

Enter the "Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy": Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid

Bitter Winter offer the first English translation of a text converting the clergy in apparatchiks under a system of awards and penalties based on their loyalty to the CCP.

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by Massimo Introvigne



Patriotic music performed at an official Three-Self Protestant church.

Here we are. Announced in November, and as usually published for collecting "comments" that never change anything substantial, the new ["Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy"](#) will come into force on May

1.

They create an Orwellian system of surveillance, and strengthen the already strict control on all clergy. The tool is a national data base of the authorized clergy, meaning clergy trained and recognized by the [five authorized religions](#). There is a complicated system to enter the data base, but those who are out of it and will claim to be clergy will commit a crime. This includes pastors of the Protestant [house churches](#), [Catholic conscientious objectors](#) who reject the [Vatican-China deal of 2018](#) and refuse to join the [Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association](#), teachers and clergy at independent mosques and Buddhist and Taoist temples, Jewish rabbis (as Judaism is not one of the [five authorized religions](#)), and religious personnel of new religious movements. They will now be immediately identified: they will not have a clergy card, and will not be included in the national data base.

To be registered in the data base, it is not enough to be proficient in one of the authorized religions. The clergy should prove that they "support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and support the socialist system" (article 3: note that this article is repeatedly mentioned in the Measures as the key to the whole regulation), and cooperate in the fight against the [xie jiao](#) and other illegal or "extremist" religions (article 6E).

Things do not end when a clergy is registered in the data base. It is difficult to be registered, easy to lose the registration. As for being registered, a clergy will have special problems if s/he is part of the "high clergy" (provisions are stricter), particularly Tibetan Buddhist, or Roman Catholic. [Tibetan Buddhists](#) are reminded by article 15 that they should respect the principle that any reincarnation of a lama should be authorized by the [CCP](#) ([we discussed this bizarre system](#) in a previous article in *Bitter Winter*). In a slap of the face of the Vatican, Catholics are told by article 16 that bishops in China should be democratically elected through the [Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association](#), i.e., appointed by the [CCP](#), and

consecrated through the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference. There is no mention of the Vatican or the Pope, which in theory should appoint the bishops under the [Vatican-China deal of 2018](#), renewed in 2020. Also, the socialist principle that those of teach in a religious community should submit to the "religious teaching guidance" of the community rather than the other way round is proclaimed by Article 43.

Once registered, the clergy enters an Orwellian world whether loyalty to the [CCP](#) and love for the Party is assessed periodically, in a system similar to social credit. The clergy receives awards and punishments, and if the latter exceeds the former registration in the data base is lost and worse consequences are threatened.

Compliant clergy is thus transformed into apparatchiks of the [CCP](#), lured by rewards and terrorized by punishments. They will be called to "Sinicize" their religions and preach love for the [CCP](#) to their devotees. Not much will be left of genuine religion—which is precisely the aim of these and other previous measures.

The full translation of the Measures follows.

Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy

[State Administration of Religious Affairs](#) Order No. 15

These Measures for the Administration of Religious Clergy have been considered and adopted by the [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#) in accordance with the prescribed procedures on January 8, 2021, and are hereby promulgated and shall come into effect on May 1, 2021.

Chapter I General Provisions

Article I In order to regulate the management of religious clergy, and to

protect the legitimate rights and interests of religious clergy, according to the "Regulations on Religious Affairs," the present measures are formulated.

Article II The religious clergy referred to in these measures, identified according to the definition of religious clergy according to law, can engage in religious teaching activities.

Article III Religious clergy should love the motherland, support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, support the socialist system, abide by the Constitution, laws, regulations, and rules, practice the core values of socialism, adhere to the principle of independent and self-administered religion in China, adhere to the direction of the [Sinicization](#) of religion in China, operate to maintain national unity, national unity, religious harmony, and social stability.

Article IV Religious affairs departments, in accordance with the administrative management of religious clergy, should protect the legitimate rights and interests of religious clergy, religious groups, religious institutions, and religious activities; train, manage religious clergy, and guide religious clergy to play an active role in promoting economic and social development.

Chapter II Rights and Obligations of Religious Clergy

Article V Religious clergy shall enjoy the following rights.

