn* Aug. 1).

July 30, 2014:

## Imam of the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar murdered

The 74 year old Imam Jume Tahir, head of the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar (Xinjiang), the largest mosque in China, was one of the vice-chairmen of the Chinese Islamic Association and a delegate of the National People's Congress. According to *Xinhua*, three men stabbed the Imam to death in front of the mosque after morning prayers; two of them were subsequently shot dead by the police. A *Xinhua* report indicates that on September 28, 19 year old Nurmemet Abidilimit was sentenced to death for the murder of the Imam. The death sentence was also given to 18 year old Gheni Hasan whom the court described as the leader of a group "influenced by religious extremism" that "trained its members to murder patriotic religious figures." In a July 31 statement, the Chinese Islamic Association mourned the assassination of the great mullah, who had always loved his country and his religion, and who had always acted in the true spirit of Islam on behalf of the unity of the ethnic groups in Xinjiang and of religious harmony. The Association called on all Muslims to oppose extremism and violence and to fight for the great renaissance of the Chinese nation.

According to the *New York Times*, Imam Jume Tahir was a very controversial figure among the Uyghurs: He is said to have been a reliable supporter of government restrictions on so-called unlawful religious practices, such as visits to the mosque by adolescents, underground madrasas, veils for women and long beards for men, and has often been cited as such in the state media (*New York Times* Sept. 29; *UCAN* Sept. 29; *Xinhua* July 31; Aug. 1 and 2; Sept. 28; *www.chinainislam.net.cn* Aug. 1).

July 30 / 31, 2014:

## Pastoral letter of bishop and appeal of priests of Diocese of Wenzhou (Zhejiang) as crosses are forcibly removed from church buildings

On July 30, 88 year old Bishop Zhu Weifang addressed the Catholics of his diocese in a pastoral letter. In it, he apologizes for his long silence on the matter of the forced removal of the crosses. He says that

he is shocked by the current campaign with its measures reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution. He hopes for a clarifying statement from the government and an end to the campaign to tear down the crosses. He calls on priests and faithful alike to trust in the power of prayer and to take a courageous stand on behalf of the faith. An appeal by the priests of the Diocese of Wenzhou, dated July 31, calls for an end to the campaign of forced removal of the crosses. Their open letter clearly demonstrates the priests' indignation at the incidents which, as they say, show no respect either for the law or for the religious sentiments of the believers and which amount almost to a new edition of the Cultural Revolution. Both texts were published on August 1 on the official website of the Diocese, [www.tzjwzjq.com](http://www.tzjwzjq.com), which was subsequently shut down on August 2.

The local Ordinary, Bishop Zhu Weifang, who is recognized by both the Pope and by the government, heads the official part of the diocese. The unofficial part of the diocese is under the direction of Coadjutor Bishop Shao Zhumin.

According to statistics provided by *UCAN*, during the period from January to July 31, 2014, at least 229 churches had their crosses removed or parts of their buildings demolished. Among them were 25 Catholic churches: 14 in the official part of the Diocese of Wenzhou and 11 in the underground (*AsiaNews* Aug. 4; *UCAN* Aug. 4; [china.ucanews.com](http://china.ucanews.com) Aug. 4). See also the entry for July 21 / Aug. 14, 2014; *RCTC* 2014, No. 3, pp. 3-4; *China heute* 2014, No. 2, pp. 72-75, 91-93 and No. 3, pp. 143-145 (in German).

The full text of Bishop Zhu Weifang's pastoral letter and of the priests' open letter can be found at [www.chinacath.org/article/doctrina/apo/2014-08-02/31758.html#ecms](http://www.chinacath.org/article/doctrina/apo/2014-08-02/31758.html#ecms). For a German translation see *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 165-170.

**August 3, 2014:**

## Earthquake in the County of Ludian (Yunnan Province) – the religions pitch in to help

After the magnitude 6.1 earthquake in Ludian County, Zhaotong City, the survivors were left to mourn 617 dead, 112 missing and more than 3,000 injured. Twelve thousand homes were destroyed. As has been the case for years, particularly since the devastating earthquake of Wenchuan in 2008, this time too, the religions were intensively involved in the relief efforts. The state media reported on the official relief efforts.

In Yunnan, according to information supplied by the province's Bureau of Religious Affairs, religious organizations, places of worship and the faithful themselves collected donations, prayed for the victims and gave comfort to the survivors. In addition, it was decided that the annual "Charity Week of the Religions" (introduced by the State Administration for Religious Affairs in 2012) in Yunnan would be held earlier this year so that help could be offered right away.

The national religious organizations of the five major religions sent out appeals for prayers and donations. The media carried reports of concrete examples of help:

A group of monks of the Buddhist Shaolin Monastery in Henan Province held a ritual for the dead and a Dharma Assembly for the living in a village of the stricken area and, in addition, treated the injured free of charge. The Islamic Association of Hebei Province, which had heard of a lack of *halal* food in the earthquake zone, mobilized Muslim food producers. A Hebei company sent 1,000 packages of *halal* biscuits worth 120,000 Yuan. Buddhist circles in Hunan Province donated more than 500,000 Yuan to the Chinese Red Cross and conducted 103 Dharma Assemblies for the victims of the earthquake.

