

**CHINA'S WAR ON RELIGION:  
THE THREAT TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
AND WHY IT MATTERS  
TO THE UNITED STATES**

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**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
**CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE  
COMMISSION ON CHINA**  
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS  
FIRST SESSION

NOVEMBER 20, 2025

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**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025**

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE  
COMMISSION ON CHINA,  
*Washington, DC.*

The hearing was held from 9:32 a.m. to 11:13 a.m., in room 106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC, Senator Dan Sullivan, Chair, Congressional-Executive Commission on China, presiding.

Also present: Representative Smith, Co-chair, Senator Merkley, and Representatives McGovern and Kiggans.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA; CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA**

Chair SULLIVAN. The Commission will come to order. Thank you to our witnesses and to all who are following this hearing online. I want to thank my fellow commissioners, Senators, and Congressmen, a bipartisan group, by the way—a very important part of this Commission's history. Today's message is straightforward: The Chinese Communist Party, the CCP, is waging a systematic campaign to bend every faith in China to Party rule. CCP authorities aim for the complete subordination of religious belief to state ideology, re-engineering doctrine, leadership, education, architecture, and even online worship. The CCP is not content to police behavior. It wants to control the conscience and intrude on the most powerful and personal relationship there is—the one individuals have with God.

The title of this hearing asks, Why does religious freedom in China matter to the United States? We certainly want to hear our witnesses answer this question, and we have a very distinguished panel here. But let me offer one reason why this hearing matters, by reading part of a sermon by detained Pastor Wang Yi, who met with President George W. Bush in the Oval Office in 2006 and was just awarded one of NED's highest prizes. In one of his last sermons before being detained, Pastor Yi said, "The rulers of this country are waging a war in the Uyghur region, in Tibet, in Shanghai, in Beijing. And the rulers who are waging this war have chosen for themselves an enemy that can never be imprisoned, an enemy that can never be destroyed, an enemy that can never be controlled or subdued—namely, the soul of human beings."

Pastor Wang Yi may now be in prison, but he and millions of others like him are not subdued. That is why this hearing matters. Not just for one community or one country or one faith, but for the defense of human dignity and conscience everywhere. The CCP wants believers in China to feel isolated and forgotten. Our responsibility is to show them, and to show Beijing, that they are neither. There are currently 1,647 documented religious cases in the CECC's Political Prisoner Database, though that number may be 10 times higher when we consider all those detained in the Uyghur region. At least a dozen bishops and priests from my own Catholic Church and Catholic faith are detained. We have documented imprisonment, torture, and worse for such simple acts as owning a prayer book, growing a beard, or gathering for worship.

My mother was a very devout Catholic. Very early on in the 1980s—it's a long story—but she went to the Soviet Union on a trip. My courageous mom brought a bunch of Bibles to hand out to the long-suffering people of Russia. Courageous. My mom's no longer with me today, but that was one of the stories I told at her funeral. Courageous Catholic, bringing the faith to starving Russians who longed for the faith and couldn't get it. And she brought them small Bibles.

Freedom of religion is under assault worldwide. Witness what is happening in Nigeria. But nowhere is the scale of the threat greater than in China. There are an estimated 500 million in China whose faith traditions face some form of restriction or control. Think about that number, 500 million. And the CCP's grip on religion does not end at its borders. Through transnational repression, it harasses exiled believers, infiltrates religious communities abroad, and intimidates diaspora groups to remain silent. Some of our witnesses have personal experience with intimidation or transnational repression right here in America. Since Xi Jinping came to power, he has pushed an aggressive agenda to roll back what little space for independent religion once existed and to assert CCP dominance over all aspects of religious life.

Christian pastors are prosecuted for fraud for accepting charity, Uyghur Muslims are punished for reading the Qur'an at home, Tibetan Buddhists are targeted for honoring the Dalai Lama. Falun Gong practitioners are tortured for peaceful meditation the Party cannot control. Across China, the Party has closed churches, imprisoned pastors and priests, and ordered the removal of Islamic and Tibetan Buddhist symbols from buildings. We're here today because the right to believe according to one's own conscience is not a privilege government may grant or withhold. It is a universal human right, central to human dignity and human flourishing. We now know that religious freedom is a critical element in societies that are stable and prosperous.

Our own history, from the earliest colonies to the First Amendment, reflects a simple truth—societies are freer, fairer, and more stable when people are free to worship, to practice their faith, and to live, speak, and act according to their beliefs. The CCP fears the power of faith because it is a source of values and moral authority it cannot control. That is why it demands that crosses come down and portraits of Xi Jinping go up. It is why Catholic priests must preach party slogans alongside sacred texts. It is why so many reli-

gious leaders and religious believers are jailed. To the CCP, faith is not just a challenge, it is an existential threat to its grip on power, and why it must be controlled or destroyed. These brave witnesses at our hearing today send a message to China that the U.S. Congress takes note. We are watching. The soul of these human beings will not be subdued.

I want to next turn to my co-chairman, Chairman Smith, for his opening statement. Then I will also ask Senator Merkley and Representative McGovern to make a statement, if they so choose. Gentlemen, thank you, and again, to our courageous witnesses, thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Chair Sullivan appears in the Appendix.]

**STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS SMITH, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE  
FROM NEW JERSEY AND CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL-  
EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA**

Co-chair SMITH. Mr. Chairman, thank you so very much for convening this very important hearing, and for the sense of urgency you and our distinguished witnesses are bringing to the further deterioration of religious freedom in the People's Republic of China. I say "urgent" because the Chinese Communist Party, directed by General Secretary Xi Jinping, is engaged in one of the most extensive crackdowns on the Protestant Christian house church in 40 years. I also say urgent because, as I look around the room, I see friends and so many loved ones who have people who are either languishing in prison or under house arrest. I look at Bob Fu. I mean, Bob Fu has been a mentor to me personally, to my Subcommittee on Human Rights, and to this Commission, for decades, speaking truth to power eloquently and effectively, giving us so many insights—and that goes for many of us in the House and Senate as well.

I remember Frank Wolf and I, just parenthetically, were once in Beijing meeting with house church leaders. Who were we talking to on the line? Bob Fu from the embassy, as well as from the van, getting further insight. So, Bob, thank you so much. And of course, Ambassador Sam Brownback, who has literally written the book on how—writing a book right now—on how to combat this and to make it clear. What an ambassador at large Sam Brownback has been, and his voice is incredibly important. All of you have made such a difference. Sam, thank you.

I would note again, parenthetically, you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, about Nigeria. Through a little snafu in scheduling, I'm chairing a hearing on Nigeria at 11. So I'm going to have to leave. But Sam testified at our last hearing on that and made powerful statements about how not just Christians, but Muslims are being killed, as the President just said, conferring CPC status on Nigeria. And how very eloquently Sam did it. This is an existential threat to the Christians, but it's also the Muslims who are being killed if they don't comport to Boko Haram and others. So Sam, thank you for that. And we'll be doing more. We look forward to your voice at future hearings to defend that.

At its core, religious freedom is about the right of conscience—what George Washington called that little spark of celestial fire

which is the inviolable domain of the heart of every human being. I'm proud to say that—working with Mr. McGovern as well as Senator Merkley—we've chaired 14 hearings on religious freedom, or the lack of it, in China. I've worked with my friends—and you, Chairman, are doing a great job, and I do thank you—we all do—for that. When we say religious freedom is a universal human right, it's because it's guaranteed by a sovereign God who created human beings in his own image and likeness, and imbued in all of us an inalienable dignity and worth whether we were born in Washington or Wuhan. It is thus not a Western construct but a universal one.

Yet the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, leader of the world's largest atheistic state, would force his own people to think otherwise. He would have the Chinese people believe that religious freedom is not for them, that religion itself is not for them, because the Party that he leads is terrified of religious faith. They fear and they're scared of any moral or spiritual authority outside the control of the Party. And they punish worship of anyone but Xi Jinping. Instead, the Chinese Communist Party wants to take control over the heart, mind, and spirit of each citizen of China. And one particularly ludicrous, yet equally insidious, example—in September, the Cyberspace Administration of China launched a two-month Clear and Bright Campaign that polices pessimism and negative emotions, among other thought crimes. I mean, this is theater of the absurd. It's also totalitarianism, pure and simple. And totalitarian governments cannot abide freedom of religion or belief, yet they cannot extinguish it. The church, the believers, the Uyghurs, the Falun Gong practitioners, the Tibetan Buddhists, all of them redouble their efforts to move forward in their faith tradition. And this Commission, and this Congress, and our country, and so many others do everything we can to help them.

When authorities shut down the Zion Church in Beijing, then one of the city's largest, Pastor Ezra Jin took the church nationwide by moving online, reaching more people than it ever could have before. We are proud to have as one of our witnesses Pastor Jin's daughter, Grace, who worked for the CECC. We thank her for her tremendous insight and leadership, and her father is another great hero.

In Fujian province, authorities confined underground Catholic Bishop Guo Xijin to his residence. And how did he respond? He joyfully celebrated the 40th anniversary of his priestly ordination by serving communion to pilgrims through the bars of the chained gate outside his home. I mean, irrepressible—will not give up. We need to stand in solidarity with him and everyone like him. These are only a few examples. We will continue on this Commission, I know, to push hard for religious freedom.

Again, we are inspired and informed by these tremendous witnesses, Mr. Chairman, that you have assembled for this hearing. I look forward to their testimony. I regret that I will have to leave to chair the other hearing at 11, so I apologize in advance.

[The prepared statement of Co-chair Smith appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Chairman Smith.

Now to my other co-chair, Senator Merkley.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF MERKLEY,  
A U.S. SENATOR FROM OREGON**

Senator MERKLEY. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman. I'm always humbled when I'm at these gatherings because our witnesses have experienced so much in their personal lives, their families, often their community, in terms of the challenges that they have faced carrying the torch of religious freedom. I'm particularly delighted to have a couple of you back who have Senate connections. Senator Brownback—then became an ambassador but certainly served here with distinction. Good to have you back, Ambassador. And Grace, as mentioned by my colleague, Congressman Smith, worked on this very Commission, this Congressional-Executive Commission on China. So she is in that place of carrying both the academic knowledge portfolio but also the very personal advocacy with her family so affected by the crackdown on religion in China.

We have seen such suppression and oppression directed against Christian congregations and leaders in China. We have seen oppression against the Muslims and the genocide against the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. We've seen the attempted erasure of Tibetan culture and Buddhist religious practice. Under President Xi's sinicization campaign, the Chinese government is using pressure and coercion to do all they can to extinguish religious communities and suppress the human soul. The U.S. has in our very founding the aspiration for religious freedom, a spirit we have carried for centuries. Certainly it brings us to this type of advocacy today, for religious freedom not just here in the United States but around the world. So welcome. And like my colleague, we have another hearing on China upstairs at the Foreign Relations Committee related to Taiwan. I apologize I'll not be able to be here for the full testimony, but I will be reading it all, hearing about it from my team, and partnering with you as we go forward. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Senator Merkley appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Great. Thank you, Senator Merkley.  
Congressman McGovern.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN,  
A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM MASSACHUSETTS**

Representative MCGOVERN. Well, thank you. Good morning, everybody. I want to thank Chair Sullivan and Co-chair Smith for convening this important hearing. I want to thank Senator Merkley and Representative Strong for their leadership on these issues as well. You know, we have different political philosophies, but we are together in championing human rights and religious freedom. Religious freedom has been at the core of the Commission's work since its founding, and it has been the subject of numerous hearings and well-documented reporting. I understand that the 2025 annual report is close to finalization, and I look forward to its publication so that all members can benefit from its analysis and its recommendations. I commend the dedicated nonpartisan staff of the Commission for their hard work in getting this 300-plus-page

report researched, written, and released. It's a lot of work, and it's good work. And it's important work.

Religious freedom is protected under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which affirms that every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. In the United States, it is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. We Americans are very proud of this protection of our rights. As a practicing Catholic, I feel a deep personal connection to the right to worship and believe according to one's conscience. Defense of this fundamental right in both national and international law is essential to our work as public servants.

China's constitution also provides that the state cannot compel citizens to believe in or not to believe in any religion or discriminate against citizens who believe in or do not believe in any religion. But, as we will hear today, such protection is honored in the breach. They don't respect that. They don't follow it. This is a reminder that even the strongest constitutional provisions on paper cannot protect citizens' rights if those in power choose to disregard them for political ends. You know, in 2022 I was honored to co-chair this Commission's hearing on how Chinese authorities were expanding digital tools to surveil and suppress online religious expression. I am pleased that today's witnesses will update us on the PRC's policies and tactics for coercive control of religion and their impact on individuals and communities.

I welcome Ambassador Sam Brownback, who headed the State Department's International Religious Freedom Office and remains a powerful leader in the field. I look forward to the testimony of those who will speak to the experiences of Hui Muslims, Christians, and Tibetans under the PRC's ongoing repression. In July, several U.N. special rapporteurs and working groups issued a statement on the Chinese government's interference in the succession of the Dalai Lama, and the enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. This is a U.S. priority, as Senator Marco Rubio and I put into law in the Tibetan Policy and Support Act.

We will also hear very personal testimony. Last month, Chinese authorities launched a multicity crackdown on the unregistered Zion Church and detained several individuals, including Pastor Ezra Jin. Many of us condemned this violation. His daughter, Grace Jin Drexel, joins us today to speak about her father and call for his release. Grace was recently a staff member at the CECC, helping raise awareness about prisoners of conscience persecuted for their faith. Now her own father is one. We stand with Grace and her family and join in their call. We must commit our voices loudly and clearly to defend the rights of those targeted for exercising their right to freedom of thought, conscience, and belief, but to be effective, our voices must carry moral credibility. I worry that we are not living up to what is expected of us. The United States is best when we lead by example. When we do not, we do a disservice to those overseas we are trying to help.

Earlier this week—you may have read this in the news—congregants of a church in Charlotte, North Carolina scattered into

the woods when masked Federal agents arrived and detained one of their members. The church has suspended services until members feel safe to gather again without the threat of Border Patrol raids. In July, the Bishop of the Diocese of San Bernardino, California told 1.2 million people in his diocese to stay home from mass on Sundays to avoid being questioned or detained by ICE. I spoke with three Catholic bishops yesterday who, again, reinforced the concern that they have about members of their church being afraid to go to church. Ayman Soliman, who fled persecution in Egypt and served as a chaplain at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital, spent two and a half months in ICE detention.

So our message to the Chinese government is that it is wrong for them to round up members of the Zion Church, to force worshipers to go underground, and to put clergy in jail. Our voice would have much more credibility if our own government were not acting in a similar way. The freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is universal. This right exists regardless of one's beliefs or national or citizenship status, so let us be clear and consistent in this message that we are sending to the people of China.

Again I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership. I yield back my time.

[The prepared statement of Representative McGovern appears in the Appendix.]

Chair Sullivan. Thank you, Congressman McGovern.

Now it is my honor to introduce our distinguished panel. Let me begin with a very distinguished American, Ambassador Sam Brownback. It's hard to figure out whether to call him Ambassador, Governor, Senator. He's held all these positions. Very, very impressive. He served as the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom from February 2018 to January 2021, where he was the State Department's chief diplomat on the issue of protecting the right to religious liberty around the world. He served as Governor of Kansas from 2011 to 2018. Ambassador Brownback currently serves as a co-chair of the International Religious Freedom Summit and chairman of the National Committee for Religious Freedom.

Next we have Mr. Ismail Juma. Mr. Juma is a human rights activist with a background in the study of religious history. He fled China with his family in 2011 after being detained by PRC authorities. As the founder of Hope Umbrella International Foundation, he works to protect freedom seekers, assist new immigrants, and foster reconciliation between different ethnic and religious groups.

Our next distinguished witness is Bhuchung Tsering. Mr. Tsering was born in Tibet. His family fled to India in 1960 in the wake of the Chinese Communist invasion. He studied in India and worked as a journalist before joining the Central Tibetan Administration and serving in the offices of the Dalai Lama. He currently leads the Research and Monitoring Unit at the International Campaign for Tibet, where he has worked since 1995. He was awarded the Truman-Reagan Freedom Medal by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in 2023.

Our next witness is Mr. Bob Fu. Dr. Fu was a student leader during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989. Dr. Fu led a house church in Beijing until he and his wife were imprisoned

for “illegal evangelicalism.” They fled to the United States as religious refugees, founding ChinaAid in 2002 to shine light on China’s human rights abuses and to promote religious freedom in China. Dr. Fu currently serves as the Family Research Council’s senior fellow for international religious freedom. He is the author of “God’s Double Agent.”

Finally, Grace Jin Drexel. I had the honor of meeting Grace a couple weeks ago here in the U.S. Senate. She is the daughter of Pastor Mingri Ezra Jin of Zion Church in China, one of the country’s largest and most influential houses of worship. In October 2025, Pastor Jin and dozens of other leaders were detained as part of the largest crackdown against independent house churches in the last 40 years. Grace has been advocating for her father ever since. She serves as a national security research analyst in the U.S. Senate and previously worked for this Commission on China issues.

Welcome to all our witnesses. For each we will have a 5-minute opening statement. If you have a longer statement, a written statement, we will certainly put that in the record. We begin with Ambassador Brownback.

**STATEMENT OF SAM BROWNBACK, AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (2018–2021), GOVERNOR OF KANSAS (2011–2018), U.S. SENATOR (1996–2011)**

Ambassador BROWNBACK. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I’m honored to be here, and honored to be with you all and to see several of you I’ve worked with for many, many years. It’s been important work and maybe no more important than now. I think that the ground that you’ve laid on dealing with China, and now in our conflict with China, this is important for us to really move forward in our policy.

What I’m going to suggest today is that we really take a shift in our strategy toward religious freedom. I think for too long we’ve looked at it mostly as a human rights issue, and often kind of a boutique human rights issue, not really a central one. To me now and in our conflict with China, this is a national security issue. It’s a national security imperative. And we need to shift our thinking away from, “This is a human rights issue” to “This is a national security issue” and put it really and squarely in that category. China is at war with faith. And it’s at war with us. We should unequivocally and clearly be on the side of their opponents. We should stand, and stand clearly, with them.

I think it’s also quite clear that China fears religious freedom far more than they fear our aircraft carriers or our nuclear weapons. They’re far more concerned. They spend billions of dollars annually harassing everybody up and down the line. I just finished a book that’s at the publishers on China’s war on faith. They treat everybody the same. You will either submit to us or we’re going to eliminate you. You choose, but it’s one of the two. And Xi Jinping is God, not whoever you’re believing in. And the stories are very, very consistent on this. So I look at religious freedom, honestly, as our greatest weapon in this battle that we’re in today. And China’s weakness is their governance. We really need to take this into our strategy.

So that's what I'm putting forward here today. My recommendations are that we make religious freedom in China a part of our national security objectives toward China, and we develop a national security strategy for the U.S. and other nations to support religious freedom inside of China. Use economic sanctions, like in the Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act, toward China. They've been a CPC country since we started that designation. They've not paid a cent for that—not a cent. We should ask President Trump, Vice President Vance, Secretary of State Rubio, Secretary of Defense Hegseth to meet with exiled leaders from the various communities that have been persecuted—the Falun Gong, Christians, Muslims, the Buddhist community.

And then specifically in these communities—I would just say, like Falun Gong, the Chinese Communist Party fears Falun Gong more than anybody. And I've puzzled at that for the longest time, why? But it's the most indigenous of all of them. It's like sowing wheat on the Kansas soil. It just grows. They've got to 90 million adherents in seven years. Well, that scares the pants off of the Chinese Communist Party. So we should really be working with them. The Falun Gong has a registry of millions of people that have left the Chinese Communist Party.

I think we should do the following: Recognize a genocide against the Falun Gong being done by the Chinese government. They have sought to wipe them out. Meet with key leaders that are in exile to support their right to religious freedom in China, Falun Gong members, and support their effort to break the great Chinese internet firewall, which many of us have been about for a long time. Christians, we obviously need to strongly advocate for the release of people like Pastor Ezra Jin of the Zion Church, Pastor Wang Yi, who is really the Martin Luther King, Jr. of China. His statements from jail have been poetic. They're beautiful. And the 10 Catholic bishops that Nina Shea identified in an article, that are imprisoned or held somewhere in China. Ten bishops. And what do we hear about it? Do people even know they're arrested?

We should also encourage private sector entities with significant ties to China to advocate for prisoners of conscience and human rights lawyers. Groups like the NBA, Hollywood, major businesses. Tibetan Buddhists, there is a cultural genocide in Tibet going on today, and we need to call it out. We should categorically reject China's government's claim to the right to appoint the next Dalai Lama. Talk about something that's ridiculous. Send Vice President Vance or Secretary Rubio to Dharamshala to meet with the Dalai Lama. I believe we should announce our support for the Dalai Lama's Middle Way approach.

For Tibet, genuine autonomy for Tibet within China. Now, I have significant doubts that this will work, but if China will not agree to this within a set period of time, say 60 days, we should announce our recognition of an independent Tibet. If they're not going to go with this route that he's put forward, we should announce our support for an independent Tibet. Tibet, and for that matter Xinjiang, has never been a part of China, no more than Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan were a part of Russia. They never were. They never have been. And we should call this out.

For the Uyghurs, they've been moved from forced labor, confinement, incarceration, from concentration camps to forced labor. Same incarceration, different setting. Transnational repression. We've got to pass legislation to address transnational repression and prosecute people that have done it. We should start addressing Xinjiang as East Turkestan in our government documents. It's not new frontier for China. It's East Turkestan. And we should aggressively enforce our laws against the use of forced labor.

In summary, it's time to support religious freedom inside China. We've noted it for a long time. And we've got to get past it. And Mr. Chairman, I would submit for the record a map of China that was put in The Washington Examiner that actually shows what China looks like, map-wise, when you take East Turkestan, Tibet, and the occupied territories out. I think we need to start showing this. Sorry I went over my time.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Brownback appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Without objection. Thank you, Ambassador Brownback.

Our next witness we want to hear from is Mr. Ma Ju.

**STATEMENT OF ISMAIL JUMA,  
HUI MUSLIM HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE**

Mr. MA. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor and a solemn responsibility to speak on behalf of tens of millions in China who cannot speak for themselves.

INTERPRETER. I will now read the prepared English statement from Mr. Ma Ju today.

As a member of the more than 10 million Hui Muslims of China, and as a human rights advocate and survivor of religious persecution, I appear before you today to present a truth that has been systematically concealed. China's Muslim communities are facing the most severe, widespread, and systematically engineered crisis threatening their physical survival and basic freedom since 1949. On the CCP's reengineering project, many have misunderstood the CCP to be merely restricting religion. This is patently false. The CCP is a political organization founded on a commitment to eradicate all religion. Its doctrine views organized faith, moral systems, and independent community structures as existential threats to totalitarian control.

When it does not yet possess the capacity to destroy religion outright, it restricts it. And when it does acquire the capacity, it moves to eliminate it without hesitation, just as it has done to NGOs and civic groups. Under the veneer of what is called a reengineering project, the CCP seeks to reshape faith into ideological appendages to the Party state and to stoke fear in Chinese communities in China and beyond. Across Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, Yunnan and other regions, thousands of mosques have had their domes demolished, minarets removed, Qur'anic inscriptions erased, and Arabic calligraphy scraped away. Many mosques have been forcibly converted into cultural plazas, civilization practice centers, interiors stripped of religious symbolism, exteriors sanitized.

This is not merely physical destruction. It is surgical removal of the Muslim spiritual landscape. Acts that are entirely normal in

Muslim societies are maligned and redefined as crimes, such as fasting under Ramadan, teaching the Qur'an privately, wearing a hijab or traditional attire, growing a religious beard, children learning at mosques, and family religious gatherings. These practices can result in police interrogation, fines, detention, or being sent to reeducation camps. This is a systematic project to redefine faith as illegal.

On cultural eradication and the destruction of religious knowledge, the lifeblood of Hui, Uyghur, Kazakh, and other Muslim communities, and centuries-old Islamic educational tradition, have been deliberately dismantled. Imams arbitrarily have been detained or forced into political indoctrination. Arabic instructions have been severely restricted. Religious texts have been censored and rewritten. CCP-approved political reinterpretations of the Qur'an have been mandated. A people's deepest moral and cultural inheritance has been uprooted at its source. Repression in Xinjiang has also not ended; it's just become more covert. There's a dangerous misconception that repression in Xinjiang has eased. The truth is the repression has not stopped. It has evolved.

What was once mass internment has transformed into pervasive surveillance and control. Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Hui, as well as Han Chinese who have converted to Islam, continue to endure forced labor, family separation, mosque demolitions, digital surveillance, reproductive restrictions, and stabilization policing systems. Xinjiang today exists in a reality of systematic totalitarian social engineering. The CCP also deploys digital tools and influence operations to intimidate overseas Muslims by monitoring them abroad through social media, by coordinating bot attacks and character assassination campaigns, using family members in China as hostages, and creating an atmosphere of fear in diaspora communities.

