



## February, 2009

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### INTERNATIONAL & TAIWAN

President **Hu Jintao visited Saudi Arabia and then several African countries** (Mali, Senegal, Tanzania and Mauritius) reassuring them that China was committed to its investments in the region. Trade between China and Africa reached \$107bn in 2008, and Hu's visit indicates that China is interested beyond resource-rich partners like Sudan, Angola and Zambia. Hu has made engagement with African nations a feature of his foreign policy, but has had to manage African expectations and criticism from Chinese economists that the home market needs further stimulus. (See Reuters, 10 February)

During his visit to the international economic forum in Davos, Premier **Wen Jiabao identified Western countries' negligence as the root cause of the current economic crisis**. Failures in regulating financial institutions and the promotion of a 'low savings, high consumption' lifestyle made Western nations culpable. As a result, Wen argued, 'developing countries should have a greater say in international financial institutions [and] establish a new world economic order that is just, equitable, stable and sound.' (See FT, 29 January)

On 9 February, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) hosted the latest round of the **Universal Periodic Review of human rights** which included China for the first time. The Chinese delegation, led by Ambassador Li Baodong, emphasized that China viewed human rights as linked with economic development. It rebuffed calls by European and some Latin American countries to publish more information on, or abolish, China's use of the death penalty. Beijing officials did say that they would examine suggestions by Canada and Australia that it restrict the number of capital offences. Several developing countries including Pakistan and Sri Lanka acclaimed China as a beacon of progress, and dismissed those raising concerns about treatment of Tibetans as having a 'political agenda'. It accepted recommendations from Iran that it reinforce internet censorship to prevent defamation of religion, and from Cuba that it respond firmly to 'self-styled human rights defenders.' (See Washington Post, 10 February; Reuters, 11 February; China Aid, 13 February; UCAN, 5 February; AsiaNews, 5 February)

Presidents Hu Jintao and Barack Obama held a telephone call on January 30 to discuss the international economic crisis. President Obama 'stressed the need to correct global trade imbalances as well as to stimulate global growth and get credit markets flowing'. President Hu said that China opposed trade protectionism and agreed to work together on international issues, especially North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, counter-terrorism, proliferation and climate change. (See Reuters, 30 January)

**Hillary Clinton visited China** for the first time in her capacity as US Secretary of State. Since coming to office she has emphasized a 'broad agenda' in Sino-US relations as part of President Obama's 'creative engagement' in foreign relations. She told reporters in Seoul that 'pressing on human rights ... can't interfere on the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis and the security crisis. We have to have a dialogue that leads to an understanding and cooperation on each of those.' Meeting with Chinese foreign minister Yang Jiechi, Mrs Clinton was reassured that the Chinese government would continue to

work with the United States, and would continue to invest in US government bonds. China also announced that military dialogue would be resumed between the two nations, after it was suspended last autumn over US military sales to Taiwan. Clinton said that the two countries found themselves 'in the same boat ... rowing in the same direction.' Mrs Clinton also met with representatives of women's groups, including HIV/AIDS activist Dr Gao Yaojie. She worshipped at the registered Haidian Church in Beijing, where she also had talks with a church official. Some prominent dissidents had their movement curtailed during her visit and human rights groups have vociferously attacked her pragmatic downplaying of the human rights agenda. Mrs Clinton has a long record of criticizing China's human rights record, and was particularly noted for a very critical speech during a visit to Beijing in 1995 to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women. Chinese media said the Chinese people were 'reassured' by her current visit. (See AsiaNews, 23 February; Sky News, 22 February; DPA, AP, Reuters 21 February; IPS, 17 February)

The **US State Department's Report on Human Rights for 2009**, released on 25 February, has found that human rights declined in China during 2008. According to the report Chinese authorities continue to limit their citizen's rights to privacy, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of movement and association. It particularly noted 'severe cultural and religious repression' of Tibetan and other minority groups. Xinhua, China's central news agency, said the report 'wilfully ignored and distorted basic facts' and was an 'excuse to interfere with others' internal affairs.' (See AP, 25 February, China Aid Association, 26 February)