According to its own data, the Protestant Amity Foundation received, among other things, 5 million Yuan of funds for relief work from the government of Hong Kong and 6,050 Yuan from Party Cell No. 11 of the Jiangsu branch of the Bank of Communications – something which can be seen as a vote of confidence. Between August 6 and 14, the largest Catholic aid organization, Jinde Charities, distributed help in the disaster area, giving out relief supplies worth 640,000 Yuan. The organization was still active



there at the end of September. Caritas Germany supported the relief efforts of Jinde with a donation of 390,000 Yuan. In addition, for some time now both Amity and Jinde have had well-designed online donation facilities available on their Internet portals.

An article in the journal *Zhongguo minzu bao* (*China Ethnic News*) emphasized the special quality of religious relief. Unlike other aid organizations, religious groups can also provide spiritual comfort to disaster victims, it said (*Xinhua* Aug. 7 and 14; [www.new.jinde.org](http://www.new.jinde.org) Oct. 10; [www.new.jinde.org/Special/spe/7.html](http://www.new.jinde.org/Special/spe/7.html); [www.amity.org.cn](http://www.amity.org.cn) Aug. 22 and 27; [www.mzb.com.cn](http://www.mzb.com.cn) Aug. 26; [www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn) Aug. 11 and 29).

August 5 / 6, 2014:

## Conference meets on the “60th anniversary of Three-Self Patriotic Movement” and the “Sinicization of Christianity” – media place number of Protestants at 23–40 million

The Chinese church must continue to explore the sinicization of Christianity, so that it can take root in Chinese culture, in the nation and in society, said Elder Fu Xianwei, Chairman of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Chinese Protestant Church, at the opening of the conference before 180 participants in Shanghai. According to Fu, for the further sinicization of Christianity the church needs the guidance and support of the religious authorities of the Party and government, as well as exchanges with the academic community and the church worldwide. At the conference opening, Liu Yuanlong, Vice-Chairman of the Catholic Patriotic Association, spoke on the sinicization experiences of the Catholic Church. Other speakers were Professor Zhuo Xinping, Director of the Institute for World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Archbishop Paul Kwong of the Anglican Church of Hong Kong; the retired Anglican Bishop of Singapore, John Chew, and Wang Zuo’an, Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. The speakers repeatedly emphasized the need to further promote the “construction of theological thinking.” One of the conference’s roundtable discussions was also on this topic. On the eve of the conference, a special service was held in the former Anglican Trinity Cathedral.

Referring to a consensus among conference participants, several state media (*China Daily*, *Global Times*, *Renmin ribao*) reported that the number of Protestants in China today is estimated at somewhere between 23 and 40 million, or between 1.7% and 2.9% of the Chinese population. Based on a survey by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, since 2010 the number of Protestants has generally been given as 23 million; that official media now unanimously give the number of 40 million, however, is new (*AFP* Aug. 7; *AsiaNews* Aug. 7; *Global Times* Aug. 7; [www.ccctspm.org](http://www.ccctspm.org) Aug. 5 and 7).

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Chinese Protestant Church was officially established in 1954. Together with the China Christian Council, founded in 1980, it forms the state-sanctioned governing bodies of Protestantism in China. The “Three-Self-Principles” are: self-governance (i.e., independent from foreign influence), self-support (i.e., financial independence from foreigners) and self-propagation (i.e., indigenous missionary work). They were originally formulated in the 19th century.

August 6, 2014:

## Pope expresses his sympathy with earthquake victims in Yunnan – Vatican Secretary of State on dialogue with China

At the end of the general audience, Pope Francis said: “I express my closeness to the people of China’s Yunnan Province, where Sunday’s earthquake claimed many casualties and caused considerable dam-

age. I pray for the deceased and for their families, for the injured and for the many who have lost their homes. May the Lord give comfort, hope and solidarity in this trial.”

Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin said in an interview with the Italian magazine *Famiglia Cristiana*: “The Catholic Church in China is alive and active. She is seeking to be faithful to the Gospel and goes on her way amid limitations and difficulties. The Holy See advocates a respectful and constructive dialogue with the civil authorities so as to find a solution for the problems that restrict Catholics’ full exercise of the faith, and to ensure that there is a climate of genuine freedom of religion” (www.vatican.va Aug. 6; www.famigliacristiana.it Aug. 7).

August 7, 2014:

## Human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng released from custody in very poor health

Gao Zhisheng has been “completely destroyed” by his three-year imprisonment, his international lawyer Jared Gensher told *BBC* a week after Gao’s release. He is emotionless, basically unintelligible, and has lost teeth due to malnutrition, Gensher said. Since his release from the Shaya Prison in Aksu Prefecture (Xinjiang), Gao Zhisheng has been living with his wife’s sister in Urumqi. On September 9, his wife, Geng He, who had fled to the United States, said in a press release that since his discharge from prison, her husband has been “visited” by police officers for two or three hours every morning and every afternoon.