- (A) to preside over religious activities, religious ceremonies.
- (B) engage in the collation of religious texts, religious doctrine and regulations, and religious culture research.
- (C) engage in and receive religious education and training.
- (D) participate in the management of their religious groups, religious

institutions, and religious activity sites, and hold corresponding positions in accordance with procedures.

(E) carry out public welfare and charitable activities.

(F) participate in social security and enjoy related rights.

(G) other rights provided by laws, regulations, and rules.

Article VI Religious clergy shall fulfill the following obligations:

(A) to safeguard the national interest and the public interest, within the scope of the laws, regulations, and rules in carrying out their activities.

(B) follow the instruction of the religious affairs departments and other relevant departments in accordance with the law.

(C) abide by the rules and regulations established for religious groups, and accept the management of the religious groups, religious institutions, and religious activity sites where they are located.

(D) serve the citizens of the faith and guide them to be patriotic and law-abiding.

(E) maintain the normal order of religious activities, resist illegal religious activities and religious extremist ideology, and resist infiltration by foreign forces using religion.

(F) maintain and promote harmony between different religions, within the same religion, and between believing and non-believing citizens.

(G) follow all other obligations under the laws, regulations, and rules.

Article VII Religious clergy should focus on improving their own quality, improve cultural and moral literacy, research doctrine and regulations always trying to favor social harmony, progress of the times, and healthy

and civilized contents, and also through their sermons, should play a role in promoting the [Sinicization](#) of religion in China.

Article VIII Religious clergy, when publishing religious information on the Internet, should comply with the relevant provisions of the national Internet information regulations.

Article IX Religious clergy income should be obtained in accordance with the laws, regulations, rules, and policies, as well as the provisions of the rules and regulations of the different religious groups.

Religious clergy shall distinguish between personal property and the property of religious groups, religious institutions, religious activity sites, shall not misappropriate, appropriate, destroy, or unauthorizedly dispose of the legitimate property of religious groups, religious institutions, religious activity sites.

Religious clergy shall pay taxes in accordance with the law, and respect the laws for tax returns.

Article X In religious groups, religious institutions, religious activities, the activities of the clergy in charge or engaged in financial-related work should be in accordance with national financial, accounting, asset management regulations, and rules on financial management responsibilities.

Article XI When religious clergy from out of the country has religious contacts with Chinese clergy, this should be in accordance with the relevant state regulations and procedures.

Article XII Religious clergy shall not perform the following acts:

(A) endanger national security, public safety, promote, support, finance religious extremism, undermine national unity, split the country, support terrorist activities, or participate in related activities.

(B) interfere with the implementation of administrative, judicial, educational. and other state functions.

(C) Being dominated by foreign forces, accepting the appointment of teaching positions by foreign religious groups or institutions without authorization, and other acts that violate the principle of independence and self-administration of religion.

(D) violate relevant state regulations when accepting donations from within and outside the country.

(E) affect the normal productive activities and life of the citizens.

(F) organize, host, or participate in unauthorized religious activities held outside the authorized places of religious activities.

(G) use public charity activities to preach, preach in schools and other educational institutions other than religious institutions, and engage in other violations of state regulations for preaching.

(H) make commercial propaganda in the name of religion.

(I) other violations of laws, regulations, and rules.

Chapter III Qualifications of Religious Clergy

Article XIII Whether religious clergy is qualified should be identified by authorized religious groups, and reported to the Religious Affairs Department for recording purposes.

National religious groups shall train the religious clergy of the religion and determine the training method and the title attributed to religious clergy, determine the conditions and procedures, etc. The conditions shall include the content of Article III of these measures. National religious groups should develop religious clergy identification methods and report

them to the [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#) for recording purposes.

Religious groups shall identify religious clergy in accordance with the rules of the national religious groups for identifying religious clergy.

Article XIV Religious groups shall identify religious clergy within twenty days from the date, fill out the religious clergy filing form, reported to the religious affairs department recording purposes, and submit a copy of the file of the proposed religious clergy for recording purposes with a copy of each clergy's resident ID card.