A classic example, a respected Islamic scholar visiting Chinese Muslim migrants in Malaysia told them he planned to meet Mr. Ma Ju in the United States. Their reaction was a mixture of excitement and dread. Their fear was simple. If their names appear alongside Mr. Juma in any report, their relatives in China would face retaliation. The fear is real, widespread, and rational.

Why does this matter to the national interests of the United States? China's war on religion is not a domestic Chinese issue. It directly impacts American national security, values, and international standing. It strikes at the foundation of America's identity. If the world's largest authoritarian state can eradicate religious freedom without consequences, it undermines the authority of America's founding values and global leadership. CCP transnational repression violates U.S. sovereignty. Their intimidation and surveillance of individuals in the U.S. is a direct assault on U.S. rule of law. It also weakens American standing within the Muslim world. Beijing is persecuting Muslims at home while courting Muslim majority countries abroad, reshaping geopolitical alignments to America's detriment.

Digital surveillance and authoritarianism are new and growing threats. China's export of AI surveillance and religious profiling systems is transforming autocracies worldwide. Religious oppression is also fueling radicalization. Freedom of religion is a proven safeguard against extremism. Protecting Chinese Muslim religious

freedom strengthens global and U.S. security. By preventing a global shift toward authoritarianism, if we are to allow the CCP's model to become a global norm, it will erode the international order and freedom.

In conclusion, and apologies for going over time, Mr. Ma Ju today is speaking for those who cannot. He speaks today to honor those who have been silenced, to expose an ongoing system of religious persecution, to defend the universal right to religious freedom, and to urge the United States and the international community to act. If we remain silent today, tomorrow there will be no one left to speak. Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Ismail Juma appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Ma.  
Our next witness is Mr. Tsering.

**STATEMENT OF BHUCHUNG K. TSERING, LEADER, INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET RESEARCH AND MONITORING UNIT**

Mr. TSERING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the CECC for giving me this opportunity to testify about China's religious policies in Tibet, and how it matters to the United States.

Tibetan Buddhism is linked to the security of the Indian subcontinent through its historical ties and its cultural and ethnic connections across the Himalayan region. The cultural influence of Tibetan Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent has also been a factor in regional stability. The Indian subcontinent is also a major player in the Indo-Pacific region and matters to the United States due to its massive economic importance, strategic security interest, and its role in global stability and the rules-based order. I would like to submit my full text for the record and will summarize here.

Chair SULLIVAN. Without objection.

Mr. TSERING. Thank you. Opinion polls have clearly showed repeatedly here in the United States that the majority of Americans embrace His Holiness the Dalai Lama not just as a religious leader, but also as an international statesman. Americans have also shown that they care deeply about what happens in Tibet. And successive congresses and administrations have passed legislative initiatives on Tibet. China has been blatantly using Tibetan Buddhism as a vehicle to not only control the Tibetan people, but also to influence the international community, including citizens of India, Nepal, Bhutan, as well as here in the United States.

Over the years, China has been increasing pressure on Nepal to restrict Tibetan religious activities, leading to a climate of fear and limited freedom for Tibetans there. Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, is a sacred place for pilgrimage for all followers of Tibetan Buddhism. The Chinese government is using access to Tibet and Lhasa to serve its political agenda. American citizens who wish to travel to Tibet, including Tibetan Americans, are being faced with obstruction by the Chinese government, while at the same time the Chinese allow a select group of journalists to go to Tibet and fulfill China's narrative on Tibet and to serve it for its propaganda material.

China not only restricts Tibetan religious freedom but also attempts to interfere in the activities of Tibetans and Tibet supporters abroad. In a report on Chinese transnational repression of Tibetan diaspora communities, the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy says China is attempting to control the actions of exiled Tibetans. Chinese authorities weaponize their relatives in Tibet by harming, threatening, or otherwise manipulating them. The looming threat resulting from ubiquitous surveillance also forces a constant feeling of unease that spreads fear and disempowers exiled communities.

The head of the Central Tibetan Administration, Sikyong Penpa Tsering himself, said how, when he went to Australia, the Chinese government tried to obstruct him from having an interview by Australian TV. The Chinese government was not successful there. More egregiously, in July this year the Chinese authorities disappeared Zhang Yadi, a Chinese student and a follower of Tibetan Buddhism who had been advocating peacefully in France for Tibet and Tibetan rights. Zhang had been on a visit to China when she was disappeared in Yunnan. Reports indicate that she was taken away by state security officials and is being held incommunicado.

The Chinese government's policy on Tibetan religion has moved from total destruction to one of control and annihilation of Tibetan identity. Over the years, the Chinese government has promulgated various regulations to bring Tibetan monasteries under tighter security control. The Buddhist Association of China is being used as a key instrument in this vehicle. China failed to place the current Dalai Lama under its control and is now trying to use the occasion of the next Dalai Lama to impose its authority on Tibet, now and in the future, by trying to claim authority—or the right—to the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. They have done that in the case of the Panchen Lama, which they have failed to legitimize even today. The Chinese government interference with the Dalai Lama has clear geopolitical implications for many Tibetan Buddhist institutions here in the United States, and in the Indian subcontinent, and in Mongolia.

I would like to end by making some recommendations. I would like to echo two of the recommendations by Ambassador Brownback about cultural genocide and about having Vice President Vance and Secretary Rubio visit Dharamshala to meet His Holiness. The Trump administration should implement the TPSA, other legislation, and sanction Chinese authorities who deny Tibetan religious freedom. They should engage multilaterally with other countries on Tibetan religious freedom. They should demand the release of Tibetan political prisoners, including the 11th Panchen Lama and Zhang Yadi. China should stop transnational repression. They should stop denying Tibetans their religious freedom. But more important, they should resolve the Tibetan issue politically. As Ambassador Brownback said, if they don't do that, merely making superficial changes will not be a lasting solution for the Tibetan people. Tibet has served as a buffer in the past. If this is not resolved, it will continue to be a national security risk for American policy. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Bhuchung K. Tsering appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Tsering.  
Our next witness is Dr. Fu.

**STATEMENT OF BOB FU,  
FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, CHINA AID**

Mr. FU. Chairman Sullivan, Co-chair Smith, and Congressman McGovern, and distinguished panelists and friends, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you. I speak as a former prisoner of conscience and founder of ChinaAid, and an American citizen whose own family was targeted on U.S. soil by the CCP. China's war on faith has entered a new and dangerous phase. I totally agree with Ambassador Brownback that we, the U.S. Government, should shift our treatment of religious freedom to a national security matter instead of purely a matter of human rights.

The CCP is no longer satisfied with just controlling churches and mosques. It now seeks to control the entire inner life of its citizens. Its goal is nothing less than to eliminate all independent faith and replace it with absolute loyalty to the CCP and Xi Jinping thought. So I want to highlight four trends. The first, the CCP is now criminalizing normal Christian life. Pastors are now being sentenced to 10 to 15 years for receiving tithes and offerings. No case demonstrates this more clearly than the shocking sentence handed down to Pastor Yang Rongli, who received 15 years, and her husband, Pastor Wang Xiaoguang, who received nearly 10 years back in June of this year, along with 10 other church leaders who received various sentences—for simply managing church donations at Golden Lampstand Church in Shanxi province. Christians are also arrested for worshiping or praying online. Christians who attend overseas Bible conferences or mission training are now being arrested. Earlier this year, a Christian woman from Beijing, Dong Yumei, was arrested and has still not been assigned for trial.

The second trend is the CCP targeting the next generation, children's access to the Bible. Essentially, they've declared war on the Bible. Children are totally banned from entering the church. Youth ministries are shut down. Parents are threatened for teaching the Bible at home. And 71-year-old sister Wang Honglan from Inner Mongolia received nearly five years' imprisonment for handing out free Bibles. A third trend is the CCP continuing to disappear and imprison most courageous religious leaders, such as my good friend Ezra Jin and Pastor Wang Yi. And, of course, other religiously motivated civil society leaders, including Gao Zhisheng, a human rights lawyer known as the conscience of China, who has been missing for over eight years. Dead or alive, nobody knows. And Dr. Wang Bingzhang, a Christian democracy advocate, is still serving life imprisonment after being kidnapped from Vietnam. A woman named Zhang Yadi, a Chinese convert to Tibetan Buddhism, also vanished upon returning to China after studying in Europe.

The fourth trend is that the CCP's persecution actually does not stop at China's border. It already extends its long arm overseas, especially on free world soil. In 2020, my own home in Texas was surrounded by as many as 100 CCP agents and hired thugs, day and night, surrounding my home, issuing threats against my family, my ministry, and my children. They said if I stopped the ministry of ChinaAid they would leave. For three months they

surrounded my home. And Chinese churches in the U.S. and Canada have even been pressured to raise the CCP's own flag in their churches, congregations, pulpits. Videos have already shown a Chinese church pastor in Los Angeles raising the Chinese Communist Party flag, singing the red songs—the red, revolutionary songs of the CCP during the Chinese so-called national day in Los Angeles. And certainly they won't raise the American flag to celebrate the Americans' Independence Day.

I will leave my recommendations for the Q&A time. Thank you so much.

[The prepared statement of Bob Fu appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Dr. Fu. Very powerful testimony. And frustrating. I don't know why we allow Chinese communist thugs to protest and harass American citizens. They should all be thrown in jail, in my view, or kicked out of the country.

Our last witness is Grace Jin Drexel. Grace, you have the floor.

**STATEMENT OF GRACE JIN DREXEL,  
DAUGHTER OF PASTOR EZRA JIN**

Ms. DREXEL. Thank you so much. On October 10th, my father, Pastor Ezra Jin Mingri, was arrested by the Chinese authorities, along with 27 other church pastors and leaders of Zion Church. Seventeen church leaders now remain in prison with him, and all 18 have been formally arrested this week. This crackdown has been reported as the largest takedown of an independent church in China since the Cultural Revolution. Because of the prominence of the church and the brazenness of the Chinese repression, this case has become an international incident and has been profiled extensively in the international press, attracting a number of statements of public support across the U.S. Government and beyond—thank you so much—including from Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Many of these church leaders were taken in front of their young families, who they now leave behind. My father and several other older leaders struggle with various health issues, and we are deeply concerned about their treatment in prison. I urge the Chinese government to release all these Zion Church members immediately and unconditionally. My father's church, Zion Church, was founded in 2007 with the mission to be faithful to God's word and to serve the families and communities around us. By God's grace and power, within just one decade, Zion grew rapidly into the largest emerging urban house church in China, with more than 1,500 members at the time.

Since Chairman Xi Jinping came into power he has refocused the Chinese Communist Party and the state to strengthen ideological purity and consolidate control of society. In 2016, Xi rewrote the regulation on religion in China and emphasized the need to sinicize religion. However, at its core this is not about making religion more Chinese. Christians in China already have Chinese Bibles, indigenous hymns, their own church history, and unique theology grown from years of persecution. Our churches are not led by foreign missionaries but by Chinese Christians themselves. Instead, the campaign is truly about forcing socialist core values into the religion. It's less sinicization; it is more "Party-fication" of religion.

Beginning in 2018, a wave of persecution and a crackdown on all religion began under the auspices of this sinicization. In 2018 Zion Church was also targeted because the church leadership refused to install facial recognition cameras inside the sanctuary. The government harassed hundreds of church members, threatened to take away their jobs, their rented houses, their children's education, and even their parents' retirement accounts. Many of the congregants did, in fact, pay the consequences of keeping their faith. On September 9th, hundreds of police brutally seized and shuttered the church buildings, took hold of church assets, and briefly detained and closely surveilled the pastors and leaders. And since 2018, my father has been under an exit ban and consequently has been forcibly separated from my family in the U.S. for more than seven years.

However, as powerful as the Chinese Communist Party is, it will never be able to take our faith and belief from us. In Zion's own church history, we've already seen how the government's attempt to coerce the faith, and control the faithful, has backfired, laying bare the hollowness of authoritarian ideology and the strength of faith, and ultimately growing the church. Because the church lost its place of worship, it pushed my father's church to develop a hybrid online/offline model that went nationwide, launching 100 new church plants across 40 cities across China, growing the church to the largest it has ever been, reaching 10,000 people daily.

A new wave of religious persecution is brewing across China. Earlier this year, multiple Zion Church sites in dozens of cities were frequently disrupted during our Sunday services, with over 150 pastors and elders and church members being taken to the police station. They were harassed, threatened, interrogated, and some briefly detained. In May of this year, Pastor Gao Quanfu, a dear friend of my father's based in Xi'an, was detained on criminal charges of "using suspicious activities to undermine the implementation of law," and fraud. His son is also here with us in the audience today, seeking to speak out about his parents and their church. In June, multiple co-workers of Golden Lampstand Church in Linfen were imprisoned for "fraud," including Pastor Yang Rongli, who has received a 15-year sentence. Many more churches in China are suffering ongoing persecution this year.

Chinese independent house churches are seen as a threat not because they are evil or dangerous, as authorities so often try to paint them. They are a threat because they often care deeply for the society and serve the community out of love and not control. The church also brings a uniquely connected civil society organization in China, bringing people from different economic, education, and social strata. Churches often model transparency in leadership, including democratically selecting church elders, rotation of church board members, and clear and independent financial structures. Christians in China do not oppose authority. And the church has always sought to enrich Chinese society. They merely ask it to be free from the control of the Chinese Communist Party, a self-identified atheist organization, in the sacred decisions of the church—including things like who can attend and be baptized, what kind of sermons can be preached, what songs of worship they can sing.

My father started Zion in order to worship freely in a church that put God as the sole head of our church. Like many faithful Christians everywhere, my father's church seeks to give unto Caesar what is Caesar's but hold on to the position that thou shalt have no other gods before me. Since I began advocating for my father and the release of other church leaders detained around a month ago, my family has also experienced transnational repression. A week after we began speaking out about my father's detention, my mother received a threatening phone call from someone impersonating a U.S. Federal agent. I have also been watched and followed in Washington, D.C., as I met with friends and mentors who have been helping me. I'm sometimes indeed fearful. After all, I know that I seek to expose and hold to account the second most powerful country in the world.

Yet as a Christian, I believe that we are asked to take courage and speak truth. And that God, who created heaven and Earth, will stand by our side. Similarly, I urge the leaders here today to take similar courage, to use the authority with which you've been entrusted, and to not forget us. Speak our names—Pastor Ezra Jin, Pastor Gao Yinjia, Pastor Wang Lin, Pastor Yin Huibin, and all the leaders of Zion Church in China, and others as well—Pastor Gao Quanfu of Light of Zion Church in Xi'an, Pastor Wang Yi of Early Rain Covenant Church, Elder Zhang Chunlei of Guiyang Ren'ai Reformed Church, and many others. Do not signal defeat and acceptance of this trampling of human rights with your silence.

We are praying for the full release of all Zion imprisoned church leaders today. And despite not knowing why this is happening and experiencing the despair of seeing my father and others wrongfully imprisoned, I can draw strength in knowing that my God is a good God, and even in these bleakest moments might be used for bigger things and our work is not in vain. My father wrote in a letter from prison just a week ago that "God has indeed used his power to uphold us. . . . I believe that during this time, like silver being refined, we are being tested by God, which is painful but full of love. But God will not abandon us." Thank you so much.

[The prepared statement of Grace Jin Drexel appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Ms. Drexel, for that very powerful testimony.

I want to thank all the witnesses for their very powerful testimony. I know Chairman Smith has another commitment soon so I'm going to turn to him to begin the questioning.

Co-chair SMITH. I'll be brief. And Grace, thank you. What moving testimony on behalf of your dad. And we do have to respond.

I would ask the panel, I mean, in 2008 right before the Olympics in Beijing, not only did Frank Wolf and I go over—and I was shocked that all the administration, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, were talking about was what venue—did they go to track and field, basketball? I said, Human rights! So did Frank. Raise human rights. They rounded up people all over Beijing so they couldn't talk to the press. Human rights. Now, Bush was talking about, what, opening ceremonies? Is he going to go? We said, "You can't. And certainly, if you do go, you've got to meet with a representative group of great human rights defenders from China,"

just like we have in this panel—like you, Grace, and Bob, and the others. And so I think we should maybe do a letter and ask, before his meeting—certainly well before his meeting in April—that our President, current President, meet with you and listen. I mean, really allocate enough time to really let both the substance and your hearts be conveyed to him.

So Mr. Chairman, I ask that we do that in a bipartisan way. But it makes a difference. You know, there's a culture of indifference and a culture of denial that pervades all of our human rights work, including and especially with religious freedom. They say, It's not really going on. Well, it is going on. And you're bearing witness so powerfully. So I think we really need to get the President, because he will be eyeball-to-eyeball with Xi Jinping sometime, maybe in April. We're not sure when. And I think he needs to see all of you before he does that.

And second, last night—you know, I do have this big hearing, I'm sorry that there was a conflict—on Nigeria. And you know, last night I met with a large delegation from Nigeria. They're here to say, Nothing to see here. Again, the culture of indifference. And maybe not so much indifference, but more denial. Their attorney general, Ribadu, who's the national security advisor, was there. And I said, after we had a long discussion about Nigeria and the killing of moderate Muslims and the slaughter of Christians—and they are a Country of Particular Concern (CPC), which Sam Brownback pushed so hard for and got in the last administration, during Trump's first term—but I asked him, "What are you doing?" You know, there's this currying favor with Xi Jinping. "Do you raise what's going on in Xinjiang and the genocide against the Muslim Uyghurs?" And—crickets—nothing.

I said, you know, is it lack of information? Do you not know what's going on there? Genocide is, you know, the worst of the worst. And it's happening against co-religionists, your fellow Muslims. We all speak out for every faith, but you know, here you are getting closer to China. And that ought to be absolutely preconditioned. So I just raised that at the meeting. And I think the President would be moved by meeting with all of you, as we are moved listening to your testimony, looking you in the eye, and knowing, Grace, we need to speak. God hasn't forgotten nor should we, nor should the President of the United States—your dad and all the rest. So thank you, Chairman, for letting me go first. I do have to run over to the other hearing. But thank you so much.

Chair SULLIVAN. Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. And good luck at the next hearing. Thank you for your passion.

I'm going to begin the questioning. By the way, it's great to have Representative Kiggans here. Welcome and we're glad you're here. I want to get to Dr. Fu. You said you had recommendations. I'd like to—if you can succinctly provide those to the Commission right now, I'd like to hear what those are.

Mr. FU. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also want to submit my written testimony for the record.

Chair SULLIVAN. Without objection.

Mr. FU. A few recommendations. First, I know Congress has been discussing the counter-CCP Transnational Repression Act, several bills. I really recommend that both the Senate and the

House take this on. And the second one—Senator Ted Budd has already proposed the Combating the Persecution of Religious Groups in China Act. So I also really advocate for that.

The third one, I think we should apply the Global Magnitsky sanctions to officials involved in persecution of the Zion Church and Golden Lampstand; you know, the long sentences, the arrest of these who are just basically traveling overseas for religious conferences, and sanctions against those who engineered the enforced disappearance of lawyer Gao Zhisheng and Zhang Yadi.

The fourth one I think is also very bipartisan, and which I really want to raise especially for the Trump administration. That is to protect these religiously based Chinese asylum seekers fleeing religious persecution, including those who are actually already vetted but because of the change in administration since President Trump took office, are stuck overseas in Thailand, for instance. I'm very, very concerned that we have overreacted—really throwing the baby out with the bathwater, because there are many who validly claimed to be under religious persecution, who were in some cases already vetted by the previous administration—some literally about to board a flight, but were stopped. I think we should urge the administration to seriously consider them and protect them. And we can't just use the word "illegal" and compromise our country's principles by not protecting religious freedom and religious refugees who seek asylum in the United States. I think I also agree with both the Co-chair and Ambassador Brownback that religious freedom must be raised in every high-level diplomatic meeting with the PRC.

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you. Let me—sorry to interrupt, because I do want to take the time to get to some of the other panelists. You did a good job of laying out the shifts and trends that have happened with regard to the CCP to control religion over the last 10 years. I want to ask all the other witnesses what you have seen, what your views are in that regard; the trends and the tactics that the CCP has used to control religion, particularly during the Xi Jinping era. And if you also want to add, how does PRC intimidation against religion, against groups outside of China, impact what's happening around the world? And if you have any personal experience with this, I would appreciate it.

But why don't we begin with you, Ambassador Brownback, on the trends that you've seen. And why do we think the Chinese Communist Party is clamping down so hard? And I'll ask all of the witnesses, except for Dr. Fu. He talked about that in his testimony.

Ambassador BROWNBACK. Thanks. I think it's a good question to ask. They have grown in their fear of people of faith.

Chair SULLIVAN. So it's a weakness we're seeing.

Ambassador BROWNBACK. It is a weakness.

Chair SULLIVAN. We always think of it as a strength, but you're saying it's actually a weakness of theirs. They're very scared of people of faith.

Ambassador BROWNBACK. Completely fearful of it. Much more fearful of that, as I said, than of our aircraft carriers or nuclear weapons. They fear their own people. Why? Well, because they are afraid of losing control. They're not acting like a confident country at all. And so why are we even ever hesitant about backing these

people of faith? There can be nothing more American than religious freedom. This is at the core of who we are. And look at the lineup you have of Muslims and Christians, Falun Gong, Buddhists, that they are deathly scared of. And that's the way they're acting. And the oppression has intensified.

And then they've invented these security systems and perfected them that truly are mindboggling, the quality of them. And then freely dispersing them. In the book "Where We Are Now," they've dispersed these systems to 80 different authoritarian countries—handed them out like candy to help in the oppression. So I just think if they're spending so much time and effort doing this, we ought to be backing these people.

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you. I only have a few seconds left but I want all the witnesses to answer that question that I posed. And then we'll turn to Rep. McGovern. Mr. Ma, do you have a view on that question that I just posed?

Mr. MA. I believe that the CCP is showing fear of the people. And the trend that we're seeing is trending toward nationalism. You can see from the groups that they're oppressing, this is part of a larger chess game.

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you.

Mr. Tsering, do you have a view on the question I posed?

Mr. TSERING. Yes, very much. Mr. Chairman, I think one single issue is that they fear the Dalai Lama and his influence in Tibet. They look at Tibetan Buddhism as a challenge to the continuation of the Chinese Communist Party, and therefore they use the United Front Work Department, a CCP organ, to control Tibetans, inside Tibet as well as outside, including American citizens, through the use of visa permission, whereby the United Front, whose whole mission is to confront the Dalai Lama, controls the Tibetan American visa process. Here, I would like to submit for the record, please, two statements that the Dalai Lama had issued, in 2011 and 2025, regarding his reincarnation.

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you.

And Ms. Drexel, do you have a view on this? And again, thank you for your very powerful, courageous testimony.

Ms. DREXEL. Thank you so much. I agree with Ambassador Brownback. And just a quick anecdote, when they came to imprison my father or detain my father, there were 30 police that came into my father's house to imprison a 56-year-old pastor, who can't karate chop his way out of anything. And so there was no need—there could have been two policepersons, one policeperson that could have come. Instead, they had 30 people surround the entire house in order to detain him. And that just shows how much they fear this faith. And I think part of it is, again, because of the resilience of the faithful, that they can't take away something that is so intimate and so core to oneself.

And in terms of signaling, they also want to show the world that there's no one there to help you, that your God is not there, your church is not there, there's no one there. And therefore, you are always under my, and solely my, control. And I think that is wrong. And I think this is a universal human rights issue and that we need to stand together with those that are persecuted for faith.

Chair SULLIVAN. Well, this Commission is here, right? That's our point. Let me just make a comment here. I think this is really insightful testimony because we all see Xi Jinping is a strongman. He's getting stronger. And he's getting control. But this is happening because they're actually weak, and scared, and afraid. That's really important for all of us to remember.

Representative McGovern.

Representative MCGOVERN. Thank you very much.

Let me thank all of you for your incredibly powerful testimony. And Grace, on this Commission, we're not going to forget about your dad, and we're going to continue to advocate for his release. You know, Mr. Chairman, among my most treasured possessions are these Tibetan prayer beads that I wear. About a year and a half ago I was in India, Bhuchung—you were there—and we met with the Dalai Lama. And he blessed these and gave them to me. And told me that they will have a calming influence, that they will help me deal with my fears and anxieties and my worries about the world. And I'm anxious to meet with the Dalai Lama again to tell him that they're not working.

And listening to the testimony here today, I mean, the issue of religious freedom is more urgent than ever. I share, by the way, Ambassador Brownback's impatience on the Tibetan issue. The Middle Way is something that has been talked about for decades now. And we've been led to believe that maybe the Chinese government might be receptive. Maybe they might be willing to negotiate certain things. And they just keep on stringing everybody along. So I do think we need to be thinking in terms of consequences, you know, of responses that are more than just words of condemnation, but that have an impact.

I actually like the idea of basically putting deadlines on some of this stuff. And if China doesn't comply, then we formally recognize Tibet as an independent country. And we have to insist also, you know, that the Tibetan people be able to decide their religious future. The Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, which I authored with then-Senator Rubio, makes it United States policy to support the right of Tibetan Buddhists to select their own leaders, and rejects China's interference in recognizing a successor or reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama, and any future Dalai Lama.

