

# Asia Harvest



'Put in the Sickle, for the Harvest has Come!' (Mark 4:29)

[www.asiaharvest.org](http://www.asiaharvest.org)

[office@asiaharvest.org](mailto:office@asiaharvest.org)

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## Crisis in China (PART ONE)

The Worst Persecution in 40 Years

# From the Frontlines

*“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you... They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. .” (John 15:18-19, 21).*

Earlier this year we sent out a newsletter entitled “A Special China Issue,” which told of the massive and brutal persecution of Christians underway in China. Many people were shocked by what we shared, and some even doubted if it was true, as other sources weren’t reporting the trouble.

In the following months it became clear that God’s people in China are not merely going through a regular season of hardship, but a major effort is underway to completely control the Church, backed by new technology that creates challenges to the Body of Christ that have never been encountered before. In this newsletter we will update you on the crisis in China, while attempting to answer some of the common questions people have asked.

## *What’s the Latest News from China?*

In recent months the government has markedly increased the pressure on Christians throughout the country. We received an unconfirmed report from a long-term China missionary stating that **314 house church Christians have been killed** in recent months, and hundreds more are missing. Most house church leaders have gone into hiding and have disconnected their phones and other devices because of the incredible surveillance capabilities of the state.

Thousands of house churches (which are considered illegal in China) have been closed. **Reflecting the actions of Mao’s Red Guards in the 1960s,** religious symbols such as crosses and Scripture posters have been torn down and replaced by flags of China or portraits of President Xi Jinping.

*Note: Our website version of this newsletter includes several important links to articles and videos to help people understand what’s going on in China and how best to pray. Please visit [www.asiaharvest.org](http://www.asiaharvest.org) for more detailed information.*

*Cover picture: The Golden Lampstand Church in Shanxi Province being dynamited by the Chinese authorities earlier this year.*

Some congregations have been ordered to sing the national anthem or other patriotic songs at the start of their services. Others have been ordered to install government facial-recognition surveillance cameras inside their worship halls, and those that have refused to comply have been forced to shut down.

Landlords who rent buildings to Christians are being heavily fined by the government, with new laws allowing fines of between 20,000 to 200,000 Yuan (almost US\$30,000). This has created a climate of fear and suspicion, and **thousands of fellowships have been forced out** of the premises they were renting. On the streets, the police have the power to stop and search anyone they wish and to check their phones and other devices for content they deem a threat to society. These threats may include the presence of a Bible app or visits to Christian websites, or any communication considered unpatriotic.

The most severe persecution is occurring in the vast Xinjiang region in northwest China. In recent years a promising church movement had emerged among the Uyghur, Kazakh and Kirghiz people groups, but most of the church leaders have been arrested and taken to concentration camps in the desert. Reputable news organizations estimate at least one million people are being detained and tortured in those camps right now. Many suburbs in cities like Urumqi, Hami and Kashgar are now depopulated and countless buildings have been boarded up. Although this initiative was designed to target Muslims in border areas, almost all Uyghur and Kazakh church leaders have also been taken away. **The government doesn't care whether someone is a Muslim or Christian. It's all the same to them.**

### *Spiritual Forces behind the Persecution*

While there are human reasons for the dramatic persecution, we should never lose sight of the fact that Satan and his fallen hosts hate God's people, and they never rest in trying to destroy them. We recently updated our Christian stats for all 2,866 cities and counties in China, and the end result was a marked increase since the last time we reviewed our figures. Currently, we estimate a total of **129.7 million professing Christians** in China, of which 109 million are Evangelical believers. The Chinese government is fully aware of the explosive growth of the Church in China, and they are determined to stop it. They don't want China taking over from South Korea as the number one Evangelical country in Asia.

### *Political Ambitions*

If you have read our Asia Harvest newsletters for some time you will know we don't usually mention politics at all, as our call is to equip the Church in Asia and not to be entangled by civilian affairs (2 Timothy 2:4). Our goal is not to favor one political system over another, but to see all people groups of Asia hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If one quote sums up what we think about politics, it would be this famous one from an economist in the last century: **"Under Communism man oppresses man. Under capitalism it's the other way around."**

To understand the human reasons of why China is so determined to destroy the Church, however, it's helpful to grasp the historical background behind China's geo-political ambitions. Starting in the 1800s, China was dominated by foreign powers that carved up various parts of the country and exploited their natural resources. The Chinese consider this the darkest period in their history, and have labelled it "The century of humiliation." Chinese resentment and desire to revenge their "loss of face" runs deep. Japan was one of the foreign nations that dominated China during this period, inflicting shameful cruelties on the Chinese people. A few years ago a survey in China found that 82 percent of respondents said China should launch a war with Japan before the end of this decade.

In a bid to try to erase the painful memories of the past, China believes they have an opportunity to be the new world super-power, replacing the United States and the West. To achieve this lofty goal, President Xi Jinping has stopped at nothing to implement his "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which would result in China having the most powerful economy and military on earth. To help him succeed, earlier this year Xi was appointed 'President for life'. Whereas often in the West we think in terms of months and years, the Chinese think in terms of decades and even centuries. They are not in a rush, and are determined to gradually work their way toward becoming the undisputed world power.

The Communist leaders trying so desperately to implement their global vision are God-hating atheists, and they are determined not to let anyone or anything stand in their way. They want absolute power over what people do, say and think, and Christians, Muslims, or anyone else who may pose a threat to their goals are being subdued, controlled, or eradicated. These are the reasons behind the current campaign to wipe out the Church in China. Mao tried to do this from the 1950s to 1970s, and **Xi Jinping seems determined to finish the job that Mao failed to do.**

### *Is Persecution always Good for the Church?*

Many times you have probably heard it said that **“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”** Often people have written to us with this quote, as if it is the sum total of persecution for Christians. It may surprise some to learn that this phrase is not in the Bible at all, but was spoken by Tertullian, a second century church leader in North Africa. For the record, Tertullian’s full quote was: “The more ye mow us down, the more quickly we grow; the blood of Christians is seed. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. Dying we conquer. The moment we are crushed, that moment we go forth victorious.”

