

‘New Wave of Religious Persecution’ Hits as Dozens of Pastors Arrested

Dozens of pastors from one of the largest underground churches in China have been detained. It is reportedly the biggest crackdown on Christians by the communist regime since 2018.

Chinese police have detained Pastor Ezra Jin Mingri, the founder of Zion Church, at his home in the southern city of Beihai last Friday evening, his daughter Grace Jin told the media, from the U.S.

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The long-time pastor has been under surveillance for years, and he is barred from leaving China.

The house church was started in 2007 and was previously shut down, but has still managed to grow into one of the largest congregations in China. Current estimates have the membership at about 5,000 regular worshippers across nearly 50 cities.

“What just happened is part of a new wave of religious persecution this year,” church spokesperson Sean Long told Reuters, from the U.S.

Ms. Jin told the Wall Street Journal that dozens of other Zion Church pastors and workers were also taken into custody or are missing in cities around the country. Long later confirmed that account, saying about 20 pastors and church leaders remain in detention.



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This is not the first time Chinese officials have cracked down on Jin's church. Jin told CBN News that in August 2018, he refused a government order to install closed-circuit surveillance cameras in the sanctuary.

"A lot of our flock are terrified by the pressure that the government is putting on them," Jin said. "It's painful to think that in our own country's capital, we must pay so dearly just to practice our faith."

Weeks later, authorities outlawed the 1,500-member church and banned him from preaching.

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"It's probably the largest incident of the government using public power to apply pressure on a house church in the past 10 years, and it is still going on today," warned Jin.

There are two main types of churches in China: registered and unregistered. Registered congregations, also known as Three-Self Churches, are government-approved because they've agreed to obey communist rules.

The other is the underground church. That group of churches isn't necessarily hidden or secret under the police state of the Chinese Communist Party, but operates outside government control.

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For decades, the house churches have faced intense persecution.

Lately, the CCP has been cracking down on the spread of religion over the internet. In September, they issued a new Code of Conduct for Religious Clergy on the Internet, WSJ

reports.

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