So I just have a couple of questions here. How would you assess the U.S. Government's implementation of this provision, including under the current administration? In addition, TPSA also authorizes sanctions such as those under the Global Magnitsky Act against those officials who interfere in the reincarnation decisions under Tibetan Buddhism. Has this authority been used? And how would you assess its effectiveness? And finally, we have discussed the value of creating an international norm in support of Tibetan Buddhists' right to determine their religious leaders, including the next Dalai Lama, including coordination by like-minded governments. Is that happening? And can the U.S. Government play a leadership role?

Mr. TSERING. Thank you, Congressman. I think, on the three points, first on what this administration is doing on Tibet. When Secretary Rubio, soon after he took over the Secretary of State position, he used the occasion of the Tibetan New Year to issue a

statement reiterating American policy on Tibet—which is positive. We want to see action to follow that policy statement, which we hope that this administration will take.

Second, on the matter of the reincarnation, as you rightly say, there is this policy of the U.S. Government to say that it only respects the authority of this Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhists on reincarnation, not the Chinese government. We want the United States to reiterate its policy and follow up on this implementation to say that if the Chinese government violates Tibetan religious freedom, they will be sanctioned. On the issue of sanctions, there is the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which you did, and TPSA also has provisions. The Magnitsky Act also has provisions.

So what the administration—not just this administration, the previous administration too—has been saying is that they do sanction Chinese officials. But it is not announced publicly who they are sanctioning. So we would recommend that the government administration here identify these people publicly so that the concerned Chinese authorities get the right message.

In terms of the future of Tibet, which you refer to, I believe that the Dalai Lama and the elected leadership of the Tibetan people have been earnestly working for a win-win solution for both the Chinese and the Tibetans. Therefore the path for a peaceful struggle they have led needs international support for this to be fulfilled. If there is enough international pressure on the Chinese, whether through such acts that you describe or any other way of strengthening American policy, that can only help if the Chinese government responds by sitting down and resolving the issue of Tibet.

Representative MCGOVERN. I know. I appreciate that. I guess one of my worries—and again, the Dalai Lama is 90. And I hope he lives to be 190. But I think the Chinese government is calculating that when he passes on, that maybe the interest in Tibet will wither, that there won't be as much attention. And I think we need to make it clear that that will not be the case. And again, I think all of us—I think on the Tibet issue in particular, we need to step it up here in Congress. And we need to encourage the administration to use the tools that we have given them to pressure China even more.

And to everybody here, I've known Bob Fu for many years. Thank you for your incredible courage and your leadership. We are all deeply concerned about not only people that are being repressed in China, but Chinese transnational repression happening here. And I'm with the Senator here that, again, we can't tolerate that. I mean, you're in the United States. You should be able to express your views and say what you want. You shouldn't have to fear that there are repercussions coming from China.

Ambassador Brownback, again, thank you, thank you, thank you for your consistent leadership on these matters. I look forward to your book. I agree with you. This is not just a human rights issue. It's a national security issue. And I do think China's lack of acceptance of religious freedom is a sign of their own weakness. And so I thank you all, and I thank the Senator for yielding.

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Congressman McGovern.  
Representative Kiggans.

Representative KIGGANS. Thank you very much for holding the hearing. It's just a privilege to be here. And I would argue with Mr. McGovern that maybe his prayer beads are working, because we see so much interest, and just the encouraged faith that all of you have and the stories you've shared. So maybe they're continuing to work in the background. But thank you for sharing your stories. My apologies for being a few minutes late.

I would love to hear from each of you, just to provide some context for myself, but how are the religious leaders in China still able to conduct their services, and grow their congregations, and practice? What type of support system surrounds them? Because I'm sure the fear is real and the threats are real. And not just in China, but the congregations that they have here, because we know that it is expanding to other countries, including our own. I just am curious about that support system, how they're still even able to have a presence and operate and grow their religions in a place like China. If you could maybe each answer.

Ms. DREXEL. Well, thank you so much. I will quickly just talk about Zion's own church network. We are still able to meet on Zoom. There are several pastors who just so happened to be abroad. Several of them were studying in the U.S., or they were at a meeting and conference in South Korea when this takedown happened. So they are still able to host our hybrid Zoom meetings, or sermons and worship. Unfortunately, there are a lot of consequences. It requires a lot of bravery for those who still come to services, either in person or online.

And again, many people have already suffered consequences. But I think that, even during the Cultural Revolution, people held on to their faith even if it meant hiding in the kitchen and quietly singing to their families and their kids. And even during that time they were not able to wipe out Christianity. And I don't think that they will be able to wipe out Christianity today. But I do think that a lot of people in China, the Christians in China, are suffering, and are dealing with the consequences of being faithful to their faith.

Representative KIGGANS. Thank you.

Mr. Fu.

Mr. FU. Thank you. Before answering your question, may I just also suggest that the Senate, especially, take the vote for the ambassador at large—and designate former congressman Mark Walker. I think the State Department—the IRF Office, that position is still vacant. I mean, if we are really serious on religious freedom, we should vote for the ambassadorship first.

And in terms of support for the religious communities, countering the CCP's war—even against the cross—the CCP declared the cross a national security threat. A wooden or metal cross is an enemy of the state. Many government-sanctioned church pastors were also being arrested or decommissioned simply for refusing to take down the cross from the rooftop of the church building. Some were sentenced to 12 to 14 years' imprisonment. But the cross—it's not just a visible cross. It's really a universal symbol.

And when Xi Jinping basically declared a war against scripture, access to the Bible, to the children, this year alone—with one small organization based in West Texas—we printed over 40,000 copies of the children's Bible and got them into China, distributed in 20

provinces, to benefit a lot of children. I think the CCP's war ultimately will fail and is doomed to fail. I really applaud both the international community's support, including, of course, today's hearing, and the global religious community's continuous solidarity with those who are persecuted.

Representative KIGGANS. Thank you.

Mr. TSERING. Thank you. In Tibet, the Chinese authorities have changed the policy from the physical destruction of Tibetan monastic institutes to control of the Tibetan monastic system. Today, monasteries are allowed ritualistic activities, but at the same time, they are trying to sinicize Tibetan Buddhism. So while they don't allow the monasteries to have the Dalai Lama's portrait, all monasteries must have the Chinese leader Xi Jinping and others' portraits in them. And they have to have political education. But in real Tibetan Buddhist study, the Chinese authorities do not allow Tibetan Buddhist students to study with their teachers, some of whom, including the Dalai Lama, are outside. And any contact is prohibited.

Representative KIGGANS. Interesting. Thank you. Interesting.

Mr. MA. I think we have presented evidence that the CCP is systematically trying to destroy all religion, whether that is Tibetan Buddhism, Christianity, Islam. And we have covered that all these religions are under attack. This religious war that the CCP is waging on us, we have taken all these attacks. But we have not retaliated. So I would like everyone here to think about what we can do in response, rather than just tell our stories here. We have suffered enough. And we have suffered beyond tolerance. I think now is the time to think about how we defend ourselves.

Ambassador BROWNBACK. I would agree with that statement, and Bob Fu's too about getting the ambassador for religious freedom confirmed, Mark Walker. Excellent guy. He will do a wonderful job. But you need that point person in the administration so that they can really push these things inside the administration. Thank you.

Representative KIGGANS. Can I just ask a quick follow-up question to Ambassador Brownback? Since you've had time as Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, what have you seen work in the past? And what perhaps didn't work as well? Do you have any other direction you can provide?

Ambassador BROWNBACK. Real consequences. Words just don't cut it. You've got to get at the money, or you've got to make them scared. And if you don't, it's not going to work. The thing about it is, you've got right here, we've got the most American thing possible—religious freedom—that they are scared to death of. And we back up and say, Well, I guess we won't talk about that, because it might offend the Chinese. Well, they're at war with us. Whether we want to admit it or not, they've already moved that way. And so we're just laying out here today clear, consequential things that the United States could do, or even start talking about, that'll get their attention. You get President Trump and the White House meeting with a few people that have been persecuted for their faith from China, and telling their stories—particularly if it's Falun Gong members or Tibetans—heads will blow up in Beijing. They are deathly scared of this.

Representative KIGGANS. I agree. We certainly win on the religious freedom front. And that's a powerful weapon. So thank you all very much for being here.

Chair SULLIVAN. Well, I'm going to end with just one final round of questions here. And so Dr. Fu, that's a very powerful story of getting Bibles to China. Again, it reminds me of the story of my mom bringing Bibles to the Soviet Union as a daring young American. We talk about this issue of fear. Dr. Fu, Ms. Drexel, do we have a sense of how many Christians live in China? Any ballpark estimate? And then I'm going to ask the same thing of Mr. Tsering on Buddhists, and Mr. Ju Ma on Muslims.

Mr. FU. Yes. Nobody knows the exact number. But even according to the analysis from the sociologists from Purdue University, the estimate of the number of Christians in China, including those who worship in the government-sanctioned church venues, has at least reached 100 million to 130 million.

Chair SULLIVAN. And do we think that number is growing or declining, despite the pressure?

Mr. FU. I definitely think it's growing, because—just the example of Zion Church. In 10 years from 2007 to 2018, before they were formally banned, they grew from 20 to, like, 1,500. And then in the past five years, even after Pastor Ezra Jin was exiled from Beijing, from his own home, the church grew from 1,500 to over 5,000. The devotion—I sometimes sign up for the daily devotion on their app—has reached at minimum 10,000 every morning—10,000 people. So that's explosive growth.

Chair SULLIVAN. Mr. Tsering, do you have a sense on Buddhists?

Mr. TSERING. The total number of Tibetans, not just in the Tibet Autonomous Region but in the other Tibetan areas which we call Tibet and Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, etc., it's around 7 million. Of that, more than 90 percent would be Tibetan Buddhists. But there are also a sizable number of Chinese who follow Tibetan Buddhism, and Mongolians.

Chair SULLIVAN. All right. Mr. Ju Ma, do you have a sense on—

Mr. MA. According to our and the government's estimate, there are 35 to 45 million Muslims. And that includes Hui Muslims and Uyghurs, as well as Chinese people who have converted to Islam.

Chair SULLIVAN. Great. Let me ask another question. Dr. Fu, this issue of intimidation, and people surrounding your house. Do we know who these people were? I mean, do you have any sense? Were they Americans? Were they Chinese sent to the U.S.? And when you called the authorities in Texas, what did they do? My view is if they're not Americans, they should be booted out of the country, like these "police stations" in New York City and everything. There's just no way we should tolerate any of this thuggish behavior by commies in our own country. So who were they? Do you know?

Mr. FU. Some are—I mean, those who surrounded my home, the 3-month nonstop threat, the law enforcement, including the FBI agents, they did arrest two.

Chair SULLIVAN. But were they Americans? Do we know who they were? Were they deported?

Mr. FU. Both of those arrested are American citizens. One from San Francisco, one from—

Chair SULLIVAN. So they're just brainwashed.

Mr. FU. And they came with financial aid or support, or as guests of the Chinese Embassy—publicly. So you can tell they're associated with the Chinese government.

Chair SULLIVAN. Okay. Ambassador, I have kind of a tough question, but I'm going to ask you anyway because you have a lot of knowledge in this area. The Vatican had an agreement with Beijing in 2018. I don't think it's been made public, but it seemed to cede a lot of authority in the Catholic Church to the Communist Party, to some criticism, with the last pope. I think they have a difficult balance because they want to expand the number of Chinese who are practicing Christianity and Catholicism. So I think sometimes the balance is, well, maybe we'll just accommodate the Chinese Communist Party. But at the same time, when you have 9 or 10 bishops who are gone, disappeared, certainly the accommodation policy doesn't appear to be working very well.

I had the opportunity to talk about these issues with senior Vatican officials pretty recently. And you know, my message was, maybe you need to rebalance here and speak out a little bit more. I mean, America is a beacon, of course, for religious freedom, but so is the Vatican. I mean, they've been around a lot longer than we have—2,000-plus years. So what's your sense—you have real good insight on this and you've probably dealt with them—on what the Vatican should be doing on these topics? Because again, it's not an easy topic. You know, if you speak out really strongly you probably would expect Xi Jinping to arrest 30 bishops. But the accommodation policy, which I believe was the policy of the last pope—we have a new American pope whom I'm very impressed with—but it didn't seem to work. So do you have a sense of that? And you know, it's a little tough to tell the Vatican what to do, but we tell a lot of countries our views. I'm wondering what your view is on this topic.

Ambassador BROWNBACK. We need the Vatican's moral voice.

Chair SULLIVAN. It's a big moral voice. You're right.

Ambassador BROWNBACK. On China.

Chair SULLIVAN. And do you think it was—I'm not talking about the current pope. He's just getting started. But the last pope, it seemed like it was a very muted voice. Would you agree with that?

Ambassador BROWNBACK. It was. I traveled several times to the Vatican to meet with officials about it. Secretary Pompeo and I both had a public conference there about the agreement and about how this is not working. If you negotiated this agreement to get these bishops free, they're not free. And you know, who knows their internal decisionmaking, but we really need their moral voice on religious freedom for everybody.

Chair SULLIVAN. Yes. For everybody. Not just for Christians.

Ambassador BROWNBACK. No. I mean, they need to be out there speaking up for Uyghur Muslims and on the forced labor situation. And they need to be speaking out for Christians. And it's my hope that this new pope—actually, I would love to see him fly to—this isn't going to happen—but he ought to fly to Taiwan and give the John Paul speech of, Be not afraid, that he did in Poland. Wow.

That would be beautiful, to have that moral voice saying Be not afraid.

Chair SULLIVAN. Yes. That was very powerful, when Pope John Paul II had that stand. It helped bring down the Soviet Union. There's no doubt about it.

Ambassador BROWNBAC. It changed Eastern Europe. It changed the mentality of the whole place. They said, because there are more Catholics there in Poland—even though they hadn't gone to mass in decades—it was still in their heart.

Chair SULLIVAN. Great. Good answer. Well, listen, I want to thank all of the witnesses. I know it takes a lot of courage. Many of you have suffered your own personal tragedies because of this issue of religious freedom. And I just want to thank all the witnesses here today. It's a great hearing. Very informative. I learned a lot. I think it's important that we do this, and that people not just in America but around the world see this. Because our voice is very important. And as you've all mentioned, it's been a part of the founding of this great republic, and a core element of who we are as Americans.

The hearing record will remain open for an additional week for members to revise and extend remarks and to submit additional written statements and additional questions for the witnesses. And we respectfully ask the witnesses to get those additional answers back to the Commission within the next three weeks. And with that, I want to thank the witnesses again. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:13 a.m., the hearing was concluded.]



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**A P P E N D I X**

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## PREPARED STATEMENTS

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### PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR SAM BROWNBACK

Mr. Chairman:

China is at war with faith. It is a battle for control of their people. The CCP annually spends billions of dollars in their own country to suppress, contain, control, deceive or eliminate all religious entities that do not have the CCP as their leader. Religious freedom is seen as an existential threat to the Communist leadership. We should strongly back these oppressed people of faith. A cause our country was founded on.

Ultimately, the battle is over authority. The Kingdom of God versus the Kingdom of Man—who will be supreme in the hearts and minds of the people. Communism makes no space for the people’s pursuit of the Divine that in any way could challenge the authority of the government.

Thus, the battle is engaged.

Our national interest, our global ideological confrontation with authoritarianism, and our hearts are with the souls of the religious people of all faiths in China who are oppressed, but still resisting the Dragon. They are our brothers and sisters of faith. They are also our most powerful ally against the CCP. We should embrace their cause. They love their nation but despise what over 70 years of Communist dictatorship has done to their ancient civilization.

It is in our national interest to strongly back the Falun Gong practitioners, Christians, and Buddhist and Muslim adherents in China. The Chinese people are a very spiritual people. To back their religious affiliation is to back them against the foreign ideology of Communism. The CCP often rails against “foreign influences” in their country but blindly forgets that Communism itself is a “foreign ideology” from industrial era Europe.

I recommend the following actions:

1. Make religious freedom in China a part of our national security objectives toward China. Develop a National Security Strategy for the U.S. and other nations to support the religious communities inside China.
2. Use economic sanctions provided in the Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act against China for ongoing and egregious religious freedom violations.
3. President Trump, Vice President Vance, Secretary of State Rubio and/or Secretary of War Hegseth should meet with exiled leaders and those from the Falun Gong, Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist communities in China who have been persecuted.

Specifically for each religious community, I recommend:

#### **Falun Gong**

This is the community the CCP fears the most because they are the most natural and indigenous to the Chinese people. They went from introduction in 1992 to 90 million practitioners in seven years, before being banned by the CCP.

They have a registry of millions of Chinese who were members of the CCP and have now renounced it. Their objective is to bring back the Chinese culture that existed before Communism.

We should:

1. Recognize a genocide against the Falun Gong by the Chinese government.
2. Meet with their key leaders in exile to support their right to freedom of religion in China.
3. Support their work to break the Great Chinese Internet Firewall.

**Christians**

One of the places where Christianity is growing the fastest.

We should:

1. Strongly advocate for the release of Christian hostages being held by the CCP. People like Pastor Ezra Jin Mingri of the Zion Church, Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain Covenant Church and the ten Catholic Bishops identified in an October 17, 2024 article by Nina Shea.
2. Encourage private sector entities with significant ties to China to advocate for the release of prisoners of conscience and human rights lawyers. Groups like the NBA, Hollywood, and major businesses with ties to China.

**Tibetan Buddhists**

China continues to aggressively push forward a cultural genocide in Tibet, doing everything possible to remove Tibetan language and culture from the next generation and to distance the people from their reverence for the Dalai Lama.

We should:

1. Categorically reject the Chinese government's claim to the right to appoint the next Dalai Lama.
2. Send Vice President Vance or Secretary Rubio to Dharamsala, India to confer with the Dalai Lama and announce our support for the Dalai Lama's Middle Way approach for Tibet. Genuine autonomy for Tibet within China. While I have significant doubts this will work, just look at Hong Kong. If China will not agree to this within 60 days, we should announce our recognition of an independent Tibet.
3. Tibet, and for that matter, Xinjiang (East Turkestan), are no more a part of China than Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were a part of Russia. They are occupied territories and we should see them as such.

**Uyghur Muslims**

Many of the Uyghurs have now been moved from concentration camps to forced labor confinement. Same incarceration, different setting. The transnational oppression experienced by Uyghurs and Falun Gong, in particular, must be confronted in our own country and Europe.

We should:

1. Pass legislation to address the transnational oppression and do high-profile prosecutions of those doing the criminal activities.
2. Start addressing Xinjiang as East Turkestan in our government documents.
3. Aggressively address the enforcement of our laws against the use of forced labor, particularly of the Uyghurs, and ask our allies to similarly ban the sale of products made by forced labor in their markets.

**Conclusion**

To date, we have failed to recognize and support our most potent ally in our struggle against the CCP, the religious people of China. The CCP fears them more than our nuclear missiles or aircraft carriers. It's time to engage them and their fundamental human dignity and God-given human right to do with their own souls what they choose. No fight could be more American than to fight for religious freedom.

Appendix



Credit: Washington Examiner Magazine

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF ISMAIL JUMA

Chairman, Co-chairman, and distinguished members of the Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor—and a solemn responsibility—to speak on behalf of the tens of millions in China who can no longer speak for themselves. I also wish to extend my deep gratitude to all who continue to defend and uphold the principle of religious freedom.

As a member of the more than ten million Hui Muslims of China, and as a humanitarian advocate and survivor of religious persecution, I appear before you to present a truth that has been systematically concealed: China's Muslim communities are facing the most severe, widespread, and systemically engineered crisis threatening their physical survival and basic freedoms since 1949.

### **I. The CCP's "Re-engineering Project": Not Only Suppression, but Erasure**

A long-term misunderstanding is that the Chinese Communist Party merely "restricts" religion. This is false. The CCP is a political organization founded on a commitment to eradicate religion. Its doctrine views organized faith, moral systems, and independent community structures as existential threats to totalitarian control. When it does not yet possess the capacity to destroy religion outright, it restricts it; when it does acquire that capacity, it moves to eliminate it without hesitation—just as it has done to independent NGOs, civic groups, and minority cultures.

Under the veneer of what it calls a "re-engineering project", the CCP seeks to reshape all religions into ideological appendages of the Party-state.

#### *1. Erasure of Islamic Architecture and Sacred Space*

Across Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, Yunnan, and other regions, thousands of mosques have had their domes demolished, minarets removed, Quranic inscriptions erased, and Arabic calligraphy scraped away.

Many mosques have been forcibly converted into "cultural plazas," "civilization practice centers," or political education sites. Interiors are stripped of religious symbolism; exteriors made to resemble secular government facilities.

This is not mere physical destruction—it is the surgical removal of the Muslim spiritual landscape.

#### *2. Normal Religious Life Criminalized as "Illegal" or "Extremist"*

Acts that are entirely normal in Muslim societies are redefined as crimes:

- Fasting during Ramadan
- Teaching the Qur'an privately
- Wearing the hijab or traditional attire
- Growing a religious beard
- Children entering mosques
- Family religious gatherings

These practices may result in police interrogation, fines, detention, or being sent to "re-education camps."

This is a systematic project to redefine faith as illegality.

#### *3. Destruction of Religious Knowledge: Cultural Eradication*

The lifeblood of Hui, Uyghur, Kazakh, and other Muslim communities—the centuries-old Islamic educational tradition—has been deliberately dismantled:

- Imams arbitrarily detained or forced into political indoctrination
- Arabic instruction severely restricted
- Religious texts censored or rewritten
- CCP-approved political reinterpretations of the Qur'an mandated

A people's deepest moral and cultural inheritance is being uprooted at its source.

#### *4. Repression in Xinjiang Has Not Ended—It Has Become More Hidden*

There is a dangerous misconception that repression in Xinjiang has "eased." The truth: It has not stopped. It has evolved.

What was once mass internment has transformed into totalized surveillance and control:

- Forced labor
- Family separation
- Mosque demolitions
- Ubiquitous digital monitoring

- Birth prevention policies
- “Stabilization” policing systems

Xinjiang today is a laboratory of totalitarian social engineering.

## II. My Personal Experience: A Survivor of Transnational Repression

Because of my humanitarian work, my efforts to promote ethnic and religious reconciliation, and my advocacy for persecuted Muslims, I was placed on China’s watchlist.

After I fled China, the repression followed me across borders:

- Surveillance and threats
- Cyberattacks and coordinated bot harassment
- Pressure and intimidation directed at my family
- Abuse of legal systems to wage transnational repression

I possess evidence of:

- Hui religious figures imprisoned after secret trials simply for sharing or reposting my social media content
- Minors prosecuted for attempting to contact me
- Cross-border legal actions initiated immediately after I submitted a human rights brief to the United Nations, supported the protection of Najiaying Mosque in Yunnan, and helped international media expose the destruction of thousands of mosques

My uncle—whom I had not spoken to for more than a decade—was coerced into calling me with a message from the authorities: “Turn back before it is too late.”

It is now evident that the CCP is exploiting legal loopholes in the United States to conduct transnational repression. America’s judicial system—ironically a symbol of the rule of law—has become one of the CCP’s most effective weapons to burden dissidents with:

- reputational smearing
- endless malicious lawsuits
- crushing legal bills

Meanwhile, here on U.S. soil, I have experienced stalking, intrusions into my residence, online and email threats, and explicit death threats. These are not isolated events—they are part of an ongoing campaign.

## III. Digital Authoritarianism: Extending Control to Overseas Muslims

The CCP deploys digital tools and influence operations to intimidate overseas Muslims:

- Monitoring Chinese Muslims abroad through social media
- Coordinated bot attacks and character assassination
- Using family members in China as hostages
- Creating an atmosphere of fear in diaspora communities

A telling example: A respected Islamic scholar visiting Chinese Muslim migrants in Malaysia told them he planned to meet me in the United States. Their reaction was a mixture of excitement and dread. Their fear was simple: if their names appeared alongside mine in a report, their relatives in China would face retaliation.

## IV. Religious Tolerance: A Core American Value and a Universal Moral Principle

### *Christianity*

- “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)
- “Judge not, that you be not judged.” (Matthew 7:1)

### *Buddhism*

- The Metta Sutta: “May all beings be happy and secure.”

### *Islam*

- “There shall be no compulsion in religion.” (Qur’an 2:256)
- “We made you nations and tribes so that you may know one another.” (Qur’an 49:13)
- The Constitution of Medina established one of the earliest multi-faith systems of coexistence.

## V. Why This Matters to the National Interests of the United States

1. It strikes at the foundation of America’s identity
2. CCP transnational repression violates U.S. sovereignty
3. It weakens America’s standing with the Muslim world

4. Digital authoritarianism is a growing threat
5. Religious oppression fuels radicalization
6. Preventing a global shift toward authoritarianism

**Conclusion: Speaking for Those Who Cannot**

I speak today:

- to honor those who have been silenced
- to expose an ongoing system of persecution
- to defend the universal right to religious freedom
- to urge the international community to act

If we remain silent today, tomorrow there may be no one left to speak.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF BHUCHUNG K. TSERING

I would like to thank the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for giving me the opportunity to testify on China's policies and tactics for coercively controlling Tibetan Buddhism and its relevance to the United States.