Is what Tertullian said true? Is persecution *always* good for the Church, and does it invariably result in the expansion of the faith? We believe that while **Tertullian’s quote may be generally true, it is certainly not always the case.**

Persecution in itself does not bring revival. It is a time of testing, and over the years we have known many church leaders in China, Vietnam and elsewhere who have gone through fiery trials, but instead of coming out of prison renewed and more zealous for the Lord, many have emerged spiritually weaker and overcome by sins and temptations. Sadly, we know of some former church leaders who are no longer walking with God. In the 1930s a missionary in northeast China stated, “The blood of martyrs may indeed be the seed of the Church, but **sometimes the crop from that seed is not always a good one.**”

A survey of Church history clearly reveals that persecution does not automatically result in the growth of Christianity. The nations of Central Asia and the Middle East once contained as many as 30 million Christians, but the Islamic conquests of the region wiped out the Church in numerous locations, many of which have yet to see any more spiritual light for over 1,000 years to the present day.

In this first of two newsletters on the Crisis in China we wanted to update readers on the latest challenges facing our Christian brothers and sisters there. Next month we will share more on how these tumultuous events are affecting Christian work in China, and we will include a public statement made by many church leaders. Be assured that despite these new challenges all Asia Harvest projects in China are continuing! Church leaders have cried out to the Lord for heavenly strategies, and are implementing what God has told them to do. **Please pray fervently for the Church in China!**



## ASIAN WORKERS' FUND



*Asia Harvest currently supports **1,283** Asian evangelists among **983** people groups.*

The **Asian Workers' Fund** assists indigenous church-planting evangelists who are involved in strategic ministry to unreached people groups. These disciples have committed their whole lives to the Gospel but are hindered by lack of finances.

You can sponsor an Asian evangelist among an unreached people group for **\$25 per month** each. Prayer cards and updates are sent to all regular supporters. To date, the evangelists we help have reported **312,008 conversions to Christ**.

## CHINA BIBLE FUND



*Current Total: **11,371,128** Chinese Bibles printed and distributed.*

We are partnering with house churches in China in a long-term project to provide Bibles for Christians who cannot access God's Word. We receive countless requests for Bibles from church leaders throughout the country. These Bibles are distributed free of charge, equipping the Body of Christ and helping add fuel to the revival in China.

## ASIAN BIBLE FUND



*Current Total: **911,624** Bibles printed in 99 languages.*

Asia is home to many ethnic groups where people have been deprived of God's Word, sometimes for decades. The **Asian Bible Fund** provides the Scriptures in numerous languages throughout **Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent**, and elsewhere. **Each Bible costs an average of \$2.70 to print and deliver.** Through this project we also print millions of Gospel booklets that are used for evangelism.



## LIVING MARTYRS' FUND



*Asia Harvest is currently supporting 293 living martyrs.*

The **Living Martyrs' Fund** supports church leaders in China, Vietnam and elsewhere who are unable to work because of injuries or illness caused by persecution. They and their families face extreme poverty and hardship. Through a gift of **\$35 per month** you can help support one of these living martyrs. A prayer card is sent to every supporter of this project.

## BLESS THE CHILDREN FUND



*Your generous support has so far impacted 143,166 children for Jesus throughout Asia.*

The **Bless the Children Fund** introduces children to Jesus Christ in India, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Nepal, and a host of other countries. Activities include printing and distributing Gospel literature designed for children, providing free surgeries for those with special needs, and generally lifting children out of spiritual and physical poverty. The results of this project have been tremendous. It costs an average of **\$10 to impact a child for Christ**.

## PERSECUTION & RELIEF FUND



*Transforming lives from ashes to beauty with God's love.*

The **Persecution & Relief Fund** assists the victims of natural disasters that have struck Asia. In addition to providing aid through medicine, tents, blankets, food and water, rebuilding homes etc., the Christians we partner with take every opportunity to share the Gospel, and many people have come to know Jesus Christ. This project also provides physical and spiritual relief to Christian communities and families throughout Asia who have been affected by persecution.



## Asia Harvest Addresses

[www.asiaharvest.org](http://www.asiaharvest.org) / [office@asiaharvest.org](mailto:office@asiaharvest.org)

<b>NORTH AMERICA:</b>	353 Jonestown Road #320, Winston-Salem, NC 27104, USA
<b>AUSTRALIA:</b>	36 Nelson Street, Stepney, South Australia 5069 <i>Bank details:</i> CBA 06-4410-10255537 (Asia Harvest)
<b>NEW ZEALAND:</b>	P.O.Box 1757, Queenstown 9348 <i>Bank details:</i> ASB 12-3154-0092327-00 (Asia Harvest)
<b>EUROPE:</b>	Stiftung SALZ, Tailfingerstr. 28, 71083 Herrenberg, Germany <i>IBAN:</i> DE93 6426 1853 0060 0080 08 / <i>BIC:</i> GENODES1PGW
<b>MALAYSIA:</b>	Strategic Missions Program, P.O.Box 8036, Pejabat Pos Kelana Jaya, 46780 Petaling Jaya, Selangor <i>Bank details:</i> CIMB 8008242805 (Strategic Missions Program)
<b>UNITED KINGDOM &amp; IRELAND:</b>	AsiaLink, P.O. Box 891, Preston PR4 9AB, England <i>Bank details:</i> NatWest Bank 01-07-65, Account No. 07018797