National religious groups identify religious clergy, and report to the [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#) for recording purposes; religious groups in provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the Central Government, identify the local religious clergy, and report to the provincial people's government religious affairs departments for recording purposes; religious groups in municipalities (prefectures, states, leagues) identify the local religious clergy, and report to the municipal people's government religious affairs departments for recording purposes; religious groups in counties (cities, districts, banners) identify the local religious clergy, and report to the [county](#) people's government religious affairs departments for recording purposes.

The forms developed by the [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#) should be used for registering clergy for recording purposes.

Article XV Tibetan Buddhism's succession of living Buddhas should be regulated in accordance with the "Regulations on Religious Affairs," the "Tibetan Buddhism Reincarnation Management Measures," and other relevant provisions.

Article XVI Catholic bishops are approved and consecrated by the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic

Association and the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference shall, within twenty days after the consecration of the bishop, fill out a Catholic bishop reporting form and report it to the [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#) for the record, and submit the following materials.

(a) A copy of the bishop's household register and a copy of his resident identity card.

(b) A statement issued by the Catholic community of the [province](#), [autonomous region](#), or [municipality](#) directly under the Central Government on the democratic election of the bishop.

(c) a letter of approval from the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference.

(d) the certificate of consecration of the bishop signed by the consecrating bishop.

The Catholic bishops registration form shall be the one supplied by the [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#).

Article XVII Religious affairs departments should, within twenty working days from the date of receipt of the religious groups' recording form submitted for the record, send a written response. Should the departments fail to respond, the form will be deemed to have been registered.

Article XVIII In the following circumstances, registration of religious clergy shall be refused:

(A) when not in accordance with the method of identification developed by the national religious groups to identify clergy.

(B) when the filing materials submitted are not true.

Article XIX The religious affair departments will assign to each registered

clergy a record number. Record numbers will use a twelve-digit code, including six administrative codes, a number identifying the religion, and five running numbers.

Article XX Religious groups shall issue a religious clergy certificate to the religious clergy to complete the record, and shall not charge a fee.

The religious clergy certificate is applicable nationwide. Religious groups and religious affairs departments shall not duplicate the identification or filing of religious clergy.

For each religious clergy certificate printed by the national religious groups, the certificate shall contain the record number and expiration date and other content. Religious clergy should renew the certificate in a timely manner before the expiration.

Article XXI In each of the following circumstance, the certificate of registration will be cancelled, and the cancellation will be officially announced:

(A) by the religious affairs department, in accordance with the law indicating the circumstances in which to cancel the qualification of religious clergy.

(B) by the religious community, in accordance with the relevant provisions of this religion to cancel the qualification of religious clergy

(C) due to voluntary renunciation, death. or other reasons for the loss of religious clergy qualifications.

Chapter IV Religious Activities of the High Clergy

Article XXII The religious activities of the high clergy referred to in these measures, refers to the religious activities of those entrusted with the duty of presiding over religious affairs of religious clergy.

National religious groups shall specify the religious activities of the high clergy, the specific scope of religious activities of the high clergy, the conditions of service and procedures, etc. The conditions of service should include the content of Article 3 of these measures. These conditions of service should be reported to the [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#) for recording purposes.

Article XXIII The religious clergy who will be appointed to the main teaching positions and the leadership of religious activities, in accordance with the principles established by the national religious groups about the main teaching positions and the leadership of religious activities, should be appointed within ten days after the creation of a new religious site or to fill out a vacancy in the main teaching positions and the leadership of religious activities, and reported to the religious affairs department for recording purposes, by submitting the following materials:

(A) a CV of the proposed incumbent.

(B) a copy of the proposed incumbent's family register, a copy of his/her resident ID card and a copy of the religious clergy certificate.

When the proposed is expected to leave previous teaching positions or religious activities, s/he should also submit documents proving the cancellation of the previous teaching or religious position.

Religious activities of the high clergy should be recorded through the filing form provided by the [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#).

Article XXIV The religious affairs department shall, within twenty working days from the date of receipt of the high clergy application submitted for the record, send a written response. Should it fail to respond, the recording procedure will be deemed to have been completed.

Article XXV In the following circumstances, application to register

somebody as part of the high clergy will be refused:

(A) the person to be appointed is not acceptable, in accordance with the rules of the national religious groups or the religious site whether the person should serve.