Tibetan Buddhism has a sizable following throughout the world, including here in the United States, as well as in the Indian subcontinent. Tibetan Buddhism is linked to the security of the Indian subcontinent through its historical ties and its cultural and ethnic connections across the Himalayan region. The cultural influence of Tibetan Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent has also been a factor in regional stability. The Indian subcontinent is also a major player in the Indo-Pacific region and matters to the United States due to its massive economic importance, strategic security interests, and its role in global stability and the rules-based order.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is revered by communities in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as in the United States, where opinion polls have clearly shown that a majority of Americans embrace him as both a religious leader and globally respected statesman. Americans have shown that they care deeply about what happens in Tibet and successive congresses and administrations have reflected that through legislative and policy initiatives.

The Chinese government's actions in Tibet have created a complex security dynamic, with India attempting to stabilize a sensitive frontier with Chinese-controlled Tibet. For its part, China has been blatantly using Tibetan Buddhism as a vehicle to not only control the Tibetan people, but also to influence the international community, including the citizens of India, Nepal, and Bhutan, as well as the United States.

Over the years China has been increasingly putting pressure on Nepal to restrict Tibetan religious activities, leading to a climate of fear and limited freedom for Tibetans in Nepal. This pressure includes having Nepal crack down on protests, surveillance of the community, refusal to register refugees, and increased security cooperation with Chinese authorities.

Lhasa is the most sacred place of pilgrimage for all followers of Tibetan Buddhism throughout the world, and Chinese authorities are politicizing access to Tibet to further their agenda. China continues to impose restrictions on Tibetan Buddhists, including American citizens, who wish to travel to Tibet. At the same time, it is providing selective access to journalists and other influencers to drive its own narrative. China has also used the Confucius Institutes in the United States to spread its propaganda on Tibet.

China not only restricts the religious freedom of Tibetans in Tibet but also attempts to interfere in the activities of Tibetans and Tibet supporters abroad. In a report on Chinese Transnational Repression of Tibetan Diaspora Communities, the Dharamsala-based Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) says that in attempting "to control the actions of exiled Tibetans, Chinese authorities weaponise their relatives in Tibet by harming, threatening, or otherwise manipulating them. The looming threat resulting from ubiquitous surveillance also fosters a constant feeling of unease that spreads fear and disempowers exiled communities. Knowing that spies are planted among their members undermines the trust essential to the survival of diaspora networks. Transnational repression poses increasing threats to Tibetan diaspora communities and, thereby, to the future of the Tibetan freedom movement."

The head of the Central Tibetan Administration, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, also said he faced transnational repression from China, which tries to stop his visits to different countries, including a direct attempt to stop a major Australian TV station from broadcasting a discussion program with him. More egregiously, in July this year, the Chinese authorities disappeared Zhang Yadi (Tara), a Chinese student and a follower of Tibetan Buddhism, who had been advocating peacefully in France for

Tibet and Tibetan rights. Zhang had been on a visit to China when she was disappeared in Yunnan. Reports indicate she was taken away by state security officers and is being held incommunicado on suspicion of inciting separatism.

Therefore, the Chinese Communist Party's attitude towards religion in general and on Tibetan Buddhism in particular becomes a national security interest for the United States.

In this testimony I will highlight China's policy of altering the very identity of the Tibetan people as part of President Xi Jinping's overall strategy to co-opt and eventually eliminate Tibet's unique religious, linguistic, and cultural identity.

I am submitting the full text of my testimony for the record and will provide an overview at the hearing.

The Chinese government's policy on Tibetan religion has moved from total destruction of Tibetan religious institutions and systems to one of insidious control and erosion. Initially, China launched major attacks on the physical structure of Tibetan Buddhism, destroying almost all of the monasteries and temples. Subsequently, China altered its policy to allow a semblance of Tibetan Buddhist practice, while simultaneously using it as a vehicle to exert influence over the Tibetan people, as well as followers of Tibetan Buddhism throughout the world.

Over the years, the Chinese state has promulgated various regulations to bring Tibetan monasteries and monastics under tighter control by the state. To be clear, while these measures apply to all religious communities in the People's Republic of China, in Tibet the effect is increasingly intense due to the defining role religion plays as the cultural and social foundation of Tibetan society. The mechanisms of control inflicted by the Xi Jinping regime are designed to contort genuine Tibetan Buddhism and its institutions into another tool of autocratic control and eventual replacement of the Tibetan people's unique civilization with one defined by the Communist Chinese Party.

The Buddhist Association of China (BAC), a supposedly non-political organization, is becoming a key instrument in the Chinese Communist Party's strategy to assimilate and transform Tibetan Buddhism. This process is intended to break down Tibetan Buddhism's unique characteristics and to change it into a tool of the Chinese state.

The most critical area where the BAC contributes to the CCP agenda is in the search for and recognition of Tibetan reincarnations. The CCP has a strategy to use the opportunity of the ageing of the Dalai Lama to use the deeply spiritual process of his reincarnation to promote its political agenda in Tibet and the region.

Since China has failed to place the current Dalai Lama under its control, it plans to ensure the next incarnation will be subservient to the Communist Party of China. China's atheist, authoritarian government is claiming authority to select the next Dalai Lama. They attempted this identical strategy with the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, the second most well-known Tibetan Buddhist leader, by kidnapping him when he was six years old (the youngest political prisoner ever). The CCP subsequently appointed a patently false substitute in his place. Not only do the Chinese government's claims completely disregard centuries-old Tibetan religious tradition, they also violate the universal principle of religious freedom.

The Chinese government's interference in the Dalai Lama reincarnation issue has clear geopolitical implications for many Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the United States, the Indian subcontinent, Mongolia, and other parts of the world. If not challenged vigorously by free countries, this decision threatens religious freedom, not only of Tibetans, but also of millions of followers of Tibetan Buddhism worldwide, including in the United States. If China achieves its goal of co-opting and controlling Buddhism in the region and globally with impunity, then it will only embolden Beijing to further its other expansionist and authoritarian ambitions.

The CCP has introduced the following measures, regulations, and initiatives to exercise control over the recognition of reincarnations. In 2019, the Chinese spokesperson responded to the Dalai Lama's assertion about his authority to decide on his reincarnation by stating that the process must adhere to Chinese law.

- The "Management Measures for the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism" (Order No. 5) passed by the State Administration of Religious Affairs on July 18, 2007, that came into force on Sept. 1, 2007. It articulates in detail the CCP role in selection, installation, and education of reincarnate lamas.
- The 2010 "Tibetan Buddhism Living Buddha Certificates" provided by the BAC to reincarnations who have been approved by the Chinese government.
- The 2016 "Tibetan Buddhism Living Buddha Inquiry System" launched by the BAC to verify legitimacy of reincarnations. In January 2016, the database started with 870 names, while in April the same year, it increased to 1,300.

- The “Revised Religious Affairs Regulations” (Order No. 686) passed by the State Council on June 14, 2017 that came into force on Feb. 1, 2018. It mandates that the religious community shall “practice the core socialist values; and preserve the unification of the country, ethnic unity, religious harmony and social stability.”
- The “Measures for the Administration of Religious Clergy” (Order No. 15) passed by SARA on Jan. 8, 2021, regulating the administration of religious clergy. The measures, which came into force on May 1, 2021, standardize state management of clergy to serve the ideological and political interests of the state and legally underpin the “Sinification” of religion policy in China. Article 15 in the regulation explicitly reaffirms the state’s role in management and approval of Tibetan reincarnate lamas.
- “Administrative Measures for Religious Activity Venues” (Order No. 19) that came into force on Sept. 1, 2023.

The Chinese authorities realize that Tibetan Buddhism is the core of Tibetan identity. Thus, to the CCP, Sinification serves to make Tibetan Buddhism conform to the CCP ideology and be an active agent of its promotion and implementation.

In a formal statement on September 24, 2011, the Dalai Lama categorically maintained that only he can make a decision regarding his reincarnation and the process by which he intends to handle the issue of his succession, and on July 2 this year he reiterated his position. I would like to submit these two statements for the record.

In the past more than 60 years, the Chinese authorities have adapted from a policy of destruction of the Tibetan religious institutions and system to one of controlling them to serve its own political objectives. For the first several years leading to and after the Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet, there was a policy of complete annihilation of Tibetan religion, including its institutions.

After the Cultural Revolution, there was a brief period of liberalization in the 1980s, leading to a resurgence of Tibetan religious expression. In an apparent realization of the failure of its policy to eliminate Tibetan Buddhism, the Chinese leadership slowly began to change its policy to one of subversion and mounting erosion.

Tibetan Buddhists inside and outside Tibet will not accept China’s plans to control the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation. Nor will the international community endorse such a blatant assault on not only Tibetan religious freedom, but also the fundamental right of any religion to choose its own leaders.

Tibet is within the parameters of U.S. security interests in the Indo-Pacific region. Tibet occupies an Asian fault zone of clashing cultures and big power politics. Tibet is where Russia, China, and British India played the Great Game in the past. A stable Tibet where the human rights and religious freedom of Tibetans is respected would contribute greatly to peace and stability in this sensitive region.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Trump administration must monitor, as per the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, Chinese officials’ violation of Tibetan religious freedom, including interference in recognizing a successor or reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama and any future Dalai Lamas and consider imposing sanctions with respect to such officials under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (22 U.S.C. 2656 note) and applying the relevant section of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to such officials.

2. The Trump administration should continue to engage multilaterally with like-minded countries and international bodies to undertake coordinated initiatives and develop a united policy on religious freedom of the Tibetan people, including within the European Union and at the United Nations.

3. The administration should publicly demand the release of Tibetan political prisoners, including those who have been imprisoned for upholding their religious rights, including the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.

4. China should be asked to stop transnational repression and release those who have been detained for peaceful advocacy of Tibetan rights, including Zhang Yadi.

5. The State Department should make greater use of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act by publicly releasing the names of Chinese officials sanctioned under the Act in the hopes of gaining greater access to monitor the conditions in Tibet, including the practice of Tibetan Buddhism and the situation in Buddhist monastic establishments.

6. Relevant congressional committees should request access to Tibet and ask American diplomats as well as organizations, including representatives of multi-

lateral organizations, to seek access to Tibet as part of the implementation of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act.

7. Denial of religious freedom for Tibetans is merely a symptom of a bigger problem, which is political, and needs to be addressed. The United States has a policy of encouraging unconditional negotiations between the Tibetan leadership and the Chinese leadership. The Trump administration should urge Beijing at senior levels, both privately and publicly, to return to substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives, without pre-conditions, to negotiate a resolution to the Tibet-China conflict, in line with the 2002 Tibetan Policy Act and 2020 Tibetan Policy and Support Act.

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Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC)

United States Congress

Hearing Date: November 20, 2025

Location: 562 Dirksen Senate Office Building,

Washington, D.C.

Chair Senator Dan Sullivan

Co-Chair

Representative Chris Smith

— Written Testimony Submitted for the Record —

Submitted by Dr. Bob Fu, Founder and President of ChinaAid

#### I. CCP POLICIES AND TACTICS OF COERCIVE RELIGIOUS CONTROL

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has escalated its campaign against religious communities into a comprehensive, nationwide strategy aimed at eliminating all forms of independent faith. This represents not merely a continuation of repression but the emergence of a new, more totalizing phase of ideological and legal control.

The CCP's objective is clear: to subordinate all religious expression to Communist Party authority and to eradicate any spiritual allegiance that competes with the Party's supremacy. This applies especially to Uyghur Muslims, Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, and other communities the CCP deems "politically untrustworthy" or "susceptible to foreign influence."

This new phase is defined by four major trends:

- 1) criminalizing normal church finances,
- 2) outlawing online worship,
- 3) targeting believers involved in overseas Christian activities, and
- 4) restricting minors from any exposure to religious teaching.

These tactics work together to produce an unprecedented level of coercive control over

religious life in China.

#### A. CRIMINALIZING TITHING, OFFERINGS, AND NORMAL CHURCH FINANCES

One of the most alarming trends in this new phase of repression is the CCP's transformation of ordinary church finances—such as tithes, offerings, and benevolence funds—into alleged criminal activity.

Historically, the state targeted house churches primarily by raiding gatherings or shutting down worship spaces. But as Christians adjusted by meeting in smaller groups or online, the CCP shifted its tactics toward financial criminalization—seeking to dismantle churches at their roots by attacking their ability to function.

##### 1. Fabricating charges of “fraud” and “illegal business operations”

Under this strategy, local Public Security Bureaus and prosecutors now routinely accuse pastors and church leaders of: illegal business operations (非法经营罪), fraud (诈骗罪), illegal fundraising, misappropriation of funds, or financial deception, even when no evidence of wrongdoing exists.

These charges are used not because churches are financially improper, but because they provide a convenient legal pretext for detaining pastors, freezing bank accounts, and confiscating church property.

##### 2. The Linfen Golden Lampstand Church cases: Yang Rongli (杨荣丽) and Wang Xiaoguang (王晓光)

A stark example of this financial repression is the extreme sentencing of the leaders of Golden Lampstand Church (金灯台教会) in Linfen, Shanxi Province.

Pastor Yang Rongli (杨荣丽) was sentenced to 15 years, one of the longest sentences imposed on a Christian leader since the Cultural Revolution.

Her husband, Pastor Wang Xiaoguang (王晓光), received nearly 10 years, along with crippling fines.

Their “crime” was receiving and administering donations and offerings—standard pastoral responsibilities in any church worldwide. No victims were identified, no illegal profit was alleged, and no misappropriation was proven.

### 3. A nationwide campaign against church finances

The Golden Lampstand cases are not isolated. Similar charge patterns have been used against leaders from:

- Early Rain Covenant Church (秋雨圣约教会)
- Beijing Zion Church (北京锡安教会)
- Shouwang Church (守望教会)
- Xunsiding Church (巡司顶教会)
- House churches in Henan, Anhui, Guizhou, and Fujian.

In each case, financial accusations serve as a powerful weapon to imprison pastors and place entire congregations under threat.

### 4. The purpose: starve the church into submission

By criminalizing normal Christian giving, the CCP seeks to: drain the financial lifeblood of faith communities; bankrupt churches through fines and asset seizures; remove pastoral leadership; prevent the funding of missions, humanitarian work, and discipleship; and create fear around offering or receiving donations.

The CCP knows that when it cannot destroy the church through theology or ideology, it can attempt to destroy it through financial strangulation.

## B. CRIMINALIZING ONLINE WORSHIP, PRAYER, AND DIGITAL FELLOWSHIP

China has enacted some of the most restrictive digital-religion laws in the world. Beginning in 2022 and accelerating through 2025, the CCP introduced a series of regulations that effectively criminalize online Christian activities, including worship, prayer meetings, Bible studies, devotional livestreams, and sharing Scripture online.

### 1. The 2024–2025 Regulations on Religious Information on the Internet

These regulations require:

- A state-issued “Religious Information Services License” for any online religious content.
- Licenses available only to government-sanctioned churches.
- Automatic exclusion of nearly all Protestant house churches.
- Criminal penalties for posting Scripture, sermons, worship music, or online fellowship without approval.

### 2. Nationwide arrests and detentions for online faith

Dozens of pastors and believers have been detained for leading WeChat prayer groups, Zoom Bible studies, and morning devotional livestreams. Beijing Zion Church’s online devotional, joined by more than 10,000 believers each morning, was used as evidence of “illegal influence” before the October 9, 2025 arrests.

### 3. Digital faith treated as a national-security threat

The CCP frames unregulated online religious content as “ideological infiltration” and a threat to social stability. Ordinary pastors and young believers are now treated as potential subversives for participating in digital worship—activities common in free societies around the world.

## C. CRIMINALIZING OVERSEAS CHRISTIAN ENGAGEMENT AND MISSION WORK

A third major trend is the CCP's escalating punishment of believers who participate in overseas Christian activities. This includes theological conferences, mission training, Bible exposition events, or fellowship with Christian organizations abroad.

## 1. Evangelist Dong Yumei (董玉梅)

Evangelist Dong Yumei, General Secretary of the United Evangelism Fellowship (中国联宣), was arrested in Beijing on March 23, 2025, after returning from mission-related activity overseas. She is now detained at Jiangyou Detention Center (江油市看守所), and the Procuratorate has formally approved her arrest — signaling the intention to prosecute her.

Her case shows that any Christian participating in global mission work risks criminal prosecution.

## 2. Surveillance and interrogation of returning travelers

Chinese Christians returning from conferences in South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, and the United States report:

- Phone and device searches
- Passport confiscation
- Hours-long interrogations
- Threats against employers or family members
- Placement under “residential surveillance” (RSDL)

## 3. Treating global Christianity as a threat

The CCP views international Christian connections as potential “foreign infiltration.” Ordinary mission trips, Bible workshops, or prayer retreats are now treated as national-security concerns. This policy intends to isolate Chinese Christians from global fellowship and weaken the global body of Christ by severing China from the rest of the Christian world.

#### D. PREVENTING MINORS FROM ACCESSING THE BIBLE OR ANY RELIGIOUS LIFE

The CCP is aggressively enforcing a nationwide prohibition on minors' participation in any religious activity. This policy aims to ensure that Christianity and other faiths "naturally die out" within one generation.

##### 1. Banning all youth religious involvement

Since 2018, authorities have:

- Prohibited minors from entering churches
- Shut down Sunday schools and youth camps
- Pressured schools to report Christian families
- Threatened parents who teach the Bible at home

##### 2. The case of Sister Wang Honglan (王洪兰)

Seventy-one-year-old Sister Wang Honglan was sentenced to five years in prison simply for distributing free Bibles, some of which reached minors. Her case demonstrates the CCP's determination to restrict even the most fundamental expression of faith — access to Scripture itself.

##### 3. A campaign to "de-Christianize" the next generation

These policies are designed to sever the transmission of faith from parents to children, thereby eliminating Christianity from Chinese society over time.

#### E. THE 2026 REVISED PUBLIC SECURITY ADMINISTRATION PUNISHMENTS LAW

Effective January 1, 2026, the revised Public Security Administration Punishments Law marks a major escalation in China's legal repression of religion.

1. Article 31 criminalizes “illegal religious activities”

Article 31 imposes:

- 5–15 days of detention
- Fines of 1,000–2,000 yuan

for organizing or promoting any unregistered religious activities. This is the first time the law has explicitly criminalized the activities of Protestant house churches, underground Catholics, and unregistered Tibetan Buddhist groups.

2. Incentivized persecution through cash rewards

Local governments now offer financial rewards for reporting:

- House church gatherings
- Underground Catholic Masses
- Uyghur religious activity
- Tibetan Buddhist study groups
- Private prayer meetings

This transforms persecution into an incentivized enforcement system.

3. Creating a nationwide legal foundation for arrests

The revised law provides uniform authority for police nationwide to raid, detain, and punish believers solely for practicing their faith outside state control. It codifies what believers already know: independent religious life is illegal under CCP rule.

## II. FORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND LONG-TERM IMPRISONMENT

A central pillar of the CCP’s war on religion is its use of forced disappearance, secret detention, and long-term imprisonment to silence influential religious leaders and conscience defenders. These cases demonstrate the regime’s willingness to eliminate individuals whose moral authority challenges Communist Party control.

#### A. GAO ZHISHENG (高智晟): EIGHT YEARS OF TOTAL DISAPPEARANCE

Gao Zhisheng—widely regarded as “the conscience of China”—is one of the most courageous Christian human-rights attorneys in Chinese history. He defended persecuted Christians, Uyghur Muslims, Falun Gong practitioners, and ordinary rural believers. For this work, the CCP subjected him to electric shocks, starvation, beatings, sleep deprivation, and years of isolation.

Gao vanished again in August 2017. For more than eight years, authorities have refused to disclose whether he is alive, where he is held, or what charges—if any—exist. His disappearance represents one of the most egregious ongoing crimes of the CCP’s security apparatus.

#### B. PASTOR WANG YI (王怡): A 9-YEAR SENTENCE FOR THEOLOGICAL COURAGE

Pastor Wang Yi (王怡), founder of Early Rain Covenant Church (秋雨圣约教会) in Chengdu, is one of the most influential Christian voices in China. A former legal scholar and public intellectual, he became a leading pastor who boldly proclaimed the Gospel, defended religious liberty, and articulated a theology of peaceful, faithful civil disobedience.

##### 1. December 2018 crackdown

On December 9, 2018, authorities conducted a massive raid on Early Rain Covenant Church:

- Over 100 church members were detained.
- Elders, deacons, and seminary students were arrested.
- Church properties were searched and sealed.
- Families were separated and harassed.
- Children were taken from relatives and placed under state watch.

##### 2. Secret trial and sentence

Pastor Wang Yi was held incommunicado for over a year before being tried in secret.

He was sentenced to \*\*9 years in prison\*\* for:

- “inciting subversion of state power” and
- “illegal business operations.”

His sermon manuscripts, pastoral writings, and theological statements—particularly his famous “Declaration of Faithful Disobedience”—were treated as evidence of political subversion.

### 3. Significance

Pastor Wang Yi’s imprisonment is intended to silence the urban house church movement. His courage continues to inspire millions of Christians inside China, many of whom still gather in secret small groups formed after Early Rain’s partial destruction.

### C. DR. WANG BINGZHANG (王炳章): LIFE IMPRISONMENT FOR FAITH AND CONSCIENCE

Dr. Wang Bingzhang (王炳章) is one of the earliest Christian pro-democracy advocates in modern Chinese history. A medical doctor trained in Canada, he became a leading figure in the overseas democracy movement and consistently grounded his political advocacy in Christian principles of human dignity and freedom.

#### 1. Kidnapping and forced rendition

In June 2002, Dr. Wang was abducted in Vietnam by Chinese security agents, transported across the border, and secretly detained inside China. This kidnapping violated international law and bypassed all normal extradition procedures.

#### 2. Closed and politicized trial

He was later tried behind closed doors on charges widely regarded as fabricated. No credible evidence was presented, no independent legal defense was permitted, and the verdict was predetermined.

### 3. Life sentence

Dr. Wang received a **\*\*life sentence\*\*** and has now spent more than two decades in prison. He has suffered:

- Multiple strokes
- Severe medical neglect
- Prolonged solitary confinement
- Long-term sensory deprivation
- Nearly complete denial of family visitation

### 4. Symbolic significance

Dr. Wang's case represents the extreme lengths to which the CCP will go to silence Christian intellectuals who advocate for democracy and human rights. His imprisonment remains one of the longest-running cases of conscience-based persecution in China.

### D. ZHANG YADI (张亚迪): A TIBETAN BUDDHIST CONVERT UNDER ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Zhang Yadi (张亚迪), a Han Chinese convert to Tibetan Buddhism, was detained after returning to China from religious study abroad. He subsequently vanished into state custody. Authorities have refused to disclose his location, legal status, or physical condition.

His disappearance reflects the CCP's deep suspicion of Tibetan Buddhism, especially among Han converts, whom the state views as susceptible to "splittist ideology." Zhang's case is part of a broader pattern in which religious identity itself becomes grounds for extrajudicial punishment.

### E. WHY THESE CASES MATTER FOR U.S. POLICY

These four emblematic cases—Gao Zhisheng, Pastor Wang Yi, Dr. Wang Bingzhang, and Zhang Yadi—reveal the CCP's reliance on disappearance, torture, and extreme sentencing to eliminate moral leaders who command public credibility.

Documenting and advocating for these prisoners of conscience is vital for:

- Magnitsky sanctions designation,
- Targeted visa bans,
- Congressional resolutions,
- Diplomatic pressure, and
- International accountability.

Their courage also provides a foundation for U.S. leadership in advancing global religious freedom and human dignity.

### III. CCP TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

The Chinese Communist Party's campaign against religious believers extends far beyond China's borders. In recent years, the CCP has expanded its coercive reach into democratic countries—including the United States—through intimidation, surveillance, infiltration, propaganda, and pressure on diaspora communities.

#### A. DIRECT TARGETING OF MY FAMILY IN THE UNITED STATES (2020)

One of the most alarming examples of CCP transnational repression occurred in 2020, when my family in Midland, Texas, was subjected to a coordinated intimidation operation carried out by CCP-linked individuals. Over a period of nearly three months, more than 50 operatives surrounded our home, shouted threats, recorded videos of our family, and attempted to provoke confrontation.

This was not a spontaneous protest. Federal investigators later confirmed that the individuals involved were connected to organized networks influenced or directed by the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD).

Their goal was clear: to silence ChinaAid's work and intimidate religious-freedom advocates on American soil.

