

Chinese Christians Bravely Tell Government: Stop Illegal Anti-Church Campaign

Chinese Christians vowed to “guard their church to the end” while facing the growing anti-church campaign in Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province.

Local pastors and church members from various churches published a public letter to the Wenzhou City government which included a list of eight ways the government had been illegally demolishing their church buildings and crosses. The government ignored their pleas, and within a week local authorities had forcibly removed the cross from the roof of Yahui Church in Pingyang County, Wenzhou City, and threatened church members harm if they talked to the media or petitioned Beijing. The Chinese government has since blocked the content of the public letter on websites within mainland China.

It is reported that over 360 churches in Zhejiang Province have been completely or partially demolished under the guise of “removing or modifying illegal constructions.” The government of Zhejiang Province says it is removing or modifying illegal buildings for urban development. However, in a news release, International Christian Concern (ICC) reported, and later the *New York Times* corroborated, that the target has been religious buildings at the exclusion of all others.

ICC received a list of 15 churches in Pingyang County alone that are facing cross demolition by the end of this month. It is widely believed that the campaign is exclusively targeting Christian churches. “The campaign has been unbridled and the government demolishes church crosses recklessly,” said a local church member.

In the published public letter to Wenzhou City government, local believers listed eight reasons why “the anti-church campaign is an abnormally illegal administrative action that is abusing authority and ignoring the rule of law.” They claimed that China’s Administrative Punishment Law requires advanced notice before the government’s compulsory execution.

However, the government’s demolition teams usually show up at churches in the middle of the night, without legal documents, and began the demolition process under the cover of darkness.

In addition, Chinese Christians argued that, even if a cross is illegal, the law demands that the demolition team should be from the Religious Bureau or the Housing and City Planning Bureau. However, the demolition team is usually made up of unidentified personnel, police and SWAT—a clear violation of procedure and the rights of the believers.

Local Christians told ICC that with this blatant anti-church campaign, “the Government is causing deep panic among its citizens. What good do they gain from it?” In addition, the presence of police and SWAT does not incite peace. “Their behaviors are nearly barbarian on many occasions,” according to local Christians. Proof of this unacceptable behavior can be seen in exclusive video footage obtained by ICC showing police beating believers with a baton during a standoff.

Not long after the public letter was published, ICC received information that the cross of Yahui Church in Pingyang County has been forcibly removed on Friday morning. The video sent to ICC from local believers shows that when the cross was slowly lowered down by government’s construction machine, believers burst into tears and sang the Chinese hymn “*cross, cross, be my glory forever; all my sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus.*”