Gao Zhisheng had campaigned as an advocate for the rights of people in politically sensitive cases. For example, he defended Falungong practitioners and took legal action against government authorities because of their use of coercion in the implementation of family planning policy. He also expressed his dissent with regard to the regime. The authorities closed down his law firm in 2005. In December 2006, he was given a suspended sentence of three years in prison for incitement of subversion of state power and was placed on probation for five years. While he was on probation, he was taken into custody several times. He reported in 2007 that he had been tortured during a period of detention. He disappeared in January of 2009, re-appeared for a month in March of 2010 and then disappeared from view once again. In December of 2011, the state media reported that he had been jailed for three years for violation of his probation terms. After serving his time in prison, he was now released. Gao Zhisheng is a Christian (*AFP* Aug. 8; *BBC News* Aug. 7 and 15; *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* July 21; www.chinaaid.org Aug. 13; www.chinachange.org Sept. 12).

August 9 / 28, 2014:

## Two priests of the Diocese of Baoding (Hebei Province) are released after eight years of imprisonment

Fifty-two year old former Vicar General Fr. Lu Genjun and Fr. Liu Honggeng, both of whom belong to the unofficial community of the Diocese of Baoding, were released on August 9 and 28 respectively. As reported by both *UCAN* and *AsiaNews*, the release of the two priests was not tied to any conditions (such as registration as a member of the official clergy or entry into the Patriotic Association). Both priests were arrested in 2006 and were held in prison without trial for eight years because they refused to join the Patriotic Association.

Fr. Lu Genjun told *UCAN*, that although he is now living in the bishop’s house, he is on the go all day long, visiting the various Catholic underground communities. He said that he will not join the official

Church and will not concelebrate with Bishop An Shuxin and the priests of the official Church so as not to create greater chaos in the Diocese of Baoding.

Bishop An Shuxin, who originally belonged to the underground community and had spent years in prison, was persuaded upon his release in 2009 to join the Patriotic Association, something which triggered great unrest in the Diocese of Baoding where the underground Church is strong. Bishop An told *UCAN* that there was a possibility that Fr. Ma Wuyong, in custody since 2004, would be released soon (but as of early October this had not yet occurred). He had no news regarding Bishop Su Zhimin, in custody since 1997 (*AsiaNews* Aug. 12; *china.ucanews.com* Sept. 5; Oct. 13). – See also entry of September 23, 2014.

August 10–17, 2014:

## Asian Youth Day in Daejeon, South Korea – young Catholics from Mainland China take part despite difficulties leaving the country

“Asian Youth! Wake up! The Glory of the Martyrs Shines on You” was the motto of the Asian Youth Day (AYD), which was attended by about 6,000 young people from across Asia. Pope Francis visited the country from August 14–18 to take part in the occasion. On August 16, he beatified 124 Korean martyrs, of whom one was the Chinese priest Fr. Zhou Wenmo (Ju Mun Mo, 1752–1801).

*UCAN* reported that prior to the event, priests and laity, especially in the Provinces of Zhejiang, Shanxi, Liaoning, Heilongjiang and Hebei, were warned by the authorities not to travel to Korea during this period. According to *AsiaNews*, members of a group of nearly 80 young people, including students from the National Seminary, who wanted to travel together from Beijing to attend the AYD, were not only prevented from leaving China but were even temporarily arrested. According to *AsiaNews*, about 120 Catholics from Mainland China were present for the Asian Youth Day, and about 300 attended the closing Mass with the Pope. One underground Catholic from the Diocese of Baoding was temporarily taken into custody at the Tianjin airport on the way home and was interrogated for several hours.

About 100 delegates from Taiwan and 100 from Hong Kong also attended the AYD, along with a number of young Catholics from Macau (*AsiaNews* Aug. 13, 16 and 17; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Aug. 16; *South China Morning Post* Aug. 14; *china.ucanews.com* Aug. 8, 17 and 27).

August 14 / 18, 2014:

## While in flight over Mainland China, Pope Francis sends telegram of greetings to President Xi Jinping – a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman reacts

Francis became the first pope ever to be given permission to fly over the People’s Republic of China. Following Vatican custom, while flying en route to Korea on August 14, the Pope sent a telegram with the wording: “Upon entering Chinese air space, I extend best wishes to your Excellency and your fellow citizens, and I invoke the divine blessings of peace and well-being upon the nation.” He sent an almost identically worded telegram during the return flight.

A spokeswoman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Hua Chunying, told *China Daily* on August 15: “We have noticed the remarks of Pope Francis. China has always been sincere in improving relations with the Vatican and has been making positive efforts for that. Together with the Vatican we want to continue to endeavor to engage in a constructive dialogue and to promote the improvement of bilateral

relations.” On August 19 she confirmed that “China will work with the Vatican on a constructive dialogue,” and also explained that “the Chinese Catholic church conducts Catholic activities based on the principles of independence” (*America Magazine* Sept. 17 and 22; *China Daily* Aug. 19; *The China Post* Aug. 15; *Global Times* Aug. 14 and 20; *UCAN* Aug. 17; *Vatican Radio* Aug. 15; [www.chinadaily.com.cn](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn) Aug. 15). – See also entries of August 6, 10–17 and 17; Sept. 16, 2014. For background information, see *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 140-143 (in German).

### August 15, 2014:

## Buddhist Panlong temple closes in protest against the commercialization plans of the authorities

In the early morning of August 15, the Panlong Temple in the Jinning County (Yunnan Province) closed its gates, informing its visitors by means of a banner that the authorities plan to upgrade the temple, commercialize it and want to convert it into a business. This would disturb the normal order of the monastery; therefore, the temple has decided to close down for a few days, the banner read.

