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Xi’an Light of Zion Pastor Gao Quanfu Goes on Trial as Prosecutors Seek 12 to 13 Years Over Church Offerings

Pastor Gao Quanfu of Xi’an’s Light of Zion Church was scheduled to stand trial on November 12 at the Beilin District People’s Court in Xi’an, Shaanxi Province, on fraud charges centred on church offerings, according to his defense team as reported by ChinaAid on November 11. Prosecutors have recommended a prison sentence of 12 to 13 years for Gao. His lawyers have requested a postponement of the hearing to allow more time to gather evidence for his defense.

Gao’s wife, Pang Yu, is scheduled to stand trial on November 17 in a separate case. Pang, who is nearly 70, suffers from underlying health conditions that her defense team says have worsened during her detention, and her lawyers are seeking her release on bail for medical treatment. Fellow church leader Pastor Tang Bingyi was originally scheduled to stand trial on November 23, but his hearing has been postponed without a new date. Although the three face charges stemming from the same investigation, authorities are prosecuting them separately.

The case began on May 16, 2025, when police detained Gao at his home on suspicion of “using superstition to undermine the implementation of the law.” The following day, authorities detained ten other pastors and church co-workers, including Tang. Pang was subsequently placed under residential surveillance; in September 2025, authorities formally arrested her on fraud allegations and changed the charges against Gao and Tang to fraud. The case was transferred to the Beilin District People’s Court in January 2026.

According to the indictment published by ChinaAid in September, prosecutors allege that Gao and other church leaders fraudulently obtained RMB 25.5 million (about $3.6 million) in offerings. The indictment attributes RMB 2.3 million of that amount to 235 reported victims and does not identify corresponding victims for the remaining roughly RMB 23.2 million. Gao’s family disputes the accusations, saying the offerings were voluntary acts of worship and that church finances were handled by a finance team overseen by elders and deacons.

Defense lawyers have also alleged procedural violations. ChinaAid reported on October 20 that police shoved a human rights lawyer from the courthouse and seized another attorney’s phone during a September 15 pretrial conference in Tang’s case, and that the lawyers allege authorities have exceeded statutory time limits and unlawfully prolonged the defendants’ detention. According to the church, authorities induced more than 200 members to provide

statements accusing church leaders of wrongdoing, and the church is urging congregants who believe their statements were misleading or inaccurate to work with defense lawyers to clarify or withdraw them.

Light of Zion Church has operated in Xi’an for nearly 40 years. Like other unregistered Protestant house churches in China, it operates outside the government-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement and relies primarily on voluntary offerings from congregants. Religious freedom advocates say fraud charges of this kind increasingly target pastors of unregistered churches, effectively criminalising ordinary Christian giving.

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Sources

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- ChinaAid, Sept 14, 2026 (published indictment) — https://chinaaid.org/news/chinese-prosecutors-seek-12-years-in-prison-for-pastors-alleged-church-offering-fraud/