

A Reader's Guide to Laws and Regulations of the New Era

During the first decade of the New Era (2012–2022) there have been changes in laws and regulations that have impacted the church and Christians in China. A number of these have been referenced in various articles in this issue of the *ChinaSource Quarterly*. Here we pull together references for your convenience and further reading.

When reading Chinese regulations about religion it is important to keep in mind that these apply to all five recognized religions in China (Buddhism, Catholicism, Christianity, Daoism, and Islam). There are often heightened concerns where ethnic affairs overlap religious affairs such as in cases of Tibetan Buddhism and Muslim ethnic groups.

This summary just covers the national level changes in regulations and administrative measures pertaining directly to religion. There are other more specific laws and regulations that also affect Chinese Christians in various areas of their life and ministry. One example would be detailed laws and regulations that affect areas such as media (print, TV, movies, and livestreaming).

Whenever possible we have included links to both the original Chinese and to an English translation. Links to helpful articles for context and analysis are also included. The items are arranged as follows:

- Religious Regulations Affecting Churches
- Policies Affecting Churches
- Religious Policies and Regulations Affecting Expatriates
- Laws and Regulations Affecting Nonprofits and NGOs

Note: All the URLs provided were active as of November 12, 2022. The SARA website is accessible in China but those seeking to access the site from outside China may get an error message.

Religious Regulations Affecting Churches

(Listed in order of the effective date)

Revised Regulations on Religious Affairs 宗教事务条例

Went into effect on February 1, 2018. These are an update of the earlier regulations from 2004. Subsequently almost every province has also issued supplementary regulations specific to their province. These can be found on the SARA website, <https://www.sara.gov.cn/gjzjswj/xxgk/flfg/index.shtml>.

Original text:

Chinese: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2017-09/07/content_5223282.htm.

English translation: <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/religious-affairs-regulations-2017/>.

Commentary:

- “Three-Self Church Reflections on Revised Regulations,” <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinese-church-voices/three-self-church-reflections-on-revised-regulations/>.
- “New Religion Regulations to Take Effect in February,” <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/from-the-west-courtyard/new-religion-regulations-to-take-effect-in-february/>.
- “Draft of New Religious Regulations,” <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/blog-entries/draft-of-new-religious-regulations/>.

- “Why Christians in China Must Prepare Themselves for the New Regulations on Religious Affairs,” <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinese-church-voices/why-christians-in-china-must-prepare-themselves-for-the-new-regulations-on-religious-affairs/>.

Measures for the Administration of Religious Groups 宗教团体管理办法

Went into effect on February 1, 2020. Requires religious groups to obtain government permission for nearly every aspect of their operations. In addition, religious groups must accept and propagate the principles of the Chinese Communist Party.

Original text:

Chinese: https://www.sara.gov.cn/gzjswj/2022-10/25/article_2022102521322016962.shtml.

English translation: <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/measures-for-the-administration-of-religious-groups/>.

Commentary:

- “China Tightens Regulations That Forces Religious Groups to Conform to Communist Party Principles,” Tamar Svanidze, *NewEurope*, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/china-tightens-regulations-that-forces-religious-groups-to-conform-to-communist-party-principles/>.
- “New Religion Law Goes into Effect in China,” *VOA Editorials*, <https://editorials.voa.gov/a/new-religion-law-goes-into-effect-in-china/5354060.html>.
- “CCP Issues Administrative Measures for Religious Institutions, Effective September 1,” *ChinaAid*, <https://chinaaid.org/ccp-issues-administrative-measures-for/>.
- “China Tightens Its Grip on Religion,” *China Aid*, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/china-tightens-its-grip-on-religion/86909>.

Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel 宗教教职人员管理办法

Went into effect on May 1, 2021.

Original text:

Chinese: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-02/09/content_5586371.htm.

English translation: <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/measures-for-the-administration-of-religious-groups/>.

Commentary:

- “‘Love Country and Party’: Taiwan Criticizes China for Religious Persecution,” *Taiwan News*, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4136210>.
- “China Issues Regulations on Religious Clergy,” Liu Xin and Lin Xiaoyi, *Global Times*, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202102/1215466.shtml>.
- “Chinese Government’s Tight New Regulations for Ministry Include Database of Church Leaders,” *Barnabas Aid*, <https://www.barnabasfund.org/us/news/chinese-government-s-tight-new-regulations-for-ministry-include-database/>.

Measures for the Administration of Religious Educational Institutions 宗教院校管理办法

Went into effect on September 1, 2021.

Original text:

Chinese: https://www.sara.gov.cn/gzjswj/2022-10/25/article_2022102521322040918.shtml.

