

Chinese bishop may face excommunication: Consecrated without papal approval

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Relations between China and the Vatican continue to fray after the Holy See threatened to excommunicate a Chinese bishop recently consecrated without papal approval.

A Vatican statement issued November 2 condemned the consecration of Wang Renlei of the Xuzhou diocese in eastern China as a “laceration of the ecclesial communion.”

The statement invoked a section of canon law according to which the bishop and those who assisted in his consecration face the penalty of excommunication if “the act was completed in conditions of true freedom” —a caveat implying that Wang may have been pressed into accepting the consecration and, if so, would not be excommunicated.

The world’s largest church body and the most populous country have frequently clashed over who ultimately holds the authority to appoint bishops to head China’s Catholic hierarchy. The Vatican argues that the power lies exclusively with the pope. But Beijing says the appointments are necessary to offset the shrinking number of Chinese bishops. The government argues that the new bishops have the support of their dioceses. *-Religion News Service*