

Prayer Diary: China

21-27 May 2023



Since March 2021, at least 24 leaders and workers from unregistered Protestant churches have been detained on suspicion of fraud – often for simply receiving tithes and offerings. At the time of printing, 17 remain in pre-trial detention on unjust fraud allegations.

Zhang Kai, a human rights lawyer, explains the Chinese government's logic: 'If a church is not registered with the government, it is illegal, which means the pastor is fake, which means tithes and offerings they receive are fraudulent.' Yet there are legitimate reasons why a church may not wish to register, while others have in fact been blocked from registering with the authorities.

This week, pray for the wellbeing of the people and churches below, and for their freedom. And please also hold in your prayers those of other religions or beliefs who are also facing injustice.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/china

Sunday 21 May

Church of Abundance, Xi'an

Three church leaders have been held in detention over fraud allegations since August 2022. They are Pastor Lian Changnian, his son Pastor Lian Xuliang and preacher Ms Fu Juan. They were denied access to their lawyers for six months. On 22 February 2023, their family members revealed that all three were subjected to torture and mistreatment in custody.

Monday 22 May

Golden Lampstand Church, Linfen

Two pastors and ten of their colleagues were detained after police raided a baptism service in August 2021. Five were released on bail, but seven were formally charged with fraud in March 2022, including Pastor Wang Xiaoguang and his wife Pastor Yang Rongli. They are still awaiting trial.

Tuesday 23 May

Linfen Covenant House Church ('Shengyue Jiayuan')

Police have pressured church members to write reports on their leaders, and several church leaders and staff members have been detained for alleged 'fraud'. Three were formally arrested and are still detained: Li Jie, Han Xiaodong and Wang Qiang.

Wednesday 24 May

Today is the Catholic World Day of Prayer for the Church in China. Use 2 Thessalonians 3:3 to inspire your prayers for churches amid the ongoing crackdown on freedom of religion or belief.

Thursday 25 May

Green Pastures ('Qingcaodi') Church, Deyang

Elders Hao Ming and Wu Jiannan were formally charged with fraud in December and reportedly face over ten years in jail. Early Rain Covenant Church, which planted Green Pastures, also continues to experience harassment.

Friday 26 May

Chen Lijun – a house church preacher in Henan Province – faces fraud allegations after purchasing a small number of Christian books online. He has been criminally detained since August 2022, and was fined the equivalent of approximately £12,000.

Saturday 27 May

Lord, we lament at the scale of human rights violations in China, targeting people of many different religions and beliefs. Today we pray specifically that even independent or unregistered churches would be free to receive gifts and offerings without being accused of 'fraud'.

Amen.