

FORMERLY IMPRISONED CHINESE PASTOR EZRA JIN TO RECEIVE MAJOR HUMAN RIGHTS PRIZE



Pastor Ezra Jin Mingri of Beijing Zion Church. (Courtesy Photo)

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WASHINGTON — Oct. 9, 2026 — Pastor Ezra Jin Mingri, founder of one of China's largest unregistered Protestant churches, has been named the recipient of a major human rights prize for his advocacy on behalf of persecuted believers.

The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice [announced Friday](#) that Jin will receive the 2026 Lantos Human Rights Prize at a Dec. 10 ceremony in Washington, D.C. The announcement coincides with the first anniversary of his arrest during China's sweeping crackdown on Beijing Zion Church.

Jin was arrested on Oct. 9, 2025, along with dozens of Zion Church pastors and members. After nine months in detention, he was [released July 4](#) and reunited with his family in the U.S. following high-level diplomatic engagement between Washington and Beijing.

President Donald Trump raised Jin's case with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a May visit to Beijing. Eight other Zion Church members remain detained in China, and Jin continues advocating for their freedom and that of other religious prisoners.

In a statement accompanying the announcement, Jin expressed gratitude for the recognition and said the Chinese Communist Party has targeted religious communities across multiple faith traditions. He urged international cooperation to defend religious freedom and secure the release of those still detained.

"I will not rest from speaking out until they are free and reunited with their loved ones," Jin said.

Katrina Lantos Swett, president of the Lantos Foundation, praised Jin's "unyielding courage and unshakeable faith," saying his commitment to religious freedom and willingness to stand despite persecution should inspire others.

Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice
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The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice today announced that it will award the 2026 Lantos Human Rights Prize to Pastor Ezra Jin Mingri, founder and leader of Zion Church and a former religious prisoner of conscience of the Chinese Communist Party. This announcement [Show more](#)

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BEIJING ZION CHURCH CRACKDOWN REMAINS UNRESOLVED
Jin founded Beijing Zion Church in 2007, helping establish one of China's largest independent Protestant congregations. In 2018, authorities shut down the church after he refused demands to install surveillance cameras inside its worship space.

Jin was also placed under heavy surveillance and was prohibited from leaving China. Despite the closure, Zion Church continued meeting privately and online, eventually developing a network of congregations across dozens of Chinese cities.

The October 2025 crackdown brought renewed arrests and prosecutions. The eight remaining detainees are Pastors Wang Lin, Yin Huibin, Lin Shucheng, Gao Yingjia, Liu Zhenbin and Wang Cong, Elder Wang Zhong and church member Wu Qiuyu.

The eight face charges of fraud and illegal business operations related to church offerings and online religious instruction. In September, [ChinaAid News reported](#) that family members had described overcrowding, inadequate medical care and harsh disciplinary conditions at detention centers in southern China's Guangxi region.

Since his release, Jin has emerged as a prominent advocate for persecuted religious communities. At a [Sept. 16 religious freedom forum](#) in Washington, he urged U.S. and Chinese leaders to prioritize human rights alongside economic and technological issues in their diplomatic discussions.

The Lantos Human Rights Prize has been awarded annually since 2009. Previous recipients include the Dalai Lama, Holocaust survivor and author Elie Wiesel, Uyghur activist Rebiya Kadeer, and Hong Kong democracy activist Joshua Wong.

Named for the late U.S. Rep. Tom Lantos, the only Holocaust survivor elected to Congress, the prize recognizes human rights advocates and seeks to encourage governments to prioritize human rights in foreign policy. Jin will receive the award at an invitation-only ceremony in Washington.

Founded in 2002, [ChinaAid](#) is an international Christian human rights organization committed to promoting religious freedom and the rule of law in China through advocacy, legal support, and international awareness campaigns.

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