



Advancing  
rights  
through  
dialogue  
以对话 倡人权

MAIN: 450 Sutter Street, Suite 900 | San Francisco | CA 94108 | USA  
TEL: (415) 986-0536 FAX: (415) 986-0579 EMAIL: [duihua@duihua.org](mailto:duihua@duihua.org)

## **Submission of The Dui Hua Foundation, an NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC, to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, for the State Report on China at the 85<sup>th</sup> Session**

**April 2023**

### ***i. Women in Prison Population in China***

The number of women incarcerated in Chinese prisons has grown faster than the population of incarcerated men over the past decade. From 2010-2016, women accounted for 5-7 percent of defendants in all criminal cases.<sup>1</sup> The latest available information provided by the Chinese government to World Prison Brief revealed that women accounted for 145,000, or 8.4 percent, of its prison population in 2018.<sup>2</sup> Although figures on women prisoners have not been made publicly available since 2019, Dui Hua believes that women continue to be the fastest-growing segment of the incarcerated population in China.

This surge has been driven partly by women's political awakening, as seen in the protests at the end of 2022 against China's zero-COVID policy and censorship.<sup>3</sup> No less notable is that they often come into conflict with the law because of their active participation in religious groups deemed unorthodox or illegal by the Chinese government. In such cases, they are charged with violating Article 300, "organizing or using a cult to undermine implementation of the law."

---

<sup>1</sup> The Supreme People's Court of China, *remmin fayuan sifa tongji lishi dianji [Records of People's Courts Historical Judicial Statistics]*, (China Legal Publishing House, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> "China World Prison Brief Data," World Prison Brief, <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/china>

<sup>3</sup> "Analysis: China's female protesters break nation free from zero-COVID," *Nikkei Asia*, December 15, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/China-up-close/Analysis-China-s-female-protesters-break-nation-free-from-zero-COVID>

**ii. Women in Dui Hua's Political Prisoner Database**

Dui Hua aims to increase dialogue on incarcerated women in order to promote “The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders” (Bangkok Rules) and better treatment of women who are suspects, defendants, or prisoners. Dui Hua's Political Prisoner Database (PPDB) records information about political and religious prisoners who have been subjected to coercive measures in China since 1980. As of March 31, 2023, the PPDB collected over 47,800 names of prisoners. Of them, over 14,700 are female.

More than 2,000 cases involving females are classified as active in the PPDB. The PPDB differentiates a case as active when the individual is confirmed or believed to currently be undergoing coercive measures including residential surveillance in a designated location, criminal detention, and imprisonment. Women are sometimes placed under exit bans.

**iii. Female prisoners & unorthodox religious groups**

Women are disproportionately represented in criminal cases involving unorthodox religious groups. They made up as many as 41 percent of all the 28,497 defendants tried for violating Article 300 from 1998-2016.<sup>4</sup> In the 2000s, the number of female defendants tried for this crime ranged from 400 to 800 each year, but it doubled one year after the crackdown on the Church of Almighty God (hereafter Almighty God) commenced in December 2012.<sup>5</sup> About 2,600 women stood trial in the two years beginning January 1, 2015.<sup>6</sup> China is not known to have disclosed trial figures disaggregated by crime, sentence, or gender after 2016.

The PPDB recorded more than 11,400 women who have been subjected to coercive measures for violating Article 300 because of their affiliation to unorthodox religious groups. More than 1,400 are classified as active in the PPDB. Most are practitioners of Falun Gong and adherents of Almighty God, followed by other unorthodox Protestant groups, Buddhist groups, qigong organizations, and groups of an unknown or miscellaneous nature.

