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RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

1. Please provide information on the treatment of ordinary member of the underground Catholic churches in Henan Province.

2. Is it customary for the authorities to issue a Certificate of Release or a Notice of Prisoner’s Release upon Completion of His Sentence once a prisoner has been released?

3. Is there a prison called Xin Yang in the outskirts of Luo He City?

RESPONSE

1. Please provide information on the treatment of ordinary member of the underground Catholic churches in Henan Province.

This question contains information on Catholics in Henan and in China generally.

Underground Catholics in Henan:

Few reports were found on Catholics, registered or unregistered, in Henan. Most reports of actions against underground Catholics came from Hebei, a province with a much larger number of Catholics. A chart in a recent article on Catholics in China estimates that Henan had 125,000 Catholics in 2000 (Liu, W. and Leung, B. 2002, ‘Organizational Revivalism: Explaining Metamorphosis of China’s Catholic Church’, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Vol.41, No.1, p.133 – Attachment 1).

Most reports on Christians in Henan concern actions against unregistered Protestants in the province (estimates of up to 5 million are common). The Cardinal Kung Foundation website,
which specialises in the Catholic Church in China, has reports on only the following three actions against Catholics in Henan:

- **5 March 2005** – “Among the younger bishops who are prevented from exercising their ministry there are: …
  3) Mgr Zhang Weizhu (diocese of Xinxiang, Henan), 45, is an active pastor and the founder of two religious orders. He is prevented from visiting his diocese and is kept under surveillance in Hebei province. …
  Many underground bishops, who were harshly persecuted in the past, are now old. And yet they are still subjected to surveillance, isolation, and brainwashing. Others are so sick that they cannot move. …
  5) Mgr Li Hongye (diocese of Luoyang, Henan), 83, was arrested in 1997. He is also ill.

- **January 1999** – “Bishop Andrew Tsien Tchew-Choenn of Hualien, Taiwan, who supports the underground Church in mainland China, told UCA News Jan 22 he had learned that underground Catholics in Gansu, Hebei, Henan and other provinces had experienced government crackdowns to deter them from celebrating Christmas.”

- **November 1995** – “Bishop Li Hongye, Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Luoyang in Henan Province, recently jailed by the Chinese government on July 25, 1994, was recently released (date unknown).”

A 2004 DFAT report states:

A.1. Henan has a high prevalence of underground Christian church groups (which in formal terms China views as illegal). There are also more reports of the authorities in Henan taking action against such underground groups (compared to other provinces in China). This may be partly because local authorities in Henan take a more hard-line attitude towards these groups and partly because there are more of these groups than in some other provinces…
  (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2006, *China: Failed asylum seeker return decision*, 7 August – Attachment 5).

Henan is noted as a province for conflict between underground Protestant churches and the authorities. Kristof says:

The Chinese government cracks down on the underground church, but inconsistently and not nearly as harshly as it persecutes Falun Gong. The worst oppression is in rural areas …
The China Aid Association, a U.S.-based group that monitors religious oppression, says that at least 1,958 Christians have been arrested in China in the last 12 months. **The worst abuses are in Henan Province**, where the police sometimes beat and torture Christians.
Underground Catholics in China:

See the following for information on Underground Catholics in China:


- RRT Country Research 2002, Research Response CHN15476, 31 October - Attachment 9. (especially Q3 (pp.4-10) situation of Catholics and government attitude to the underground Church; Q4 on church registration; Q8 on raids on house churches since 2000 and Q10 actions against Catholics).


In 2006, Human Rights Watch stated, in relation to Catholics in China:

During 2005, the Vatican and Beijing engaged in informal dialogue aimed at rapprochement, as evidenced in part by persistent reports that both sides approved the appointment of two new bishops, one in Shanghai and the other in Xi’an. At the same time, so-called underground Catholic priests and bishops, loyal only to the Vatican, came under increasing pressure. Officials, particularly in Hebei province, the center of underground Catholic activity, subjected influential priests and bishops to “reeducation” sessions aimed at forcing them to join the Catholic Patriotic Association and align themselves with the official Chinese Catholic Church. Although there are few available details about the process, the targeted clergy were detained at undisclosed locations for the duration of their sessions.

