

Religious Freedom: The human-rights situation of religious minorities in China
World Uyghur Congress Written Statement
Dolkun Isa, April 26, 2019

Few other governments around the world restrict religious practice to the extent that the Uyghur population faces in 2018 in East Turkistan (officially the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China).

Religious dress and symbols like the hijab or display of the crescent moon, unauthorised versions of the Quran and other religious texts, praying at home with others or holding private religious ceremonies, attending mosque below the age of 18,ⁱ and teaching children in the spirit of Islam are all considered illegal for Uyghurs today. In 2019, the only religious practice permitted for Uyghurs is highly monitored activities within registered sites (state-sanctioned mosques).

Numerous reports from 2017-19 have indicated that thousands of mosques in the region were destroyed by the government under the guise of a “Mosque Rectification Campaign” over the last half of 2016. The regional government cited “safety concerns” as a justification for the actions.ⁱⁱ According to sources, villages in the south of the region have had around 50 percent of their mosques demolished, leaving tens of thousands without a place of worship. Praying outside of state-sanctioned mosques is illegal, effectively prohibiting Uyghurs from conducting any and all religious practice.

Chinese government officials in the region have openly discouraged religious observation during the Holy month of Ramadan with a variety of local regulations. Across the entire region, however, students, teachers, public service employees and Party members have all been forbidden from fasting and are often provided food and water throughout the day. In other instances, Uyghur restaurants have been forced to remain open, and government officials have been forced to swear not to fast or risk losing their jobs.

China has convicted and imprisoned Abdukiram Abduveli,ⁱⁱⁱ Qamber Amber^{iv} Eli Yasin,^v Eziz Emet,^{vi} and Horigul Nasir,^{vii} Abdusemet Qarihaji,^{viii} and Memet Réhim and Memet Sidiq,^{ix} for their religious beliefs and practices in recent years. These represent only individual cases that came available through reporting.

Religious freedom for Uyghurs has deteriorated dramatically in recent years with the overhaul of China’s *Regulations on Religious Affairs* (RRA) and a number of national, regional and local legislative measures undermining international human rights norms. Although regional policies and practice have strongly restricted religious freedom for Uyghurs for many years, China has passed two significant pieces of legislation that explicitly target religious practice.

Firstly, newly proposed amendments to the RRA were issued on September 7, 2016 that extend greater powers to authorities in terms of oversight, as well as the ability of the government to shut down religious organizations that fall outside its approval. More specifically, the proposed amendments take a new and expected focus on the ostensible use of religion as a vessel for extremist or separatist tendencies and makes approval for the Hajj pilgrimage reliant on the national Islamic religious group.

One significant change is the addition of “extremism” as something to be guarded against in religious management as well as stipulating that organizations and individuals must not use religion to “harm national security,” in addition to “disrupt[ing] social order, impair[ing] the health of citizens or interfere[ing] with the national educational system,” that were previously included in the 2005 text.^x

The draft also includes a more significant focus on the spread of religious content online as information on religious news sites must now be examined and approved by a provincial level or higher level Religious Affairs Department. Article 48 stipulates that, “Information on religious news sites must comply with relevant laws and regulations, and the management of religious affairs,” and

goes on to state that, “Internet information service of religious content must comply with the relevant provisions of the relevant laws, regulations and management of religious affairs in the country.”^{xi}

An additional focus has been made on the role of religion in relation to schools, principally in Article 44 which states that, “It is forbidden to spread religion, religious activities, organize religious activities, or establish religious sites within public schools.” Article 41 also makes explicit mention of the prohibition on non-religious schools from organizing or holding religious activities.^{xii}

China cited two major reasons for the proposed amendments, one being a resistance to “foreign religions” and the other in relation to guiding religious practice so as to encourage the promotion of core socialist values such as unity, progress, peace and tolerance.^{xiii} The amendments were up for a one-month review period, but little information has been released as to the final version and its impact on China’s approach to monitoring and controlling religious practice).

The second, and more significant for Uyghurs, is the *Regulation on De-extremification* which explicitly links Islam to extremism and radicalisation, bans a number of specific religious practices and expression and builds on previous efforts to reiterate that religious expression for Uyghurs is in danger of being distorted and manifested as extremism.