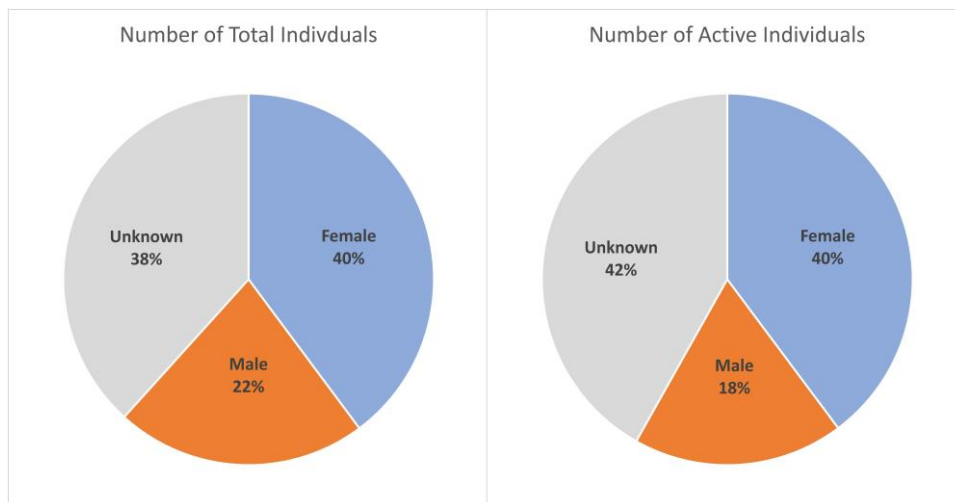
---

<sup>4</sup> “Detailed Court Statistics on Article 300, Part I,” *Human Rights Journal*, The Dui Hua Foundation, 28 May 2020, <https://www.duihuahrjournal.org/2020/05/detailed-court-statistics-on-article-300.html>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Charts 1 and 2: Gender breakdown of unorthodox religious prisoners accused of violating Article 300 in the PPDB as of March 31, 2023. (Gender is not always known)



*iv. Negative representation of female religious prisoners in Chinese government sources*

Women are the main target of negative stereotypes in China’s anti-cult propaganda.<sup>7</sup> In cult cases, they are typically portrayed as middle aged, “left-behind women” (留守妇女) in rural regions whose husbands left to cities for employment or to conduct business for an extended period. Chinese propaganda often makes sexist claims that women are “weak-willed and psychologically vulnerable, with a propensity to succumb to coercion or monetary enticements from cult organizations” because many of them have a low level of education.

These stereotypes continue. An anti-cult article from March 2021 by an Inner Mongolia county government claimed that women create social disorder when they “wander around the whole day” and create panic by “spreading rumours” after they take part in cult organizations.<sup>8</sup> The article blamed “superstitious” women for disregarding their primary responsibility as caretakers of children and elderly after they are mind-controlled by cult organizations.<sup>9</sup> Women,

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> “Evil Cults Harm Women, Replete With Vice,” Wushenqi People’s Government, March 10, 2021, [邪教残害女性恶贯满盈], [http://www.wsq.gov.cn/ztjj/fxjzl/sdjx/202103/t20210310\\_2856955.html](http://www.wsq.gov.cn/ztjj/fxjzl/sdjx/202103/t20210310_2856955.html)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

alongside children and elderly, continue to be major targets of religious education across China because of what anti-cult propaganda calls their “innately vulnerable character.”<sup>10</sup>

Although Chinese propaganda tends to describe women as passive victims in cult cases, they are known to have taken leading roles in several outlawed religious groups. Many regional leaders and principal members of unorthodox religious groups are women, including those who practice Falun Gong and Almighty God. Women have likewise had leading roles in several other homegrown religious groups which emerged in the 2010s.<sup>11</sup>

**v. *Hefty prison sentences meted out to female religious practitioners in key roles: Falun Gong & Almighty God***

Since the release of *The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups in China* in March 2022, news media sources have continued to report convictions of Falun Gong and Almighty God practitioners. Just as with their male counterparts, female members in key roles are no exception to harsh sentencings.

One recent example is NXN. She received a prison sentence of 15 years in late 2022, one of the longest prison sentences known to have been given to Falun Gong practitioners convicted of the sole offense of Article 300.<sup>12</sup> Upon the expected expiration of her prison sentence in April 2036, NXN must serve a four-year supplemental deprivation of political rights (DPR) sentence which prohibits her from voting, standing for office, holding a position in a state-owned company, publishing articles, and giving interviews. Because of DPR, she will also be subjected to intense police monitoring and travel restrictions as a “targeted person.”<sup>13</sup>

Media coverage about cult cases involving the Almighty God may have declined over the past two years, but repression of the church has persisted. At least two female adherents received heavy prison sentences in 2022. In the first case, an unnamed female church leader, born in

