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CHINA TIGHTENS CONTROL ON RELIGION AS ARRESTS ESCALATE

A series of arrests and raids in China during September and October indicate that a new crackdown is underway against Christians even as the government professed its willingness to liberalize its policies on religion.

Well-known evangelical leader Cai Zhuohua was among those arrested and reportedly faces an extremely harsh sentence because of his role in house church leadership and religious literature distribution. Chinese officials had recently declared new changes in religious policy, but evidence has since emerged that the regime issued three internal directives in August calling for "much tighter control of religion."

A Chinese-language magazine reported that the new directives aim to suppress the conversion of Communist Party members, the growth of religion and religious organizations across the country, and the increase of religious activity on university campuses.

A document issued by the Community Party calls for a specific crackdown on the "rampant" growth of religious believers in 11 provinces: Guangdong, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Beijing, Fujian, Zhejiang, Hunan, Hubei, Hebei, Henan and Chongqing.

From the news flow at Intercessors Network