China has consistently used the narrative of ‘counter-terrorism’ as a justification for its crackdown on the peaceful practice of Islam and violence against Uyghur civilians. Steps have also been taken to reify a supposed connection between religious practice and religious extremism. China introduced the Regulation for the Uyghur Autonomous Region which bans the wearing of veils or headscarves for women and beards for men, among other things. In addition, the legislation builds previous efforts to reiterate that basic religious expression for the Uyghur population is in danger of being distorted and manifested as extremism and potentially violence as a result.

The definition of “extremism” found in the law refers to “[...] propositions and conduct using distortion of religious teachings or other means to incite hatred or discrimination and advocate violence.” As with the recently passed Anti-Terrorism Law, its wording remains both vague and open-ended and leaves a great deal of discretion to those tasked with its implementation.

Illegal practices under the legislation now include: Wearing burqas with face coverings or “symbols of extremification”; wearing “irregular beards”; using traditional Muslim names for children; possessing, communicating or accessing information or documents with “extremification content”; possessing unauthorized versions of the Quran or other religious texts’ praying at home with others or holding private religious ceremonies like weddings or funerals; teaching religion to children at home or in a school setting; and attending mosque below the age of 18.

The precise language of the law—and its potential for wide interpretation thereof—is a real cause for concern. For example, the text on documents with “extremification content” states that, “publishing, printing, distributing, selling, producing, downloading, storing, reproducing, accessing, copying, or possessing articles, publications, audio or video with extremification content,” is all considered illegal by the state. In practice, Uyghurs who merely receive content on their smartphones or other devices are in breach of the law.

The Chinese Communist Party’s restrictions on religious belief are merely one aspect of a more broad plan to totally assimilate the Uyghur population and destroy the Uyghur identity. China has passed a total ban on the use of the Uyghur language at all education levels, Uyghur cultural activities have been banned, and any other expression reflecting Uyghur culture are heavily restricted.

China now operates hundreds of political indoctrination camps in the region that operate effectively as prisons. Detainees are not charged with any crime, have no access to a lawyer and are held indefinitely. One of the five categories targeting Uyghurs includes ‘suspicious people’ who have some

fundamental religious sentiment. Estimates of those detain stand between one and two million people in the camps as of April 2019.

Religious expression is one of the primary criteria for detention in the camps. In 2018, reports from the region indicate that there exists a particular climate of fear among all Uyghurs now afraid to participate in any religious activities for fear of arbitrary detention.

From the criminalisation of one tenet of the faith to another, the Uyghur population now struggles to carve out a space where religious expression is at all tolerated. If the Chinese government continues to implement policies targeting Uyghurs' religious expression and practice without a coordinated response from civil society or the international community, irreparable harm may be inflicted on the entire population in clear violation of accepted international human rights norms.

ⁱ Long, Q. (2014, October 30). China Clamps Down on 'Underage Religion' Among Muslim Uyghurs, *Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/underage-10302014120731.html>

ⁱⁱ Hoshur, S. (2016, December 19). Under the Guise of Public Safety, China Demolishes Thousands of Mosques, *Radio Free Asia*. Retrieved from: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/under-the-guise-of-public-safety-12192016140127.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Long, Q. (2014, April 25). Uyghur Religious Leader on Hunger Strike After Fifth Jail Term, *Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/hunger-04252014152239.html>

^{iv} Hoshur, Shohret (2015, April 8). Uyghur Religious Scholar Jailed Nine Years For 'Refusing to Cooperate' With Authorities, *Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/scholar-04082015120808.html>

^v Hoshur, Shohret (2016, May 9). Uyghur Given 7-Year Prison Term For Viewing Muslim Film, *Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/film-05092016151441.html>

^{vi} Hoshur, Shohret (2016, March 16). Uyghur Imam, Farmers Sentenced For Illegally Practicing Religion in China's Xinjiang, *Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/uyghur-imam-farmers-sentenced-for-illegally-practicing-religion-in-chinas-xinjiang-03162016112010.html>

^{vii} Hoshur, Shohret (2017, September 19). Uyghur Woman Handed 10-Year Prison Term Over Headscarf Claim, *Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/headscarf-09192017174307.html>

