

# Chinese Communist Party Shuts Down Bible Apps, Christian WeChat Accounts Under New Crackdown Policies

In a mission to clamp down the spread of Christianity in China, the Chinese Communist government shut down Bible mobile apps and censored Christian-backed social media accounts in popular chat app WeChat on Saturday. This is indicative of an ever-tightening grip of bureaucratic regulations targeting faith workers occurring in the country.

According to International Christian Concern (ICC), Father Francis Liu of the Chinese Christian Fellowship of Righteousness said in a tweet that several Christian WeChat pages, including “Gospel League” and “Life Quarterly,” were no longer accessible online.

Anyone attempting to reach such accounts are greeted with the following message: “(We) received report that (this account) violates the ‘Internet User Public Account Information Services Management Provisions’ and its account has been blocked and suspended.”

Bible apps have also been banned from China’s App Store, and hard copy Bibles are no longer eligible for purchase online, as per ICC. In China, Bible Apps can only be accessed with the aid of a VPN.

Another indication of the repression is the sale of books that support President Xi Jinping’s ideas and communist philosophy in bookstores operated by the state-sanctioned Three-self churches.

ICC noted that “even their WeChat accounts are turning into propaganda channels for CCP.”

New religious regulations issued by China’s State Administration for Religious Affairs went into force on Saturday, Christian Post (CP) reports. Catholic bishops must be certified and ordained by the state-sanctioned Chinese Catholic Bishops’

Conference, according to Article 16 of the regulations in Chapter III.

According to the Union of Catholic Asian News' reading, "the regulations indirectly assert that the election of Catholic bishops will be done by the state-approved system under the Chinese Communist Party's direction and the Vatican and Pope Francis will have no role in it [...] It runs contrary to the laborious China-Vatican deal on the appointment of Catholic bishops, signed in September 2018."

The China-Vatican Agreement of 2018 which has been renewed last year allows the Chinese Government, through its state-approved Patriotic Catholic Chinese Association, to recommend new bishops to the Vatican with the pope's powers of veto. Upon signing the agreement, the Vatican said that it hoped the unification of the approximately 10 million to 12 million Catholics would be promoted by China.

Additionally, Article 27 states that senior religious leaders will hold their positions for a period of three or five years, during which they may resubmit their personal information to the authorities, states the United Kingdom-based group Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW). The group explained that the provision may be used to punish individuals for criticism or failure to comply with regulations by denying their application to re-register.

CSW also noted that the rules in Article 3 mandate clergy to "support the leadership of the Communist Party."

Likewise, Article 12 states that clergy members should not "endanger national security" or be "dominated by foreign forces."

Per the latest reports, religious oppression in China increased in 2020, with church closures and other human rights violations affecting thousands of Christians.

In 2018, the Chinese government prohibited the selling of Bibles at online bookstores around the world in order to conform with a "white paper" that mandated adherence to core socialist principles.

The communist regime's assault on religious rights prompted the United States State Department to designate China as a "country of particular concern" for "continuing to participate in especially serious abuses of religious freedom."

According to Open Doors USA's Global Watch List, China is one of the worst countries in the world when it comes to Christian oppression.

The Christian Council of China and the Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches of China have also reportedly revised the titles and reviews of all their books on their official WeChat bookstore, "Tianfengshuyuan."

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