

PRISONER PROFILE

Prisoner Name: **Pastor Yang Hua**

Location: **China**

Arrested: **January 2016**



Arrest and background

Chinese house church leader Pastor Yang Hua was formally arrested on suspicion of 'divulging state secrets' on January 22, following more than a week in detention.

Born Li Guozi, he changed his name to Yang Hua, which means 'Looking up to Jehovah'. Together with Pastor Su Tianfu, he leads the Living Stone (Huoshi) Church situated in China's southwest Guizhou Province, in the capital, Guiyang.

Initially the church began with around 20 Christians meeting for Bible study and worship in a single apartment. Responding to God's leading, three of the four founding pastors, including Su and Yang, moved from rural china into the city and planted what has now become the largest protestant evangelical house church in the area.

Living Stone Church is very much one that seeks to live out its faith in the community. By 2013 the church had around 400 members and currently would claim to have some 700 members meeting in at least three different locations. The church membership comprises a good cross-section of the community including students, businesspeople, bankers, government officials, rights activists and lawyers. They are engaged in helping support orphaned and disabled children, the elderly and infirm as well as local welfare projects.

Initially the church was allowed to operate relatively freely. Now, because of its growth, its very open and public ministry and the impact on the local community the authorities have been targeting the church and appear committed to forcing it to close. Over the past 12 months the church has been subject to harassment, intimidation and repression, and recently a number of its pastors and members have been arrested.

December 9, 2015, was the day Wang Hongwu (pastor Yang's wife) witnessed her husband being taken into administrative detention. She documented her account of events in the following post on Weibo, a popular Chinese social media site:

'Today, I went to pick up Pastor Yang, but I failed. [I] saw four people pushing Yang Hua into a van without a license plate. Pastor Yang put on a black hood, and his mouth might have been sealed. I called out to him, but he didn't respond. Those four people did not allow me to approach him. They pushed Pastor Yang into the car and sped away. I asked the detention centre, and they only said that the department managing him took him away. They could not tell me which department [had taken him]. Then, I went home ... I can only hand everything to the Lord!'

Yang then served time in administrative detention for 'the crime of obstructing justice' and 'gathering a crowd to disturb social order.' On the day he was scheduled to be released authorities added the charge of 'illegally holding state secrets' and transferred him to criminal detention. Once the Procuratorate approved his formal arrest, authorities then changed the charge to one of 'divulging state secrets'.

A member of the congregation described Yang Hua as upstanding, honest and brave. Yang's father spent time in jail during the Cultural Revolution because of his Christian faith.

The church understands that the severe pressure they are experiencing is all part of the strategy implemented by the authorities to force the church into registering with the state-sanctioned religious associations or face closure. Because the church has also been instrumental in bringing together lawyers to defend smaller local churches from harassment and restrictions they know that they are viewed as an inconvenient and serious problem for the authorities.

Watch this video to learn more about Living Stone Church and Pastor Yang.

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/01/pastor-charged-with-extralegal-crime.html>

Send a card of encouragement to Pastor Yang:

Mark cards for Yang Hua and send to: Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington, BR5 4RT.

When writing, please do not mention Release International, advance your political opinions or include anything which could be insulting to the authorities.

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