^{viii} World Uyghur Congress (2017, September 8). Political Prisoner Database: Abdusemet Qarihazi. Available at: <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?s=Abdusemet+Qarihazi>

^{ix} World Uyghur Congress. Political Prisoner Database: Memet Réhim and Memet Sidiq. Available at: http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?page_id=32974

^x Legal Affairs Office of the State Council (2016, September 8). Notice of the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council on the Draft Comment on the Draft Amendment to the Regulations on Religious Affairs (Draft), art. 3. Available at: <http://www.sara.gov.cn/tg/377829.htm>

^{xi} Legal Affairs Office of the State Council (2016, September 8). Notice of the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council on the Draft Comment on the Draft Amendment to the Regulations on Religious Affairs (Draft), art. 48. Available at: <http://www.sara.gov.cn/tg/377829.htm>

^{xii} Legal Affairs Office of the State Council (2016, September 8). Notice of the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council on the Draft Comment on the Draft Amendment to the Regulations on Religious Affairs (Draft), art. 41 & 44. Available at: <http://www.sara.gov.cn/tg/377829.htm>

^{xiii} Johnston, I. (2016, October 7). China Seeks Tighter Grip in Wake of a Religious Revival, *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/08/world/asia/china-religion-regulations.html?_r=0

Dolkun Isa – World Uyghur Congress

1. The relationship between religion and politics in China

1. What importance has religious freedom had historically and what are the reasons for the status of religions in China today? (CDU/CSU)

Religion has a major role in the lives, history and culture for many groups within China. According to China's own constitution, freedom of religion for all groups should be respected and protected. However, in reality this has never been the case. Religious sentiment has been viewed by the Chinese government with suspicion and repression of religious people has existed for most of China's history. Religious belief is perceived as a challenge to the absolute authority of the Chinese government.

2. To what extent are religious communities viewed by the Communist Party in China as a challenge to their power ambitions and how do you evaluate the actual resources available to them? (SPD)

Religious communities are viewed as a challenge to the absolute authority of Xi Jinping and the communist party. Through restrictive legislation and repressive security measures, the CCP has tried to establish absolute control over religious institutions and organisation and have sought to erode religious beliefs through assimilatory policies. While China claims that resources are available to religious communities, this is absolutely not the case. Only government approved mosques, with government approved imams are allowed to exist.

2. The policy of the Chinese government and the attitude of Chinese society towards religious minorities

The Chinese government views all religious groups as potential threats to the CCP's authority and have cracked down brutally on nearly all religious groups in China. The severity and scale of the repression have led many observers to label the situation in China as a 'war on religious belief'. The situation is particularly bad for Uyghurs. Even the most basic expression of Islamic beliefs is equated by the Chinese government as an act of terrorism or links to extremism. Owning a Quran or a prayer mat, having a long beard, wearing an Islamic veil, discussing or practicing religion outside CCP approved mosques have all been banned. These Islamophobic policies are also reflected in Chinese society. Many Han Chinese believe the CCP's false narrative that they are fighting terrorism in East Turkistan and believe the camps are justified. The level of Islamophobia in Chinese language media and on social media is very high.

The other element of China's approach is assimilation or 'sinification'. The CCP is trying to control all aspects of religious practice. Amendments made to the Regulation on Religious Affairs have effectively established state control over every aspect of religious belief in China. China's 'Sinification' plan, announced in December 2018, formalizes the CCP's strategy of making religions, particularly Islam, 'compatible' with Han Chinese society, but establishing

strict control over all religious institutions and organisations, and by removing any teachings, architectural styles or influences from outside the CCP and altering religious teachings to emphasize loyalty to the CCP. These efforts have also focused on indoctrinating the younger generations of religious communities to forsake their religious beliefs, especially among Uyghur youth whose parents have been detained in the camps.

3. What information can you provide to the Committee on re-education camps run by the Chinese central government, particularly regarding the number of camps, the number of persons interned there, the accusations used to justify internment, opportunities for legal redress and the conditions in the camps? (FDP)

The camps have existed since 2017, possibly 2016. Uyghurs started losing all contact with family members and hearing rumors about mass detentions in internment camps starting in April 2017. Satellite imagery has identified over 40 internment camps, although the number is thought to be much higher. The CCP has not provided any list of detainees in the camps, but estimates put the number of detainees at 1-2 million (1.5 million estimated by Dr. Adrian Zenz, 800,000-2 million estimated by the US State Department). Nearly every family in the Uyghur diaspora has family members who have disappeared or are detained in the camps.

