

34 Churches Call for Government to Respect Religious Freedom

In a joint declaration, 34 churches in the Chinese capital, Beijing, have called on the government to respect the freedom and rights of religious citizens, advocacy group CSW reports.

The churches, which are independent from the state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement, committed to “stand together” in the “new environment” that had been created following the issuance of the new Regulations on Religious Affairs in February.

According to CSW, these churches have experienced surveillance, fines, intimidation and pressure to close. Home of Christ Church in Shantou, Guangdong province, for example, saw its leaders and some of the members being interrogated about church activities in June and July this year. Some electronic devices and religious literature were confiscated.

“Such cases suggest that the space for independent religious communities is shrinking at a worrying rate,” CSW said. Its chief executive, Mervyn Thomas, said they were “extremely concerned about the restrictions” that the churches, registered or unregistered, face in China.

“We further condemn the arbitrary detention of citizens in connection with their religion or belief, including Christians, Muslims and those of other faiths. We renew our calls to the Chinese government to release all those detained for their faith, as well as for those detained in connection with their defense of fundamental human rights in China,” Thomas said. {eo}

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