(B) the proposed incumbent leaves his/her previous position and has not completed the corresponding cancellation procedure.

(C) the filing materials submitted are not true.

Article XXVI After the completion of the filing procedures for high clergy, those so designated can have an appointment ceremony and be inaugurated in their duties.

Article XXVII The high clergy will remain in their position for a term of three to five years. After the expiration of the term, a possible continuation in the office should be in accordance with the provisions of Article 23 of these Measures.

Article XXVIII When the high clergy leaves the position, a cancellation procedure should be initiated and follow the prescribed procedures, as follows:

(A) a statement by the organization managing the position confirming that a decision has been taken for the high clergy to leave the position.

(B) indicate the place where the religious community issued a written opinion.

When the high clergy leaves a position as leader of a place of worship or the head of the financial management agency, those in charge of the place of worship should also submit a report including a financial review at the time of the high clergy's departure.

Article XXIX In the following circumstances, registration as high clergy will be cancelled:

(A) the management of the relevant organization is not in accordance with the rules and procedures of the national religious groups about organization, worship, education, etc.

(B) there is no, or no longer, consent from the religious community.

(C) the religious clergy who left a position was the clergy in charge of the place of worship, or the head of the financial management agency, and the community did not submit a report on the financial review at the departure.

Article XXX High clergy can generally only serve in the main teaching position in one site. If necessary, exceptions can be granted.

Part-time leading religious activities and main teaching positions will be authorized in a [county](#) (city, [district](#), flag) if the local religious groups agree. This situation will be reported to the [county](#) people's government religious affairs department. The [county](#) people's government religious affairs department will report to the provincial people's government religious affairs department for recording purposes. In cross-provincial entities, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the Central Government, the religious affairs department of the provincial people's government where the proposed part-time religious activity site will happen should be informed.

Article XXXI The religious clergy serving in the main teaching positions in religious activities should be dismissed in the following circumstance, with a public announcement:

(A) the loss of religious clergy qualifications.

(B) violation of laws, regulations, rules, and regulations of religious groups,

resulting in the loss of the main teaching position in religious activity sites.

(C) more than one year without performing the duties of the main teaching in the religious activity sites, or loss of the ability to perform the duties of the main teaching.

Chapter V Supervision and Management

Article XXXII The religious affairs departments shall supervise the duties of the religious clergy, and the religious activities of the high clergy, and perform in general the guidance and supervision of religious groups, religious institutions, religious activities, to strengthen the management of religious clergy.

Article XXXIII The religious affairs departments shall, in accordance with the principle of management of the service, strengthen the information management of religious clergy.

The [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#) shall establish a database of religious clergy, the local people's government departments of religious affairs should provide and update the basic information of religious clergy, including awards and punishments, cancellation of records, and other information.

Article XXXIV The religious clergy across provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government who engage in religious teaching activities, should be agreed by the religious groups in the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government when they arrive and depart from there, and reported to the provincial people's government religious affairs departments in both places for recording purposes. Cross-provincial, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the Central Government should keep records of those who engage in religious activities for more than one year, and the two provincial people's

governments religious affairs departments of the localities from where and to where the clergy moves should update the religious clergy database for the relevant information changes. The management responsibilities of the religious clergy will be transferred to the corresponding religious affairs departments and religious groups in the place of relocation.

Religious clergy across counties, municipal administrative regions can only engage in religious teaching activities under the management of the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government, in accordance with the actual situation and the relevant provisions.

Article XXXV Religious groups should develop religious clergy training program, strengthen the political education of religious clergy, the education on the rule of law, cultural education, religious education, improve the overall quality of religious clergy, and the overall quality of the religious clergy team.

National religious groups and provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the Central Government religious groups shall develop rules and regulations for religious clergy who want to study abroad.

Article XXXVI Religious groups shall regulate the management of religious clergy certificate, shall not violate the issuance of certificates, shall not profit from the issuance of certificates.

Article XXXVII Religious groups shall, in accordance with the Constitution, laws, regulations, rules, and policies and the actual work needs, within the scope of their mandate, establish and improve the management of religious clergy rules and regulations, develop a religious clergy code of conduct, which should include an improved mechanism of rewards and punishments for religious clergy, provisions for being

coopted and expelled, and in case of violation of laws, regulations, rules and regulations, provisions for the religious clergy to be punished accordingly.

