

270 Christian Leaders Were Arrested in China for Reading the Bible

The leaders were blindfolded, handcuffed and taken to a local police station under charges of conducting an “illegal religious gathering.”



Recently Chinese police raided a gathering of house-church pastors in the Hedeng district, arresting at least 270 for conducting an “illegal religious gathering.”

According to *Asianews* the Christian leaders were blindfolded, handcuffed and taken to a local police station after officers from a dozen towns converged upon the Bible study.

Although many pastors were eventually released upon paying an “interrogation tax” equivalent to U.S. \$40, about 150 remain imprisoned.

In September, China’s ruling Communist Party officially acknowledged the ballooning house-church movement, adding that “religious believers should be mobilized to make a positive contribution to society.”

And last week the government celebrated the only authorized Christian publisher’s printing of the 50 millionth Bible, with a government official remarking that China “respects and protects religious freedom.”

However, international religious freedom groups continue to criticize the government’s inconsistencies after businessman Shi Weihai, owner of Beijing’s Holy Spirit Bookstore, was arrested for not registering his house church.

A party document was leaked in November describing a nationwide campaign to “normalize” underground Protestant churches by giving them two options: join the government-sanctioned religious organizations or face suppression. [*Usa Today*]