## B. INFILTRATION AND COERCION OF CHINESE CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

Beyond targeting individuals, the CCP has systematically expanded its influence operations into Chinese-speaking churches across the United States and Canada. These efforts are often coordinated through the United Front Work Department (UFWD), Chinese consulates, and CCP-aligned community organizations.

### 1. Pressure to raise the PRC flag in churches

In multiple cases, Chinese consular officials or United Front proxies have approached pastors and church leaders, urging them to:

- Display the PRC flag on the pulpit during China's National Day,
- Hold "patriotic celebrations" inside sanctuaries,
- Sing patriotic songs before worship services,
- Promote CCP-approved narratives about China's religious policy.

Some churches complied out of fear that refusal could result in retaliation against family members in China.

### 2. Manipulation of church leadership

There are documented attempts to:

- Influence or infiltrate church elder boards,
- Insert pro-CCP individuals into leadership positions,
- Pressure congregations to avoid discussing persecution,

- Steer churches toward pro-Beijing social organizations,
- Discourage cooperation with U.S. human-rights groups or congressional offices.

These tactics mirror domestic CCP strategies used to control the Three-Self Patriotic Movement churches inside China.

### 3. Promoting CCP ideology within congregations

Chinese consulates have offered incentives—including travel opportunities, cultural grants, and “friendship visits”—to pastors willing to echo Party viewpoints, such as:

- “China protects religious freedom,”
- “Reports of persecution are exaggerations,”
- “Christianity should support Sino-American friendship,”
- “Criticism of China is anti-Asian.”

Such talking points are designed to silence diaspora churches and align them with the CCP’s political goals.

## C. INTIMIDATION OF DIASPORA BELIEVERS AND THREATS TO FAMILY IN CHINA

The CCP also targets ordinary diaspora believers—students, workers, new immigrants, and refugees—who worship freely abroad or speak publicly about persecution. The intimidation often begins not overseas, but through retaliation against family members still inside China.

### 1. Threats to relatives in China

Chinese police frequently summon or intimidate the parents, siblings, or extended family of believers living abroad. Common messages include:

- “Your son’s church in America is being monitored.”
- “Tell your daughter to stop attending Christian gatherings or you will be punished.”

- “We know she talks to foreign organizations.”
- “If he participates in political or religious activities, the whole family will suffer.”

These threats are credible: many families have faced job loss, surveillance, or coercive “home visits” by police simply because a relative attended a Chinese-speaking church in the U.S.

## 2. Surveillance at overseas worship gatherings

United Front agents and CCP-linked individuals have been observed:

- Recording or photographing worship services,
- Collecting names of attendees,
- Following believers to their cars,
- Attempting to infiltrate Bible study groups,
- Monitoring pastors who preach on persecution.

This creates a chilling effect among diaspora congregations who fear being reported to authorities in China.

## 3. Coercion during return trips

When diaspora Christians return to China—even for short family visits—they face heightened risks:

- Passport confiscation,
- Phone and laptop searches,
- Interrogations at airports,
- Threats of detention,
- Pressure to provide information about U.S. churches.

Many believers now fear returning to China at all, knowing they may be detained simply for practicing their faith freely abroad.

#### D. INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND PROPAGANDA TARGETING U.S.-BASED CHURCHES

The CCP also deploys sophisticated propaganda and information warfare tactics to weaken, divide, and silence diaspora faith communities. These operations often rely on state media outlets, United Front proxies, and coordinated online networks designed to manipulate Chinese-speaking audiences abroad.

##### 1. Smear campaigns against Christian leaders and ministries

The CCP frequently labels persecuted pastors and churches as:

- “criminal gangs,”
- “illegal cults,”
- “fraudulent organizations,”
- “foreign-controlled entities,”
- or “anti-China forces.”

These narratives are then amplified by CCP-linked social media accounts and Chinese-language platforms targeting diaspora believers in North America.

Pastors, missionaries, and human-rights advocates—including ChinaAid’s work—are common targets of these smear operations.

##### 2. Manipulation of diaspora opinion

The CCP seeks to manufacture confusion and suspicion within Chinese-speaking Christian communities by:

- spreading false claims that persecution reports are exaggerated,
- accusing pastors of being “American agents,”
- encouraging distrust of U.S. institutions,

- and promoting narratives that Christianity should support “Sino-American friendship” over biblical truth and human rights.

These influence operations weaken solidarity among believers and undermine support for persecuted Christians in China.

### 3. Creating divisions within congregations

Through online harassment, coordinated rumors, and the insertion of pro-CCP voices inside churches, the CCP aims to:

- fracture congregations,
- discredit pastors who speak on persecution,
- marginalize members involved in advocacy,
- and silence discussion of human-rights abuses.

This is psychological warfare directed at the heart of diaspora Christian communities.

## E. WHY CCP TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION MATTERS FOR U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY

China’s transnational repression is not only a human-rights concern—it is a direct threat to U.S. sovereignty, constitutional freedoms, and national security. By targeting diaspora believers, infiltrating American churches, intimidating human-rights defenders, and conducting influence operations on U.S. soil, the CCP seeks to export its authoritarian control model into the heart of democratic societies.

The CCP’s actions undermine:

- First Amendment religious freedom,
- Freedom of speech and association,
- Safety of faith communities,

- Independence of religious institutions,
- Federal and local law-enforcement authority,
- Trust in civic and democratic processes.

If the CCP can successfully intimidate pastors, believers, and human-rights advocates **\*\*inside the United States\*\***, then no religious community is safe.

A strong and coordinated U.S. response is essential to protect the Constitution, defend vulnerable communities, and deter foreign authoritarian interference in American civil society.

#### IV. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States must adopt a strong, coordinated strategy to confront the CCP's escalating war on religion. The following recommendations reflect urgent priorities for Congress and the Administration.

##### A. PASS THE COUNTER-CCP TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION ACT

This bipartisan legislation is essential to protect Americans and U.S.-based religious communities from foreign coercion. The Act would:

- Define CCP transnational repression as a national-security threat,
- Strengthen DOJ, DHS, and FBI authority to investigate foreign intimidation,
- Establish interagency coordination to disrupt CCP operations,
- Create reporting systems for victims,
- Penalize unregistered foreign agents acting on behalf of the PRC,
- Safeguard diaspora churches and human-rights advocates.

Given documented CCP activity on U.S. soil—including the 2020 targeting of my family—this Act is urgently needed.

B. PASS SENATOR TED BUDD'S "COMBATTING THE PERSECUTION OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN CHINA ACT"

This bill represents one of the strongest and most focused legislative responses to the CCP's religious persecution. Congress should advance it without delay. The legislation would:

- Mandate sanctions on CCP officials responsible for religious persecution,
- Require enhanced reporting on abuses against Christians, Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and other communities,
- Restrict visas for perpetrators of torture, disappearance, and arbitrary detention,
- Direct the executive branch to develop strategies to counter persecution,
- Ensure continued congressional oversight.

This Act acknowledges that the CCP's religious repression is systematic, coordinated, and integral to its authoritarian governance.

C. APPLY GLOBAL MAGNITSKY SANCTIONS TO PERPETRATORS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Congress should urge the Administration to use the robust tools available under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act to sanction:

- Public Security Bureau officials involved in the October 9, 2025 mass raids on Beijing Zion Church,
- Prosecutors and judges responsible for sentencing Pastor Yang Rongli (杨荣丽) and Pastor Wang Xiaoguang (王晓光),

- Authorities overseeing detention centers where believers are abused,
- Officials involved in the disappearance of Gao Zhisheng (高智晟) and Zhang Yadi (张亚迪),
- Officers in Sichuan connected to the arrest of Evangelist Dong Yumei (董玉梅),
- Security officials responsible for imprisoning Pastor Wang Yi (王怡),
- Provincial officials implementing the 2026 revised Public Security Law.

Sanctions should include visa bans, asset freezes, and prohibitions on financial transactions. These measures send a clear message that perpetrators of religious persecution will face consequences.

#### D. ESTABLISH A "PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE IN CHINA" LIST FOR REGULAR PUBLIC REPORTING

Congress should direct the State Department to publish a recurring, publicly accessible list of prisoners of conscience, including:

- Christian pastors,
- House church elders and co-workers,
- Uyghur Muslim detainees,
- Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns,
- Human-rights lawyers,
- Religious dissidents.

This list should specifically highlight:

- Gao Zhisheng (高智晟), missing for more than eight years,
- Pastor Wang Yi (王怡), serving a 9-year sentence,
- Dr. Wang Bingzhang (王炳章), imprisoned for life,
- Zhang Yadi (张亚迪), under enforced disappearance,

- Pastor Jin Mingri (金明日 / Ezra Jin) and the nearly 30 Zion Church pastors and co-workers detained since the October 9, 2025 raids.

Such public documentation places meaningful international pressure on the CCP and affirms that these prisoners are not forgotten.

#### E. EXPAND PROTECTIONS FOR CHINESE ASYLUM SEEKERS AND RELIGIOUS REFUGEES

Congress and the Administration should strengthen pathways for persecuted believers seeking refuge, including:

- Pastors and church families,
- Christian converts,
- Uyghur Muslims fleeing genocide,
- Tibetan Buddhists under severe repression,
- Falun Gong practitioners,
- Human-rights lawyers and activists,
- Victims of transnational repression.

Recommended steps include:

- Restoring consistency in asylum adjudication for Chinese religion-based claims,
- Issuing DHS guidance recognizing heightened risks under the 2026 Public Security Law,
- Providing added protections for believers whose families are targeted in China,
- Supporting emergency humanitarian evacuations of high-risk religious leaders.

U.S. refugee and asylum policy must reflect the gravity of the CCP's persecution and offer real pathways to safety for those fleeing religious oppression.

#### F. COUNTER CCP INFLUENCE OPERATIONS TARGETING U.S.-BASED CHURCHES

Congress should direct the Department of Justice, FBI, DHS, and the State Department to intensify efforts to identify, deter, and disrupt CCP influence operations targeting religious communities in the United States. This includes:

- United Front Work Department (UFWD) infiltration of churches,
- Attempts by consular officials to pressure pastors,
- CCP-funded propaganda networks targeting diaspora believers,
- Threats against families in China intended to silence advocates in the U.S.,
- Covert attempts to manipulate preaching, teaching, and church leadership.

Concrete steps include:

- Designating UFWD activities as foreign political interference,
- Prosecuting unregistered foreign agents operating within religious communities,
- Creating clear reporting mechanisms for churches under pressure,
- Providing guidance to pastors on identifying common CCP infiltration tactics.

These measures are vital to protect the integrity and independence of religious life in the United States.

#### G. PRIORITIZE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN ALL DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT WITH CHINA

The Administration should raise cases of religious persecution in every high-level diplomatic engagement with the PRC. This includes:

- Pastor Wang Yi (王怡),
- Gao Zhisheng (高智晟),
- Pastor Jin Mingri (金明日 / Ezra Jin),

- Nearly 30 Zion Church pastors and co-workers detained since October 9, 2025,
- Victims of the 2026 Public Security Law,
- Uyghur Muslim prisoners,
- Tibetan Buddhist leaders,
- Victims of cross-border abductions and disappearances.

Diplomacy must not sideline human rights. Religious freedom should be treated as a central, non-negotiable pillar of U.S.-China policy.

#### H. SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY, FAITH GROUPS, AND DOCUMENTATION EFFORTS

Congress should expand partnership and support for NGOs, academic institutions, faith-based organizations, and advocacy groups working to document persecution, assist victims, and strengthen religious freedom globally. This includes:

- Grant funding for documentation of religious persecution,
- Legal aid programs for affected families and asylum seekers,
- Capacity-building for diaspora churches and advocacy networks,
- Training for asylum officers and legal practitioners,
- Support for international accountability mechanisms.

Civil society often provides the first and last line of defense for persecuted believers.

#### I. WHY U.S. LEADERSHIP MATTERS

The CCP closely watches how the United States responds to religious persecution. Silence emboldens authoritarian regimes; strong action deters them. When the U.S. speaks with clarity and moral courage:

- Prisoners of conscience gain protection,
- Torture decreases,
- Prisoners survive,
- Families gain hope,
- CCP officials reconsider their actions,
- American values are strengthened globally.

This Congress has an opportunity to demonstrate decisive leadership at a moment when millions of believers in China—and across the world—are watching for signs of hope and solidarity.

#### CONCLUSION

China's war on religion is not a theoretical issue—it is a lived reality for millions of believers facing daily intimidation, imprisonment, and the crushing weight of an authoritarian system determined to extinguish independent faith.

This struggle is visible in the suffering of pastors imprisoned for preaching the Gospel, Uyghur Muslims detained in camps for their identity, Tibetan Buddhists disappeared for their devotion, and ordinary Christians punished for gathering in homes, giving offerings, attending Bible studies online, or traveling to overseas conferences.

It is visible in the plight of those who have vanished into China's vast security apparatus—figures such as Gao Zhisheng (高智晟), Pastor Wang Yi (王怡), Dr. Wang Bingzhang (王炳章), and Zhang Yadi (张亚迪)—whose courage has cost them their freedom, and in some cases, their very visibility to the world.

It is visible in the children barred from churches, the elderly punished for distributing Bibles, and the tens of thousands of believers monitored through omnipresent digital surveillance systems that treat faith as a national-security threat.

And it is visible even here in the United States, where the CCP has targeted diaspora churches, infiltrated congregations, intimidated activists, and harassed families—including my own—to silence advocacy and export authoritarian control onto American soil.

These realities demand a clear and principled response from the United States. For generations, our nation has been a beacon of hope for those who suffer for their faith. Religious liberty is not only a constitutional right—it is a foundational commitment that has shaped America's identity and global leadership.

The recommendations presented in this testimony—legislative action, targeted sanctions, diplomatic engagement, strengthened asylum protections, and support for civil society—are not abstract policy ideas. They are lifelines for believers who continue to worship under threat, families awaiting news from secret detention centers, pastors imprisoned for their faith, and communities terrorized by the expansion of state control.

As Congress considers these measures, I urge you to remember the countless individuals whose names may never be spoken in this chamber but whose faith and courage sustain the spiritual life of a nation longing for freedom.

Their struggle is not only for religious liberty in China—it is a struggle for human dignity everywhere. If the CCP succeeds in extinguishing independent faith among its own people and silencing diaspora believers abroad, authoritarianism will gain strength worldwide.

But if the United States stands firm—if Congress acts decisively—then persecuted believers will know they are not forgotten, oppressors will know the world is watching, and the flame of religious freedom will continue to burn brightly for generations to come.

Thank you for your leadership, for convening this critical hearing, and for your commitment to defending religious freedom for all people. I look forward to working with you to ensure that the voices of the persecuted continue to be heard, both in this chamber and across the world.

## Prepared Statement of Grace Jin Drexel

On October 10th, my father, Pastor Ezra Jin, was arrested by Chinese authorities along with 28 other pastors and church leaders from Zion Church. Seventeen church leaders now remain in prison with him. This crackdown has been reported as the largest takedown of an independent, “underground,” or house church in China since the Cultural Revolution. Because of the prominence of the church and the brazenness of China’s repression, their case has become an international [incident](#) that has been profiled extensively in the international press, attracting a number of statements of public support across the United States Government and beyond, including from Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Many of these church leaders were taken in front of their young families, who they now leave behind. My father, and several other older leaders, struggle with various health issues and we are deeply concerned about their treatment in prison. I urge the Chinese government to release all these Zion Church members immediately and unconditionally.

My father’s church, Zion Church, was founded in 2007 with the mission to be faithful to God’s Word and to serve families and communities around us. When Zion was founded in 2007, there were only 2 families—less than 20 church members. But by God’s grace and power, within just one decade, Zion grew rapidly into one of the largest emerging urban house churches in China, with more than 1,500 members and more than 20 ministers.

Since Chairman Xi Jinping came into power, he has refocused the Chinese Communist Party and the state to strengthen ideological purity and to consolidate control of society. In 2016, Xi rewrote the Regulation on Religion in China and emphasized the need to “Sinicize religion.” However, at its core, this was not about making religions “more Chinese”—Christians in China already had Chinese Bibles, indigenous hymns, their own Church history, and a unique theology grown from years of persecution. Our churches are led not by foreign missionaries but by Chinese Christians themselves. Instead, the campaign was truly about forcing “socialist core values” into all religions. It is less Sinicization, more “Party-fication of religion.”

Beginning in 2018, a wave of persecution and a crackdown on all religions began under the auspices of Sinicization. We saw crosses being torn down, churches leveled, portraits of Xi and Mao installed in place of crucifixes. Instead of singing hymns, revolutionary Party songs were sung in churches. Independent churches, also known as house churches or underground churches, were shut down forcibly—the pastors or leaders dragged from the podium and often detained or harassed. Not only aimed at Protestant Christians and Catholics, this crackdown also targeted Muslims, especially

the Uyghur community in Western China, Buddhists, Taoists, and other religious groups.

In 2018, Zion Church was also targeted. Because the church leadership refused to install facial recognition cameras inside the sanctuary, the government harassed hundreds of church members, threatening their jobs, their rented houses, their children's education, and even their parents' retirement accounts. Many of the congregants did in fact pay the consequences for keeping their faith. On September 9, hundreds of police brutally seized and shuttered the church building, took hold of church assets, and briefly detained and closely surveilled the pastors and leaders. Since 2018, my father has been under an exit ban and consequently has been forcibly separated from my family in the U.S. for more than seven years.

During that year, another influential independent house church in Sichuan, Early Rain Covenant Church, was also taken down. Its pastor, Pastor Wang Yi, has been serving a nine-year prison sentence since then.

However, as many here can attest, as powerful as the Chinese Communist Party and many other authoritarian governments are, they will never be able to take our faith and beliefs from us. Even in the case of Zion Church's own history, we've already seen how government attempts to coerce and control the faithful have backfired, laying bare the hollowness of authoritarian ideology, the strength of faith, and ultimately growing the church. Because the church lost its place of worship, it pushed my father's church to develop a hybrid online-offline model that went nationwide, launching 100 new church plants in 40 cities across China, growing the church to the largest it's ever been, often reaching 10,000 individuals daily.

In the year leading up to the Zion arrests last month, a new wave of religious persecution has been emerging across China. Earlier this year, multiple Zion Church sites in dozens of cities were frequently disrupted during Sunday services, and over 150 pastors, elders, and church members were taken to police stations. They were harassed, threatened, interrogated, and some briefly detained. In May of this year, Pastor Gao Quanfu, a dear friend of my father's, based in Xi'an, was detained on criminal charges of "using superstitious activities to undermine the implementation of the law." His son is also here in the audience today seeking to speak out for his parents and their church. In June, multiple co-workers of the Golden Lampstand Church in Linfen were imprisoned for "fraud," including Pastor Yang Rongli, who received a heavy 15-year sentence. Many more churches in China are suffering ongoing persecution this year.

Christians in China are not opposed to the Chinese authorities, and the Church has always sought to enrich Chinese society. They merely ask to be free from the control of the Chinese Communist Party, a self-identified atheist organization, in the sacred decisions of the church, including things like who can attend and be baptized, what sermons are preached, and what songs of worship they sing. The CCP seeks to control everything and everyone in China, including the most intimate part of us, which is our beliefs. My father started Zion Church in order to worship freely in a church that put God as the sole head of our church. Like faithful Christians everywhere, my father's church seeks to give unto Caesar what is Caesar's but holds firm to the position that "thou shall have no other gods before me."

Chinese independent house churches are seen as a threat not because they are evil or dangerous, as the authorities so often try to paint them. They are a threat because they often care deeply for the society and serve the community out of love, and not control. In 2008, the house churches came together and were the first to provide humanitarian aid for those suffering in Sichuan after the devastating earthquake. My father's church ministers to broken marriages and depressed children. When they heard that the Beijing blood bank was almost out of blood, Zion Church hosted blood drives and continued to do so each year until the government seized its meeting space in 2018. The Church also serves as a uniquely connected civil society organization in China, bringing together people from different economic, educational, and social strata. Churches often model transparency in leadership, including democratically selecting church elders, rotation of church board members, and clear and independent financial structures.

Since I began advocating for the release of my father and the other church leaders detained around a month ago, my family has also experienced "transnational repression"; that is, we have been targeted by the Chinese government abroad. A week after we began speaking out about my dad's detention, my mother received a threatening phone call from someone impersonating a U.S. federal agent warning her that she was a suspect in a money laundering scheme. They threatened her with harsh consequences if she does not return to China and manipulated her into sharing her phone screen and contacts. There is also evidence that I have been watched and followed in Washington, D.C. as I met with friends and mentors who have been helping me. I am sometimes indeed fearful—after all, I know that I am seeking to expose and hold to account the second most powerful country in the world. Yet as a Christian, I believe only light exposes and ultimately overcomes darkness, and that the God who created Heaven and Earth will stand by my side.

Similarly, I urge leaders here today to take courage—to use the authority you've been entrusted with, and to not forget us. Speak our names: Pastor Ezra Jin, Pastor

Gao Yinjia, Pastor Wang Lin, Pastor Yin Huibin, and all the leaders of Zion Church in China. And others as well: Pastor Gao Quanfu of Light of Zion Church in Xi'an, Pastor Wang Yi of Early Rain Covenant Church, Elder Zhang Chunlei of Guiyang Ren'ai Reformed Church, and others. Please do not signal defeat and acceptance of this trampling of universal human rights with your silence.

As a Christian, I also believe in miracles, and we are praying for the full release of all of Zion's imprisoned church leaders today. And despite not knowing why this is happening and experiencing the despair of seeing my father and others wrongfully imprisoned, I can draw strength in knowing that my God is a good God and that even these bleakest moments might be used for bigger things, and our work is not in vain. As my dad wrote in a letter from prison just a couple weeks ago, "God has indeed used His power to uphold us . . . I believe that during this time, like gold being refined, we are being tested by God, which is painful but full of love. God will not abandon us."

Thank you so much.

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN

Good morning. The Commission will come to order. Thank you to our witnesses and to all who are following this hearing online.

Today's message is straightforward: the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is waging a systematic campaign to bend every faith in China to Party rule. CCP authorities aim for the complete subordination of religious belief to state ideology—re-engineering doctrine, leadership, education, architecture, and even online worship.

The CCP is not content to police behavior; it wants to control the conscience and intrude on the most powerful and personal relationship there is—the one with God. We have documented imprisonment, torture, and worse for such simple acts as owning a prayer book, growing a beard, or gathering for worship.

There are currently 1,647 documented religion prisoner cases in the CECC's Political Prisoner Database, although that number may be ten times higher when we consider all those detained in the Uyghur region. At least a dozen bishops and priests from my own Catholic Church are detained.

Make no mistake about it, freedom of religion is under assault worldwide—witness what is happening in Nigeria. But nowhere is the scale of the threat greater than in China. There are an estimated 500 million people in China whose faith traditions face some form of restriction or control.

And the CCP's grip on religion does not end at its borders. Through transnational repression, it harasses exiled believers, infiltrates religious communities, and intimidates diaspora groups to remain silent. Some of our witnesses have personal experience with intimidation or transnational repression right here in America.

Since Xi Jinping came to power, he has pushed an aggressive agenda to roll back what little space for independent religion once existed and to assert CCP dominance over all aspects of religious life. Christian pastors are prosecuted for fraud for accepting charity. Uyghur Muslims are punished for reading the Qur'an at home. Tibetan Buddhists are targeted for honoring the Dalai Lama; Falun Gong practitioners are tortured for peaceful meditation the Party cannot control. Across China, the Party has closed churches, imprisoned pastors and priests, and ordered the removal of Islamic and Tibetan Buddhist symbols from buildings.

We are here today because the right to believe according to one's own conscience is not a privilege government may grant or withhold. It is a universal human right, central to human dignity and human flourishing. We know now that religious freedom is a critical element in societies that are stable and prosperous. Our own history, from the earliest colonies to the First Amendment, reflects a simple truth: societies are freer, fairer, and more stable when people are free to worship, to practice their faith, and to live, speak, and act according to their beliefs.

The CCP fears the power of faith because it is a source of values and moral authority it cannot control. That is why it demands that crosses come down and portraits of Xi Jinping go up. It is why a Catholic priest must preach Party slogans alongside sacred texts. It is why so many religious leaders and religious believers are jailed.

To the CCP, faith is not just a challenge, it is an existential threat to its grip on power—and why it must be controlled or destroyed.

The title of this hearing asks why religious freedom in China matters to the United States. We certainly want to hear our witnesses answer this question. But let me offer one reason why this hearing matters by reading part of a statement by detained pastor Wang Yi, who met with President George W. Bush in the Oval Office in 2006. The National Endowment for Democracy just awarded Wang Yi one of its highest prizes.

In one of his last statements before being detained, Pastor Yi said: "the rulers of this country are waging a war—in the [Uyghur region], in Tibet, in Shanghai, in Beijing—and the rulers who are waging this war have chosen for themselves an enemy that can never be imprisoned, an enemy that can never be destroyed, an enemy that can never be controlled or subdued, namely, the soul of human beings." Pastor Wang Yi may now be in prison—but he, and millions of others like him, are not subdued. That is why this hearing matters—not just for one community, one country, or one faith, but for the defense of human dignity and conscience everywhere. The CCP wants believers in China to feel isolated and forgotten. Our responsibility is to show them—and to show Beijing—that they are neither.