The Panlong temple is one of the most important Buddhist sites in Yunnan and attracts many visitors. As revealed by Chinese media reports, on August 14 government officials of the county and of Jincheng Town came unannounced to hold a meeting in the temple “to plan the development prospects of the temple.” A monk told the newspaper *Chuncheng Wanbao* that they had proposed all sorts of “ideas for commercialization,” including the building of five exhibition halls and a multimedia center at the Wanghai Pavilion within the temple grounds. The abbot and the monks were decidedly against it, since as monks it would be impossible for them to lead a commercialized life, the monk was quoted. In a report of the news agency *Xinhua* which took up the incident on August 17, a representative of Jincheng Town denied that the government wants to expand the temple into a commercial temple and to sharply increase the price of tickets. He said that it was merely a question of “remodeling and upgrading” the Wanghai Pavilion, from which there is a panoramic view. The county government announced on September 17 that the temple will not be developed into a commercialized business. The temple reopened for visitors the same day.

Again and again, Buddhist and Daoist monasteries that are popular tourist attractions have to struggle with the fact that local authorities in association with tourism businesses would like to market them economically (see *China heute* 2012, No. 4, pp. 208-212, 227-229) ([www.thepaper.cn](http://www.thepaper.cn) Aug. 15 and 17; *Xinhua* Aug. 17; [www.yn.people.com.cn](http://www.yn.people.com.cn) Aug. 17).

### August 16, 2014:

## Xinjiang ribao reports crackdown on “illegal religious activities” in Urumqi

*Reuters* described the contents of the report in the government newspaper *Xinjiang ribao*. According to this report on the action in Xinjiang’s capital, for which no precise date was given, 27 sites used for “underground” preaching were closed and 44 illegal imams were detained. Another 24 people were detained for preaching *jihād* and nine for promoting terrorism and religious extremism. 82 children were “rescued” from unapproved Islamic schools. The authorities confiscated 170,000 copies of illegal publications together with audio-visual material for the propagation of terror. They also seized religious clothing, such as face veils for women and items which were printed with crescent and star. (*Reuters* Aug. 16).

For the duration of Xinjiang Games (August 4–20), the City of Karamay had banned the wearing of certain clothing on public buses. The forbidden items include head and face veils (*hijab, niqab, burqa*) as well as any clothing items displaying the crescent and star (*Deutsche Welle* Aug. 8; *Ming Pao* Aug. 6; *UCAN* Sept. 15).

**August 17, 2014:**

### **In Korea, Pope expresses hope for dialogue with countries in Asia, with which the Holy See does not yet maintain full relations**

At an August 17 meeting with the bishops of Asia, Pope Francis spoke about dialogue and said: “In this spirit of openness to others, I earnestly hope that those countries of your continent with whom the Holy See does not yet enjoy a full relationship, may not hesitate to further a dialogue for the benefit of all. I am not referring to political dialogue alone, but to fraternal dialogue.” He also said: “But these Christians don’t come as conquerors, they don’t come to take away our identity [...]” ([w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/august/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140817\\_corea-vescovi-asia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/august/documents/papa-francesco_20140817_corea-vescovi-asia.html) [full text of the Pope’s speech]; *AsiaNews* Aug. 17; *UCAN* Aug. 17). – See also entries of August 6, 10–17 and 14/18; Sept. 16, 2014. For background information, see *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 140-143 (in German).

**August 19, 2014:**

### **Ministry of Public Security reports arrest of nearly 1,000 suspected members of “illegal cult” of “Almighty God”**

According to *Xinhua* (August 19), the ministry declared that the suspects arrested in June were involved in more than 500 cases. Among them were nearly a hundred “high-level organizers and leading members.”

Founded in the 1990s, the “Church of the Almighty God” (also known as the “Doctrine of the Eastern Lightning”) proclaims Almighty God or Second Christ, a reincarnation of Christ in the form of a Chinese woman, whose antithesis is the “great red dragon” which the group identifies with the Chinese Communist Party. – See also the entry of October 11, 2014.

**August 20, 2014:**

### ***Global Times*: Government officials in Kashgar (Xinjiang) punished for breach of discipline by practicing religion**

As reported by the state newspaper, on August 19 an official was dismissed for “violating a rule that officials should not have any religious beliefs.” Another was reprimanded for illegal appointment of religious personnel and removed from his post, and still another because of his “ambiguous” stance on anti-terrorism campaigns and terrorist attacks.

The *Global Times* also confirmed that in July, by posting notices on their websites, some local governments in Xinjiang had called on Party members, civil servants and students not to fast and not to participate in religious activities during Ramadan. The main reason given for such restrictions was Party discipline, the paper wrote.

Numerous international media had reported on the restrictions regarding the observance of Ramadan in the Autonomous Region of Xinjiang (*Global Times* Aug. 20, among others).

August 24, 2014:

## ***The Globe and Mail*: China expels more and more foreign missionaries**

The expulsions have increased since May, the Canadian newspaper has reported, citing the Protestant Pastor Peter Jung of the organization “Justice for North Korea.” Among the estimated nearly 1,000 deportees were hundreds of South Koreans who had proselytized among the Chinese or who had supported Christian North Korean refugees in China. In early 2013, at the peak, in China there were between 2,000–4,000 [Protestant] missionaries from South Korea alone, as well as many from the USA, *The Globe and Mail* reported (Aug. 24).

