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Leadership Class

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Introduction

According to Global Christian Relief, China has the largest persecuted Christian church in the world. [1] Brother Yun, a Christian leader in the underground house church, in his book, *The Heavenly Man*, described the start of persecution in China: “China became a Communist nation in 1949. Within a few years all missionaries were expelled, church buildings were closed, and thousands of Chinese pastors were imprisoned. Many lost their lives. My mother saw the missionaries leave Nanyang in the early 1950s. She never forgot the tears in their eyes as they headed for the coast under armed guard, their ministries for the Lord having abruptly come to an end.” Prior to the beginning of communism in China, Brother Yun said that the response of the people to missionaries was highly resistant. [2]

A State Department report on religious freedom in China states that there are 5 state sponsored churches in China, one for Protestantism, one for Catholicism, one for Buddhism, one for Taoism, and one for Islam. Religious education is forbidden for children. Any pastor in the state sponsored Three Self Churches must submit to CCP indoctrination and must pledge allegiance to the CCP and to socialism, and must vow to uphold the communist leadership of China. Any religious organization outside the state sponsored churches is illegal for teaching heterodox doctrine which is dangerous to CCP stability. People can be sentenced to life in prison for belonging to a church outside the state sponsored Three Self Churches. Members of the CCP and those in the military are required to be atheists. [3]

Christian Persecution in China

Imprisonment and Torture

Since China is not forthcoming with information on what happens in their prisons, the numbers of those imprisoned for their religion are hard to come by. The US State Department has estimated in 2023 the number to be from the thousands to 10,000. [3] Prisoners can be charged with being counter-revolutionaries, anti-government, disrupters of the public peace, or many are held without being charged. [2] Others are charged with “illegally using an information network” or “inciting subversion of state power” and “illegal business operations.” There are also false accusations of things like embezzlement. [4] Chinese prisoners may be sent to forced labor camps, and torture in prison is commonplace. [2]

Brother Yun spent many years imprisoned in China. He experienced daily beatings during some periods of his imprisonment. He endured the most fearful tortures, including being subjected to an electronic baton on on face and his private parts. He was forced to crawl through human feces. At one point he was sent to a forced labor camp and made to carry human excrement utilized to fertilize the fields. One time, “I was taken to an interrogation room where several guards forced me to the floor and made me sit with my legs apart. I begged them not to beat my fractured legs, but one sinister-looking man hardened his heart and pulled out his baton. To ensure I would never be able to escape, he struck my legs between my knees and feet repeatedly. He destroyed my legs until I could stand the pain no more. I lay on the ground screaming like a wounded animal. Excruciating pain surged through my body and mind. All I could do was try to focus my thoughts on the Lord Jesus and his suffering on the cross. I thought I was surely going to die but the Lord sustained me because he wasn’t finished with me. My legs below my knees turned

completely black and there was no feeling in them at all. My entire body ached and was bruised from head to toe.” [2]

Forced Labor

Many prisoners die from the conditions in the prisons. “In just one city in China, Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province, 49 pastors were sent to prison labour camps near the Russian border in 1950. Many were given sentences of up to twenty years for their “crimes” of preaching the gospel. Of those 49 pastors, just one returned home. 48 died in prison.” [2]

A US Department of Labor report investigated labor camps in Xinjiang province. Minority groups are placed in the camps and forced to work in factories for almost no money. They aren’t allowed to leave or have much communication with their families. Child labor is also prevalent. The workers are forced to learn Mandarin and are indoctrinated into communism. [10]

There are also “Vocational Skills Education and Training Centers” otherwise known as re-education centers. What the government deems as surplus workers from rural areas are taken to the factories in the cities and forced to work there, along with learning Mandarin and communism. These people live under constant surveillance and are quite isolated, making them vulnerable. Escape becomes impossible for those trapped in this system. [10]

China runs a paramilitary force under the Bureau of Prisons. This force is used in mining and heavy industry. It “operates corporations in energy, mining, chemicals, oil and gas extraction, logistics, apparel, electronics, wine, food processing, insurance, tourism, and many other sectors.” [10] It’s something to consider when buying cheap Chinese goods.