---

<sup>10</sup> “Gathering Women’s Power to Strengthen Anti-Cult Propaganda,” China Anti-Cult Website, March 15, 2022, <https://www.kaiwind.com/n436/n531/c781215/content.html>

<sup>11</sup> “The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups in China,” The Dui Hua Foundation, March 29, 2022, [https://duihua.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Persecution-of-Unorthodox-Religious-Group\\_Dui-Hua-Report.pdf](https://duihua.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Persecution-of-Unorthodox-Religious-Group_Dui-Hua-Report.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> “Harbin Disabled Woman Illegally Sentenced to 15 Years in Prison,” Falun Dafa Website, November 2, 2022, [哈尔滨残疾女子牛小娜被非法判 15 年], <https://www.minghui.org/mh/articles/2022/11/2/哈尔滨残疾女子牛小娜被非法判 15 年-451409.html>

<sup>13</sup> “For State Security, Police Rules Color Code “Targeted Population”,” The Dui Hua Foundation, October 3, 2013, <https://www.duihuresearch.org/2013/10/for-state-security-police-rules-color.html>

1965, in Shaanxi reportedly received a 15-year imprisonment for violating Article 300 with a three-year DPR sentence.<sup>14</sup>

Besides Article 300, adherents of unorthodox religious groups have been accused of endangering state security. Another female leader of Almighty God in Fujian was convicted of violating Article 300 and “illegally trafficking in state secrets for a foreign entity” and sentenced to 15 years in prison with a five-year DPR sentence. She reportedly sent information about China’s suppression of her church to an overseas news group.<sup>15</sup>

***vi. Women affiliated with lesser-known unorthodox religions also face high risk of imprisonment***

Dui Hua continues to find cases from Chinese government sources where women were imprisoned for violating Article 300 because of the leading roles they played in smaller religious groups. In April 2022, China Anti-Cult Association publicized a cult case involving the Society of Disciples (门徒会, or “*mentu hui*”).<sup>16</sup> The Chinese government began banning the church in 1994. The 2022 case involved a woman with surname initial Z who allegedly relied on her church’s divine power to cure diseases. Z and four other defendants were sentenced to one to four years for violating Article 300.<sup>17</sup>

In early 2023, Dui Hua learned about the imprisonment of JM, a leader of the Evangelical Gospel Mission Armored with Blood and Holy Spirit (血水圣灵全备福音布道团). She was in charge of church affairs in Ji’an County, Jiangxi Province.<sup>18</sup> The church was designated as a cult organization by the State Council in 1995. She was detained for violating Article 300 on June 8, 2020 and arrested on July 13. The circumstances of her case were deemed serious because she had allegedly amassed over two million yuan from worshippers and been found in

---

<sup>14</sup>“2022 Annual Report: The Chinese Government Repression and Persecution of the Church of Almighty God,” Church of Almighty God, [全能神教会遭受中共政府镇压迫害 2022 年年度报告], <https://www.hidden-advent.org/persecution/annual-report-2022.html>

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> “Five People Convicted for Claiming to Cure Sicknesses and Spreading Cult,” The Supreme People’s Procuratorate Website, April 20, 2022, [赵某等 5 人主打“治病”传播邪教，被判刑!], [https://www.xsbnca.gov.cn/550.news.detail.dhtml?news\\_id=54730](https://www.xsbnca.gov.cn/550.news.detail.dhtml?news_id=54730)

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> “Jiangxi Ji’an: One “Blood Water Holy Spirit” Core Leader Sentenced,” Anhui Anti-Cult Weibo, March 18, 2021, [江西吉安一名“血水圣灵”邪教骨干获刑], <https://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404616119536189563>

possession of a large number of cult videos, books, and other propaganda materials.<sup>19</sup> In November 2020, JM was sentenced to four years and six months in prison.

