

PRISONER PROFILE

Prisoner Name: **Wang Yi**

Location: **China**

Sentenced: **December 2018**



Early Rain Covenant Church Pastor Wang Yi outside a U.S. congressional office building during a 2006 trip to Washington, D.C. Photo: ChinaAid

Arrest and background

Pastor Wang Yi (also known as Wang Li) is the influential leader of Early Rain Covenant Church in the city of Chengdu, Sichuan province – one of the best-known house churches in China. He and his wife, Jiang Rong, were detained in December 2018 and charged with ‘inciting subversion of state power’ and ‘illegal business operations.’ If convicted, Pastor Wang could face up to 15 years in prison. A former law professor, Pastor Wang has been vocal in calling on the state to uphold religious liberties.

Early Rain Covenant Church had been under pressure from the authorities for some time but matters escalated on December 9th, 2018. That night and the next day, police raided church members’ homes and arrested them. By the end of the week, about 150 church leaders and seminary students were in police custody, and the church had been forcibly closed.

Since then most of those arrested have been released including Pastor Wang’s wife, Jiang (released 11th June 2019), and church elder Li Yingqiang (released 19th Aug 2019.) However, several including Pastor Wang and Deacon, Tan Defu, remain incarcerated. Those who have been released remain under varying levels of surveillance. In July 2019 the defense lawyer for Pastor Wang Yi was barred from meeting with his client and officials have reportedly assigned different lawyers to his case. Church members are very worried about their pastor and have received very little information about his condition or the progress of his case.

Since the crackdown some Early Rain church members have been sent back to their hometowns and banned from Chengdu. Others have lost their jobs or been evicted. Church elder Su Bingsen was released in April 2019 and was flown home to Fujian in the company of security officials; his family had been evicted from their home while he was in custody. Some of those who have been released say they were abused and deprived of food and water.

Early Rain may have been targeted because of its open approach to church mission, which has included posting sermons online and street evangelism. The church also runs a Bible school for about 100 students and has a primary school. Its meetings around the city regularly attracted more than 800 people each week.

Pastor Wang himself has been a prominent campaigner for greater religious freedom. In 2018 he wrote a declaration, signed by hundreds of Chinese pastors, which includes a statement of Christian beliefs and a call for an end to persecution; it also recognises the Chinese Government's authority. Many of those in China who have signed the 'Declaration for the Sake of the Christian Faith' have suffered persecution since.*

PLEASE PRAY:

- 1. That God will sustain, encourage and comfort Pastor Wang, his wife Jiang Rong and all the other members of Early Rain Covenant Church who are in detention. Ask God to give them opportunities to speak about Him to their fellow inmates and guards.**
- 2. That the Early Rain congregation will grow in faith and courage, amid sustained persecution. Pray that their powerful witness will inspire and encourage other Christians in Sichuan province and across China.**
- 3. That the Chinese Government will end its persecution of Early Rain Covenant Church and release those in custody.**

TAKE ACTION: *

Church leaders around the world are being encouraged to add their name to Pastor Wang's 'Declaration for the Sake of the Christian Faith'. The petition will be presented to the Chinese Government.

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