According to the “Provisions on the Administration of Religious Activities of Aliens Within the Territory of the People’s Republic of China,” article 8, aliens may not develop followers among Chinese citizens ([www.sara.gov.cn/zcfg/xzfg/519.htm](http://www.sara.gov.cn/zcfg/xzfg/519.htm)).

August 25, 2014:

## **Death of Bishop John Wu Shizhen in Nanchang (Jiangxi Province)**



Bishop John Wu Shizhen. Photo: UCAN.

Bishop Wu Shizhen died at the age of 93. He was born on January 19, 1921 in Fuzhou, Linchuan County, and was ordained a priest in 1949. In 1985, leaders of the official Church merged the five original dioceses of Jiangxi Province to create the Diocese of Jiangxi. Consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of Jiangxi without papal mandate in 1987, in 1990 Wu succeeded his predecessor as Bishop of Jiangxi. According to reports, Bishop Wu had, however, later obtained the recognition of Rome as Bishop of Nanchang. It is said that one of Bishop Wu’s greatest desires was the reconciliation between the official and the

underground Churches. Above all else, the formation of seminarians and of religious Sisters was close to the heart of Bishop Wu. The bishop was interred on August 30 in the Cathedral of Nanchang (*Fides* Sept. 16; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Sept. 27; *UCAN* Sept. 20, 1990; Aug. 26; Sept. 18).

August 30, 2014:

## **Cardinal John Tong consecrates three new auxiliary bishops for Hong Kong**



The three future auxiliary bishops speaking at a press conference after their nomination. Photo: UCAN.

The three new Auxiliary Bishops are Stephen Lee Bun Sang, Michael Yeung Ming-cheung and Joseph Ha Chi-shing, OFM (see photo). All three grew up in Hong Kong and went to school there. Although they each spent several years studying abroad, they have nevertheless spent the greatest part of their priestly life in Hong Kong. All three have years of experience in leadership positions. Co-consecrators at the episcopal ordination in the Hong Kong Cathedral were Joseph Cardinal

Zen, SDB, and the Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in Rome, Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai, SDB. Eight other bishops and over 200 priests as well as 2,000 faithful attended the consecration.

On July 11, the day of the announcement of the names of the new auxiliary bishops, Cardinal Tong announced that Pope Francis had extended his own tenure as bishop of Hong Kong for another three years. Cardinal Tong turned 75 – the age of obligatory retirement – on July 31 (*AsiaNews* Sept. 2, *Fides* July 12; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* July 12 and 19; *South China Morning Post* July 13; *UCAN* July 11; Sept. 1; *Vatican Information Service* July 11). – For details see report in *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 150-151 (in German).

## End of August 2014:

### County in Xinjiang rewards inter-ethnic marriage – also an issue in Tibet

According to the *South China Morning Post* (September 2) – citing the website of the local government – in the County of Qiemo (Cherchen), a new scheme went into effect in late August. Henceforth, couples where each partner belongs to a different nationality will receive a 10,000 Yuan reward if they have registered their marriage, and another 10,000 Yuan a year, if their family remains “harmonious.” The total, however, is not to exceed 50,000 Yuan. Furthermore, such couples will be given subsidies for health care and for the education of their children. Around 72% of the residents of the county are Uyghur, and around 26% are Han Chinese. The measure is intended to serve the “cultural integration” and to “stabilize Xinjiang,” as one local official was quoted by the *South China Morning Post*. The newspaper also reported that the Party secretary of Xinjiang, Zhang Chunxian, called in the Party newspaper *Qiushi* for “equal birth policy for all ethnic groups” in southern Xinjiang. Under current rules the Uyghur, like all ethnic minorities in China, are permitted to have more children than Han Chinese.

According to a *Washington Post* report (August 16) the Party secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Chen Quanguo, is also said to have called on the government at a meeting in June to “actively promote mixed marriages.”

## September 9 / 10/ 20, 2014:

### Dalai Lama and Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman on the future of the institution of the Dalai Lama

Under the headline “The Dalai Lama does not want to have a successor, but he does wish to live a long time,” the German newspaper *Welt am Sonntag* (September 9) published an interview with the Dalai Lama, in which he was quoted as saying that he could imagine not having a successor. In the interview, he also remarked that he sometimes says jokingly that after five centuries this tradition could possibly come to an end with the 14th Dalai Lama, who is “quite popular.”

On September 10, a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, said in reference to this interview, that “the title of Dalai Lama is conferred by the central government.” She added that the Chinese government respects the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism and the Buddha reincarnation system. “The Dalai Lama has his ulterior political motives and his words constitute a severe sabotage to the system,” she said.

On September 20, the Dalai Lama told the Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* that he denied having said he would be the last Dalai Lama; rather, that is a question which the Tibetan people would have to decide. The secretary of the Dalai Lama, Lama Tenzin Taklha, told the newspaper that the Dalai

Lama was very concerned that the Chinese government would choose as his successor someone whom it could control. He added that the Dalai Lama is pondering new possibilities for determining his reincarnation, including electing a successor through voting similar to the selection process of popes of the Roman Catholic Church (*Asahi Shimbun* Sept. 25; *Kyodo* Sept. 10; *Welt am Sonntag* Sept. 9).

