

# PRISONER PROFILE

<i>Prisoner Name:</i>	<b>Wang Yi</b>
<i>Location:</i>	<b>China</b>
<i>Arrested:</i>	<b>December 2018</b>
<i>Sentenced:</i>	<b>9 years</b>



*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. During a police raid in December 2018 he and his wife, Jiang Rong, were arrested and detained along with around 100 members of their church. The Pastor was charged with ‘inciting subversion of state power’ and ‘illegal business operations.’ In December 2019 he was convicted of those crimes, fined, and sentenced to 9 years in prison. He decided not to appeal this sentence but to calmly accept the outcome and trust God’s sovereignty. A former law professor, Pastor Wang Yi 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 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 August 2019.) However, those who have been released remain under varying levels of surveillance, some being told to meet with public security officials five times a day.

Since Pastor Wang was sentenced, his wife, Jiang, and his son, Shuya, have lived at home under constant police surveillance. Authorities forbid them to meet or contact relatives, friends, or other Christians in the church, and they are only allowed to meet Pastor Wang’s parents once a week—under the “protection” of the police. They have not been permitted to visit Pastor Wang and telephone contact has been severely restricted.

Since the original crackdown and arrests in 2018, Early Rain Covenant Church has experienced sustained harassment from government officials and police. Church members’ homes have been raided and leaders have been detained. Property has been confiscated, some members have lost their jobs and others have been evicted from their homes or deprived of electricity, water or internet connections.

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 Yi. Ask God to give him opportunities to share his faith and love his 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.**

### 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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