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Latest: Qu Hongbo Trial in China After 16 Months in Jail

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Organizing and using a cult organization to undermine the implementation of the law."

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Pastor Qu Hongbo, known to his congregation by his Christian name Mingdao, went on trial in Shenyang on 23 November 2026, charged with "organizing and using a cult organization to undermine the implementation of the law." He had already spent more than 16 months in detention. Prosecutors are asking for four and a half years in prison and a fine of 50,000 yuan.

He is not standing alone. Three other members of the Saierte Fellowship are on trial with him: Shao Huaxuan, Wang Xiangchao and Liu Xueyun. Prosecutors want three years each for them, plus fines of 30,000 yuan apiece. All four were arrested in June 2025. All four have been in custody ever since.

Their crime, as far as anyone outside the courtroom can tell, was running a church. The Saierte Fellowship is an unregistered Christian fellowship in Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning province in north-eastern China. Its ministry focuses mainly on university students, sharing the Gospel and holding fellowship meetings. It has been operating for more than a decade.

That is what makes this case so chilling for Christians across China. The fellowship did not bomb anything, steal anything, or hurt anyone. It held worship meetings, taught students about Jesus, and prayed together. In the language of the Chinese state, that is now called a "cult organization" undermining the law, and it can cost a pastor four and a half years of his life.

The road to the courtroom has been long and slow. The case went through three pretrial conferences, and a fourth was held on 16 and 17 November. A prayer letter from the fellowship, dated 13 November, told supporters the formal trial would follow the next week. It did. The trial opened on 23 November and was scheduled to run for two days, with no courtroom updates reported by the time the first day ended.

Qu Hongbo Trial: Four Christians Face 'Cult' Charges In Shenyang

What happened to these four believers before the trial is, in many ways, worse than the charges themselves. According to Chinese Human Rights Defenders, police tortured Pastor Qu and the others during interrogations to force false confessions. Qu was reportedly beaten while hooded, forced to squat on his toes, and deprived of food and water for more than ten hours.

That is not an accusation from a distant advocacy group. It is the account of a human rights organisation documenting a pattern it has seen again and again: believers arrested, held for months without trial, and pressed until they say what the police want to hear. The fellowship's own prayer letter asked Christians to pray for supernatural courage and wisdom for the four, especially if they were given the chance to share the Gospel in the courtroom.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment a complaint withdrawn under threat -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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