

Pastor of China's Largest Megachurch Jailed for Defending Christianity

Ten days after officials in China's coastal Zhejiang province released a notice detailing the forced removal of a pastor from his position at China's largest government-sanctioned church, the pastor was taken into custody today and placed under "residential surveillance in a designated location." Additionally, family members believe that the pastor's wife, whom they have been unable to contact, was also taken into police custody.

China Aid reported that Pastor Gu "Joseph" Yuese of Hangzhou's Chongyi Church, a Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) Church, was forcibly removed from his position leading the church, according to a Jan. 18 document released by the local TSPM and China Christian Council (CCC), because of his public opposition to the hundreds of forced cross demolitions throughout Zhejiang since early 2014. China Aid learned of Gu's arrest after his family members and staff at Chongyi Church were unable to contact him yesterday. Today, they received an official notice, stating that Gu was placed under "residential surveillance in a designated location," a situation commonly known by experts as a black jail. A formal arrest notice is expected to follow.

Family members also told China Aid that they believe Gu's wife, Zhou Lianmei, was detained after the couple's home was searched by the Hangzhou Public Security Bureau.

Gu currently serves as a member of the standing committee of the nation's CCC and is the current chairman of the Zhejiang Provincial CCC. He has served as the senior pastor of Chongyi Church for more than a decade.

“His arrest marks a major escalation in the crackdown against those who oppose the forced demolition of crosses,” China Aid Founder and President Bob Fu said. “He will be the highest-ranking national church leader arrested since the Cultural Revolution.”

China Aid will continue to update the story of Gu’s situation as more information becomes available.

Additionally, China Aid learned that six church crosses were forcibly demolished within the past week.

China Aid exposes religious freedom abuses, such as those experienced by Gu Yuese and Zhou Lianmei, in order to promote religious freedom and rule of law in China.