**Taiwanese officials are seeking a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement with the mainland** to speed up trade-related benefits in the wake of Beijing's economic stimulus package. Taiwanese officials hope a feasibility study will pave the way for a full normalization of trade arrangements and faster integration of the two economies. (See AFPC, 2 February)

The Taiwanese government has agreed **compensation and pension packages with people with Hansen's disease (leprosy)**, many of whom had once been forcibly segregated in the Losheng leprosarium for much of their lives. The segregation policy was introduced in 1930 by the Japanese colonial authorities and maintained up until 1962. Premier Liu Chao-shuan apologized for past government's behaviour, and agreed payments of between NT\$200,000 and NT\$3.64m (US\$5,757-US\$104,777). The move follows the passage of a bill last August, but several of the remaining patients at the leprosarium have refused to accept the government apology. (See UCAN, 25 February)

Two looted Qing dynasty cast bronze animal heads were auctioned by Christie's in Paris for €31m. The rat and rabbit heads were originally part of a zodiac animal collection made to grace a water clock fountain at the Summer Palace of the Qianlong emperor. They were looted by British and French troops who razed the palace in 1860 during the Opium Wars, and became part of Yves Saint Laurent's art collection. A spokesman for the Chinese Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Jiang Yu, demanded that the objects be returned to China. The scholar Xie Chengsheng added, 'If your belongings are stolen and you see them in the market the next day you do not buy them back. You call the police.' China says that it will restrict future Christie's activities in China as a result of the sale. It later emerged that the winning bidder was Cai Mingchao, an advisor to China's Lost Cultural Relics Recovery Programme. He has said that he will not pay the agreed figure. (See Christian Science Monitor, 20 February; Guardian, 3 March)

The Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has reportedly bought a \$5.8m home in Hong Kong's Tai Po district. Mugabe's daughter is already studying in Hong Kong. (See AFP, 15 February)

## NATIONAL NEWS

**Large parts of northern China have been suffering from a prolonged drought.** The drought in Hebei province is considered the most serious in 50 years, while winter crops have been affected in Anhui, Gansu, Hebei, Henan, Jiangsu, Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces. It is estimated that wheat harvests this year will be cut by 20% in the worst affected areas of Henan and Anhui. Beijing has had no rain for more than 100 days, the longest dry spell for 38 years, and a state of emergency has been declared by the municipal government. About 4.42m people and 2.22m livestock have restricted drinking water. Attempts to rectify the situation by seeding clouds has resulted in severe snow storms in other parts of northern China. (See Times, 5 February; UCAN, 11 February)

Chen Xiwen, director of the office of the Central Leading Group on Rural Work, estimated that **around 20m rural migrants have lost their jobs in China's eastern cities**. The figures come from a survey by the Ministry of Agriculture in 150 villages throughout the country. Chen said that the figure represents 15% of the estimated total migrant population (130m), but the numbers crowding bus and train stations since the Chinese New Year indicate that the lure of jobs is still drawing large numbers to cities in Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang. Guangdong's export growth slowed substantially from 22.3% in 2007 to 5.6% last year, with overall provincial growth down to 10.1%. Overall, China's exports fell sharply by 17.5% year on year for January; Chinese imports fell even more sharply by 43%. At the moment many migrants are waiting out the downturn in the hope of finding new jobs in the cities. Local authorities have been instructed to provide more jobs and increased incomes for rural dwellers as part of the 4trn yuan (£41bn) government stimulus package. The government will also subsidise rural dwellers' purchase of electrical goods like refrigerators and televisions. (See Reuters, 4 January; Chinaview, 2 February; Guardian, 11 February)

New figures show that China is now the **world's largest producer of carbon dioxide emissions**. Research published in *Geophysical Research Letters* shows that Chinese emissions increased by around 8% in 2008. China produces about 24% of the world's man-made 'green house gasses', with the USA contributing 21%. However CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per inhabitant are 5.2 tons in China compared with 19.4 tons in the United States and 8.6 tons in Western Europe. Under the Kyoto Protocol emissions are the responsibility of the country in which they are produced, yet environmental economists at Carnegie Mellon University suggest that 9% of China's emissions are produced manufacturing exports for the United States, with an equivalent figure of 6% for the EU (In total, 33% of China's emissions are produced making goods for export). Experts are suggesting that new international environmental agreements need to be based on consumption rather than production. (See Guardian, 23 February; Treehugger, 24 February)

