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## **Persecution in China at an All-Time High**

Christians in China are experiencing horrific human rights violations. Persecution is sharply rising under President Xi Jinping. The Communist Party has “embarked on a 3-phase, 14-year plan to ‘suffocate’ Three Self churches and ‘annihilate’ underground churches,” according to Billion Bibles.

Today’s persecution in China is far more comprehensive and even sophisticated compared to past efforts. One example of this is the Chinese government tracks and regulates details even down to how many steps citizens take every day. Some say that current persecution is the worst in China’s history since Mao’s “Cultural Revolution.” More than 223,000 people were persecuted by the Chinese government in 2017.

There are two types of churches in China, commonly known as the state-sanctioned “Three-Self Churches” and the underground churches. The state-sanctioned churches, though permitted to operate, are highly regulated by the Communist Party. The underground churches are “unofficial” assemblies of Christians, often inside people’s homes. They are considered illegal and heavily persecuted.

One of the most notable cases is Wang Yi, the founding pastor of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, who was secretly tried and convicted to nine years of hard labor for spreading the gospel. In a moving manifesto, Yi explains how all Chinese pastors should be led to “civil disobedience” because their ultimate obedience should be to God and not the government.

### Religious Persecution Experienced in China:

- It has been common practice for a Christian to receive three years in prison for religious actions.
- China’s prison system only allows prisoners of conscience to use the bathroom once a day. If they are given a meal, it’s watery vegetable soup. Sometimes they are not given meals at all.
- There is evidence of prisoners of conscience having their organs harvested while they are still alive. This is happening even on teenagers according to a human right watchdog group.

- Some Christians are tortured to death while prominent pastors and church leaders are killed.
- Christian funerals are prohibited. Family members risk arrest if they do not conduct secular funerals for their deceased loved ones.
- A 1500-person church in Beijing was forced to shut down after they refused to install CCTV (Central Chinese Television).
- Chinese authorities are changing Christianity by rewriting the Bible and religious songs to worship government leaders and make them more in line with socialist values.
- Numerous crosses have been torn down, images of the Holy Family replaced with images of President Xi Jinping, and Bibles confiscated and burned. This removal of symbols is happening to all major religious groups.
- Authentic Bibles are no longer allowed to be sold online in China. That was a loophole in the law that had been used for many years.
- Christmas parties have been banned in schools all across China.
- Youth have been particularly targeted. China no longer allows Sunday schools, church camps, or students to share their faith, and prevents anyone under the age of 18 from attending church.
- People suspected of affiliations with an underground church, missionaries, or family members of a Christian are under constant surveillance and threatened by the government.
- As China has clamped down on foreign missionaries in recent years, missionaries are witnessing intensified threats and deportations.
- In addition, Uyghur Muslims, Falun Gong, and Tibetan Buddhists also have been heavily persecuted and sent to concentration camps.

The persecution of Christians doesn't seem to be working however, because Christianity remains the fastest growing religion in China. Its Christian population is projected to grow to almost 250 million by 2030.