



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Religious Freedom in China: The Case of Bishop James Su Zhimin

Thursday, July 30, 2020

9:00 – 11:00 AM

2172 Rayburn House Office Building

Xi Jinping: Where is Bishop Su?

Co-Chairman Chris Smith of New Jersey
Opening Statement
Excerpts of Remarks

Good morning. We are here today to focus attention on the case of His Excellency Bishop James Su Zhimin, Bishop of Baoding diocese, whom this Commission has [recognized as a prisoner of conscience](#).

Bishop Su has endured approximately 40 years in prison.

His crime—simply exercising his universally recognized human right of religious freedom.

Today, I again join many including the Bishops relatives and ask President Xi Jinping: where is Bishop Su?

What have you done in secret to this extraordinary man of God?

And why does a powerful dictatorship fear peaceful men and women of faith and virtue?

Bishop Su's case is emblematic of larger religious freedom issues in China—including how they pertain to the Catholic Church.

Accordingly, we will examine the 2018 temporary agreement between the Holy See and the Chinese government, and whether it is in the interest of religious believers in China for the agreement to be extended or jettisoned, and the broader implications it has with respect to the ability of religious communities to maintain relative autonomy vis-à-vis the State.

I met Bishop Su in Beijing in 1994.

At the time, he had already spent several years in prison for his faith, yet he had extraordinary gentleness, strength, courage and a peace that surpassed all understanding.

Bishop Su told my delegation after celebrating Mass in a tiny apartment that he prayed for his persecutors and he especially prayed for the cruel and misguided leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.

Bishop Su was beaten, starved and tortured for his faith. Yet he prayed not just for persecuted believers but for God's mercy on those who hate, torture and kill. His faith in Jesus absolutely amazed me.

Cynically, Chinese authorities arrested him before my delegation even left the country, and held him for nine days. He was arrested again in 1997, and has not been seen since save for once in 2003 when he surfaced in a hospital in Baoding.

Again, Bishop Su has suffered approximately 40 years in prison—and the Chinese Communist Party refuses to disclose where he is and what they have done to him.

What are they hiding?

Now, though not confirmed, there is new concern that this good and holy man may have died or been killed, as Chinese authorities have asked the Vatican to appoint a new bishop to the Baoding diocese, Coadjutor Bishop Francis An Shuxin from the government-sanctioned Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, apparently under the terms of the 2018 Temporary Agreement.

Before replacing him, the Vatican ought to demand an answer to the question "Where is Bishop Su?".

While the details of the 2018 Agreement are not public, there is deep concern that President Xi is using the accord to advance his goal of sinicizing—radically transforming the Catholic Church of China and all faiths into the Communist Party's servant.

Viewed charitably, for the Vatican, the 2018 agreement was an attempt to get the best deal possible for China's Catholics in an impossible situation. For China it was just another tactical move towards the strategic goal of suppression, and eventual extinction of religion in China.

Reports this week that the Chinese government has hacked the Vatican's computers in advance of negotiations should raise serious questions of bad faith and sincerity.

Let's not forget, despite solemn promises and binding treaty obligations, Xi Jinping in recent months has absolutely crushed Hong Kong's democracy and human rights.

Xi Jinping is today committing genocide against the Uyghur Muslims.

And the Chinese Communist Party under Xi Jinping is continuing and expanding the most comprehensive attempt to manipulate and control—or destroy—religious communities since Chairman Mao Zedong made the eradication of religion a goal of his disastrous [Cultural Revolution](#) half a century ago.

Now Xi Jinping, apparently fearing the power of independent religious belief as a challenge to the Communist Party's stranglehold on power, is trying to radically transform religion into the Party's servant, employing a draconian policy known as [sinicization](#).

To drive home the point, religious believers of every persuasion are harassed, arrested, jailed or tortured. Only the compliant are left relatively unscathed.

Bibles are burned, churches destroyed, crosses set ablaze atop church steeples and now, under Xi, religious leaders are required to install facial-recognition cameras in their places of worship. New regulations expand restrictions on religious expression online and prohibit those under age 18 from attending services.

Government officials are also reportedly rewriting religious texts—including the Bible—that remove content unwanted by the atheist Communist Party, and in 2018 launched a five-year sinicization plan for Chinese Protestant Christians.

Thus, Bishop Su's courage and faithfulness to God in the face of unspeakable cruelty inspires us to act with insight, decisiveness and prudence.

Bishop Su is the quintessential example of that which is good and honorable and true.

President Xi Jinping where is Bishop Su and what have you done to him?