Confiscation of Goods

Christians in China face confiscation of goods also. Brother Yun's wife relates what happened to them while her husband was imprisoned: "This time was very difficult. We faced severe poverty. The police came to our home and confiscated everything of value: pots, pans, furniture, even our clothing. Yun's mother and I had no choice but to work in the fields, otherwise we would have starved. She was already over 60 years old but was fit and strong." [2]

In 2018, Pastor Li Juncui protested the confiscation of the cross from the front of his church building in Henan province. He was accused of obstructing government administration and embezzlement because of the incident. His sentence was a \$7000 fine and 5 ½ years in prison. [4]

The US State Department found that in China, "Regulations stipulate that individuals who participate in unsanctioned religious activities are subject to criminal and administrative penalties. The regulations also stipulate that any form of income from illegal activities or illegal properties shall be confiscated and a fine imposed of between one to three times the value of the illegal income or properties. If the illegal income or properties cannot be identified, officials may impose a fine of less than 50,000 renminbi (RMB) (\$7,000)." [3]

Organ Harvesting

Highly disturbing reports are coming out of organ harvesting among specific ethnic or religious groups in detention in China. People are at times arrested and never told the cause of the arrest. Prisoners are separated out by religion with only some religions being forced to undergo medical testing such as ultrasounds and x-rays without consent. Allegations received by United Nations experts suggest that livers, kidneys, hearts and corneas were being taken by force. [7]

Chinese official claim that all transplants are now from voluntary donors. But experts found that between 60,000 and 100,000 transplants are performed annually, with only about 5000

voluntary donors. US Congressional testimony suggested that 25,000 to 50,000 cases of prisoners forcibly having their organs harvested occur in China every year, with most of these coming from minority or selected religious groups. [8]

Envar Tohti in the documentary *Hard to Believe*, admitted to performing one of these surgeries. He is a former surgeon from Xingiang, China. He was told to take a mobile surgery team to an execution area and wait for the sound of gunfire before appearing. The man was shot in the right side of his chest, away from his heart, and was still alive. Envar was instructed to remove his liver and kidneys as quickly as possible. He did so, and the man died from the organ removal. He was then instructed to forget all about the affair. [9]

Recorded calls to Chinese hospitals inquiring about transplants assured people that the transplants were taken from healthy Falun Gong practitioners, which is a newer religion in China. In the calls the prospective transplant recipients were told that they go to the prison and select healthy Falun Gong people to take the organs from. They were charging great sums of money for the organs: Cornea \$30,000, kidney \$62,000, liver \$130,000 or heart \$160,000. [9]

An Israeli heart transplant surgeon was working with a patient for heart transplant and it was taking a long time. One day the patient came to him and said he was scheduled in two weeks to have a heart transplant done in China. The doctor was thinking, "Wait a minute, how can you schedule a transplant like this two weeks in advance? How can you know that you'll get the organ donated?" He was familiar with kidney transplants happening in China this was but had assumed some poor farmer was donating one of his kidneys for money, but that obviously couldn't happen with a heart. He did some research and the numbers of executed prisoners didn't at all match up with the numbers of transplants happening. As he found out about the forced organ harvesting, this son of a concentration camp survivor couldn't abide political prisoners being killed for their organs, and got a law passed in Israel against that any illegally obtained organ couldn't be paid for by health insurance.