The Dalai Lama has already given a detailed declaration on the issue of his reincarnation on September 24, 2011. A German translation can be found in *China heute* 2012, No. 1, pp. 15-20.

**September 15, 2014:**

## Two Catholic churches in Provinces of Hunan and Jiangxi torn down by force, church cross dismantled in Zhejiang

In three different provinces attacks occurred on the same day on church buildings which belonged to the official Catholic Church.

Two churches in the Provinces of Hunan and Jiangxi were completely demolished. A priest, who tried in vain to prevent the workers from demolishing the church in Dejin City (Hunan), was led away in handcuffs by government personnel. After intervention by Bishop Qu Ailin he was released the next day. As Bishop Qu reported to *UCAN*, all buildings in the neighborhood of the church had to be razed for a development project. He said that the government had broken its promise that the old church would only be demolished once the new church which is being built at another location would be ready for use.

In Jingdezhen (Jiangxi), the Church of Our Lady was razed to the ground shortly after midnight by a firm called "Old Jingdezhen Investment Corporation." Previously, as *UCAN* was able to learn from confirmed online reports, the parish priest was lured away by a dinner invitation from the local Bureau of Religious Affairs and the gatekeeper was temporarily abducted.

Both incidents were apparently motivated by urban development and land speculation and so did not seem to be in the same category as the incidents in Zhejiang. There, the cross of the Catholic church in Jingtou (Cangnan, Wenzhou) was also taken down on September 15. The parish had fought the order for two months and finally agreed with the authorities that they could remove the existing cross, which was judged illegal, if the parish would be allowed to put a smaller cross in its place (*UCAN* Sept. 19; *china.ucanews.com* Sept. 18).

**September 16, 2014:**

## Argentine newspaper reports on Pope's letter to President Xi Jinping

The Argentine online newspaper *Infobae* has reported that Pope Francis, in a letter signed in his own hand, has invited President Xi Jinping to visit him at his home in Santa Marta to reflect together about world peace, and expressed his willingness to travel to China "even tomorrow." According to *Infobae*, the letter was forwarded to President Xi Jinping via Argentinian connections (*www.infobae.com* Sept. 16). The actual existence of this letter, however, has not been confirmed either by the Vatican or from the Chinese side.



September 19, 2014:

## Joint Indo-Chinese declaration provides for promotion of religiously motivated travel between countries

In the “Joint Statement on Building Closer Partnership for Development” of both countries, China agrees, among other things, “to help India promote Indian tourism products and routes that are related to the Chinese monk Xuan Zhuang [Xuanzang] of the seventh century.” Xuanzang brought Buddhist scriptures from India to China and translated many of them into Chinese. Furthermore, the statement also notes that India thanks the Chinese Foreign Ministry and the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region for the support and coordination extended to Indian pilgrims on the occasion of their annual pilgrimage. In order to further promote religious exchanges between the two countries and to facilitate the pilgrimage of Indian pilgrims, China has decided, at India’s request, to open up an additional pilgrimage route via the Nathu La Pass, the statement says. The Joint Statement was released at the end of President Xi Jinping’s state visit to India (*Xinhua* Sept. 18 and 19).

For problems experienced by Tibetan pilgrims traveling from the People’s Republic of China to India, see the entry of July 3–14, 2014.

September 21, 2014:

## Death of Bishop John Chrysostom Lan Shi of Sanyuan



Bishop John Chrysostom Lan Shi.  
Photo: chinacath.org.

Bishop Lan Shi, retired Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Sanyuan, Shaanxi Province, has died at the age of 89. He was born in 1925 in Tongyuan, Gaoling District, and ordained a priest in 1954. In 1965 he was arrested and spent the years up to 1979 in labor camps. On November 28, 2000 he was ordained with the approval of the Holy See as Coadjutor Bishop of Sanyuan. Ordinary of the diocese at that time was Bishop Zong Huaide. Since 2010, Bishop Han Yingjin has been responsible for the diocese. Retired Bishop Zong Huaide still lives in the diocese. Bishop Lan was particularly committed to the young. He also composed several liturgical chants and songs. The interment took place on September 24 in the parish of Xiushidu (*Fides* Oct. 8; [www.gcatholic.org](http://www.gcatholic.org)).

September 21, 2014:

## Report: donations in China on the rise again in 2013

After donations to Chinese charities had decreased in 2011 and 2012 in the wake of scandals involving aid agencies, particularly the Chinese Red Cross, in 2013 they increased again over the previous year by around 21% to 98.9 billion Yuan. The China Charity and Donation Information Center, which is overseen by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, announced the figures. Seventy percent of all charitable donations came from corporations, especially from private firms and foreign enterprises. According to the report, new trends in giving include the donation of company shares and online donations (*Xinhua* Sept. 21).