The largest ever Chinese investment in a foreign company has moved a step closer. The international mining company Rio Tinto announced that it would be accepting a \$20bn bail out by the state-owned Chinese aluminium firm Chinalco. Rio needs the cash to pay off urgent debts, and in return is offering Chinalco shares, a stake in several mining assets and two seats on the board of directors. The move has drawn strong dissent from some existing share holders and has yet to be fully approved. (See FT 16 February; Guardian, 12 February)

Chinese **officials have closed around 10,000 internet sites** in a clampdown on unregistered content. The majority will be allowed to reopen once they have gained the necessary registration. The majority belong to small businesses, but China also prevents users from accessing pornography, gambling or politically inciting materials. However, a number of religious sites including Catholic sites in Hong Kong and Taiwan, remain blocked in mainland China. Websites used by Charter 08 activists such as Bullog.cn have also been removed. (See Bloomberg, 25 February; AsiaNews, 17 February)

A gas explosion in a Shanxi coal mine killed 73 miners, with many more trapped or suffering from critical injuries. The mine in Gujiao city is owned by the Shanxi Coking Coal Group, which operates 28 mines. Several directors have been arrested. (See AP, 22 February)

An unauthorised fireworks display to celebrate Chinese New Year at China Central Television resulted in a fire which burned down the nearly completed, 241-room Mandarin Oriental Beijing. A firefighter died from injuries sustained fighting the blaze. (See IHT 10 February)

Chinese government **concerns about domestic journalists 'fake reporting' continue**. The deputy director of the General Administration of Press and Publications, Li Dongdong, said that better screening for press credentials, a 'database of media professionals with a bad record', and standardized qualifications for journalists would be introduced. These measures do not apply to foreign journalists who are administered by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. (See AP, 13 February)

**HIV/AIDS has become China's deadliest infectious disease**, killing 6,987 people in the first nine months of 2008. The number of confirmed infections had risen to 264, 302 according to Chinese health statistics, but the government and UNAIDS estimate the true figure is likely to be closer to 700,000. Last

year health authorities acknowledged publicly that most new HIV/AIDS infections were now transmitted sexually, having previously put most infections down to intravenous drug use. There has also been a 20% rise in the number of syphilis cases being reported. A new sex education campaign has been launched by the Ministry of Health. (See SCMP, 19 February; AP, 18 February)

## CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS NEWS

Rev Gao Feng, president of the China Christian Council, welcomed a delegation from the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCUSA) to Shanghai on 26 February. The delegation included Archbishop Vicken Aykazian and Rev Dr Michael Kurt Kinnamon. (See CCC, 26 February)

According to Dr Fan Yanfeng, an academic who attended **last November's symposium on the house churches**, this development has been misreported. Dr Fan says the meeting was a 'small internal research meeting that an NGO hosted to prepare for a research report on house church issues. One thing I can confirm, this meeting did not have official Chinese backing or authorization to begin a dialogue with the Chinese house churches.' Dr Fan added that so far no government institution has yet been tasked with communication with the house churches, though local and national security bureau officials regularly talk with house church leaders like Pastor Zhang Mingxuan. Another Beijing house church leader who attended the meetings, Wang Shuangyan, says she looks forward to more such meetings, 'to indirectly pass our opinions to the government and appeal for a legal identity for the house church.' A prominent writer and human rights activist said that the moves were a 'strategic adjustment' and do not signal rapid, fundamental change. (See Voice of America, 28 January; China Aid Association 26 February)

China Aid issued its China report for 2009, highlighting **increased rates of arrests against house church leaders** during 2008, particularly in Beijing during and after the Olympic period. The number of cases covered by China Aid doubled from 2007 to 2008. (See China Aid, 5 February)

The **prominent Christian attorney and human rights advocate, Gao Zhisheng, has again been arrested** by authorities. He was detained whilst leaving his home in Shaanxi province on 4 February and his whereabouts are unknown. Mr Gao is well known as a defence lawyer at trials of Christian house church leaders, Falungong members and human rights activists. He was a former member of the CCP and the Red Army, but has been arrested several times since 2005, especially after writing an open letter to the US Congress in September 2007. He has reportedly been tortured during several of his detentions. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008. (See China Aid, 9 February)

