

Application for asylum

1 Self-introduction

My name is Zeng Xiangyu, passport number: EC9923857, I was born in Guanghan City, Deyang City, Sichuan Province, China.¹ I graduated from Southwest Jiaotong University in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, majoring in Computer Science and Technology. I entered the U.S. on a F1 visa on September 2, 2021, to pursue a Master's Degree in Computer Engineering at Northeastern University. I once staged a protest against the Chinese government by holding up a blank piece of paper at school. As a result, my family received threats from the Chinese government. In 2023, I was baptized and became a Christian. The church I attended is defined as a cult called the 'Shouters' by the Chinese government. Therefore, I apply for asylum to the United States government.

2 Periods in school

2.1 Solidarity with Ukraine

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine and a large number of bodies of massacred civilians were exposed by the media, I read these reports and discussed with some of my friends in China in a QQ(social media) group. I strongly supported Ukraine and criticized the Chinese government's attitude and centralized rule. Such a series of statements eventually got the chat group blocked and my own QQ account was officially restricted from logging in for 24 hours on the grounds of violating community guidelines² .

2.2 The White Paper Revolution

On November 26, 2022, in memory of the residents of Urumqi, Xinjiang, who were burned to death in a fire caused by the city blockade, Shanghai citizens held up white papers and marched on the road as a silent protest, which then set off the White Paper Revolution, spreading throughout the country and evolving into a large-scale wave of demonstrations against the zero Covid policy(zeroing at all costs) and centralized system of government³ .

An old man in my family suffered from a basic disease. During the epidemic closure and control in late November, he suddenly felt unwell, the road near his home was blocked, and my family repeatedly negotiated with the hospital staff, failing to send him to hospital in time for medical treatment due to blockade. After that, his health condition declined. On December 16, 2022, he suffered a sudden respiratory and cardiac arrest, and passed away at Le Ling Psychiatric Hospital in Deyang, Sichuan Province at the age of 74, despite rescue efforts⁴.

My family did not tell me about the incident on time because I am alone overseas, they didn't want

1 See Evidence No. 1

2 See Evidence No. 2

3 <https://time.com/6238050/china-protests-censorship-urumqi-a4/>

4 See Evidence No. 3

me to be worried. Later, I learned about this and felt exceptionally angry, so I held up a white sheet of paper to protest against the government's extreme policies and dictatorship at the main gate of my school on a Friday afternoon, March 3, 2023. I took photos of the protest and shared them in our family WeChat group⁵, to express my grief and indignation and to mourn for him. Later, this group was blocked, and my parents were summoned by the Jinyan Police Station in Guanghan City, Sichuan Province, on Monday, March 6, 2023, at 3:00 PM⁶. My father was filming in the hall, and the police had a bad attitude, and when they found my father filming, they told him to stop his recording behavior immediately. Later, they were taken to a small room, where the police informed them that I had posted pictures and content opposing the government on WeChat. They said this was illegal and must be stopped immediately, or else serious consequences would follow, including the possibility of being sentenced to prison upon return to the country. Later, the police provided my mother with paper and a pen to write a guarantee letter, promising that I would not engage in such activities again. They said not to think that the government couldn't do anything just because I didn't return home, and threatened that they could stop my mother's retirement insurance benefits and my father's career would also be affected. When they were leaving, the police said: to tell your son not to think that we don't know what he has done even though he is far away in a foreign country, and he didn't answer the phone when I called him. His behavior is provocative and we reserve the right to hold him criminally liable.

2.3 Graduation

After this series of events, I felt despair about the social environment in China. I could never have imagined that I would encounter such a thing until the government's threats actually happened to myself, and I felt more fearful than ever before, and also more guilty because of the trouble I brought to my family. In May 2023, I completed my master's degree in computer engineering at Northeastern University and graduated. My roommate went back to China for a while after graduation, but I was afraid to go back to China due to my fear of the Chinese government and of being arrested by the police. I had frequent insomnia. Later I started my working at a software company and moved to San Jose on August 31, 2023.

