

Crackdown Escalates as Underground Christians Face New Wave of Arrests in January

A new persecution of Christians is under way in China with the arrest of church leaders and the demolition of a major Christian church building.

After the arrest of more than 100 Christians in December, Chinese authorities arrested six leaders of a Protestant church, according to Reuters.

“The detentions of the members of the Early Rain Covenant Church, a large unofficial ‘house church’ based in the southwestern city of Chengdu, took place on Tuesday, according to the church statement and a separate statement on the detentions from advocacy group Human Rights Watch,” Reuters reported.

Church leader Li Yingqiang was among those arrested after his home was raided.

The CCP's Crackdown on Christians Is Escalating—Please Don't Look Away

Please don't treat what's happening to Christians in China as a “religion policy” footnote. It's a moral and human issue: whether people are still allowed to worship, gather, and live by conscience without...

– liqiang gong (@gong_liqia88076) January 3, 2026

Yalkun Uluyol, a Human Rights Watch China researcher, told Reuters that “the government should immediately free those detained and let them freely practice their religion.”

More than 44 million Chinese citizens are registered as members of state-approved Christian churches, with millions more belonging to unofficial and illegal “house churches.”

Prior to the recent arrests, Li Yingqiang said he “sensed a storm gathering” and voiced concern over “the imminent prospect of... another large-scale crackdown,” according to the BBC.

“I dearly hope that none of our families shall ever again endure such a storm. Yet as an elder appointed by the Lord to stand among you... it is my duty to remind you all to prepare yourselves before the storm returns,” he wrote to church members in November.

Li and his wife, Zhang Xinyue, remain in detention after the Tuesday raid that arrested them.

“The situation is ongoing, with specific details yet to be fully confirmed,” Early Rain Covenant Church said in a statement calling for prayers to support its members.

The arrests were accompanied by government action to demolish the Yayang Church building in Wenzhou. Armed guards stood by to prevent interference.

Residents who live near the church have been sent packing while nearby workers have been ordered not to video the demolition, according to ChinaAid.

ChinaAid Urges International Action to Prevent the Imminent

Destruction of Yayang Christian Church in Wenzhou, China

Issued by: ChinaAid Association

Date: January 5, 2026

Location: Yayang Town, Taishun County, Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province, China

ChinaAid Association urgently...

– Bob Fu 傅晓 (@BobFu4China) January 5, 2026

“The massive mobilization against the two major independent church networks shows the central government is determined to stamp out Christian churches entirely, unless the church is totally indoctrinated into the party’s ideology,” Bob Fu, who founded ChinaAid, said.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has said that “religious freedom conditions in China remained among the worst in the world.”

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