

Chinese Christians: 'There Is No Freedom at All'

A massive new wave of persecution of Christians has been taking place in China.

In the spring, China's president Xi Jinping introduced a five-year plan to "sincize" all the nation's religions by infusing them with "Chinese characteristics" such as loyalty to the Communist Party.

Over the last several months, the government has taken steps toward this measure by shutting down hundreds of private Christian "house churches" and seizing Bibles.

The unregistered Protestant house churches that sprung up independent of the official Christian Council, were largely tolerated at one point but have since become a target.

"Chinese leaders have always been suspicious of the political challenge or threat that Christianity poses to the Communist regime," said Xi Lian, a scholar of Christianity in China at Duke University. "Under Xi, this fear of Western infiltration has intensified and gained a prominence that we haven't seen for a long time."

Some Christians have lost their jobs, been evicted from their homes or even jailed for their faith.

In March, a prominent Chinese house church leader was sentenced to seven years in prison after he built Christian schools in Myanmar.

ChinaAid reports that last month, half a dozen Christians were sentenced to up to 13 years in jail for involvement in a so-called "cult."

ChinaAid says because of this crackdown, several dozen pastors

and their families have fled to the United States in recent years. {eoa}

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