Female leaders of Buddhist or Buddhist-sounding religious groups are similarly at risk of imprisonment. In November 2021, a woman with surname initial L received a prison sentence of 18 months for violating Article 300.<sup>20</sup> L was a leading member of *Guanyin Famen* (观音法[门]), a group which has been described by anti-cult propaganda as anti-communist for remarks made in the early 1990s about the inevitable fall of Communist China.<sup>21</sup> The circumstances of her case were not considered to be serious because she had only been found possessing 80 copies of cult books.<sup>22</sup>

**vii. *Increasingly difficult to obtain information about women accused of political and religious crimes***

Despite China's promotion of “Sunshine Justice” to improve judicial transparency and accountability by livestreaming trials and reporting court decisions, Dui Hua noted a sharp decline in transparency in criminal cases of a political or religious nature. Among the first judicial websites to be affected was the Information Website of National Courts’ Sentence Reduction, Parole, and Temporary Service of Sentences Outside Prisons (全国法院减刑、假释、暂予监外执行信息网).<sup>23</sup> The website was once a useful source to discover women prisoners convicted of Article 300 including clemency rulings and decisions. However, around 2019, the website’s search function ceased to produce meaningful results for crime-based searches and remains so at the time of the writing.

---

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> “A Jiangxi Pucheng Woman Sentenced for Spreading “Guanyin Famen”, Pucheng County Government, November 19, 2021, [江西抚州一女子宣扬“观音法门”邪教获刑],

<http://pucheng.gov.cn/ztl/2018nzt/cckhfdxj/122916.htm>

<sup>21</sup> “The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups in China,” The Dui Hua Foundation, March 29, 2022, [https://duihua.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Persecution-of-Unorthodox-Religious-Group\\_Dui-Hua-Report.pdf](https://duihua.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Persecution-of-Unorthodox-Religious-Group_Dui-Hua-Report.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> “A Jiangxi Pucheng Woman Sentenced for Spreading “Guanyin Famen”, Pucheng County Government, November 19, 2021, [江西抚州一女子宣扬“观音法门”邪教获刑],

<http://pucheng.gov.cn/ztl/2018nzt/cckhfdxj/122916.htm>

<sup>23</sup> National Courts’ Sentence Reduction, Parole, and Temporary Service of Sentences Outside Prisons, [全国法院减刑、假释、暂予监外执行信息网], <http://jxjs.court.gov.cn/>

In June 2021, all judgments and judicial decisions for endangering state security cases, including those for sentence reduction, were purged from the Supreme People's Court website China Judgements Online (中国裁判文书网).<sup>24</sup> Additionally, judgments involving other politically motivated offenses such as Article 300 have largely disappeared. At the time of writing, only 37 judgments involving this crime can be found, compared to 4,000 judgments before the purge. It is unclear how many defendants are women because the contents of these remaining judgments are deemed “unsuitable for disclosure.” One of these cases also involved what a Chinese court called “state secrets.”

The purge has extended to the Supreme People's Procuratorate website (中国检察网) which once hosted over 5,000 documents of indictment or arrest involving Article 300. This website provided insight into China's extensive use of Article 300 to suppress unorthodox religious groups. At the time of writing, the website only had 26 results related to cults. These remaining documents provide no information about the gender of the criminal suspects, their religious affiliation, or sentencing beyond their names and dates of prosecution. All of them were posted in the six months prior to October 2020; the indictments posted earlier are nowhere to be found.

***viii. Dui Hua's channels to obtain information about incarcerated women in China***

Despite fading judicial transparency, Dui Hua continues to be able to obtain information directly from the Chinese government about women prisoners accused of politically motivated offenses. LSL is an example of Dui Hua's successful intervention. As early as 2000, LSL was first given a two-year re-education through labor sentence for disturbing social order. Upon completion, she was sent to a legal education school for being “unrepentant.” In 2009, LSL was convicted and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment for violating Article 300. In January 2018, Dui Hua received an official response confirming she was granted a nine-month sentence reduction in October 2012. LSL completed her sentence in December 2017.<sup>25</sup>

Much of the information provided to Dui Hua by the Chinese government involves Guangdong Women's Prison, one of the largest women's prisons in China, which can house 5,000 prisoners. From 2021-2022, Dui Hua submitted 57 inquiries involving 27 women under coercive

---

<sup>24</sup> “China: All State Security Judgments Purged from Supreme Court Site,” *Human Rights Journal*, The Dui Hua Foundation, July 26, 2021, <https://www.duihuahrjournal.org/2021/07/china-all-state-security-judgments.html>

<sup>25</sup> *Dui Hua Digest*, The Dui Hua Foundation, January 2018, <https://duihua.org/dui-hua-digest-january-2018/>

measures in the province. Twenty-three of them have served their sentences in Guangdong Women's Prison.

