



#### 4.4.16

### **CHINA | Pastor Under Surveillance; Lawyer Denied Passport**

Pastor Gu Yuese, who publicly opposed forced cross removals from churches in Zhejiang Province, was released from detention and placed under “residential surveillance” March 31.

Pastor Gu Yuese, also known as Joseph Gu, was senior pastor of the state-sanctioned Chongyi Church in Zhejiang Province, which is reportedly one of the largest registered churches in China. He was first detained in January 2016 before being formally arrested Feb. 6 on charges of embezzling funds. The pastor was also the chair of the Zhejiang branch of the China Christian Council (CCC), a state-sanctioned religious organization which, along with the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), oversees the practices and organization of registered churches.

According to reports received by China Aid, the release of Pastor Gu and of human rights lawyer Zhang Kai on March 23 are both related to President Xi’s visit to the U.S. for the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C.

In other news, Chinese rights lawyer Ni Yulan was prevented from travelling to the U.S. to receive the State Department’s International Women of Courage Award. Ni, a Christian lawyer specializing in housing rights who was previously imprisoned and tortured, was due to attend the award ceremony in Washington, D.C. on March 29.

Her request for a new passport was denied, apparently because of her connection with lawyers detained in the “July 9 crackdown,” in which over 300 lawyers, activists, family members and associates have so far been interrogated, detained, imprisoned and disappeared.

Ni told the media she and her husband were forced to leave their home after police put pressure on their property agent. Her husband, Dong Jiqin, was physically assaulted by unknown assailants at their home as they were dragged out.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, "We welcome news of Pastor Gu's release but note with concern that he is not actually free as he is under residential surveillance. We are also deeply concerned about reports that lawyer Ni Yulan has been prevented from travelling to the US and has been forcibly evicted from her home. We congratulate Ms. Ni on receiving this award, in recognition of her tireless and courageous efforts to defend the rights of petitioners and other citizens in China. CSW calls on the Chinese authorities to grant Ni Yulan a passport, to cease all harassment and intimidation of Ni and her husband, and to uphold the right of lawyers in China to practice their profession without interference. We also urge China to remove restrictions on Pastor Gu and to guarantee the right to freedom of religion or belief for Christians and other religious communities in China."