At 5pm on Wednesday 11 February, **more than 60 house church leaders were arrested** together with two Korean pastors in Nanyang City, Henan Province. The church leaders had come from four provinces and represented several house church groupings. Thirty police broke up the meeting, arrested the Christians, confiscated their belongings and escorted them to the Nanyang Jingda Hotel where they were questioned. All were forced to register and pay a fine. The two Korean pastors were deported on 14 February charged with illegal religious activities. Most of the house church leaders were released, after their arrest was made public in foreign media. Four remained in custody until 20 February. (See China Aid, 16 February, 24 February)

Pastor Cui Qian of the Wanbang Missionary Church, Shanghai, has had his lease of the church building annulled after hosting the **4<sup>th</sup> Seminar of Chinese Urban House Church Pastors Fellowship** on 10-12 February. Despite being told by police to cancel the Seminar at the last minute, the delegates arranged for it to go ahead at a neutral location. But police then ordered the landlord to terminate the lease of the building to the church within 30 days, depriving the 1200 strong congregation of a place to worship. (See China Aid, 13 February)

The Catholic bishop of Shanghai, Aloysius Jin Luxian, has urged Catholics in the diocese to **form action groups to visit migrant workers**, get to know their needs and grievances, and respond to them where possible. He urged Catholics to 'open their heart with love', helping to improve migrants self-confidence, encourage them to make efforts to self-improvement and dissuade them from excessive drinking and gambling. His auxiliary bishop Joseph Xing Wenzhi and the diocesan social service centre would coordinate the response. (See UCAN, 19 February)

The unregistered auxiliary bishop of Xiwanzi, **Mgr Leo Yao Liang, has been released from 30 months of detention.** The bishop, 85, has been warned against partaking in high profile church events. Bishop Yao has said that he was treated well during his detention, but was forbidden from contacting anyone. Bishop Yao was ordained in secret in 2002 and has been detained several times since, most recently for consecrating an unregistered church building. (See UCAN, 12 February)

In an interview with the SCMP, Cardinal Zen Ze-kuin has said it was 'regrettable' that the Vatican had not criticised recent moves by the CPA to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Chinese 'self ordination' of Catholic bishops and priests independently of the Vatican. The cardinal archbishop of Hong Kong suggested that there was a danger of schism in the Chinese Catholic church if further concessions were made to the CPA, saying that the Pope's pastoral letter of 2007 had not yet led to greater freedom of worship and that a lack of effort to clarify its teachings had led some Chinese Catholics to be 'confused'. (The Tablet, 21 February)

The Catholic Church in Hong Kong has sought a judicial review in the appeals court over a new law requiring all subsidised schools in the territory to form a management committee by July, 2009. Churches run nearly 300 schools in Hong Kong and are worried that the new committees will **dilute their ability to run schools according to Christian principles.** (See ENI, 6 February)

Debates on legalising homosexuality have drawn Christian groups into debating their influence on Hong Kong society. A pastor of the Evangelical Free Church, Revd Patrick So Wing Chi had suggested in January that legalisation could lead to more HIV/AIDS cases and students turning to male prostitution to earn money. A 'Concern Against Religious Hegemony' group then organised a protest outside the church on 15 February, arguing that 'universal values' were more important than inherited dogma. Leading theological figures have expressed concern that advocacy be based on dialogue and that pro-family Christians not be labelled as 'the religious right'. (ENI, 23 February)

The bishop emeritus of Hwalien diocese (Taiwan), Andrea Tsien Chih-chun has died at the age of 83. He had been dean of the faculty of philosophy at Fu Jen University, being consecrated bishop in 1992. (AF 19 February)