The justifications for the existence of camps given by the Chinese government have changed radically over time. Before August 2018, the CCP repeatedly denied that the camps even existed. After the issue was raised at the UN CERD's review of China in August 2018 and after satellite imagery proved that the camps existed, the Chinese government changed its response, acknowledging the camps existed, but saying they were voluntary and meant to provide professional training. After this was proven to be untrue, the Chinese government again changed its narrative to say that the camps are a 'counter-terrorism' measure. The real reason for the camps is to socially reengineer and assimilate the Uyghur people to establish complete control over the region and undermine the unique Uyghur identity.

The testimony of former detainees has indicated that the conditions in the camps are very overcrowded. Detainees are subjected to acts of torture, political indoctrination and other forms of mistreatment. There are a rising number of deaths in the camps, with at least 40 reported (although the number is certainly much higher). My own mother died in a camp on May 2018. She was 78 years old and not politically active. I still have no idea how she died or what happened to the rest of my family.

Detainees have no opportunities for legal redress. They are detained without charge and are not given a trial or access to a lawyer. They have no opportunity to appeal their detention. Their detention is therefore arbitrary. Despite changes made by the Chinese government to the Xinjiang Deextremification Regulations in November 2018 meant to formalize the camp system, the internment camps still exist entirely outside of Chinese criminal law.

4. For 20 years, there have been accusations of systematic forced removal of organs from prisoners of conscience in Chinese detention camps. Major studies and reports have been

presented, particularly since 2006. What is the current body of evidence and can it be assumed beyond reasonable doubt that the accusations against the Chinese authorities are correct? (AfD)

It is notoriously difficult to acquire substantial evidence on the CCP's practice of organ harvesting. Some firsthand testimony of the practice exists. Dr. Enver Tohti, a former surgeon in China has repeatedly given details about the organ harvesting he witnessed while working in China. The organ harvesting of prisoners and falun gong practioners is well-documented. Organ harvesting has existed in China when there is no transparency or accountability. We are very concerned that this is happening to Uyghur detainees in the internment camps. The bodies of those who have died in the camps are not returned to family members and are cremated without their permission.

5. Why did the Communist government make a U-turn in terms of its policy towards Falun Gong in 1999? Why was the official policy prior to this to promote the movement, which was then followed by a U-turn, with the call by Jiang Zemin to "destroy their reputation, bankrupt them financially and destroy them physically"? (AfD)

I believe there are others better placed to answer this question.

6. Are individuals outside China who advocate on behalf of religious minorities in China like the Uyghurs subject to surveillance, persecution and/or intimidation? If so, to what extent? (FDP)

The Uyghur community around the world is subject to regular harassment and intimidation from the Chinese government. Uyghur refugees and asylum seekers who escape China are pursued by the Chinese government who seek their return from their host countries. If they are forcibly returned they disappear, are arbitrarily detained or are subjected to other serious human rights violations.

The CCP has also committed acts of reprisals against Uyghurs activists. The family members of Uyghur human rights activists have been detained and sent to the camps. Uyghurs are regularly threatened by the Chinese government not to get involved with Uyghur related human rights advocacy or their families will suffer. Uyghurs in the diaspora receive messages from Chinese officials telling them not to get involved in demonstrations, not to speak publicly on the situation in East Turkistan and are asked to spy on the Uyghur community. At Uyghur demonstrations, the CCP sends people (sometimes accredited journalists) to photograph demonstrators in order to punish their family members in East Turkistan.

The CCP has also been trying to silence Uyghur diaspora leaders and activists. The Chinese government has been trying to stop the World Uyghur Congress from speaking at UN institutions and events. It has also tried to falsely use the narrative of terrorism to hinder Uyghur activism, but falsely placing INTERPOL red notices on Uyghur activists (the Red Notice on my name was overturned in February 2018 because of lack of evidence) and by trying to stop

Uyghur organisations from transferring money by trying to get them labelled as terrorists on financial databases, such as World-Check.