English translation: Not available.

Commentary:

“CCP Issues Administrative Measures for Religious Institutions, Effective September 1,” *ChinaAid*, <https://chinaaid.org/ccp-issues-administrative-measures-for/>.

Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services 互联网宗教信息服务管理办法

Went into effect on March 1, 2022. Requires a government-issued permit to post religious content online. Bans the online broadcasting of religious ceremonies, rites, and worship services.

Original text:

Chinese: http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2022/content_5678093.htm.

English translation: <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/internet-religious-information/>.

Commentary:

- “Preparing for the New Internet Religious Information Measures,” *ChinaSource*, <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinese-church-voices/preparing-for-the-new-internet-religious-information-measures/>.
- “Regulating the Internet,” *ChinaSource*, <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinese-church-voices/regulating-the-internet/>.
- “Explained: New CCP Regulations on Religious Internet Content,” *ChinaAid*, <https://chinaaid.org/explained-new-ccp-regulations-on/>.
- “China Bans Online Religious Activity Ahead of Party Congress,” *NikkeiAsia*, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/China-bans-online-religious-activity-ahead-of-party-congress>.
- “China’s Latest Crackdown on Religion Bans Foreigners from Spreading Church and Spiritual Content Online,” *South China Morning Post*, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3160689/chinas-latest-crackdown-religion-bans-foreigners-spreading>.
- “China Releases Administrative Measures for Internet Religious Information Services,” *China Christian Daily*, http://m.chinachristiandaily.com/news/category/2021-12-23/china-releases-administrative-measures-for-internet-religious-information-services_10985.

Measures for the Administration of Financial Affairs of Religious Premises 宗教活动场所财务管理办法

Went into effect on June 1, 2022.

Original Text:

Chinese: https://www.sara.gov.cn/gzjswj/2022-10/25/article_2022102521322031842.shtml.

English translation: Not available.

Commentary:

- “Communist Party Grabs Religious Funding,” *AsiaNews*, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Communist-Party-grabs-religious-funding-55599.html>.
- “China Introduces New Laws Governing Church Finances,” *Barnabas Today*, <https://www.barnabastoday.com/2022/05/news-east-asia-china-introduces-new-laws-governing-church-finances/>.
- “Chinese Government Seeks to Manage Religious Organizations’ Finances In New Measures,” *ChinaAid*, <https://chinaaid.org/chinese-government-seeks-to-manage/>.

Policies Affecting Churches

Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere (Document 9) 关于当前意识形态领域情况的通报，简称 9 号文件

This internal document was issued on April 22, 2013 by the Central Committee and later circulated within China. This is an important document for the shift towards a more ideological approach and an opposition to western ideologies and beliefs including religious beliefs.

Original text:

Chinese: <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/chinese/309756.html>.

English translation: <https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation>.

Commentary:

- “China Takes Aim at Western Ideas,” *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/20/world/asia/chinas-new-leadership-takes-hard-line-in-secret-memo.html>.
- “Tilting backwards,” *The Economist*, <https://www.economist.com/analects/2013/06/24/tilting-backwards>.

White Paper on China's Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief 白皮书: 中国保障宗教信仰自由的政策和实践

Issued on April 3, 2018.

Original text:

Chinese: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-04/03/content_5279419.htm.

English translation: http://english.scio.gov.cn/node_8004074.html, http://english.scio.gov.cn/2018-04/04/content_50811898.htm.

Commentary:

- 白皮书：外国人在我国境内的宗教活动依法受到保护，新华网，http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-04/03/c_1122631263.htm.

Five-Year Planning Outline for Advancing the Sinification of Christianity (2018–2022) 推进我国基督教中国化五年工作规划纲要 (2018–2022)

Published in December 2017.

Original text:

Chinese: <https://www.ccctspm.org/cppccinfo/10283>.

English translation: <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/outline-of-the-five-year-plan-for-promoting-the-sinification-of-christianity%ef%bc%882018-2022%ef%bc%89/>.

Commentary:

- "'Sinicization' of Christianity—Understanding the Contexts," *ChinaSource*, <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/blog-entries/sinicization-of-christianity-understanding-the-contexts/>.
- "'Sinicization' of Christianity—Understanding the Contexts," *Lausanne Movement*, <https://lausanne.org/content/lga/2019-09/sinicization-religion-china>.
- "'Sinicized Christianity' Is Not Christianity," *Jackson Wu. Doing Theology. Thinking Mission*, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jacksonwu/2019/03/20/sinicized-christianity-is-not-christianity/>.
- "'Sinicization': A New Ideological Robe for Religion in China," *Oxford House*, <https://www.oxfordhousereseach.com/sinicization-a-new-ideological-robe-for-religion-in-china/>.
- "China Tells Christianity To Be More Chinese," *Christianity Today*, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/march/sinicization-china-wants-christianity-churches-more-chinese.html>.
- "Xi Stresses Developing Religions in Chinese Context," http://www.news.cn/english/2021-12/04/c_1310352026.htm.