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS SMITH

Thank you, Senator Sullivan, and good morning, everyone.

I'm very glad the CECC is holding this hearing, and to be working with you on this critical, and indeed, urgent, issue that is so close to my heart.

I say "urgent" because, as we speak, the Chinese Communist Party, directed by General Secretary Xi Jinping, is engaged in one of the most extensive crackdowns on a Protestant Christian house church in 40 years. I also say urgent because, as I look around this room, I see friends of many faiths with loved ones languishing in Chinese prisons. Their plight is pressing and we must act and pray with urgency.

At its core, religious freedom is about the right of conscience—what George Washington called "that little spark of celestial fire which is the inviolable domain in the heart of every human being." I am proud to say that this is the fourteenth hearing I have chaired or co-chaired dedicated to religious freedom in China.

We say that religious freedom is a universal right because it is guaranteed by a sovereign God who created human beings in his own image and likeness and imbued them with inalienable dignity and worth, whether they were born in Washington or Wuhan. It is thus not a "Western" construct but a universal one.

Yet the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, leader of the world's largest atheistic state, would force his own people to think otherwise. He would have the Chinese people believe that religious freedom is not for them, that religion itself is not for them, because he, and the party he leads, are terrified of religious faith. They fear any moral or spiritual authority outside the control of the Party; and they punish worship of anyone but Xi Jinping.

Instead, the Chinese Communist Party wants total control over heart, mind, and spirit of each citizen of China. In one particularly ludicrous yet equally insidious example, in September, the Cyberspace Administration of China launched a two-month "Clear and Bright" campaign that polices pessimism and "negative emotions," among other thought crimes. This is totalitarianism, pure and simple, and totalitarian governments cannot abide freedom of religion or belief. And yet, neither can they extinguish it.

In Tibet, as Communist authorities seek to stamp out any mention or memory of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, blanketing religious sites with surveillance and security forces in the lead-up to his 90th birthday, a young singer performed a song celebrating the spiritual leader, and Tibetans inside and outside Tibet shared and re-shared it on social media.

When authorities shut down Zion Church in Beijing, then one of the city's largest, Pastor Ezra Jin took the church nationwide by moving online, reaching more people than it ever could have before. (We are also proud to have as one of our witnesses Pastor Jin's daughter, Grace, who used to work for the CECC.)

In Fujian province, authorities confined underground Catholic bishop Guo Xijin to his residence, so he joyfully celebrated the 40th anniversary of his priestly ordination by serving communion to pilgrims through the bars of the chained gate outside his home.

After removing domes and minarets from thousands of mosques in China to excise foreign elements, authorities likely believed they could dismantle two of the remaining mosques targeted for demolition with impunity, yet whole communities of Hui Muslims in Yunnan province took to the streets in protest.

And these are only a few examples out of the many we at the Commission have documented, to say nothing of the countless acts of quiet faith and steadfast devotion known only to individual believers and their God. I encourage you to read the statements we will be posting on the webpage for this hearing, which will feature expert testimony and inspiring personal narratives from Uyghurs, Catholics, Falun Gong practitioners, and others.

Today, we will hear directly from brave men and women whose families and faith communities have suffered in China for their dogged belief that they, too, are entitled to freedom of religion, and that an illegitimate and atheistic regime cannot bind the conscience of its citizens.

In many cases, authorities have pursued beyond China's borders these believers in an authority above the CCP, attempting to silence their advocacy. Thus we are especially grateful for their voices here today. Among those voices is that of Grace Jin Drexel, the daughter of Pastor Ezra Jin and a former CECC researcher. I heard Grace address the CPAC Christian persecution summit, and I was deeply moved by her advocacy for her father. I know we are all eager to hear how we can support Pastor Ezra and all those detained in the crackdown on the Zion Church network.

But we are not only here to lament or to cry out for the "least of these" who suffer persecution and injustice, or to call out evil rulers and bad actors. We speak up for Falun Gong practitioners, for Uyghur Muslims, for Tibetan Buddhists, and for

underground Catholics because it is right, but also because robust religious freedom diplomacy is critical for U.S. national security, as Ambassador Brownback and I wrote in our recent op-ed for the Washington Times, “Why China’s War on Religion Matters to the U.S.” And Ambassador, I know this is the topic of the book you have coming out soon, and I really look forward to reading it.

Studies show that religious freedom is strongly correlated with flourishing societies and nations—it is a security stabilizer, making countries and regions safer. It is associated with economic growth and trustworthy institutions, ensuring fairer markets for American and international business. This unalienable freedom is fundamental to peace and prosperity for China and for the United States and deserves our strong and unwavering support. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses. Thank you.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

Good morning. I want to thank Chair Sullivan and Co-chair Smith for convening this important hearing. I want to thank Senator Merkley and Representative Strong for their leadership on these issues as well. We have different political philosophies but we are together in championing human rights and religious freedom.

Religious freedom has been at the core of the Commission’s work since its founding. It has been the subject of numerous hearings and well-documented reporting. I understand the 2025 Annual Report is close to finalization. I look forward to its publication so that all Members can benefit from its analysis and recommendations. I commend the dedicated, non-partisan staff of the Commission for their hard work in getting this 300+ page report researched, written and released. It is a lot of work. And it is good work. And it’s important work.

Religious freedom is protected under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which affirms that every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. In the United States, it is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. We Americans are very proud of this protection of our rights. As a practicing Catholic, I feel a deep personal connection to the right to worship and belief according to one’s conscience. Defense of this fundamental right, in both national and international law, is essential to our work as public servants.

China’s constitution also provides that the state cannot “compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion” or “discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion.” But as we will hear today, such protection is honored in the breach. They don’t respect it, they don’t follow it. This is a reminder that even the strongest constitutional provisions on paper cannot protect citizens’ rights if those in power choose to disregard them for political ends.

In 2022 I was honored to co-chair this Commission’s hearing on how Chinese authorities were expanding digital tools to surveil and suppress online religious expression. I’m pleased that today’s witnesses will update us on the PRC’s policies and tactics for coercive control of religion and their impact on individuals and communities. I welcome Ambassador Sam Brownback, who headed the State Department’s International Religious Freedom office and remains a powerful leader in the field.

I look forward to the testimony of those who will speak to the experiences of Hui Muslims, Christians, and Tibetans under the PRC’s ongoing repression. In July, several UN special rapporteurs and working groups issued a statement on the Chinese government’s interference in the succession of the Dalai Lama and the enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. This is a U.S. priority, as Senator Marco Rubio and I put into law in the Tibetan Policy and Support Act.

We will also hear very personal testimony. Last month, Chinese authorities launched a multi-city crackdown on the unregistered house Zion Church and detained several individuals including Pastor Ezra Jin. Many of us condemned this violation.

His daughter, Grace Jin Drexel, joins us today to speak about her father and call for his release. Grace was recently a staff member of the CECC, helping raise awareness about prisoners of conscience persecuted for their faith. Now her own father is one. We stand with Grace and her family and join in their call.

We must commit our voices, loudly and clearly, to defend the rights of those targeted for exercising their right to freedom of thought, conscience, and belief. But to be effective, our voice must carry moral credibility. I worry that we are not living up to what is expected of us. The United States is at its best when we lead by example. When we do not, we do a disservice to those overseas we are trying to help.

Earlier this week—you may have read this in the news—congregants of a church in Charlotte, North Carolina, scattered into the woods when masked federal agents arrived and detained one of their members. The church has suspended services until members feel safe to gather again without the threat of Border Patrol raids.

In July, the Bishop of the Diocese of San Bernardino, California, told the 1.2 million people in his diocese to stay home from Mass on Sundays to avoid being questioned or detained by ICE. I spoke with three Catholic bishops yesterday who reiterated the concern that they have about members of their church being afraid to go to church. Imam Ayman Soliman, who fled persecution in Egypt and served as chaplain at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital, spent two and half months in ICE detention.

Our message to the Chinese government is that it is wrong for them to round up members of the Zion Church, to force worshipers to go underground, and to put clergy in jail. Our voice would have much more credibility if our own government were not acting in a similar way.

The freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is universal. This right exists regardless of one's beliefs, or national or citizenship status. Let us be clear and consistent in this message that we are sending to the people of China.

Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership. I yield back my time.

## SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD

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### QUESTION FOR AMBASSADOR BROWNBACK FROM HON. DALE STRONG

*Question.* People of faith are experiencing a rise in discrimination and persecution across the world. Christians in Nigeria and across Europe. Jews in the United States. Hindus in Bangladesh—and sadly, I could keep going. 1. How does China’s stance on religious freedom specifically impact global trends or policies? 2. Given that religious freedom is a founding principle of the United States, what specific actions can we take to counter China’s global influence?

*Answer.* China’s stance on religious freedom as a Country of Particular Concern and still the second largest economy is highly damaging to the global human rights movement. They are the greatest enabler of human rights abuses in the world. They support rogue regimes and have three genocides going on in their own country right now. Other nations see this and determine they too can violate religious freedom fundamental rights with impunity. We must stand up to China and they must feel actual consequences for their abuses.

We can counter China by deploying religious freedom as a tool of our national security interest. As I said in my testimony, the CCP fears religious freedom in their own country more than they fear our aircraft carriers or nuclear weapons. The CCP spends billions annually to suppress people of every faith. They fear people of faith. We should stand boldly and publicly with the Chinese Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, Uyghur Muslims, and Falun Gong practitioners. They are our strongest allies against the Chinese regime that seeks global dominance.

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### QUESTION FOR ISMAIL JUMA (MA JU) FROM HON. DAN SULLIVAN

*Question.* Mr. Ma, in your testimony, you referred to repercussions you have faced for your actions and that others have faced merely for contacting you. We know from reports that you have been subjected to lawfare here in the United States, where a Chinese state-owned enterprise filed a lawsuit against you in a New York state court. Could you tell us about that case? In your opinion, is the PRC seeking to weaponize the American legal system against you to silence your activism? Have you experienced other types of transnational repression or harassment since you started speaking out about human rights and religious freedom in China?

*Answer.* Thank you very much for your thoughtful questions and your continued attention to my case. I appreciate the opportunity to provide a more detailed response.

#### **Background of the Case and Real Motivations**

As I mentioned, this lawsuit is not just a simple legal dispute. Before the lawsuit was filed, I had received explicit warnings from individuals connected to the plaintiffs that if I did not stop my advocacy and exposure of certain truths, there would be consequences. This lawsuit is essentially a follow-through on those threats. The true purpose is not to resolve any genuine financial claim, but to entangle me in a legal battle that drains my time, resources, and energy. It is a form of “lawfare” intended to intimidate and silence me, preventing me from assisting others, submitting reports to international bodies like the UN, and revealing further truths about human rights abuses.

#### **The Impact on Others and Broader Context**

In fact, some individuals who collaborated with me to submit reports to the UN have already faced sentencing in China. Others who tried to provide me with information or evidence have also been persecuted. This demonstrates a broader pattern of transnational repression.

### Legislative and Sanction Recommendations

Therefore, I would like to suggest that the U.S. consider legislative measures to address this issue. Specifically, the U.S. should implement a background and motive review for lawsuits originating from authoritarian states. Such a review would examine the political motives and the potential for these lawsuits to be tools of intimidation rather than genuine legal claims. Without such safeguards, authoritarian regimes can exploit the legal system to pursue political ends on U.S. soil.

Additionally, it is crucial not only to impose sanctions on high-level officials, but also on mid- and lower-level participants who carry out these acts of repression—such as judges, legal officials, and local enforcers involved in these transnational cases. By holding all levels of perpetrators accountable, we send a strong message that the international community will not tolerate such abuses.

### Conclusion

In summary, my case is a clear example of how authoritarian regimes attempt to leverage foreign legal systems to silence dissent and hinder human rights advocacy. I hope that through your support, we can consider legislative actions to scrutinize the motives of such lawsuits and ensure that all those complicit in these abuses face appropriate consequences.

Thank you once again for your attention and support. I am grateful for your commitment to defending human rights and freedom of speech.

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QUESTION FOR ISMAIL JUMA (MA JU)  
FROM HON. DALE STRONG

*Question.* People of faith are experiencing a rise in discrimination and persecution across the world. Christians in Nigeria and across Europe. Jews in the United States. Hindus in Bangladesh—and sadly, I could keep going. 1. How does China’s stance on religious freedom specifically impact global trends or policies? 2. Given that religious freedom is a founding principle of the United States, what specific actions can we take to counter China’s global influence?

*Answer.* Thank you for your thoughtful questions and for your commitment to addressing these critical issues. In addition to the details about my own case, I’d like to provide a broader perspective on how China’s approach to religious freedom is influencing global trends and what concrete steps the United States can take in response.

In essence, China is not merely suppressing religious freedom at home but is also exporting a model where the state fully controls religion and can tighten restrictions under the guise of security. This model is being subtly promoted worldwide in several ways. For example, China is working to redefine human rights and religious freedom in global discourse by prioritizing “development-first” and “non-interference” narratives in international forums. They normalize the idea that states can reshape religious practices under anti-terrorism or stability pretexts. They export the “Xinjiang governance toolkit,” meaning surveillance tech and big-data policing methods are sold to other countries, providing a template for controlling religious groups. There’s also a silencing effect in the Muslim world, where Muslim-majority nations that rely on Chinese investment often remain silent or supportive regarding Xinjiang, thus weakening collective condemnation of religious persecution. Finally, by pushing for stronger digital censorship of religious content, China encourages other states to adopt similar restrictive measures, making them appear more globally acceptable.

Given that religious freedom is a core American value, there are concrete steps the United States can take. At the government and policy level, it’s important to use existing legal tools effectively, enforcing laws like the IRFA and the Global Magnitsky Act, and updating sanctions on officials and entities involved in religious repression. Integrate religious freedom criteria into trade and tech controls by scrutinizing companies that export surveillance tech for religious profiling and imposing stricter export controls. In multilateral arenas, introduce alternative texts that affirm religious freedom and coordinate with allies to counter China’s repressive models. Also, provide clearer refugee pathways for those fleeing religious persecution and work with transit countries to prevent forced returns.

At the civil society and professional community level, it’s crucial to preserve evidence and memory, collaborate to document religious repression, shape academic and media narratives to counter China’s official story, and establish ethical guardrails in the tech sector to avoid contributing to religious persecution.

Within Muslim and minority faith communities, integrate the Chinese case into global Muslim discussions using accurate information, and make “religious freedom plus China” a local political issue by engaging with local representatives. Provide anonymous platforms for those inside China to share their stories safely and avoid flattening all Chinese people into a single enemy, so that the narrative remains focused on the government’s policies rather than creating unnecessary division.

In conclusion, hope comes from the evidence and memory we preserve today, the individuals within China who still hold on to their humanity, and those abroad who refuse to remain silent. By using legal tools, media resources, academic efforts, and interfaith solidarity, we ensure that China’s model does not become the new global norm but rather remains a cautionary tale.

Thank you once again for your dedication to these principles and for considering these comprehensive steps. I am grateful for your support in defending human rights and religious freedom.

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QUESTIONS FOR BOB FU FROM HON. DALE STRONG

*Question.* People of faith are experiencing a rise in discrimination and persecution across the world. Christians in Nigeria and across Europe. Jews in the United States. Hindus in Bangladesh—and sadly, I could keep going. 1. How does China’s stance on religious freedom specifically impact global trends or policies? 2. Given that religious freedom is a founding principle of the United States, what specific actions can we take to counter China’s global influence?

*Answer.* Thank you, Congressman Strong, for that important question. You are right that religious persecution is rising worldwide. But China is not just another country on that list—the Chinese Communist Party is the *driving force* shaping global trends of repression today.

First, China has built the world’s most sophisticated system of digital control over religion—using facial recognition, big-data policing, and AI profiling to monitor churches, mosques, temples, and even private prayer groups. This model is now exported through Chinese technology companies to parts of Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East. As a result, the CCP’s assumption that religion is a “security threat” is spreading globally.

Second, China’s policy of criminalizing normal religious practice—Sunday school, tithing, Bible studies, children’s education—is now influencing governments that rely on Beijing for loans or political cover. The CCP’s language of “subversion,” “illegal religious activity,” and “national security risk” is being adopted in other authoritarian states to justify their own repression.

Third, China is conducting *transnational repression* far beyond its borders. In my written testimony I documented cases where Chinese police, state security, and online agents have intimidated pastors, human rights defenders, and families, all living legally in the United States. This emboldens other regimes to reach across borders to silence people of faith.

Because religious freedom is a founding principle of the United States, we have both a moral duty and a strategic interest to respond.

First, the U.S. should lead a global coalition of democracies to track and counter the export of China’s religious-control model—similar to the Clean Network Initiative but focused specifically on religious freedom.

Second, we should make religious freedom a core component of trade, technology, and security agreements—especially where Chinese surveillance tools are being used to target believers.

Third, we need robust use of Global Magnitsky sanctions, not only against Beijing but also against provincial security officials, police chiefs, prosecutors, and prison administrators responsible for persecuting Christians, Uyghurs, Tibetans, and others.

Fourth, we must protect diaspora communities here in the United States—by prosecuting CCP operatives who intimidate religious exiles, shutting down illegal “police service stations,” and expanding support for asylum seekers fleeing religious persecution.

Finally, we should invest in independent civil society and secure access to uncensored religious materials—because every time a Bible reaches a home in China, it pushes back against authoritarian control.

In short, China’s repression is not contained within its borders—it is becoming a blueprint for authoritarian regimes worldwide. But the United States, by leading with clarity and resolve, can help ensure that the fundamental right to believe is protected for all people, everywhere.

*Question.* The Chinese Communist Party forces its ideology into all areas of religious life, turning places of worship into tools for indoctrination and limiting personal faith. How does the overhaul of religious institutions in China specifically manipulate and threaten people of faith in China? Can you share some examples, please?

*Answer.* Thank you Congressman Strong for your question. China today represents the most comprehensive attempt by any modern government to *rewrite, control, and ultimately replace religion* with loyalty to the Communist Party. The CCP's overhaul of religious institutions is not simply regulation—it is a full-scale ideological campaign to transform faith communities into instruments of state control.

First, the CCP has forced its political ideology directly into the heart of worship. Churches, temples, and mosques are required to display Xi Jinping's portraits, national flags, and "Core Socialist Values" above or beside their sacred texts. Bibles and hymnals are rewritten to reflect Party doctrine. In one well-known example, the CCP altered the Gospel story of the woman caught in adultery, replacing Jesus's words of mercy with a claim that Jesus stoned the woman to death—because mercy was deemed politically "incorrect." This is not theological debate; it is manipulation designed to erode the foundations of belief.

Second, religious institutions are being replaced by Party-run structures. Thousands of churches have been shut down or forcibly merged into approved "patriotic associations," where sermons must be submitted in advance, pastors are required to undergo political training, and children under 18 are forbidden to attend any religious activity. The goal is to cut off the transmission of faith to the next generation.

Third, the CCP uses advanced surveillance to intimidate and control believers. In many regions, entrance to churches requires facial recognition scans; police sit in on worship services; and digital monitoring systems flag pastors as "pre-crime threats" if they gather people in homes or conduct discipleship training. This makes normal religious life impossible and places believers under constant fear.

Fourth, when independent churches resist, the CCP criminalizes them. In my testimony, I detailed cases such as Early Rain Covenant Church, Zion Church, and the recent Golden Lampstand Church verdict in Shanxi. In each case, normal activities like tithing, Bible teaching, and helping the poor were redefined as "fraud," "illegal business," or "endangering national security." Pastors and elder boards have been sentenced to years in prison for simply living out their faith. Pastor Yang Rongli received a 15-year sentence back in June this year for her leadership in Golden Lampstand Church, under the pretext of "fraud," while her husband, pastor Wang Xiaoguang, was sentenced to nearly 10 years along with the other 10 church leaders under the exact same fabricated charge of fraud.

So what does all this mean for people of faith in China?

It means their sacred spaces are turned into political classrooms, their scriptures are rewritten, their children are barred from belief, their pastors are treated as criminals, and their faith is monitored by the state at every moment.

In short, the CCP's overhaul of religious institutions is designed not just to control religion, but to replace it—so that allegiance to the Party comes before allegiance to God.

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#### QUESTIONS FOR BHUCHUNG TSERING FROM HON. DALE STRONG

*Question.* People of faith are experiencing a rise in discrimination and persecution across the world. Christians in Nigeria and across Europe. Jews in the United States. Hindus in Bangladesh—and sadly, I could keep going. 1. How does China's stance on religious freedom specifically impact global trends or policies? 2. Given that religious freedom is a founding principle of the United States, what specific actions can we take to counter China's global influence?

*Answer.*

1. China's violation of religious freedom and its attempt to make religion subservient to the Chinese Communist Party impacts religious leaders and the followers of religious traditions throughout the world. China is trying to gain international legitimacy through devious means and exerting direct and indirect pressure on international religious institutions to support its agenda. For example, it has impacted the policies of the Vatican towards Tibetan Buddhism and H.H. the Dalai Lama, fearing that this might anger the Chinese Government.

2. In general the United States can be proactive and forceful in standing up for religious freedom of the people under the rule of the People's Republic of China, at the United Nations and other international fora, including in the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom. In particular, for Tibetan Buddhism, the United States

should strongly reiterate the spirit of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 by asserting its position of supporting the authority of this 14th Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhists on matters concerning the reincarnation system. Where Chinese officials are seen to be interfering in this process, the concerned individuals should be sanctioned under TPSA.

*Question.* The Chinese Communist Party forces its ideology into all areas of religious life, turning places of worship into tools for indoctrination and limiting personal faith. How does the overhaul of religious institutions in China specifically manipulate and threaten people of faith in China? Can you share some examples, please?

*Answer.* In terms of Tibetan Buddhism, China is now attempting to construct a new framework for the Buddhist institutions under which all spiritual and temporal decision making concerning monastic activities is in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party and not with the spiritual masters as was the tradition. The Buddhist monasteries and nunneries in Tibet are governed by a CCP-appointed “Democratic Management Committee” that puts CCP objectives above any spiritual tradition in the activities of the institutions. For example, the Tibetan monastic education curriculum, traditionally set by learned spiritual masters, is formulated by the atheist Chinese government and political indoctrination has been made part of the mandated study for the monks and nuns.

Above all, the atheist Chinese government is claiming authority to control the reincarnation system of Tibetan Buddhism, a deeply spiritual process, in order to use it for its political objectives. They have already tried it with the appointment of their own Panchen Lama and want to do so with the next Dalai Lama.

The teacher-student relationship of traditional Tibetan Buddhism that has kept the faith alive for centuries has now been broken, with students not being allowed to follow masters of their choosing. Similarly, freedom to go on pilgrimages to sacred sites in Tibet are severely restricted through restrictive permit systems for Tibetans and denial of passports for those desiring to go to the holiest Buddhist site in Bodhi Gaya, India, where Buddha achieved enlightenment.

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QUESTION FOR GRACE JIN DREXEL FROM HON. DALE STRONG

*Question.* People of faith are experiencing a rise in discrimination and persecution across the world. Christians in Nigeria and across Europe. Jews in the United States. Hindus in Bangladesh—and sadly, I could keep going. 1. How does China’s stance on religious freedom specifically impact global trends or policies? 2. Given that religious freedom is a founding principle of the United States, what specific actions can we take to counter China’s global influence?

*Answer.* The tragic rise of religious persecution around the world often occurs because governments are unable or unwilling to stop it—too often turning a blind eye to prejudice or even subtly encouraging the repression. But China is unique in the scale and extent to which the government itself is actively driving the persecution and building an ecosystem of techno-authoritarian tools that would help other governments do the same. They are also softening global norms that would protect religious groups from these abuses. No government today has so directly and so brutally repressed so many. The United States has far more power than any other country to hold China to account and to turn back the rising tide of repressive governments’ tools and momentum in targeting faith. It must be more aggressive in stopping its own companies from supporting China’s techno-authoritarian ecosystem, and in standing up for the faithful in China to show that China, and other powers, cannot repress faith with impunity. Members of the U.S. Government, across all levels and including at multilateral meetings, should also continue to mention those detained or persecuted for their faith in every meeting with their Chinese counterparts.

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STATEMENT AFFIRMING THE CONTINUATION  
OF THE INSTITUTION OF DALAI LAMA  
JULY 2, 2025

(Translated from the original Tibetan)

On 24 September 2011, at a meeting of the heads of Tibetan spiritual traditions, I made a statement to fellow Tibetans in and outside Tibet, followers of Tibetan Buddhism, and those who have a connection with Tibet and Tibetans, regarding whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue. I stated, "As far back as 1969, I made clear that concerned people should decide whether the Dalai Lama's reincarnations should continue in the future."

I also said, "When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, to re-evaluate whether or not the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue."

