

Underground Christians fear China crackdown

Beijing, China (CNN, April 28, 2011) -- This calm denim-clad 28-year-old identifies herself only as Water, based on the Chinese characters that make up her first name. She has been deemed an enemy of the state, an unlikely label for a petite and well-educated woman who eschews violence and confrontation.

Here in China, Water is living her life in fear, under the close watch of the Chinese government for practicing Christianity at Beijing's underground Shouwang Church. She requested her Chinese name not be published for safety reasons.

Shouwang Church has come under fire by Chinese authorities three weeks ago, when the government ordered the church to cease all activity until further notice. The Chinese government has stated that Shouwang operates unlawfully. To be recognized, the church must register to be a state-sanctioned operation, which includes censoring of certain religious materials.

The government mandate fell in the midst of a recent crackdown on dissidents, activists and lawyers across China, as the government fears a revolt that mirrors the unrest across the Arab world.

On Easter Sunday, police officers stood outside Water's home and that of hundreds of other Shouwang members, forbidding them from attending an outdoor service church members had spent months preparing. The senior pastor, Jin Tianming, remains under house arrest. Those who did make it to the site in northwest Beijing were rounded up in unmarked public buses and detained inside police stations.

Shouwang is one of China's largest Protestant Christian groups not sanctioned by the Chinese government. From 2005 to 2007, Shouwang actively applied for registration with the government but was unsuccessful.

"In church, we would call this a spiritual war," Water quietly said in a CNN interview. "Every day, this spiritual war is not what I prepared for but now I find I am in it."

Water says she merely wants a margin of religious freedom, but her pursuit has been rocky. Over the past three weeks, Water is followed by the police at home and near the church site. She was detained two weeks ago at the police station overnight. Her mother, who is also a Christian, and her father, who is not, have been harassed, she said.

"My father, who is not a believer, even came to visit me at the police station where I was held," Water recalled.

"Every day I face a new situation with new difficulties. I try to ignore them but their approach every day is different," she explained. "They make my daily life pretty challenging."

Water, who started practicing Christianity because she felt the Communist Party "left [her] empty," says that she prays for her country to find "strength" on a daily basis. At the same time, she is realistic about the risks she has taken.

"Personally I don't know how long I can last because the pressure is pretty intense, because they try to harass your family, your workplace and your landlord. They want to evict you," she told CNN. "They want to control you."

Water has been accepted to a graduate school program in North America that will commence this fall but unlike most Chinese, she worries less about obtaining the necessary foreign visa than her ability to merely exit the country.

"I've seen what is happening around me and to be honest, I'm not sure how I'll end up," she told CNN, referring to a recent series of detainments by customs police at the Beijing airport, most notably Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei on April 3.

According to Shouwang Church, more than 200 worshippers have been arrested or detained in recent months and more than 36 were detained at police stations, including lawyers, students and artists. China Human Rights Dialogue, a non-governmental organization based in Hong Kong, report that 17 human rights lawyers and activists are currently reported missing.

Usually hundreds of worshippers gather at this illegal "house" -- or unofficial -- church, which is one of the largest Christian gathering places in the country. Shouwang -- which means "to keep watch" in Mandarin -- is an unregistered Christian group that was forced outdoors after authorities blocked the rental of its previous office space in November, the church said. It has not been able to obtain a new location since.

In China, the church debate is now being waged on the public stage. In a Tuesday editorial, the state-run Global Times newspaper published the first Chinese language coverage of the controversy. The editorial conceded the Chinese government "lacks 'house church' management experience." But the editorial also claims China does have religious freedom while also attempting to prevent "religion's shock on the rest of society."

The editorial later scolded Shouwang Church for "not engaging in religion but politics and that's taboo for the church."

"Now is a particularly sensitive time," the editorial read. "Shouwang Church is not acting appropriately, according to the state's management."

On Wednesday, Shouwang published a statement saying its actions were not political. In a blog post on its website, Shouwang accused the authorities for politicizing the church's existence while acknowledging that the 'house church' issue is difficult for the Chinese government. "It will not be easy for relevant departments to 'completely resolve' this," the blog said in Mandarin.

"Shouwang wants nothing more than to be guaranteed to be able to gather inside to worship in stability," the church's post said.

As for Shouwang's church members, Water is not sure how long she can keep fighting for her faith. She is keenly aware of the fate of many Chinese dissidents, religious and otherwise.

"I'm really afraid of torture," Water said, with hands calmly folded. "Being tortured ... I heard many stories of that."

<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/04/28/china.church.crackdown/index.html>

【キーワード】

守望教会 (Shouwang Church)、家の教会 (家庭教会)

宗教の自由 (信教の自由)

中国基督教三自愛国運動委員会 (三自=自治・自養・自伝)、中国基督教協会

公認宗教 (仏教、道教、イスラム教、カトリック[天主教]、プロテスタント[基督教])

イエスとその運動

イエスの誕生とその背景

- ガリラヤ地方南部の町ナザレで
 - 聖書ではベツレヘム（ダビデ王の故郷）で誕生したとされる（ルカ、マタイ福音書）。
- ユダヤ教（ヘブライズム）の伝統の中で
 - 律法をめぐる論争
- ローマによる支配、ギリシア文化（ヘレニズム）の中で

イエスの教え

- ユダヤ教イエス派
 - イエスは30歳代に運動を開始し、一年ほど続く。ローマ帝国の反逆者として、十字架刑に処せられる。
- 新約聖書によれば、イエスは死の三日後に復活し、弟子たちの前に現れ、40日後に天に昇ったとされる。

イエスの十字架の意味

- 十字架上におけるイエスの「犠牲」
 - 人類の罪のあがないのため？
- 「殉教」との関係
 - イエスは殉教（殉国）を求めるのか？
 - イエスの倫理：徹底した個人倫理

キリスト教の始まり

- イエスの運動はユダヤ教内部の改革運動として始まった。
- 第一次ユダヤ戦争（66-73）以降、ユダヤ教と、イエスを「キリスト」と信じる共同体（キリスト教）は互いの違いを意識し始める。相互の批判も始まる（**反ユダヤ主義**の萌芽）。

新約聖書と旧約聖書

- カルタゴ教会会議（397）において、現在あるような形で旧約聖書（39巻）と新約聖書（27巻）が認定される。
- 「正典」としての聖書
 - 「外典」「偽典」：『ユダの福音書』『マグダラのマリアの福音書』等
- イエスの教えと教会（キリスト教）の教えの間の距離（ヘブライズムとヘレニズムの距離）