7. How does the Chinese public react to the digital surveillance of religious minorities in Xinjiang and what are the impacts of this form of control on society as a whole? (SPD)

As we understand it, the Chinese public has been overall supportive of China's surveillance of Uyghurs, although there are indications that concern is growing, even in Han Chinese society. Most of Chinese society accepts China's propaganda that China's actions in Xinjiang are aimed at preventing terrorism at the surveillance of the Uyghur people is meant to keep them safe. However, as the restrictive and invasive surveillance methods pioneered in Xinjiang are applied to the rest of Chinese society, we are hopeful that this may change.

Uyghurs have their every word and action tracked by the CCP. A dense network of surveillance cameras with facial recognition technology track the Uyghur peoples every move. Uyghurs are checked, especially their phones, at the numerous checkpoints and roadblocks in the region. All online activity is strictly controlled and monitored. The CCP even sent 1 million cadres to the region to live in Uyghur households to monitor their behaviour. Uyghurs are also encouraged to spy and report on their neighbours. The impacts have been grave. People are terrified to speak publicly or engage with others, as they fear they might be sent to the camps if they say the wrong thing. The society has become oppressive, riddled with suspicion and largely unbearable for the people who live there. Many Han Chinese who have lived in the region for extended periods of time have started to leave the region because of how unbearable life had become.

3. Strategies for Western states and organisations to exert influence on Chinese policy towards religious minorities

8. What are the consequences of the Chinese practice of re-education, which is still increasing massively, and what reaction by Western democracies can help protect religious minorities such as Christians, Muslim Uyghurs and Buddhist Tibetans, as well as other groups in China? (CDU/CSU)

The consequences of the camps are very serious and possible existential for the Uyghur people. The goal of the camps is to undermine and erode the Uyghur ethnic identity to totally assimilate the Uyghur people. Everything that makes the Uyghur people unique: our language, history, culture, religion and ethnic identity is being targeted by political indoctrination and other repressive measures. Younger generations are being targeted in particular for indoctrination as the CCP tries to eradicate the Uyghur identity from younger generations. If something is not done, the Uyghur culture and identity could be eradicated completely. It is a truly critical and traumatic situation for the Uyghur people.

We have deeply appreciated the support of Western democracies, especially Germany, so far, but much more needs to be done. Western democracies can help by:

- a. Continue to publicly hold China accountable for its serious human rights violations and call for the camps to be closed. It is a crucial time for China and it is very sensitive about how it is perceived by the international community.
- b. Build coalitions to take collective/joint action. China's current strategy to dismiss criticism about the camps is to portray it as a US or Western led conspiracy. To combat this, Western democracies must work together to collectively hold China accountable. They should also reach out and work with others leaders, especially from Muslim-majority countries and Central Asia. China continues to exert influence on these countries and they have largely remained silent on the issue. If Western democracies could encourage and support these countries to speak publicly on the camps, it would make a huge difference. China wants to cast the issue as a geopolitical conspiracy, but a broad coalition acting in a joint manner would help to return focus to this issue as a human rights crisis affecting millions of people.
- c. Have economic repercussions for human rights violations. Trade deals and economic relations with China not be dealt with separately from human rights concerns. The Belt and Road Initiative is a major reason why the Uyghur people have been subjected to such horrific repression, as East Turkistan's location as a gateway to Central Asia and the rest of the world has made it vital for this program to work. States should make their participation with this initiative and other trade deals with China conditional on closing the internment camps and respecting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. States should also seek to impose targeted sanctions and asset freezes on the individuals and entities responsible for this crime against humanity.
- d. Hold Western companies accountable. Western democracies should ensure that companies in their countries are not complicit in the camp system, but purchasing products made by forced labour in the camps or by providing material or technology that contributes to the repression in East Turkistan.
- e. States should also protect the Uyghur diaspora communities in their countries and to not return any asylum seekers or refugees to China, where they would face certain persecution.