Although I have had no public discussions on this issue, over the last 14 years leaders of Tibet's spiritual traditions, members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, participants in a Special General Body Meeting, members of the Central Tibetan Administration, NGOs, Buddhists from the Himalayan region, Mongolia, Buddhist republics of the Russian Federation, and Buddhists in Asia including mainland China, have written to me with reasons, earnestly requesting that the institution of the Dalai Lama continue. In particular, I have received messages through various channels from Tibetans in Tibet making the same appeal. In accordance with all these requests, I am affirming that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue.

The process by which a future Dalai Lama is to be recognized has been clearly established in the 24 September 2011 statement which states that responsibility for doing so will rest exclusively with members of the Gaden Phodrang Trust, the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They should consult the various heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors who are linked inseparably to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. They should accordingly carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with past tradition.

I hereby reiterate that the Gaden Phodrang Trust has sole authority to recognize the future reincarnation; no one else has any such authority to interfere in this matter.

Dalai Lama  
Dharamshala  
21 May 2025

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Statement of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, on the Issue of His Reincarnation  
 September 24, 2011  
<https://www.dalailama.com/news/2011/statement-of-his-holiness-the-fourteenth-dalai-lama-tenzin-gyatso-on-the-issue-of-his-reincarnation>

(Translated from the Tibetan)

#### Introduction

My fellow Tibetans, both in and outside Tibet, all those who follow the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and everyone who has a connection to Tibet and Tibetans: due to the foresight of our ancient kings, ministers and scholar-adepts, the complete teaching of the Buddha, comprising the scriptural and experiential teachings of the Three Vehicles and the Four Sets of Tantra and their related subjects and disciplines flourished widely in the Land of Snow. Tibet has served as a source of Buddhist and related cultural traditions for the world. In particular, it has contributed significantly to the happiness of countless beings in Asia, including those in China, Tibet and Mongolia.

In the course of upholding the Buddhist tradition in Tibet, we evolved a unique Tibetan tradition of recognizing the reincarnations of scholar-adepts that has been of immense help to both the Dharma and sentient beings, particularly to the monastic community.

Since the omniscient Gedun Gyatso was recognized and confirmed as the reincarnation of Gedun Drub in the fifteenth century and the Gaden Phodrang Labrang (the Dalai Lama's institution) was established, successive reincarnations have been recognized. The third in the line, Sonam Gyatso, was given the title of the Dalai Lama. The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, established the Gaden Phodrang Government in 1642, becoming the spiritual and political head of Tibet. For more than 600 years since Gedun Drub, a series of unmistakable reincarnations has been recognised in the lineage of the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lamas have functioned as both the political and spiritual leaders of Tibet for 369 years since 1642. I have now voluntarily brought this to an end, proud and satisfied that we can pursue the kind of democratic system of government flourishing elsewhere in the world. In fact, as far back as 1969, I made clear that concerned people should decide whether the Dalai Lama's reincarnations should continue in the future. However, in the absence of clear guidelines, should the concerned public express a strong wish for the Dalai Lamas to continue, there is an obvious risk of vested political interests misusing the reincarnation system to fulfil their own political agenda. Therefore, while I remain physically and mentally fit, it seems important to me that we draw up clear guidelines to recognise the next Dalai Lama, so that there is no room for doubt or deception. For these guidelines to be fully comprehensible, it is essential to

understand the system of Tulku recognition and the basic concepts behind it. Therefore, I shall briefly explain them below.

#### Past and future lives

In order to accept reincarnation or the reality of Tulkus, we need to accept the existence of past and future lives. Sentient beings come to this present life from their previous lives and take rebirth again after death. This kind of continuous rebirth is accepted by all the ancient Indian spiritual traditions and schools of philosophy, except the Charvakas, who were a materialist movement. Some modern thinkers deny past and future lives on the premise that we cannot see them. Others do not draw such clear cut conclusions on this basis.

Although many religious traditions accept rebirth, they differ in their views of what it is that is reborn, how it is reborn, and how it passes through the transitional period between two lives. Some religious traditions accept the prospect of future life, but reject the idea of past lives.

Generally, Buddhists believe that there is no beginning to birth and that once we achieve liberation from the cycle of existence by overcoming our karma and destructive emotions, we will not be reborn under the sway of these conditions. Therefore, Buddhists believe that there is an end to being reborn as a result of karma and destructive emotions, but most Buddhist philosophical schools do not accept that the mind-stream comes to an end. To reject past and future rebirth would contradict the Buddhist concept of the ground, path and result, which must be explained on the basis of the disciplined or undisciplined mind. If we accept this argument, logically, we would also have to accept that the world and its inhabitants come about without causes and conditions. Therefore, as long as you are a Buddhist, it is necessary to accept past and future rebirth.

For those who remember their past lives, rebirth is a clear experience. However, most ordinary beings forget their past lives as they go through the process of death, intermediate state and rebirth. As past and future rebirths are slightly obscure to them, we need to use evidence-based logic to prove past and future rebirths to them.

There are many different logical arguments given in the words of the Buddha and subsequent commentaries to prove the existence of past and future lives. In brief, they come down to four points: the logic that things are preceded by things of a similar type, the logic that things are preceded by a substantial cause, the logic that the mind has gained familiarity with things in the past, and the logic of having gained experience of things in the past.

Ultimately all these arguments are based on the idea that the nature of the mind, its clarity and awareness, must have clarity and awareness as its substantial cause. It

cannot have any other entity such as an inanimate object as its substantial cause. This is self-evident. Through logical analysis we infer that a new stream of clarity and awareness cannot come about without causes or from unrelated causes. While we observe that mind cannot be produced in a laboratory, we also infer that nothing can eliminate the continuity of subtle clarity and awareness.

As far as I know, no modern psychologist, physicist, or neuroscientist has been able to observe or predict the production of mind either from matter or without cause.

There are people who can remember their immediate past life or even many past lives, as well as being able to recognise places and relatives from those lives. This is not just something that happened in the past. Even today there are many people in the East and West, who can recall incidents and experiences from their past lives. Denying this is not an honest and impartial way of doing research, because it runs counter to this evidence. The Tibetan system of recognising reincarnations is an authentic mode of investigation based on people's recollection of their past lives.

#### How rebirth takes place

There are two ways in which someone can take rebirth after death: rebirth under the sway of karma and destructive emotions and rebirth through the power of compassion and prayer. Regarding the first, due to ignorance negative and positive karma are created and their imprints remain on the consciousness. These are reactivated through craving and grasping, propelling us into the next life. We then take rebirth involuntarily in higher or lower realms. This is the way ordinary beings circle incessantly through existence like the turning of a wheel. Even under such circumstances ordinary beings can engage diligently with a positive aspiration in virtuous practices in their day-to-day lives. They familiarise themselves with virtue that at the time of death can be reactivated providing the means for them to take rebirth in a higher realm of existence. On the other hand, superior Bodhisattvas, who have attained the path of seeing, are not reborn through the force of their karma and destructive emotions, but due to the power of their compassion for sentient beings and based on their prayers to benefit others. They are able to choose their place and time of birth as well as their future parents. Such a rebirth, which is solely for the benefit of others, is rebirth through the force of compassion and prayer.

#### The meaning of Tulku

It seems the Tibetan custom of applying the epithet 'Tulku' (Buddha's Emanation Body) to recognized reincarnations began when devotees used it as an honorary title, but it has since become a common expression. In general, the term Tulku refers to a particular aspect of the Buddha, one of the three or four described in the Sutra Vehicle. According to this explanation of these aspects of the Buddha, a person who is totally bound by destructive emotions and karma has the potential to achieve the Truth Body

(Dharmakaya), comprising the Wisdom Truth Body and Nature Truth Body. The former refers to the enlightened mind of a Buddha, which sees everything directly and precisely, as it is, in an instant. It has been cleared of all destructive emotions, as well as their imprints, through the accumulation of merit and wisdom over a long period of time. The latter, the Nature Truth Body, refers to the empty nature of that all-knowing enlightened mind. These two together are aspects of the Buddhas for themselves. However, as they are not directly accessible to others, but only amongst the Buddhas themselves, it is imperative that the Buddhas manifest in physical forms that are accessible to sentient beings in order to help them. Hence, the ultimate physical aspect of a Buddha is the Body of Complete Enjoyment (Sambhogakaya), which is accessible to superior Bodhisattvas, and has five definite qualifications such as residing in the Akanishta Heaven. And from the Body of Complete Enjoyment are manifested the myriad Emanation Bodies or Tulkus (Nirmanakaya), of the Buddhas, which appear as gods or humans and are accessible even to ordinary beings. These two physical aspects of the Buddha are termed Form Bodies, which are meant for others.

The Emanation Body is three-fold: a) the Supreme Emanation Body like Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha, who manifested the twelve deeds of a Buddha such as being born in the place he chose and so forth; b) the Artistic Emanation Body which serves others by appearing as craftsmen, artists and so on; and c) the Incarnate Emanation Body, according to which Buddhas appear in various forms such as human beings, deities, rivers, bridges, medicinal plants, and trees to help sentient beings. Of these three types of Emanation Body, the reincarnations of spiritual masters recognized and known as 'Tulkus' in Tibet come under the third category. Amongst these Tulkus there may be many who are truly qualified Incarnate Emanation Bodies of the Buddhas, but this does not necessarily apply to all of them. Amongst the Tulkus of Tibet there may be those who are reincarnations of superior Bodhisattvas, Bodhisattvas on the paths of accumulation and preparation, as well as masters who are evidently yet to enter these Bodhisattva paths. Therefore, the title of Tulku is given to reincarnate Lamas either on the grounds of their resembling enlightened beings or through their connection to certain qualities of enlightened beings.

As Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo said:

"Reincarnation is what happens when someone takes rebirth after the predecessor's passing away; emanation is when manifestations take place without the source's passing away."

#### Recognition of Reincarnations

The practice of recognizing who is who by identifying someone's previous life occurred even when Shakyamuni Buddha himself was alive. Many accounts are found in the four Agama Sections of the Vinaya Pitaka, the Jataka Stories, the Sutra of the Wise and Foolish, the Sutra of One Hundred Karmas and so on, in which the Tathagata revealed

the workings of karma, recounting innumerable stories about how the effects of certain karmas created in a past life are experienced by a person in his or her present life. Also, in the life stories of Indian masters, who lived after the Buddha, many reveal their previous places of birth. There are many such stories, but the system of recognizing and numbering their reincarnations did not occur in India.

The system of recognizing reincarnations in Tibet

Past and future lives were asserted in the indigenous Tibetan Bon tradition before the arrival of Buddhism. And since the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, virtually all Tibetans have believed in past and future lives. Investigating the reincarnations of many spiritual masters who upheld the Dharma, as well as the custom of praying devotedly to them, flourished everywhere in Tibet. Many authentic scriptures, indigenous Tibetan books such as the Mani Kabum and the Fivefold Kathang Teachings and others like the The Books of Kadam Disciples and the Jewel Garland: Responses to Queries, which were recounted by the glorious, incomparable Indian master Dipankara Atisha in the 11th century in Tibet, tell stories of the reincarnations of Arya Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion. However, the present tradition of formally recognizing the reincarnations of masters first began in the early 13th century with the recognition of Karmapa Pagshi as the reincarnation of Karmapa Dusum Khyenpa by his disciples in accordance with his prediction. Since then, there have been seventeen Karmapa incarnations over more than nine hundred years. Similarly, since the recognition of Kunga Sangmo as the reincarnation of Khandro Choekyi Dronme in the 15th century there have been more than ten incarnations of Samding Dorje Phagmo. So, among the Tulkus recognized in Tibet there are monastics and lay tantric practitioners, male and female. This system of recognizing the reincarnations gradually spread to other Tibetan Buddhist traditions, and Bon, in Tibet. Today, there are recognized Tulkus in all the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Sakya, Geluk, Kagyu and Nyingma, as well as Jonang and Bodong, who serve the Dharma. It is also evident that amongst these Tulkus some are a disgrace.

The omniscient Gedun Drub, who was a direct disciple of Je Tsongkhapa, founded Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Tsang and took care of his students. He passed away in 1474 at the age of 84. Although initially no efforts were made to identify his reincarnation, people were obliged to recognize a child named Sangye Chophel, who had been born in Tanak, Tsang (1476), because of what he had to say about his amazing and flawless recollections of his past life. Since then, a tradition began of searching for and recognizing the successive reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas by the Gaden Phodrang Labrang and later the Gaden Phodrang Government.

The ways of recognizing reincarnations

After the system of recognizing Tulkus came into being, various procedures for going about it began to develop and grow. Among these some of the most important involve

the predecessor's predictive letter and other instructions and indications that might occur; the reincarnation's reliably recounting his previous life and speaking about it; identifying possessions belonging to the predecessor and recognizing people who had been close to him. Apart from these, additional methods include asking reliable spiritual masters for their divination as well as seeking the predictions of mundane oracles, who appear through mediums in trance, and observing the visions that manifest in sacred lakes of protectors like Lhamoi Latso, a sacred lake south of Lhasa.

When there happens to be more than one prospective candidate for recognition as a Tulku, and it becomes difficult to decide, there is a practice of making the final decision by divination employing the dough-ball method (zen tak) before a sacred image while calling upon the power of truth.

Emanation before the passing away of the predecessor (ma-dhey tulku)

Usually a reincarnation has to be someone's taking rebirth as a human being after previously passing away. Ordinary sentient beings generally cannot manifest an emanation before death (ma-dhey tulku), but superior Bodhisattvas, who can manifest themselves in hundreds or thousands of bodies simultaneously, can manifest an emanation before death. Within the Tibetan system of recognizing Tulkus there are emanations who belong to the same mind-stream as the predecessor, emanations who are connected to others through the power of karma and prayers, and emanations who come as a result of blessings and appointment.

The main purpose of the appearance of a reincarnation is to continue the predecessor's unfinished work to serve Dharma and beings. In the case of a Lama who is an ordinary being, instead of having a reincarnation belonging to the same mind-stream, someone else with connections to that Lama through pure karma and prayers may be recognized as his or her emanation. Alternatively it is possible for the Lama to appoint a successor who is either his disciple or someone young who is to be recognized as his emanation. Since these options are possible in the case of an ordinary being, an emanation before death that is not of the same mind-stream is feasible. In some cases one high Lama may have several reincarnations simultaneously, such as incarnations of body, speech and mind and so on. In recent times, there have been well-known emanations before death such as Dudjom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje and Chogye Trichen Ngawang Khyenrab.

Using the Golden Urn

As the degenerate age gets worse, and as more reincarnations of high Lamas are being recognized, some of them for political motives, increasing numbers have been recognized through inappropriate and questionable means, as a result of which huge damage has been done to the Dharma.

During the conflict between Tibet and the Gurkhas (1791-93) the Tibetan Government had to call on Manchu military support. Consequently the Gurkha military was expelled from Tibet, but afterwards Manchu officials made a 29-point proposal on the pretext of making the Tibetan Government's administration more efficient. This proposal included the suggestion of picking lots from a Golden Urn to decide on the recognition of the reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas, Panchen Lamas and Hutuktus, a Mongolian title given to high Lamas. Therefore, this procedure was followed in the case of recognizing some reincarnations of the Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama and other high Lamas. The ritual to be followed was written by the Eighth Dalai Lama Jampel Gyatso. Even after such a system had been introduced, this procedure was dispensed with for the Ninth, Thirteenth and myself, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

Even in the case of the Tenth Dalai Lama, the authentic reincarnation had already been found and in reality this procedure was not followed, but in order to humour the Manchus it was merely announced that this procedure had been observed.

The Golden Urn system was actually used only in the cases of the Eleventh and Twelfth Dalai Lamas. However, the Twelfth Dalai Lama had already been recognized before the procedure was employed. Therefore, there has only been one occasion when a Dalai Lama was recognized by using this method. Likewise, among the reincarnations of the Panchen Lama, apart from the Eighth and the Ninth, there have been no instances of this method being employed. This system was imposed by the Manchus, but Tibetans had no faith in it because it lacked any spiritual quality. However, if it were to be used honestly, it seems that we could consider it as similar to the manner of divination employing the dough-ball method (zen tak).

In 1880, during the recognition of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the Twelfth, traces of the Priest-Patron relationship between Tibet and the Manchus still existed. He was recognized as the unmistakable reincarnation by the Eighth Panchen Lama, the predictions of the Nechung and Samye oracles and by observing visions that appeared in Lhamoi Latso, therefore the Golden Urn procedure was not followed. This can be clearly understood from the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's final testament of the Water-Monkey Year (1933) in which he states:

"As you all know, I was selected not in the customary way of picking lots from the golden urn, but my selection was foretold and divined. In accordance with these divinations and prophecies I was recognized as the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and enthroned."

When I was recognized as the Fourteenth incarnation of the Dalai Lama in 1939, the Priest-Patron relationship between Tibet and China had already come to an end. Therefore, there was no question of any need to confirm the reincarnation by employing the Golden Urn. It is well-known that the then Regent of Tibet and the Tibetan National Assembly had followed the procedure for recognizing the Dalai Lama's

reincarnation taking account of the predictions of high Lamas, oracles and the visions seen in Lhamoi Latso; the Chinese had no involvement in it whatever. Nevertheless, some concerned officials of the Guomintang later cunningly spread lies in the newspapers claiming that they had agreed to forego the use of the Golden Urn and that Wu Chung-tsin presided over my enthronement, and so on. This lie was exposed by Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, who the People's Republic of China considered to be a most progressive person, at the Second Session of the Fifth People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region (31st July 1989). This is clear, when, at the end of his speech, in which he gave a detailed explanation of events and presented documentary evidence, he demanded:

"What need is there for the Communist Party to follow suit and continue the lies of the Guomintang?"

Deceptive strategy and false hopes

In the recent past, there have been cases of irresponsible managers of wealthy Lama-estates who indulged in improper methods to recognize reincarnations, which have undermined the Dharma, the monastic community and our society. Moreover, since the Manchu era Chinese political authorities repeatedly engaged in various deceitful means using Buddhism, Buddhist masters and Tulkus as tools to fulfill their political ends as they involved themselves in Tibetan and Mongolian affairs. Today, the authoritarian rulers of the People's Republic of China, who as communists reject religion, but still involve themselves in religious affairs, have imposed a so-called re-education campaign and declared the so-called Order No. Five, concerning the control and recognition of reincarnations, which came into force on 1st September 2007. This is outrageous and disgraceful. The enforcement of various inappropriate methods for recognizing reincarnations to eradicate our unique Tibetan cultural traditions is doing damage that will be difficult to repair.

Moreover, they say they are waiting for my death and will recognize a Fifteenth Dalai Lama of their choice. It is clear from their recent rules and regulations and subsequent declarations that they have a detailed strategy to deceive Tibetans, followers of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and the world community. Therefore, as I have a responsibility to protect the Dharma and sentient beings and counter such detrimental schemes, I make the following declaration.

The next incarnation of the Dalai Lama

As I mentioned earlier, reincarnation is a phenomenon which should take place either through the voluntary choice of the concerned person or at least on the strength of his or her karma, merit and prayers. Therefore, the person who reincarnates has sole legitimate authority over where and how he or she takes rebirth and how that

reincarnation is to be recognized. It is a reality that no one else can force the person concerned, or manipulate him or her. It is particularly inappropriate for Chinese communists, who explicitly reject even the idea of past and future lives, let alone the concept of reincarnate Tulkus, to meddle in the system of reincarnation and especially the reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas. Such brazen meddling contradicts their own political ideology and reveals their double standards. Should this situation continue in the future, it will be impossible for Tibetans and those who follow the Tibetan Buddhist tradition to acknowledge or accept it.

When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, and re-evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not. On that basis we will take a decision. If it is decided that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should continue and there is a need for the Fifteenth Dalai Lama to be recognized, responsibility for doing so will primarily rest on the concerned officers of the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust. They should consult the various heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors who are linked inseparably to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. They should seek advice and direction from these concerned beings and carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with past tradition. I shall leave clear written instructions about this. Bear in mind that, apart from the reincarnation recognized through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People's Republic of China.

The Dalai Lama  
Dharamsala

September 24, 2011

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5-Minute Oral Testimony (Dr. Bob Fu)

美國國會及行政當局中國委員會 (CECC) 聽證會五分鐘口頭證詞 (傅希秋)

Founder and President, ChinaAid

中國援助協會 (ChinaAid) 創始人兼會長

CECC Hearing – November 20, 10:00 AM

2025 年 11 月 20 日上午 10 時

Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 562

參議院德克森辦公大樓 562 會議室

Chairman Sullivan, Co-Chairman Smith, and distinguished Members of the Commission:  
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

蘇利文主席、史密斯共同主席，以及各位委員，感謝您們給我今天作證的機會。

I speak as a former prisoner of conscience, the founder of ChinaAid, and an American citizen whose family was targeted on U.S. soil by the CCP.

我是一名前良心犯，中國援助協會創始人，也是曾在美國本土受中共跨國迫害的美國公民。

Today I speak for Christians, Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and other people of faith suffering under the most aggressive war on religion since Mao.

今天，我代表千千萬萬在中共最嚴厲宗教戰爭下受苦的基督徒、維吾爾穆斯林、藏傳佛教徒和其他信仰群體發聲。

China's war on faith has entered a dangerous new phase: the CCP seeks to eliminate all independent faith.

中國對信仰的戰爭已進入危險新階段：中共企圖消滅所有獨立的信仰力量。

I highlight four trends.

我將概述四大趨勢：

First, the CCP is criminalizing normal Christian life—sentencing pastors to 10–15 years for receiving tithes and offerings, as seen in the heavy sentences of Pastor Yang Rongli and Pastor Wang Xiaoguang.

第一，中共把正常的基督徒生活定為犯罪——牧師因接受十一奉獻而被判 10 至 15 年，如楊榮麗牧師和王曉光牧師受到重判。

Online worship is outlawed. Posting Scripture, joining a Bible study on Zoom, or livestreaming a sermon is illegal.

網上敬拜被全面取締。發布聖經經文、參加 Zoom 查經或直播講道都屬非法。

Christians attending overseas conferences are arrested, such as evangelist Dong Yumei.

參加海外培訓或宣教會議者被捕，例如董玉梅傳道。

Second, the CCP targets the next generation. Children are banned from churches. Parents are threatened for teaching the Bible at home.

第二，中共針對下一代。兒童被禁止進入教會，家長因在家教導聖經被威脅。

Seventy-one-year-old Sister Wang Honglan was sentenced to five years simply for giving away Bibles.

71 歲的王洪蘭姊妹因免費發放聖經而被判五年徒刑。

Starting January 1, 2026, all unregistered religious activity becomes explicitly criminal under China's revised Public Security Law.

自 2026 年 1 月 1 日起，中國新的《治安管理處罰法》將明確把所有未登記的宗教活動定為犯罪。

Third, China continues to imprison and disappear religious leaders:

第三，中共繼續監禁與強迫失蹤宗教領袖：

- Lawyer Gao Zhisheng has been missing for over eight years;

— 高智晟律師失蹤逾八年；

- Pastor Wang Yi is serving nine years;

— 王怡牧師被判九年；

- Dr. Wang Bingzhang is serving life after being kidnapped;

— 王炳章博士被綁架後判處無期徒刑；

- Zhang Yadi, a Tibetan Buddhist convert, has disappeared.

— 藏傳佛教徒張亞迪被強迫失蹤。

Fourth, China's persecution now reaches the United States.

第四，中共的迫害已蔓延至美國本土。

In 2020, more than 50 CCP-linked operatives surrounded my Texas home for nearly three months to intimidate my family.

2020 年，50 多名中共操控的代理人包圍我在德州的家近三個月，企圖恐嚇我家。

Chinese churches in North America have been pressured to raise the PRC flag on pulpits and silence sermons about persecution.

北美多間華人教會被施壓在講台上升掛五星旗，並禁止講述迫害真相。

What must be done?

必須採取哪些行動？

Congress must pass the Counter-CCP Transnational Repression Act.

國會必須通過《反中共跨國鎮壓法案》。

Pass Senator Ted Budd's Act to sanction religious persecutors.

通過泰德·巴德參議員的法案，制裁宗教迫害者。

Apply Global Magnitsky sanctions to officials behind the Zion Church 10.9 raids and major religious cases.

對參與 10·9 錫安教案等迫害事件的官員啟動《全球馬格尼茨基法》制裁。

Protect asylum seekers targeted under China's 2026 Public Security Law.

保護因 2026 年新法而面臨迫害的庇護申請者。

Ensure religious freedom is raised in every diplomatic engagement with the PRC.

在所有中美高層外交中堅定提出宗教自由問題。

Thank you for standing with those who cannot stand for themselves. May the courage of persecuted believers inspire decisive action.