3 Becoming a Christian

3.1 Opportunities

On September 3rd I was shopping at the H-Mart near my home, intending to buy a rice cooker. While I was shopping, a middle-aged Asian lady came to me and started to talk with me in Chinese. I could tell from her accent that she was a Taiwanese. Afterwards she asked for my contact information. Her name is Hui Wen, she lives in Castro Valley and is a Christian.

Three weeks later, on September 21st, she sent me an invitation to a gospel gathering. My understanding of Christianity had been limited to textbooks and history, and I had never met anyone

⁵ See Evidence No. 4

⁶ See Evidence No. 5

who had evangelized me before, so I planned to go and have a look first. During the gathering, some people went up to the stage to share their own stories about the Lord Jesus, and I mentioned that I had once purchased a Bible when I was in elementary school, but I only thought that it was colored red and was different from other books. They told me that this was my connection with the Lord Jesus, but I just didn't realize it back then.

3.2 Baptism

I participated in the Saturday gospel meetings as a gospel friend one after another, and every time, Hui Wen came to pick me up. Since I could play the guitar, I was responsible for accompanying the singing during hymns.⁷ Several meetings made me very joyful, as if I had forgotten my previous worries and fears. I finally found my spiritual home and friends. I decided to accept the Lord Jesus.

November 3, 2023, was the day I was baptized at Xiaoyu Qiu's home in Fremont. Many brothers and sisters from the church came to pray for me and I was baptized in the bathtub⁸. That night, I felt like I was reborn.

3.3 Church activities

We met every Friday evenings at Brother Qiu's house to sing hymns and enjoy a love feast. I made Sichuan cuisine and played the guitar to accompany the hymns. On Sundays, we usually rent a venue for our gatherings, where we break bread and pray together⁹. Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday night at 8:30 PM, I would read the Bible with some brothers in the zoom meeting¹⁰ and we would pray together.

Because I was saved by the gospel, I want to bring the gospel to as many people as possible. On Sundays we went to the park to preach the gospel, knock on neighbors' doors to spread the gospel, or go to a big mall like IEAK¹¹. We would make beautiful cards with gospel on them and give them to people we met. I didn't really have a good time evangelizing, as many people refused, except for a young couple with children who accepted my cards. I would also share scripture verses to my WeChat Moments¹², but soon I found that they were invisible to my friends, it seems to have been blocked. Then I started spreading the gospel on Twitter and met a Christian sister from Italy. After that, she invited me to join a study group¹³, in which there are pastors explaining and brothers and sisters from all over the world, which allowed me to have more communications with them, and I also invited them to come to my church as well.

7 See Evidence No. 6

8 See Evidence No. 7

9 See Evidence No. 8

10 See Evidence No. 9

11 See Evidence No. 10

12 See Evidence No. 11.

13 See Evidence No. 12

3.4 Introduction of my church

My church is the San Francisco Bay Area Church¹⁴, which originated from the local church founded by Lee Chang Shou in 1962 in the U.S. Dongyang Yiwu Incident happened in February 1982, Christians in the local church were suppressed by the government because they were determined not to join the Three-Self Patriotic Church¹⁵. Because the prayer form of the church involves loud shouting, it was called the "Shouters" by the government.¹⁶ In November 1995, the General Office of the Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the 'Notice on Forwarding the Work Opinion of the Ministry of Public Security on Investigating and Banning the "Shouters" and Other Cult Organizations' (Document [1995] No.50)¹⁷, classified the "Shouters" as a **Cult Organization**.

3.5 Cases of persecution

I have also learned of some cases of persecution by the Chinese government against the "Shouters":

On January 28, 2008, Dr. Bai Cheng, a house church Christian who had returned to China, taken away by the police and criminally detained in Luoyang city, Henan Province, while he was reading the Bible in his home with 16 other people on the charge of "suspected participation in the activities of a cult organization."¹⁸.

On July 6, 2012, Hu Gong, Wen Weihong, and Liu Aiyong, Christians in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, were sentenced to 8 to 9 years in prison by the Yuquan District Court of Hohhot for their belief in the local church and distributing hundreds of gospel materials¹⁹. He Feng, a follower of the "Shouters" in Yongcheng City, Henan Province, was arrested by police on March 3, 2016, and charged with "organizing and using a cult organization to undermine the implementation of the law," after which he was sentenced to four years in prison²⁰.