9. What connections do you see between the systematic oppression of religious minorities in China, efforts to safeguard national stability and energy supplies, and the expansion of political and economic influence on the international stage; and what steps do you believe have the greatest potential to allow the grave human-rights violations against religious minorities, particularly in Xinjian and Tibet, to be addressed, and persuade China to end such actions? (Alliance 90/The Greens)

Unfortunately, these issues are linked to some extent. Uyghurs have always faced persecution by the Chinese government, but the level of repression Uyghurs have been subjected to in the last 5 years has increased dramatically under the rule of Xi Jinping. The deterioration of the situation in East Turkistan has also corresponded with the implementation of Xi Jinping's flagship program, the Belt and Road Initiative. East Turkistan is the gateway from China to the rest of the world, which all planned BRI infrastructure must go through. The mass arbitrary detention of over 1 million innocent people in internment camps is therefore culmination of

China's attempts to forcibly assimilate the Uyghur people and an attempt to establish complete social control in the region to ensure the success of the BRI.

Xi Jinping's legitimacy and hold on power is linked to the success of the BRI, which the Chinese government is pursuing at all costs. It appears to be the vehicle for China's geopolitical ambitions and has corresponded with and has facilitated rising Chinese influence around the world. In order for this project to be successful, China must have a favourable public image, but its crimes against humanity have challenged that and have created major problems for the Chinese government. This is, therefore, a point where other states may exert pressure on China to close the camps. States should demand that China close the camps and respect the basic rights of all religious and ethnic minorities before engaging with the BRI or other trade deals. The pressure and emphasis on China's reputation, along with China's economic problems, presents an important opportunity for policy makers to insist that China cease its crimes against humanity.

10. What form ought a coherent German policy towards China take in view of the massive violations of human rights, particularly those of religious minorities, but also the far-reaching intrusions on the right to privacy or freedom of expression and how do you assess the coherence of the Federal Government's policy towards China against this background? (Alliance 90/The Greens)

We have deeply appreciated the efforts of the German government so far in response to the human rights crisis in East Turkistan. It is essential that the German government continue to raise this issue publicly at all levels: in the UN, with the UN and in its bilateral relations with China. We hope that the German government can take further steps to work with other governments to raise this issue collectively and to take a leadership role, where appropriate, especially with regards to passing a resolution on the topic at the UN Human Rights Council.

Domestically, we would hope that the German government could take further steps to protect the Uyghur diaspora from harassment and intimidation. The accidental return of a Uyghur asylum seeker from Germany to China, who initially disappeared and now has been given a lengthy prison sentence, shows the need for further cooperation and communication between the Federal government and state and regional authorities. We urge the German Federal government to insist on reciprocity with the Chinese government. Chinese journalists and officials should not have free reign to harass and intimidate activists on German soil and spread Chinese propaganda, while German journalists are not granted access or the ability to report without intimidation and pressure in China.

11. What examples exist of political instrumentalisation of religion in China (e.g. through religious extremism and to promote separatist movements), which could pose a genuine threat to the government in Peking and ought the Chinese government in your opinion to react to this threat? (The Left Party)

There is very little evidence that political instrumentalization of religion poses a genuine threat to the Chinese government. Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, Chinese Christians and other faith groups are only asking for their constitutionally given right to freedom of religion be respected, but have been met with violence and repression. Instead of consulting with these communities or giving ethnic or religious minorities any form of meaningful representation, the Chinese government has opted to brutally crack down on them. Nothing can justify the mass arbitrary detention of over 1 million innocent people, or the abhorrent treatment of Uyghurs, Tibetans and other groups in China.

12. To what extent is Christianity, which, alongside Islam, is one of the recognised religions in China, in your view instrumentalised by churches and organisations from Western countries in order to promote in China the spread of values and ethical beliefs viewed as “Western” and undermine the laicism practised in China today? (The Left Party)

We would like to point out that this is an excuse from the CCP meant to justify its repression of religious communities and terrible human rights record. The right to freedom of religion is enshrined in the Chinese constitution and people are well within their rights to ascribe to the religion and set of values of their choosing, China has no right to dictate what religion, values or beliefs its citizens hold. Furthermore, we would like to point out that Chinese Confucian institutes, cultural organisations and many other bodies actively promote and advance Chinese values and interests in Germany and other Western countries. However, Western countries are not able to open similar institutions in China, due to the Foreign NGOs Law. There exists a fundamental asymmetry in German-China relations.