September 22 / 28, 2014:

## The beginning of the protests in Hong Kong

On September 22, the Hong Kong Federation of Students and the student group “Scholarism” called for a class boycott of several days at universities, and on September 26 they extended the call for a general school boycott. Thousands of university and high school students took to the streets to demonstrate for genuinely free elections of the Chief Executive of Hong Kong in 2017 and, in general, for more democracy. At the end of August, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress in Beijing had established that for the vote the citizens of Hong Kong may only choose between candidates that are determined in advance. Many in Hong Kong feel betrayed. On September 28, the “Occupy Central” movement began its nonviolent protests and joined the students who were already demonstrating. This evolved into a series of protests that was to continue for several weeks, leading to several cases of violent attacks on the part of the police and forced evictions of demonstrators from the streets and protest camps. Talks between the protesters and the Hong Kong government were put off.

Although broadly supporting the concerns of the protesters, in the face of threatening escalations of violence, the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong called repeatedly for prudence and withdrawal.

See also the entries of September 29, October 15 and article in *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 145-149 (in German, sources there).

September 23, 2014:

## Amnesty International publishes report on “China’s Trade in Tools of Torture and Repression”

According to the study, China plays an increasingly strong role in the world market for law enforcement equipment. The study was prepared by Amnesty International, along with the British Omega Research Foundation. According to the report, more than 130 Chinese companies currently produce and then sell potentially dangerous law enforcement equipment, such as electric shock stun batons, metal spiked batons, heavy weighted leg cuffs and rigid restraint chairs. These items would also be sold in countries of Africa and Asia, which are known for habitual human rights violations. Most of the companies are state-run. But also on the domestic scene within Mainland China, the torture of prisoners by electric shock, mechanical holding devices, etc., is widespread, the report said (Amnesty International Sept. 23).

September 23, 2014:

## Uyghur economist Ilham Tohti sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of separatism

Ilham Tohti taught at the Minzu University in Beijing but the trial, lasting only two days, was held in Urumqi. According to *Xinhua*, in its reasoning which the court provided to explain its sentence, it was maintained that Ilham Tohti spread separatist thoughts on the internet via the web site *Uighur Online* and that he also “bewitched and coerced young ethnic students to work for the website.” By the articles he spread, he attacked the Chinese policies on minorities, religion, economy and family planning, and by “distorting the causes” of unrest he “incited ethnic hatred” and “encouraged his fellow Uighurs to use violence,” the court ruled. Ilham Tohti also “colluded with foreign groups and individuals in hyping incidents related to Xinjiang with the aim of making domestic issues international,” the court said.

Ilham's lawyer, Li Fangping, told the *South China Morning Post*, that Ilham was sentenced only for what he had said, and that the authorities had not been able to demonstrate by which of his speeches he is supposed to have triggered the bloody riots in Urumqi on July 5, 2009. The Japanese news agency *Kyodo* commented that this was the harshest punishment handed down to a Chinese activist in years. On September 23, the European Union condemned the judgment against Ilham Tohti as completely unjustified and called for his immediate release.

Ilham Tohti is regarded as someone who, although openly critical of government policy in Xinjiang, has nevertheless always spoken out clearly against separatism. In an interview with the journalist Ian Johnson, the dissident writer Wang Lixiong referred to Ilham Tohti as the only Uyghur who has the potential of a civil society actor but at the same time says he is a Zhongguoren [Chinese]. The only possible conclusion that one can draw is "that they don't want moderate Uighurs," Wang said. "Because if you have moderate Uighurs, then why aren't you talking to them?" (*Kyodo* Aug. 23; *South China Morning Post* Sept. 23 and 24; *Xinhua* Sept. 18 and 23; [www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2014/sep/22/trial-ilham-tohti-they-dont-want-moderate-uighurs/](http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2014/sep/22/trial-ilham-tohti-they-dont-want-moderate-uighurs/); see *China heute* 2009, No. 3, pp. 141-145 [in German]; *RCTC* 2014, No. 1, pp. 12-13).

September 23, 2014:

## High-ranking officials of the United Front Department of the Party visit Baoding Diocese – Catholics call for the release of Bishop Su Zhimin

Zhao Xueyi, director of the Second Bureau (for nationalities and religion work) of the United Front Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, and the heads of the United Front departments of Hebei Province and Baoding City came for an inspection visit to the Cathedral of Baoding. As reported by *UCAN*, they met Bishop An Shuxin, head of the official part of the diocese, Fr. Lu Genjun, recently released from prison, and other Church representatives for talks. On that occasion, Catholic representative Su Tianyou, on behalf of all believers, called for the release of the local Ordinary, Bishop Su Zhimin, who was arrested in 1997 and has since disappeared. He also handed over relevant documents. Su, a nephew of the bishop, spoke of the concerns of the faithful for the old bishop as well as his importance for the improvement of Sino-Vatican relations and the unity of the Church in Baoding. Following that, the officials conducted a "secret conversation" with Bishop An. Fr. Lu Genjun told *UCAN* that the officials had said they would "consider" whether the bishop should be released; Fr. Lu also said that the intention and the result of their visit were unclear. The now 79 year old Bishop Su Zhimin was arrested in 1997 because he refused to join the Patriotic Association. Since then, his whereabouts are unknown. Only once, in 2003, was he sighted briefly in a hospital ([china.ucanews.com](http://china.ucanews.com) Oct. 13). See also the article of August 9 / 28, 2014.