Xi stresses developing religions in Chinese context 习近平出席全国宗教工作会议并发表重要讲话

From a speech at the National Conference on Religious Affairs held on December 3–4, 2021. These conferences are held about every five years and set out the policy for development in the religious sphere.

Original text:

Chinese: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-12/04/content_5655877.htm.

English translation:

http://english.www.gov.cn/news/topnews/202112/04/content_WS61ab6dacc6d0df57f98e60bf.html.

Commentary:

- "China Tightens Control Of Religion, with Focus on National Security," *South China Morning Post*, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3158590/china-tightens-control-religion-emphasis-national-security>.
- "Xi Stresses Sinicization and Regulation of Religious Activities," *Bloomberg*, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-04/xi-stresses-sinicization-and-regulation-of-religious-activities>.
- "Xi Jinping on Work Related to Religious Affairs," *China Daily*, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202112/05/WS61ac8769a310cdd39bc79722.html>.
- "China Stresses More Marxism, Tightening Control of Religion," *Union of Catholic Asian News*, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/china-stresses-more-marxism-tightening-control-of-religion/95322>.

- “Uphold Principle That Religions in China Must Be Chinese in Orientation, Says Xi,” *The Straits Times*, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/uphold-principle-that-religions-in-china-must-be-chinese-in-orientation-says-xi>.

Religious Policies and Regulations Affecting Expatriates

Detailed Implementation Measures on the Administration of Foreigners' Group Religious Activities in the Mainland Territory of the P.R.C. (Draft Revisions for Solicitation of Comments)
中华人民共和国境内外国人宗教活动管理规定实施细则（修订征求意见稿）

Currently in drafting stage and seeking comments. Issued for comment on November 18, 2020. This is built on the 1994 set of regulations on this same topic. Many of the new provisions are already in use.

Original text:

Chinese: <https://wsb1.qhu.edu.cn/info/1022/1381.htm>.

English translation: <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/foreign-religion-in-china/>.

Commentary:

- “China Proposes New Restrictions on Foreigners, Religious Services,” VOA, <https://www.voanews.com/a/east-asia-pacific-voa-news-china-china-proposes-new-restrictions-foreigners-religious-services/6199092.html>.
- “New Rules Regarding Foreign Religious Activities in China, *Bitter Winter*, <https://bitterwinter.org/new-rules-regarding-foreign-religious-activities-in-china/>.

Laws and Regulations Affecting Nonprofits and NGOs

Charity Law of the People’s Republic of China
中华人民共和国慈善法

Went into effect on September 1, 2016. This law is administered by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and applies to all nonprofits and NGOs registered in China.

Original text:

Chinese: http://www.pkulaw.cn/fulltext_form.aspx?Db=chl&Gid=266755.

English translation: <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/2016-charity-law/>.

Bi-lingual version: <https://www.chinafile.com/ngo/laws-regulations/charity-law-of-peoples-republic-of-china>.

Commentary:

“Handbook of Charity Law of the People’s Republic of China,” United Nations Development Programme, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/cn/UNDP-CH-Handbook-of-Charity-Law-of-the-Peoples-Republic-of-China.pdf>.

**People's Republic of China's Law on the Management of the Activities of Overseas NGOs
within Mainland China**
境外非政府组织境内活动管理法

Went into effect on January 1, 2017. This law is administered by the Ministry of Public Security. For the purposes of this law "overseas" includes organizations in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Original text:

Chinese: [《境外非政府组织境内活动管理法》全文公布 \(guancha.cn\)](http://www.guancha.cn/).

English translation: <https://chinadevelopmentbrief.org/reports/the-peoples-republic-of-chinas-law-on-the-management-of-the-activities-of-overseas-ngos-within-mainland-china/>.

Commentary:

- "China's Overseas NGO Law and the Future of International Civil Society," Heike Holbig and Bertram Lang, *Taylor & Francis Online*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00472336.2021.1955292>.
- "The Foreign NGO Law and Its implementation—Legal Path for Foreign NGOs in China," *Dentons*, <https://www.dentons.com/en/insights/articles/2021/march/4/the-foreign-ngo-law-and-its-implementation>.