



***"Little children, you are from
God and have overcome them,
for He who is in you is greater
than he who is in the world."***

~ 1 John 4:4 ESV

CHINA: Non-Compliant Catholic Bishop Rearrested

Sources: AsiaNews, ChinaAid, FSSPX, International Christian Concern

Peter Shao Zhumin, a Catholic priest who was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI as an auxiliary bishop, became the bishop of the Diocese of Wenzhou in 2016. However, over the years, Bishop Shao has stood in opposition to the dictates of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Not acknowledging its authority over the church, he refused to join the state-controlled Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. In response, the official association appointed a different bishop to replace him; however, many members of the diocese do not recognize the association's appointment.

Bishop Shao has been arrested on at least two prior occasions because of his refusal to yield to the Chinese Communist Party. The most recent incident arose after he publicly celebrated mass on December 27th.

Authorities of the CCP imposed a fine of 200,000 yuan (around \$40,000 CAD) which the church leader challenged, insisting that no laws were violated. In response, police officials from the Public Security Bureau arrested him on March 7th, claiming that the arrest was for his own safety.

In recent years, opposition from Chinese security officials against unregistered religious groups has intensified. Plain clothes officers regularly attend unregistered churches to ban children and teenagers from entering, or to prevent services from taking place altogether. In recent social media posts, the CCP has publicly celebrated its increase in governmental persecution of religious minorities throughout 2024, referencing the party's "intensified efforts to dismantle cult organizations." The term "cult" is used to describe beliefs deemed anti-government or those that fail to comply with the principles of the CCP. Based on recent trends, this increased persecution is expected to continue during 2025. To learn more about the various trials facing Chinese Christians, and/or to review previously posted *Persecution & Prayer Alert* reports, see our [country profile](#).



Bishop Shao
Photo: ChinaAid

- ***Please prayerfully uphold Bishop Shao as he now deals with this most recent incident of persecution, asking the Lord to advocate on his behalf.***
- ***In the midst of governmental opposition, may this faithful church leader – along with the many other arrested/fined Christians throughout China – remain strong in their resolve to honour God in both word and deed.***
- ***Pray for a spiritual awakening to take place among CCP leaders and local officials who actively oppose Christianity, so that they too would yield to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.***

PAKISTAN: Resignation of Judge Implicated in Blasphemy Entrapment

Sources: Morning Star News, The Nation

On March 6th, Justice Chaudhry Abdul Aziz of the Lahore High Court unexpectedly resigned from his judicial post as a court official, effective immediately. The judge cited "personal issues" as the reason for his resignation.

While highly praised by many, allegations have arisen that Chaudhry had links to a group suspected of exploiting blasphemy laws for personal gain. An anonymous Muslim lawyer believes that mounting international pressure over the blatant human rights violations may have forced him to step down.

Some defence lawyers have reportedly expressed relief over the recent news of his resignation due to the pressures he placed on individuals who were victimized during the blasphemy trials. An investigation in 2024 alleges that organized groups (including those involving lawyers) have been intentionally entrapping Christians, leading to allegations of blasphemy. Further information addressing this concern is [available here](#).



Lahore High Court
Photo: Wikipedia / MariyamAftab (cc)

- ***Pray that Pakistan's judicial officials would uphold justice, fairness and impartiality when assessing the various cases brought before them.***
- ***May the police and other local authorities likewise exercise wisdom, discernment and prudence as they initially evaluate situations warranting their intervention.***
- ***As God's Holy Spirit continues to work through His followers in Pakistan, pray that the "Good News" of the Gospel will reach many who are in need of His eternal salvation and hope.***

UZBEKISTAN: New Religion Law Takes Effect

Sources: Forum18, The Times of Central Asia, World Evangelical Alliance

For the past several months, members of the Uzbek parliament have been deliberating over revisions to their existing religion laws. On June 26th, 2024, a draft law was published. Recently, as of February 21st, this new law officially came into effect. For more information, see [this page](#).

Proponents of the new law proclaimed that it would promote religious tolerance, prevent discrimination, strengthen national unity, and ensure freedom and equality for all citizens. Authorities stated that, after receiving more than 480 public submissions, "most citizens backed the initiative, recognizing its timely development and potential benefits for the country."

Major concerns have since been raised by religious groups regarding the new restrictions placed on the religious education of children. These new restrictions impose fines or jail terms for parents who allow or arrange "illegal" religious education for youth under the age of 18. Defenders of the legislation allege that the new law is designed to keep children from the influence of terrorist groups; in particular, those who promote militant Islamic viewpoints. However, the implications of the new law actually apply to parents representing all religious groups, including adherents of Christianity, who wish to teach their children about their faith.



Uzbekistan Parliament
Photo: Wikimedia / Davide Mauro (cc)

As a result of this new legislation, police have been targeting children who attend night prayers during Ramadan. Human rights defenders have also expressed concerns that parents could even be punished for instructing their children at home, which would be a clear violation of the country's constitution.

- ***On behalf of parents who are endeavouring to raise their children in the ways of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:6-8), pray that they would receive His wisdom and direction.***
- ***Intercede for Uzbekistan's governing leaders, praying that they would be willing to reevaluate the newly implemented religion law and make necessary changes to the forementioned restrictions to ensure freedom of belief and conscience for all.***

The "Persecution & Prayer Alert" is a ministry of:
Voice of the Martyrs Canada, P.O. Box 608, Streetsville, Ontario, L5M 2C1
Tel. (905) 670-9721 - Website: www.vomcanada.com