The Buddhist Association of China has issued **new rules for Tibetan Buddhist monks** instructing them that their paramount duty is to 'safeguard social stability, the socialist legal system and the fundamental interests of the people'. They must also avoid separatist activities and illegal demonstrations. The rules suggest that monks 'see clearly' that the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama is a leading separatist, and a loyal tool of anti-Chinese Western forces – 'the very root that causes social unrest in Tibet and the biggest obstacle for Tibetan Buddhism to build up its order.' Calls to boycott the Tibetan New Year (Losar) are growing among exiled Tibetan groups and within Tibet itself. A group of 20 Tibetans were arrested in Litang for urging the boycott. Losar begins on 25 February, (See Reuters, 25 February; AsiaNews, 19 February)

The Dalai Lama, 73, has been made an honorary citizen of the city of Rome. During a visit to the city he said that his faith in the Chinese government was becoming 'thinner and thinner', but his 'faith towards Chinese people [is] never shaken.' (See VOA, 9 February)

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#### ABBREVIATIONS AND SOURCES

AF	Agenzia Fides	<a href="http://www.fides.org">www.fides.org</a>
AFP	Agence France Presse	<a href="http://www.afp.com">www.afp.com</a>
AFPC	American Foreign Policy Centre	<a href="http://www.afpc.org">www.afpc.org</a>
AP	Associated Press	<a href="http://www.ap.org">www.ap.org</a>
ATO	Asia Times Online	<a href="http://www.atimes.com">www.atimes.com</a>
BBC	British Broadcasting Association	<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk">www.bbc.co.uk</a>
CAA	China Aid Association	<a href="http://www.chinaaid.org">www.chinaaid.org</a>
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	
CBNN	Christian Broadcast Network News	<a href="http://www.cbn.com/CBN/news">www.cbn.com/CBN/news</a>
CCC	China Christian Council [Protestant]	<a href="http://www.chinesechristianchurch.org.cn">www.chinesechristianchurch.org.cn</a>
CCP	Chinese Communist Party	
(C)CPA	(Chinese) Catholic Patriotic Association	
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress	
CD	China Daily	<a href="http://www.chinadaily.net/news/">www.chinadaily.net/news/</a>
CHCA	Chinese House Church Association [Protestant]	
CRI	China Radio International	<a href="http://www.cri.com.cn">www.cri.com.cn</a>
CWN	Catholic World News	<a href="http://www.cwnnews.com">www.cwnnews.com</a>
	Chinaview	<a href="http://www.chinaview.cn">www.chinaview.cn</a>
	China.org.cn	<a href="http://www.China.org.cn">www.China.org.cn</a>
DPA	Deutsche Presse-Agentur	<a href="http://www.dpa.com">www.dpa.com</a>
EDA	Églises D'Asie	<a href="http://eglisie.mepasie.org">http://eglisie.mepasie.org</a>
FT	Financial Times	<a href="http://www.ft.com">www.ft.com</a>
	Guardian	<a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk">www.guardian.co.uk</a>
HK	Hong Kong	
	Independent	<a href="http://www.independent.co.uk">www.independent.co.uk</a>
IHT	International Herald Tribune	<a href="http://www.iht.com">www.iht.com</a>
IPS	Inter Press Service	<a href="http://www.ipsnews.net">www.ipsnews.net</a>
PBS	Public Broadcast Radio	<a href="http://www.pbs.org">www.pbs.org</a>
RAB	Religious Affairs Bureau	
	Religious Intelligence	<a href="http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk">www.religiousintelligence.co.uk</a>
	Reuters	<a href="http://www.reuters.co.uk">www.reuters.co.uk</a>
	Sky News	<a href="http://news.sky.com/skynews">http://news.sky.com/skynews</a>
SARA	State Administration for Religious Affairs	
SCMP	South China Morning Post	<a href="http://www.scmp.com">www.scmp.com</a>
SOE	State Owned Enterprise	
	The Daily Telegraph	<a href="http://www.telegraph.co.uk">www.telegraph.co.uk</a>
	The Times	<a href="http://www.timesonline.co.uk/">www.timesonline.co.uk/</a>
UCAN	Union of Catholic Asia News	<a href="http://www.ucanews.com">www.ucanews.com</a>
UFWD	United Front Work Department	
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization	
WP	Washington Post	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com">www.washingtonpost.com</a>
	Xinhua	<a href="http://www.xinhua.org/">http://www.xinhua.org/</a>

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