

Christian Persecution Intensifies in China with Mandatory Worship App

In a troubling development, it has been alleged that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is testing a new app that demands citizens pre-register before attending religious services, further restricting religious freedom.

The Voice of the Martyrs, a persecution watchdog, revealed the CCP has rolled out an app in Henan province, requiring individuals to seek approval through the app in order to attend any kind of religious gathering. Todd Nettleton, Chief of Media Relations for The Voice of the Martyrs, explained that citizens must provide personal information, including their identity, address and ID details, to the Chinese government through the app.

The approval process is limited to churches registered with the CCP, leaving house churches and unsanctioned gatherings with no opportunity to obtain permission.

Authorities can now easily check for compliance by asking attendees to present their phones and open the app during church services. The app, known as "Smart Religion," has been developed by the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Henan Province and applies not only to Christian churches but also to mosques, Buddhist temples and other religious spaces, as reported by CBN News in March.

This app-based regulation raises serious concerns about privacy and personal freedom. With the ability to track individuals and capture their information, the CCP gains further control over citizens' lives.

Nettleton warns that the app could potentially expand

throughout China, as seen during the COVID pandemic when a similar app-based control was implemented for public transit and certain buildings.

Sam Brownback, co-chair of the International Religious Freedom Summit, emphasized that the app enables authorities to track and shut down religious gatherings, further limiting church attendance. The implications are particularly worrisome for unregistered churches, as the government may pressure them to come “under communist control” by promising reduced persecution.

Nettleton also highlighted that the app restricts attendance for individuals under 18, placing additional burdens on adults who must pre-register and subject themselves to potential pressure and persecution. He emphasized the extensive resources available to the CCP, including manpower, surveillance cameras and location tracking, which allow for minute-level control over individuals’ lives.

Persecution watchdogs are closely monitoring the expansion of the app requirements to other provinces. The CCP’s attempts to rewrite a more communism-driven version of the Bible, reported last year, add to concerns about religious freedoms. The proposed new translation, integrating Confucian and Buddhist principles, aligns with the Communist Party’s agenda.

Christians and advocates for freedom of religion remain vigilant in protecting the fundamental right to practice faith without government interference. {eoa}

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