High Tech / Surveillance

The Chinese system of social credit scores is making life more difficult for Christians. What they say and do in public is monitored. With cameras to surveillance of all electronic media, not much can be done in private. Whereas the government in past years had to rely on informants and such like, now they have technology to do much of the dirty work, although informants still play a part. [1] The government uses facial recognition, forced biometric data collection and IA, obligatory data monitoring apps and GPS devices installed in vehicles in their suppression of religion. A government program called “Smart Eyes” was intended to have 100% camera coverage of public spaces was later expanded into a program called “Skynet”. [5]

Lily Tang Williams, a candidate for US House of Representatives, grew up under Chairman Mao’s cultural revolution. She learned quickly to trust no one under a communist government. Now, she speaks at various places around the United States, warning people of the dangers of communism, and how the US is going that way. She says that groups are deliberately pitted against one another in order for the elites to maintain their control over all. If the groups are busy fighting one another, they do not fight the elites. Groups are encouraged to snitch on one another, creating a very hostile environment to live in. She was all for the Maoist regime as a child, excited to be able to wear the red scarf. She says that she told a friend that since she was the best in the class, she was going to be recommended for the first to get the red scarf. Her friend snitched on her to the teacher, and she got in real trouble. She learned that way not to trust others in China. Now she warns against teaching such as Critical Race Theory, saying that it leads to this type of division in society that allows Maoist policies to flourish. The consequences to the group of people being villainized. When being outside the government orthodoxy means imprisonment, torture or even death, it’s a serious situation to be made out to be the bad guy, and to be non conformist. [11] Tang said in an interview for The Heritage Foundation, “But nowadays, nowadays I have been so scared once I

wake up. American students don't know what the terms they're using, socialism, democratic social means equity. I summarized 12 features Mao's Cultural Revolution on my Facebook, Lily 4 Liberty. You can judge yourself those 12 features, Mao's tactics and features are so similar with today what is go going on on American soil, including looting, burning, changing names, censorship, cancel culture, self-censorship. And you can be losing your job and business by your past words, by your past deeds. And neighbors, families, the divisioning of society. It's very, very scary." [12]

Treatment of Women

Women in China are subjected to persecution peculiar to their sex, including forced sterilization, forced abortion, forced marriage, forced divorce, sexual violence, trafficking, all in higher numbers if they are Christian. Women are sometimes forced into marriage since the one child policy and selective abortion has created a surplus of males in the population. [6] Deling, the wife of Brother Yun, evaded authorities long enough to give birth to their second child, when the government would have forced her to abort the baby. She was apprehended after the birth, and was forced to undergo sterilization surgery. Unsaved family members participate in the attempts to force abortions, marriages, divorces, adding to the government persecution. Deling's family put great pressure on her when Brother Yun was sentenced to prison, to force her to divorce him. [2]

The Effect of Persecution on the Christian Church

A Pastor in Beijing explained the effect of persecution thus, "It's because we have to pay a cost that the Gospel grows – people are curious as to who this Jesus is we are prepared to risk all to follow." [1] Brother Yun described a period of increased persecution against the underground church. He said, "Many believers were frightened, but the Holy Spirit soothed their fears and gave new direction to the church. A fresh breeze of revival swept through. Prayer meetings lasted all

night and many sleeping souls were awakened. Signs and wonders were commonplace. Many brought sick people to the house churches and they were healed. Those with mental illnesses and the demon-possessed received complete deliverance and healing in Jesus' name. The Christians still in prison found their witness was empowered because of the many fervent prayers for us. Consequently, countless prisoners came to know the Lord. Many government officials and Communist Party members received Jesus at that time. Some even started to witness boldly for the Lord." [2]

After Yun's escape from prison and from China, he said that he had come to understand that the persecution was training for God's purposes as missionaries. He asks that the people in the West not pray that the persecution stops, but that no matter what they would be pleasing to God and that they would have strength and power to endure. He stated how even though there was little response to the gospel before the communist takeover, persecution made the church flourish. [2] I (Kat Kanning) once attending a conference from Voice of the Martyrs, and the Chinese speaker was asked how we in the West should pray for those in China, suffering persecution. He said that instead they pray for us in the US and other western countries. They pray that we begin to suffer persecution so that the western church becomes strong and deeply rooted in Christ!

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