Cases of persecution against house churches have been cropping up over time. On October 27, 2019, police in Taizhou City, Zhejiang Province, the police raided the Shouters' meeting place, and more than 50 Christians were all arrested, including eight elderly people in their 70s and four children between the ages of 3 and 7²¹.

On December 30, 2019, The Chengdu Intermediate People's Court sentenced Wang Yi, the pastor of the Early Rain Covenant Church (an evangelical house church) in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in the first-instance verdict, to nine years in prison for inciting subversion of state power and illegal business operations. He was also deprived of political rights for three years and fined 50,000 RMB

14 <https://cog-sf-bay.org/>

15 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-Self_Patriotic_Movement

16 See Evidence No. 13

17 See Evidence No. 14

18 <https://www.epochtimes.com/gb/8/2/15/n2011288.htm>

19 <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/Xinwen/jywx-10022013131453.html>

20 <https://www.adhrrf.org/news/religious-freedom/212435.html>

21 <https://www.adhrrf.org/news/religious-freedom/212435.html>

with confiscation of personal property²².

After the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of China, the authorities again escalated their crackdown on private religious activities. In January 2023, seven followers of the Qingdao local church were charged by the authorities with "organizing and utilizing cults to undermine the implementation of the law" and faced sentences ranging from three to seven years²³.

On September 1, 2023, the stricter law 'Regulations on Religious Activities Sites' began to be implemented, and Chapter 1, Article 3 states, "Places of religious activity shall support the leadership of the Communist Party of China, support the socialist system, and thoroughly implement Xi Jinping's Thought of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era"²⁴, which is exactly the oath when join the Communist Party of China.

4 Summary

The persecution cases mentioned above all involve Christians from house churches in China or returned China being arrested by government authorities for activities such as gathering or spreading the gospel. Christians are arrested when found spreading the gospel on the streets or in shopping malls, and after being detained, they are directly accused. The church's property is confiscated, and the Bibles are thrown into the trash.²⁵ Such instances are widely happened throughout the country, and there are countless reports on the Internet about such instances, of which I have only seen a few.

The Chinese government only allows Christians to go to their designated Three-Self Patriotic Churches, where they will hang the national flag and the CCP flag, deploying surveillance cameras, and emphasize to love of country and CCP²⁶. As a house church Christian, I will certainly not turn my back on my faith. The Three-Self Patriotic churches cooperate with the Chinese government, which violates the Bible, goes against God, and forsakes the Lord. There is no way I can attend a church like that and stop evangelizing. I must follow God's will, not the Chinese government, as Hebrews 10:25 says: not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. If I go back to China, I will only be able to attend churches operated by the Chinese government, such as the Three-Self Patriotic Churches. Pastor Wang Yi once said: The Three-Self Patriotic Church is a church that engages in politics, a church that is ruled by politics, and a church that does not have Jesus as its only Lord.

Because of my own speech being subjected to a series of suppressions, as well as the threats from the government to my parents in China because of me, and the instances of persecution against believers in house churches across China, I am even more fearful of returning to China, of being arrested by the police when gathering, and of being sentenced to prison for evangelizing in my

²² <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/chinese-news-50948041>

²³ <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/shehui/hx1-01192023072728.html>

²⁴ See Evidence No. 15

²⁵ <https://www.adhrrf.org/news/religious-freedom/210894.html>

²⁶ See Evidence No. 16

country²⁷. Moses led his people out of Egypt and eventually returned to the land of Canaan, and similarly, I was guided by God to study in the United States of America, to the Promised Land of God, I very much hope to stay here, so I am seeking asylum from the U.S. government.

I swear that all of the above is true! I am responsible for the authenticity of all translations of non-English material!

Applicant: Zeng Xiangyu
xx/xx/2024

Signature: ZENG, XIANG YU

²⁷ See Evidence No. 17