Dui Hua continues to press for clemency for women prisoners, particularly those convicted of Article 300. From 2021 to 2022, the Chinese government provided 48 written responses concerning 17 women under coercive measures. Seven of them have been incarcerated in Guangdong Women's Prison for violating Article 300. Taken together with findings from its own research, Dui Hua learned that nine acts of clemency were granted to incarcerated women, with seven acts of clemency taking place during 2021 to 2022. Notable instances of clemency include:

- Falun Gong practitioner FY received a 42-month prison sentence in Yun'an County in July 2018. She was released from prison on December 31, 2020 after her sentence was reduced by three months and 23 days.
- LLZ, also a Falun Gong practitioner, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment in Maonan County in August 2019. She received her first sentence reduction of seven months in November 2022 and was released from prison in January 2023.
- Almighty God member HQM was released from prison on April 9, 2021, following a four-month reduction granted to her in the same year. She had been sentenced to four years in prison in October 2018.
- LSX, another member of Almighty God, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in September 2018. Her sentence was commuted by one month and 15 days on June 24, 2020. She was released the same day.

Dui Hua conducts extensive research to find the names of women incarcerated for political and religious crimes. In late 2022, Dui Hua learned of new details about a widely publicized case of the Three Grades of Servants (三班仆人) in Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan.<sup>26</sup> The church is one of the indigenous doomsday groups founded in the 1980s; it was designated as a cult organization by the Ministry of Public Security on March 12, 1999. LW and six other key members from a local branch were detained in 2016 for violating Article 300.

---

<sup>26</sup> *Prisoner Updates 2023 #2*, The Dui Hua Foundation, January 30, 2023, <https://duihua.org/prisoner-updates-2023-2/>



They were accused of holding house worship services that were reportedly attended by dozens of worshippers.

Seven defendants were sentenced in May 2018, and the judgment was upheld by the Chuxiong Intermediate People's Court in August 2018.<sup>27</sup> LW received a prison sentence of eight years and was admitted to Yunnan No.1 Women's Prison. She was granted her first sentence reduction of eight months in October 2020. The prison submitted another reduction request of six months in 2022, citing LW's good behavior and the fact that she had completed half of her sentence in October 2020. The decision by the Kunming Intermediate People's Court has not been made public. If the reduction was approved, LW will complete her sentence sometime in 2023.

The sentences of the six other defendants remain unknown.

Dui Hua has learned of other acts of clemency granted to unorthodox religious prisoners. Two Falun Gong practitioners who are serving 10-year prison sentences in Guangdong Women's Prison received sentence reductions in 2022:

- XRP was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment with three years of DPR. She received her first sentence reduction of six months, and her DPR was reduced to one year in 2020. An official response given to Dui Hua in March 2023 indicated that she received her second reduction of seven months in November. She is scheduled for release in January 2025.
- ZYQ received her first sentence reduction of seven months after serving four years. She was convicted in March 2018 and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. She has three more years to serve until her release in February 2026.

**ix. Recommendations**

- Dui Hua calls on the Chinese government to annually release comprehensive statistics on sentencing and prison populations disaggregated by gender, age, and crime in accordance with the Bangkok Rules, which urges member states to collect, maintain, analyze, and publish specific data on women in prison and women offenders.

---

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

- Dui Hua calls on the Chinese government to increase the use of non-custodial measures as recommended by the Bangkok Rules, such as bail during the pre-trial period, especially for cases involving non-violent crimes such as Article 300 and peaceful demonstrations. Many women are placed in custody in detention centers, under the administration of Public Security organs while under police investigations, awaiting court trial or appeal, or serving short-term incarceration.
- Dui Hua urges the Chinese government to resume providing meaningful access for the public to judicial documents, including indictments, court judgments, and decisions of all cases, regardless of the criminal offense involved. Transparency is particularly lacking in provinces with high populations of ethnic minorities. It also helps the public understand the reasons why women are placed in custody for peacefully pursuing their religious faith and other criminal offenses.
- Dui Hua urges the Chinese government to demonstrate the lenient aspects of its criminal justice system by granting more sentence reductions, parole, medical parole, and other forms of clemency to women prisoners convicted of violating Article 300 and other politically motivated offenses.