Article XXXVIII Religious groups should develop a religious clergy assessment system, as an important basis for appointment, rewards, and punishments.

Article XXXIX Religious groups shall establish religious personnel files, and improve the information sharing mechanism concerning religious groups, religious institutions, religious activities, and religious personnel, and regularly report changes in religious personnel information to the religious affairs departments.

Religious colleges and universities should report to the appropriate institution of the religious community in a timely manner the files of the religious staff of the institution.

Religious activity sites should be reported to the religious community institutions and religious affairs departments in the location of the religious site.

Article XL Religious institutions should adhere to the correct direction, improve the quality of education, train high-quality religious clergy.

Article XLI Entrance to religious places of worship should be regulated through strict gatekeeping, verification of identity, and registration.

Religious sites shall not exceed the capacity and financial ability of the site to receive religious clergy.

Article XLII Religious groups, religious institutions, religious sites should establish and improve the groups, institutions, places of religious clergy management system, strengthen the supervision and management of religious clergy engaged in religious activities, control domestic and

foreign donations.

Article XLIII The high clergy serving in the main teaching positions in religious sites should perform religious affairs management responsibilities, accept the religious community's teaching guidance, submit to the management of religious activities in the management organization, accept the supervision of the religious clergy and religious citizens in the place of religious activities.

Article XLIV The religious affairs departments and religious groups, religious institutions, religious activities that receive reports that the religious clergy violate laws, regulations, rules, or regulations of religious groups, shall investigate and verify, according to the relevant law and regulations.

Article XLV When religious clergy believe that religious groups, religious institutions, religious activities and their members violate their legitimate rights and interests, they can report to the religious affairs departments. Religious affairs departments shall investigate and verify, and shall deal with it according to law.

Chapter VI Legal Liability

Article XLVI The public officials managing religious clergy guilty of abuse of power, negligence, or favoritism, should be submitted to disciplinary action and, if their behavior constitutes a crime, be held criminally responsible.

Article XLVII The religious groups, religious institutions, institutions regulating religious activities caught in one of the following acts, and asked to correct them by the religious affair departments, should be punished if they fail to perform the correction of:

(A) a failure to establish a sound system for the management of religious

clergy.

(B) a failure to manage religious clergy in accordance with the provisions of these Measures.

(C) a failure to identify or approve religious clergy in accordance with these provisions.

(D) when teachers for religious activity sites are not selected in accordance with the provisions regulating the teaching positions in the religious activity sites.

(E) when religious groups do not act in accordance with the provisions of these Measures for recording the religious clergy, or religious activity sites do not operate in accordance with the provisions of these measures for recording the high clergy teaching at religious activity sites.

(F) failure to issue certificates of religious clergy in accordance with the provisions, or making a profit by issuing certificates.

(G) infringement of the legitimate rights and interests of religious clergy.

(H) other violations of the relevant provisions of these Measures.

Article XLVIII The religious clergy who violate the relevant provisions of these Measures shall be punished in accordance with the "Regulations on Religious Affairs," Article 73, and other relevant provisions.

Article XLIX Those not satisfied with the religious affairs department's administrative actions can apply for administrative reconsideration; those not satisfied with an administrative reconsideration of a decision can file an administrative lawsuit in accordance with law.

Chapter VII Administrative Rules

Article L If the [county](#) (city, [district](#), flag) cannot manage the relevant

religious groups, the corresponding responsibilities under these measures will pass to the upper level ([prefecture](#), state, [league](#)) that will manage the religious group.

If the city ([prefecture](#), state, [league](#)) cannot manage the relevant religious groups, the corresponding duties will pass to the provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the Central Government.

If the provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the Central Government cannot manage the relevant religious groups, the corresponding duties will pass to the national religious groups.

Article LI These Measures shall be interpreted by the [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#).

Article LII These Measures shall come into force on May 1, 2021. The [State Administration of Religious Affairs](#) measures of 2006 for registering religious clergy and religious places of worship shall be deemed to be no longer in force.