

Pastor Zhang Shaojie

Country: China

Charges: **'gathering a crowd to disrupt public order' and 'fraud'**

Date of arrest: **November 2013**

Sentence: **12 years imprisonment**



Arrest and background

12 years imprisonment (Sentenced July 2014)

On July 4, 2014, the state-sanctioned Nanle County church pastor, Zhang Shaojie, was sentenced to 12 years in prison in China. Zhang was detained on November 15, 2013, when he met Nanle County authorities in the church – a meeting that turned out to be a set-up in order to detain the pastor. Pastor Zhang was later charged with gathering a crowd to disrupt public order and fraud. He was convicted on both charges.

The Nanle County Christian Church had been in dispute with local government authorities over a plot of land. The authorities wanted the church to relinquish its legally-acquired rights to the land, but the church refused. Pastor Zhang and the church leaders had already drawn up plans to erect a new church building, Bible school and ministry centre on the land, but local government officials wanted to seize the plot and sell it to property developers at a huge profit. Pastor Zhang and church members decided to go to Beijing to petition for the land but were prevented by the local government. Then, in November 2013, the pastor and more than 20 other Christians were suddenly detained.

Pastor Zhang was charged and sentenced in July 2014. Church members and local Christians believe the Chinese officials targeted Pastor Zhang to get the land and prevent the ministry of the church from growing. Several thousand members gathered to meet in the old dilapidated church building, as well as in more than 40 cell groups across Nanle County.

Various church members and others suggest this persecution was also linked to a plan to replace Pastor Zhang as the local Three-Self Christian Church President. The church believes their pastor has fallen foul of the authorities because of his frequent defence of marginalised social groups and individuals who have had their rights violated.

This verdict is totally unacceptable,' said China Aid founder and president Bob Fu. 'This case shows the Chinese Government continues to cover up religious persecution with fabricated

criminal charges against an innocent church leader.’ When Pastor Shaojie subsequently appealed his 12-year sentence, the Court of Second Instance upheld its previous decision.

On January 8 2021, prison officials escorted Pastor Shaojie to Zhengzhou City, Henan Province, to carry out the five remaining years of his sentence in a new prison. His family were concerned about the move believing it could be detrimental to his well-being. At various times during his imprisonment Zhang has been badly treated by the prison authorities.

In October 2021 Pastor Zhang’s family received a letter from him reporting that he ‘is in a good spirit in the Lord.’ Since then communications have been limited.

Please Pray:

1. Pray that Pastor Zhang will remain strong in his faith and experience the comfort and presence of the Holy Spirit during the remainder of his sentence.
2. Pray that Pastor Zhang’s family will continue be able to receive regular communications from him and reassurance that he is well.
3. Pray that Pastor Zhang will have renewed hope for the future.

Take Action:

You can write a letter of encouragement to Pastor Zhang at his prison address below. Please ensure that you follow our letter writing guidance detailed in **Reach Out**.

Zhang Shaojie
Xinmi Prison of Zhengzhou Henan Province,
P O Box 841,
Xinmi Post,
No. 61, Songshan Avenue
East Xinmi City,
Henan Province,
452370
CHINA

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