It is notable that when meetings of Catholic congregants remained small, discreet, and apolitical, officials often turned a blind eye. Reported detentions followed the celebration of masses that attracted large numbers, for public celebration of important Catholic feast days and during pastoral retreats.

One longstanding issue, that of rights to former Catholic Church properties, flared anew in 2005. According to Article 30 of the 2005 regulations, “land legally used by a religious body or a site...” and the “structures and facilities legally owned by such a body or site... are protected by law. It may not be encroach[ed] upon, loot[ed]... [and] confiscate[ed]...”

However, a church in Xi’an was forced to buy back its original properties, nationalized in 1982, but sold to a developer in 2003. The case made headlines after unknown assailants in Xi’an severely beat and injured nuns attempting to protect the properties from demolition.


The Congressional-Executive Commission on China stated:

Government repression of unregistered Catholic clerics increased in the past year. Based on NGO reports, officials in Hebei and Zhejiang provinces detained a total of 38 unregistered clerics in 13 incidents in the last year, while in the previous year officials detained 11 clerics in 5 incidents. The government targets Catholic bishops who lead large unregistered communities for the most severe punishment. Bishop Jia Zhiguo, the unregistered bishop of
Zhengding diocese in Hebei province, has spent most of the past year in detention. Bishop Jia has been detained at least eight times since 2004. Government harassment and abuse of registered Catholic clerics also increased in the past year. In November and December 2005, three incidents were reported in which officials or unidentified assailants beat registered Catholic nuns or priests after they demanded the return of church property. In April and May 2006, officials began a campaign to increase control over registered Catholic bishops. Officials detained, sequestered, threatened, or exerted pressure on dozens of registered Catholic clerics to coerce them into participating in the consecration of bishops selected by the statecontrolled Catholic Patriotic Association but not approved by the Holy See. Government authorities also restricted contact between registered clergy and the Holy See, denying bishops permission to travel to Rome in September 2005 to participate in a meeting of Catholic bishops. Authorities continued to permit some registered priests and nuns to study abroad.


2. Is it customary for the authorities to issue a Certificate of Release or a Notice of Prisoner’s Release upon Completion of His Sentence once a prisoner has been released?

According to the Prison Law of the People’s Republic of China:

Article 35 If a prisoner has completed service of his sentence, the prison shall release him as scheduled and issue him a certificate of release.

Article 36 After a prisoner is released, the public security organ shall make residence registration for him on the strength of his certificate of release.


3. Is there a prison called Xin Yang in the outskirts of Luo He City?


There is also a Xinyang RTL (Reform through Labour camp) according to the Laogai Handbook (The Laogai Research Foundation 2006, Laogai Handbook 2005-2006, October p.446 – Attachment 13). The Laogai Handbook does not give an exact address, only “Xinyang City” (Xinyang City administers 3 districts and 8 counties and covers 18,293 km² with a population of over 7 million – see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xinyang).

Xinyang is located 160 km south of Luohe city according to the Microsoft Encarta Atlas.

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Search Engines

Databases:
FACTIVA (news database)
BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)
REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)
ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights
Watch, US Department of State Reports)
RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Liu, W. and Leung, B. 2002, ‘Organizational Revivalism: Explaining Metamorphosis of
China’s Catholic Church’, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Vol.41, No.1,
p.133.

2. ‘Violence, Harassment Against Hebei Catholics Reported’ 1999, Union of Catholic
– Accessed 23 February 2007

3. ‘List of bishops and priests in prison, isolation or labour camps’ 2005, Asianews, 5
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4. ‘Destruction of a Roman Catholic Church and release of a bishop’ 1995, Cardinal Kung

5. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2006, China: Failed asylum seeker return
decision, 7 August (CISNET ‘China’ CX160293)


7. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2005, CHN100386.E – China: Situation of
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11. Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2006, Congressional-Executive
Commission on China Annual Report 2006, GECC website, 20 September

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