September 23, 2014:

## Death of Bishop John Baptist Wang Jin of Yuci

Bishop Wang Jin of the Diocese of Yuci (Shanxi Province) has died at the age of 90. He was born on April 22, 1924 in Taiyuan and was ordained a priest there in 1951. He spent the years from 1965 to 1985 in prison. He was ordained with the approval of the Holy See as Bishop of Yuci in 1999. There he concerned himself especially with priestly vocations. The Requiem for Bishop Wang was celebrated on October 7 at the Cathedral of Yuci (*Fides* Oct. 8; [www.chinacatholic.org](http://www.chinacatholic.org) Sept. 23); Photo: Internet.



September 24 / 28, 2014:

## China celebrates 2,565th birthday of Confucius with ceremonies in temples and a conference at the Great Hall of the People – 10 years of Confucius Institutes

As reported by China's official media, on September 28, ceremonies were held in many Confucius temples around the country on Confucius' birthday. Five hundred people gathered in Beijing's Confucius Temple, including followers of Confucius from Russia and the U.S. as well as the 90 year old Kong Deyong, a 77th generation descendant of Confucius and Chairman of the World Federation of the Descendants of Confucius. The ritual included bowing to the statue of Confucius, an ancient dance and the offering of wine to Confucius. Middle school students recited passages from the Confucian classics.

On September 24, President Xi Jinping spoke at the opening of the International Conference for the 2,565th birthday of Confucius and the 5th Congress of the International Confucius Association. "If a country or a nation does not cherish its own thinking and culture, if they lose their soul, no matter which country or which nation, it will not be able to stand," Xi said. On September 27, there was a ceremony to mark the tenth anniversary of the Confucius Institutes. According to *Xinhua*, China now operates 465 Confucius Institutes in 123 countries and regions. Their goal is the dissemination of Chinese language and culture (*China Daily* Sept. 29; *Xinhua* Sept. 24 and 27).

September 29, 2014:

## John Cardinal Tong directs appeal to Hong Kong government

Following clashes between police and demonstrators, the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong delivered an "urgent appeal," signed by Cardinal John Tong, to the government of Hong Kong. In it, he called on the government to "make the personal safety of our fellow citizens its primary concern," exercising restraint "in the deployment of force with a view to listening to the voice of the younger generation and citizens from all walks of life." He called on the protesters to remain calm, and asked all Christians to "continue to pray for reconciliation among conflicting parties in Hong Kong" (for the full text, see [sundayex.catholic.org.hk/node/2354](http://sundayex.catholic.org.hk/node/2354)).

See also the entries of September 22 / 28, October 15 and article in *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 145-149 (in German).

September 30, 2014:

## China celebrates first "Martyrs' Day"

During the ceremony, President Xi Jinping laid a wreath at the Monument to the People's Heroes on Tian'anmen Square. The newly introduced day of commemoration, adopted the month before by the National People's Congress, honors people who have "sacrificed their lives for national independence and prosperity, as well as the welfare of the people" since the first Opium War. China has an estimated 20 million martyrs (*lieshi* 烈士), but only 1.93 million are known by name, *Xinhua* wrote. According to the news agency, the number of martyrs has risen annually in recent years by about 300 (*Xinhua* Sept. 30).

October 6, 2014:

## ***Xinhua*: The City of Qufu wants to spread the teachings of Confucius in hundreds of villages**

Qufu City in Shandong Province, the birthplace of Confucius, is currently recruiting staff who, after suitable training, will convey the teachings of Confucius in intelligible form in 405 villages. According to Meng Po of the city's tourism office, who developed the plan, in this way the "quality" of the villagers will be improved and a harmonious environment will be created. For example, the villagers will be encouraged to respect the elderly and to get along well with their neighbors. The lessons will be given in the courtyards of the village committee buildings or in the village squares. Meng explained that in addition a Confucius library is to be built up and a new play about Confucius will be performed in each village (*Xinhua* Oct. 6).

October 11, 2014:

## **Two members of the "Church of the Almighty God" sentenced to death for murder**

A court in Yantai (Shandong Province) has sentenced Zhang Fan and her father Zhang Lidong to death for murder and for undermining the implementation of the law by a cult. Three other defendants received prison sentences of life imprisonment, ten and seven years respectively. According to the report in *China Daily*, the five had killed a woman named Wu Shuoyan on May 28 in a McDonald's restaurant in Zhaoyuan when she refused to give them her telephone number; the group reportedly wanted to recruit her as a member ([www.chinadaily.com.cn](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn) Oct. 11).

For more on this incident, see *RCTC* 2014, No. 3, p. 7. See also the entry of August 19, 2014.

October 15, 2014:

## **Religious leaders in Hong Kong offer themselves as mediators**

Amid the protests in Hong Kong, leaders of the different religions have offered themselves as intermediaries in discussions between the government and the protesters. In a statement, the Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist and Muslim leaders expressed their readiness to help provide a basis for a common dialogue. According to *UCAN*, it is rather unlikely that the government will take them up on their offer given the leading role Christians have played in the pro-democracy rallies in recent weeks and the fact that key Catholic and Protestant figures have featured prominently (*UCAN* Oct. 16).

See also the entries September 22 / 28, September 29 and article in *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 145-149 (in German).

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