

# PRISONER PROFILE

Prisoner Name: **Zhang Kai**

Location: **China**

Arrested: **August 2015**

Sentence: **Six months**



## Arrest and background

Zhang Kai, a Beijing-based Christian lawyer with the Xinqiao Law Firm in Beijing, was seized by security officials on August 25 in Wenzhou, a city in the eastern province of Zhejiang. Zhang had been in Wenzhou offering legal support to churches battling a controversial Communist Party demolition initiative that has targeted Christian places of worship since late 2013. Zhang is passionate in his defence of those who are being treated unjustly by the Chinese authorities. He courageously defended Pastor Huang Yizi when he was charged in connection with his opposition to the removal of church crosses. In July 2015 Zhang announced the formation of a group of some 30 lawyers who would defend churches under attack in Zhejiang. He called the group 'Lawyers for the protection of the cross.'

Writing on Weibo, China's social media site, two weeks before his detention, Zhang said: 'I have thought it through: at worst they can put me in jail. But if I keep silent, I will regret it for the rest of my life.'

Many Christians believe the removal of more than 1,200 crosses, and the complete demolition of some churches in Zhejiang, is a deliberate attempt by the authorities to intimidate local Christians, restrict church growth and discourage local believers from meeting together.

Zhang had been an outspoken critic of the cross removals. In March he posted an online essay denouncing the Communist Party's treatment of Chinese churchgoers. 'I believe it is God's calling and a compelling and historic mission for today's Christian lawyers to seek justice and promote reconciliation and the rule of law,' he wrote.

'People always ask me, what is the political environment going to be like this year? Will there be more oppression against churches? I want to answer with words from the Bible. "Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." We should thank God for having been born in China in this era.'

A notice from Wenzhou public security officials that was published on social media said Zhang, whose whereabouts are not known, was being held on suspicion of two crimes.

The first is 'gathering and disturbing social order', while the second, and potentially more serious, charge is 'stealing, spying, buying and illegally providing state secrets and intelligence to entities outside of China'.

Joshua Rosenzweig, an independent researcher and expert in human rights and criminal justice in China, said charges related to 'endangering state security' enabled the police to hold a suspect in a place of their choosing for up to six months without having to notify anyone of that location. It also allowed police to deny their suspect access to legal counsel.

Release believes that brother Zhang is being held in one of China's so-called unregistered 'black jails' at a secret location similar to the one which held Pastor Zhang Shaojie and members of the Nanle Church in 2013.

Yang Xingquan, who works at the same Beijing law firm as Zhang, said Zhang Kai's faith would help him cope with his detention. 'He is a Christian and he can bear the stress and stay strong,' he said.

Release is calling for Zhang's release.

## **Please Pray**

- That God will sustain protect and bless Zhang Kai during this time.
- That God will encourage all believers affected by this latest crackdown.
- That God will bring good out of a difficult situation and enable the Chinese church to continue meeting and worshipping together.

## **Please write**

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

### **Send a card of encouragement to Zhang Kai's family and law associates**

Please consider sending a card or letter of encouragement to Zhang Kai's family and/or associates at his law firm to let them know that Zhang, the family and his associates are being prayed for. Release will endeavour to forward these cards and letters to Zhang's family and law associates.

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

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