感謝美國站立在不能為自己站立的人身旁。願受迫害信徒的勇氣激發我們作出果斷行動。



## CCP's Growing Threats to Religious Freedom in Hong Kong

**Written Testimony by Frances Hui**

Policy and Advocacy Coordinator  
Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation

Hearing before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China

“China’s War on Religion: The Threat to Religious Freedom and Why it Matters to the United States”

November 20, 2025

Senator Sullivan, Congressman Smith, Commissioners, and all staff of the Commission, thank you for convening this hearing and for your leadership in spotlighting the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) escalating assaults on religious freedom. I appreciate the Commission’s invitation to share the recent developments in Hong Kong’s religious freedom.

As a Hong Kong native, Catholic, and now an exiled activist, I have witnessed and documented the CCP’s growing threats to religious communities in Hong Kong and advocated for the rights and freedom of those persecuted for standing up for justice. Hong Kong has become a testbed for the CCP’s growing campaign to export religious repression from China to the world. The developments in Hong Kong urgently demand the full attention of the United States.

For decades, the freedoms of conscience and religious belief were guaranteed under Hong Kong’s Basic Law and the Sino-British Joint Declaration after the 1997 handover. These protections allowed Hong Kong to become a diverse, international city where religion flourished. Hong Kong served as a sanctuary for persecuted believers fleeing mainland China’s religious repression and functioned as a global hub for faith communities and human rights advocates. Every June 4th, the Catholic Church in Hong Kong organized commemorative Masses in various districts across the city to pray for the victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre and for the Church in China.

That legacy, however, has been shattered by the imposition of the National Security Law (NSL) in 2020, undermining religious communities’ role as defenders of justice and freedom and coercing them into silence and compliance. This trend not only impacts millions of Hong Kongers but signals a deliberate CCP campaign that threatens universal values and democratic systems far beyond Hong Kong.

In my work for the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation, I conducted open-source research and interviews with clergy, scholars, educators, and laypersons from various faiths to assess the CCP’s quiet and careful strategy to take control of religious communities in Hong Kong.<sup>1</sup>

### **I. Sinicization of Religion in Hong Kong**

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<sup>1</sup> Frances Hui, “[Hostile Takeover: The CCP and Hong Kong’s Religious Communities](#),” Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation.



In May 2015, CCP's General Secretary Xi Jinping introduced the policy of "Sinicization of religion"—an idea to align religious groups with communist doctrines, customs, and "socialist core values," anchoring the party's ideology within faith. In Hong Kong, Sinicization is promoted through orchestrated cultural exchanges, shaming campaigns, educational indoctrination, and infiltration of theological discourse to serve a range of CCP political and economic goals.

State documents describe Hong Kong's six major religions as playing important roles for the People's Republic of China (PRC) by engaging with the world, given the PRC's "strategic and geopolitical factors." It has particularly targeted Christianity and Islam, which it views as especially susceptible to "foreign influence" and associated with pro-democracy values.

Church leaders in Hong Kong have been meeting their counterparts in China for "cultural and theological exchanges," with Chinese bishops and representatives promoting Xi's Sinicization policy and emphasizing the need to "adhere to the direction of Sinicization in China." Since 2021, Hong Kong's Catholic Diocese has held at least three seminars on the Sinicization of religion with the state-controlled church in China.

This campaign has already had a visible effect. In recent years, religious leaders in Hong Kong have increasingly made remarks that echo the CCP rhetoric and values. Hong Kong's bishop, Cardinal Stephen Chow, for example, has urged Hong Kong Catholics to "love the country" and drawn parallels between the late Pope's "love for humanity" and Xi's goal of a "Community of Common Destiny" for all people.<sup>2</sup> Most recently, he defended the state of religious freedom in Hong Kong and insisted that there is no religious persecution there at an event in Parramatta, Australia.<sup>3</sup>

In August 2023, a group of 20 leaders of Hong Kong Islamic organizations was invited to visit Xinjiang. In interviews on China's state television, they dismissed reports of Uyghur forced labor—despite extensive documentation of internment camps designed to torture and brainwash millions of Uyghurs—and claimed that Muslim compatriots are "fully enjoying religious freedom and are well-respected."<sup>4</sup> Muslim community leaders from Hong Kong have also promoted China's development projects, including the Belt and Road Initiatives, which involve cooperation with dozens of Islamic countries.

Faith groups have been publicly celebrating the PRC's National Day and the anniversary of Hong Kong's handover to China, displaying the PRC national flag and parroting the CCP rhetoric in sermons and statements. Since the NSL was imposed, representatives from each group gather every fall to celebrate China's national establishment day, all praising the country's leadership and pledging to cooperate with the CCP's governance.

## II. Chilling Effect: Self-Censorship and Institutional Silence

<sup>2</sup> Jeffe Lam, "'Patriotism Is Everyone's Duty': Hong Kong Bishop Brushes aside 'Politicising Religion' Concerns during Historic Beijing Visit," South China Morning Post, April 21, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Cook, "Hong Kong faces big challenges, says its cardinal," The Catholic Weekly, September 23, 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Azizul Rahman Suffiad's interview starts from 0:47-55. "[新疆新闻联播] 香港伊斯兰教团体代表团参访新疆," China Central Television, 2023, video, 2:21.



The NSL's sweeping, ambiguous provisions have spread a climate of fear through Hong Kong's religious life. Arrests of prominent faith-inspired activists—including publisher Jimmy Lai, Cardinal Joseph Zen, and Protestant pastor Gary Pang Moon-yuen—have sent shockwaves through clergy and laity alike. Religious leaders are heeding internal advisories to avoid politically sensitive topics. A survey indicated that church leaders are adjusting the content of their preaching in response to the political environment.<sup>5</sup>

The Hong Kong Catholic Diocese has retreated from its historical role in speaking out on religious persecution in China and on sociopolitical issues in Hong Kong. In October 2020, the Church censored a statement by its Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) by removing a reference to James Su Zhiman, a bishop of Baoding diocese in China, who spent over 25 years in Chinese prison or forced labor camps and has been missing since 1996.<sup>6</sup> In 2022, the Diocese ended the tradition of hosting annual memorial masses on June 4<sup>th</sup> to commemorate the lost lives in the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre.<sup>7</sup> Later that year, it rebranded JPC as the "Diocesan Commission on Integral Human Development," removing historical references to persecution in mainland China and the commission's work to "advocate and promote human rights" from the commission's website.<sup>8</sup>

Pastors, teachers, and faith-based educators report pressure to adapt teaching materials, sermons, and curricula to align with national security and patriotic-value requirements. Teachers at Catholic schools told me it was challenging to teach students about the early Christian martyrs, Catholicism's historical role in social and political affairs, persecutions in the Roman Empire, or even the Beatitudes' blessing of "those who are persecuted for righteousness." To avoid crossing unseen red lines, they now avoid any real-life examples that might suggest a moral critique of the CCP.

Ordinary worshipers have also retreated from any form of discussion, fearing reprisal for words or actions deemed "seditious" by authorities. This pervasive self-censorship not only stifles dissent but erodes the conscience role of religious communities in society, reducing faith to a depoliticized ritual divested of moral witness. As one Hong Kong Catholic priest told me, "When the Church cannot speak out and advocate for social justice, and address and confront challenges, when people are suffering in the current social conditions and the church remains silent, the God we preach becomes an irrelevant faith."

### III. Indoctrination in Education

The NSL requires all schools in Hong Kong to implement "national security education," organize weekly flag-raising ceremonies, and incorporate "value education" into all subjects to promote students' national identity, obedience, and law-abidingness. While these are morally correct values to teach, within China's national security framework, they are defined as loyalty to the one-party authoritarian rule, where opposition is not tolerated.

<sup>5</sup> 梁國全, "如果宣講沒有了情境……," *Christian Times*, January 19, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Greg Torode, "Nuns arrested as Beijing turns up heat on Church in Hong Kong," Reuters, December 30, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> "連續第二年停辦六四彌撒 教區：一切追憶會於5月彌撒中進行," Radio Free Asia, May 11, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> See the PDF of the pamphlet about the Diocesan Commission on Integral Human Development in Chinese: <https://www.dcihd.org/about/?id=13>.



The majority of Hong Kong schools are run by religious sponsoring bodies, primarily Roman Catholics and other Christian denominations. These faith-based schools usually offer courses in Ethics and Religious Studies (ERS) in addition to the mandatory subjects.

These schools are no exception under the NSL requirement. Under the law, the PRC national flag, which symbolizes atheism, is celebrated and displayed beside sacred symbols. Teachers have been required to submit all of their past and current teaching materials related to China and national security for screening and adjustment, and to specify how they incorporate national security and certain Chinese values into each of their courses, including ERS.

ERS textbooks published by the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese now include prayers and reflections that blend religious language with political messaging, praising and embracing China and Chinese identity:

“Lord, thank you for making me Chinese. I am willing to treat others with harmony.”  
(Chapter 1: "God Loves China," Embark on the Starlit Path, 2nd grade.)

“Sharing the same culture makes us sons and daughters of the Chinese nation. Jesus, through His words and actions, teaches us how to love our own nation and culture. Are you willing to follow Jesus?” (Chapter 4: "Treasure Traditional Culture," Embark on the Starlit Path, 3rd grade.)

This subtle indoctrination shapes a new generation of Hong Kongers whose religious identity is inseparable from state-defined loyalty, conditioning them to see conscience, activism, and dissent as threats to national security.

#### IV. Targeted Persecution and Direct Attack

People in Hong Kong still largely retain the formal freedom to attend worship and practice their faith. However, many religious believers whose faith has led them to pro-democracy activism have been arrested, convicted, and sentenced for their political stance. The most prominent include Jimmy Lai, Benny Tai, Joshua Wong, Cardinal Joseph Zen, Rev. Chu Yiu-ming, and Pastor Gary Pang Moon-yuen.

Jimmy Lai, a devout Catholic, has been imprisoned for nearly five years. He has been denied regular access to Holy Communion and has not been permitted to attend mass since the start of his trial in December 2023.<sup>9</sup>

In October 2022, 50-year-old protestant pastor Gary Pang Moon-yuen was sentenced to a 13-month prison term for sedition and seditious speech after he briefly interrupted the trial of activist Chow Hang-tung in January 2022 and criticized the judge for “threatening to silence” people in a YouTube video.<sup>10</sup> He is the first Christian clergyman to be convicted under the NSL.

State-backed media outlets routinely slander religious communities, scapegoating them for dissent and advocating for tighter regulation reminiscent of the mainland’s Religious Affairs Bureau. These media outlets

<sup>9</sup> Kris Cheng, “Jimmy Lai’s time ‘running out,’ son says, as trial draws to close,” Nikkei Asia, August 13, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Anugrah Kumar, “Protestant pastor is first Christian clergy imprisoned on charges of sedition in Hong Kong,” Christian Post, October 30, 2022.



usually serve as Party channels to forecast future actions and promote the party's agenda. Their rhetoric signals the possibility of a future regulatory body on religious affairs in Hong Kong.

Falun Gong, in particular, remains vulnerable to organized campaigns of intimidation, physical attack, and destruction of property. Lawmakers have sought to ban it and freeze the assets. The chilling effect also reaches international religious organizations, as the Vatican and other global faith bodies faced increased pressure to align their policies with the CCP agenda.

#### V. Conclusion

To be precise, the CCP is waging a quiet but determined war against religious communities in Hong Kong. While it is not as overtly violent as the persecution in mainland China, it has effectively eroded the role of religious communities as a conscience for society.

The CCP recognizes the city's unique position as an international crossroads and a source of soft power for its geopolitical ambition. Religious diversity is now tolerated as part of the Hong Kong government's agenda to uphold its image of an international city that respects civil liberties and human rights. But beneath that façade, the CCP has adopted a careful co-opting strategy to gain control of the religious networks and use them as an outpost of its diplomatic and propaganda machinery to extend its influence beyond China's borders.

We must remember that this is the same authoritarian regime that has committed genocide against millions of Uyghurs, persecuted Tibetans for owning photographs of the Dalai Lama, and arrested leaders and members of underground churches who refuse to take oaths of fidelity to the government.

Hong Kong's religious communities now stand as frontline witnesses in a global contest over fundamental freedom. If Beijing can successfully tame churches, mosques, and temples in a place with a common-law system under the watch of the international community, media, and businesses, it will gain a powerful model for pressuring religious communities elsewhere, including in democratic societies. The erosion of religious freedom in Hong Kong undermines the credibility of international human rights agreements and challenges the U.S. to defend its values abroad. If the U.S. fails to recognize the threats facing Hong Kong's religious communities as part of the CCP's war on religious freedom and fails to hold Beijing accountable, it will embolden Beijing and other authoritarian regimes and weaken confidence in international law and our commitment to religious freedom.

#### VI. Recommendations

For these reasons, I offer the following recommendations for a robust U.S. response:

1. **Treat Hong Kong as a Front in China's War on Religion.** The State Department and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) should include Hong Kong in all China-related reporting and recommendations on religious freedom. Hong Kong should not be seen as a peripheral issue but a critical part of the CCP's broader strategy.



2. **Use Targeted Sanctions and Visa Restrictions.** Leverage all available policy tools—including the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, and the Global Magnitsky authorities—to impose targeted sanctions and visa bans on Hong Kong and mainland Chinese officials responsible for violations of religious freedom in Hong Kong. This should include officials who advocate tightening control over religious affairs and those involved in the imprisonment and mistreatment of religious believers—including judges, prosecutors, and prison authorities who abuse the law to punish religiously motivated advocacy or deny basic religious rights in detention. Congress should pass the Hong Kong Judicial Sanctions Act (H.R.633/S.1755), which identifies some of these individuals for review by the State Department for sanctions.<sup>11</sup>
3. **Increase Advocacy and Diplomatic Pressure.** Make the release of religious and pro-democracy detainees a priority in all bilateral and multilateral engagements with Hong Kong and PRC officials. Encourage Congressional Members and USCIRF Commissioners to formally adopt religious prisoners of conscience, raising their profiles and advocating for their immediate release. Such public advocacy amplifies the voices of persecuted individuals and signals the seriousness of U.S. concerns.
4. **Engage Global Religious Authorities.** Coordinate with the Vatican, major Christian denominations, Islamic organizations, and other international religious bodies to resist CCP efforts to co-opt or silence religious leaders and institutions in Hong Kong. Urge the Vatican to reconsider its agreement with Beijing, prevent the terms from extending to Hong Kong, and publicly advocate for religious prisoners of conscience in China and Hong Kong.
5. **Strengthen Protection for Hong Kong Believers at Risk.** Investigate CCP-directed harassment and transnational repression aimed at Hong Kong activists or believers on U.S. soil, including threats against churches, church leaders, or their families. Congress should pass the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (HKETO) Certification Act (H.R.2661), requiring the administration to review the diplomatic privileges and immunities given to these offices that have served as the Hong Kong government's outposts to influence policy on China and conduct espionage and surveillance of pro-democracy activists around the world.<sup>12</sup> Create and expand safe pathways—including refugee or humanitarian routes—for those at risk due to religious belief or faith-based advocacy.

U.S. leadership in shining a light on this issue is crucial. Through policy, advocacy, and international coordination, the U.S. can help defend not only the rights of Hong Kongers but also the universal principle of religious liberty upon which America was built.

<sup>11</sup> [H.R.733](#): "To provide for a review of sanctions with respect to Hong Kong," Congress.gov.

<sup>12</sup> [H.R.2661](#): "Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (HKETO) Certification Act," Congress.gov.



**Before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Hearing entitled:  
“China’s War on Religion: The Threat to Religious Freedom and Why it Matters to the U.S.”  
November 20, 2025**

Written Statement for the Record: Cynthia Sun, Danielle Wang

Honorable Chair and Members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to submit a statement for this timely hearing on China’s war on religion and its threat. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is accelerating a campaign of religious persecution and transnational repression that subordinates faith to Party doctrine and Xi Jinping’s leadership. Based on top-down directives and sweeping detentions nationwide, the persecution of Falun Gong is systemic and widespread. Between 1999 and 2025, the documented death toll of Falun Gong practitioners has reached 5,283 and counting.<sup>1</sup> Over the last three years, independent monitors and grassroots networks have documented sustained mass arrests, long sentences following sham trials, and ongoing deaths in custody. The same toolkit—surveillance, censorship, disinformation, torture, and forced organ harvesting—is increasingly applied to other religious and ethnic minorities.

This statement consists of two sections: (1) a brief overview of recent developments in the CCP’s persecution of Falun Gong in China and globally, and (2) the first-hand account of Danielle Wang regarding the suspicious circumstances surrounding the recent death in Beijing of her father, prominent practitioner Zhiwen Wang. Danielle previously testified in 2013 and 2016 to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the CECC, respectively.<sup>2</sup>

The CCP’s violent persecution of Falun Gong has long deployed technology and tactics that undermine religious freedom and the rule of law in China—and increasingly in the United States—while serving as a testing ground for methods then used against other faith communities, human rights defenders, and U.S. targets. The U.S. government must end the silence and impunity surrounding this campaign, consistently naming Falun Gong as among the CCP’s top victims, expanding targeted sanctions, and countering transnational repression. Such action would serve not only to protect the Falun Gong community, but also numerous other citizens of China and the world, as well as democratic values.

### CCP Policies and Tactics

Falun Gong (also known as Falun Dafa) is a spiritual and meditation practice from the Buddhist tradition, whose teachings center on the tenets of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance.<sup>3</sup> Though it does not have ordained clergy or formal places of worship, its focus on self-cultivation and belief in the divine renders it a form of religious practice. Introduced to China in 1992 by Mr. Li Hongzhi, it quickly spread, thanks to the health benefits and spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Minghui Library, “死難者名單(Death Cases by Date),” accessed November 17, 2025, <https://library.minghui.org/deathcase/Html/DeathCase/DeathDate/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. Danielle Wang, daughter of Wang Zhiwen, testimony, *Their Daughters’ Appeal to Beijing: “Let Our Fathers Go!”*, before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, 113th Cong., 1st sess., December 5, 2013, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-113/hr85791/pdf/CHRG-113/hr85791.pdf>; Xiaodan (Danielle) Wang, testimony, *Dissidents Who Have Suffered for Human Rights in China: A Look Back and a Look Forward*, Congressional-Executive Commission on China, December 5, 2016, <https://www.cecc.gov/sites/evc-subsites/www.cecc.gov/files/CECC%20Hearing%20-%20Dissidents%20Who%20Have%20Suffered%20-%20Dec16%20-%20Xiaodan%20Wang.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> David Ownby, *Falun Gong and the Future of China*, pp.2–4 (Oxford Univ. Press 2008); Benjamin Penny, *The Religion of Falun Gong*, (The University of Chicago Press, 2012); Falun Dafa, “Brief Introduction to Falun Dafa,” <https://en.falundafa.org/>.



fulfillment experienced by practitioners. By 1999, Falun Gong was practiced by 100 million people in China, according to official sources.<sup>4</sup>

In July 1999, the CCP arbitrarily launched a political campaign to wipe out Falun Gong, using any means necessary, in violation of China's own constitution. Despite the regime's claims to the contrary and as many Chinese lawyers have argued, practicing Falun Gong is not technically illegal in China. Rather, the regime's actions against practitioners consistently violate Chinese law and international human rights commitments. Nevertheless, the Chinese authorities continue to wield Article 300 of the Criminal Law ("using a heretical organization to undermine the implementation of the law") to prosecute actions by Falun Gong practitioners that elsewhere in the world are not only legal, but also celebrated. These activities include exposing rights abuses online, discussing the persecution in public, or sharing technology to jump the Great Firewall. Some detentions are also triggered by people simply engaging in religious practice like possessing spiritual texts or gathering together to study them.

From 2022 to 2025, over 10,000 Falun Gong practitioners were arbitrarily detained or harassed, and over 2,000 were sentenced to terms with a maximum of 15 years.<sup>5</sup> In 2024 alone, at least 541 were sentenced for up to 13 years, with victims' ages ranging from 29 to 94. Once in custody, Falun Gong practitioners face systematic physical and mental torture aimed at making them renounce their faith. This brutality routinely leads to deaths in custody or soon after release.

Recent analysis indicates a pattern of escalation: since 2022, hundreds of Falun Gong practitioners who had escaped arrest for more than a decade have been newly detained and imprisoned. The cases include senior citizens in their 70s, 80s and 90s, whose terms are effectively life sentences given their age. Thousands more believers in China faced abductions, home raids, physical assault, wrongful termination, school expulsion, forced medical tests, unjustified psychiatric detention, phone tapping, and other forms of harassment

Driving these injustices is the regime's demonization of Falun Gong practitioners. An anti-Falun Gong WeChat petition launched by the regime in 2023 garnered nearly 50 million signatures nationwide within a year, with police, employers, and schools forcing many citizens to sign.<sup>6</sup> Simultaneously, bounty programs in multiple provinces have offered cash rewards to report Falun Gong practitioners, illustrating a scale of mobilization and prioritization that also reverberates beyond China.

### Transnational Repression

For more than two decades, the CCP and its proxies have conducted a sustained campaign of transnational repression against Falun Gong outside China—refining tactics that now reach a far wider set of victims. Freedom House has described Beijing's effort as "the most

<sup>4</sup> Bay Fang, "An Opiate of the Masses? Millions of Chinese Embrace a Mystical Exercise Movement," *U.S. News & World Report*, February 14, 1999, archived at the Wayback Machine, [http://web.archive.org/web/20120509002028/http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/990222.archive\\_000322\\_2.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20120509002028/http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/990222.archive_000322_2.htm); Falun Dafa Information Center, "Shanghai TV: 100 Million Around the World Are Learning Falun Dafa (Falun Gong)," YouTube video, January 12, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJaFOhWVfMk>.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Larry Liu and Cynthia Sun, "Freedom Forsaken: Falun Gong and Beijing's Playbook for Repression," written submission to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom hearing, "State-Controlled Religion in China," October 16, 2025, <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/Falun%20Gong--USCIRF%20Testimony%20Freedom%20Forsaken.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Falun Dafa Information Center, "CCP Launches Nationwide Anti-Falun Gong Petition Campaign, Deceiving Tens of Millions," January 18, 2024, <https://faluninfo.net/ccp-launches-nationwide-anti-falun-gong-petition-campaign-deceiving-tens-of-millions/>.



sophisticated, global, and comprehensive campaign of transnational repression in the world,” with Falun Gong among its targets.<sup>7</sup> The victim pool is not limited to the Chinese diaspora: Falun Gong is practiced in over 100 countries and in over 40 languages, and non-ethnic Chinese adherents have also been harassed, barred from events, assaulted by proxies, or detained during visits by Chinese officials.

Since 2022, operations have escalated under top-down directives attributed to Xi Jinping, with a special focus on the United States.<sup>8</sup> Key security ministries play organizing roles, and leaked materials indicate coordination to treat the United States as a “main battlefield.” Additional leaks describe efforts to mobilize proxies, expand “public opinion” and “legal” warfare, and turn U.S. institutions and public opinion against Falun Gong and affiliated entities.

In practice, this reinvigorated campaign has included over 190 violent threats against practitioners, supporters, and venues; physical attacks; impersonation attempts; and efforts to weaponize U.S. agencies and courts.<sup>9</sup> Shen Yun Performing Arts—a New York-based, globally touring classical Chinese dance company founded by Falun Gong practitioners to revive traditional Chinese culture—has been a particular target, alongside its training campus Dragon Springs.<sup>10</sup> In 2024, two Chinese agents were convicted for an attempted bribery scheme to induce a supposed IRS official to target Shen Yun’s non-profit status. In addition, two other federal indictments in recent years have charged Chinese agents in schemes targeting Falun Gong communities in the United States. Parallel lawfare has targeted Dragon Springs and Shen Yun through repeated, frivolous lawsuits—all but one were dismissed with the latest suit pending a motion to dismiss—generating reputational and financial costs despite lacking merit.

Physical and public-safety risks have also been documented. In March 2024, a Shen Yun bus tire was deliberately slashed, with a similar slash later discovered on a tour truck; in February 2025, a false bomb threat prompted an evacuation of the Kennedy Center. Taiwanese authorities traced similar threats against Shen Yun performances to a Huawei Research Institute in Xi’an.<sup>11</sup> In Flushing, New York, practitioners and information booths have faced assaults and vandalism (assailants were arrested in 2022 and 2023), while paid protest operations amplified defamatory narratives outside major New York venues in 2025.<sup>12</sup>

The campaign also leverages diplomatic influence and disinformation. Chinese diplomats have pressured theaters and officials worldwide to cancel Shen Yun; in November 2024, a theater in Latvia publicly rejected such a demand and its foreign ministry raised concerns with

<sup>7</sup> Freedom House, “China: Transnational Repression—Origin Country Case Study,” Special Report, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression/china>.

<sup>8</sup> Tasnim Nazeer, “Leaked CCP Files Expose Global Crackdown on Dissent,” *The Diplomat*, February 2025, <https://thediplomat.com/2025/02/leaked-ccp-files-expose-global-crackdown-on-dissent/>.

<sup>9</sup> Falun Dafa Information Center, “Incident Tracker: Monitoring the CCP’s Latest Transnational Repression and Disinformation Campaign against Falun Gong, Shen Yun,” last updated November 8, 2025, <https://faluninfo.net/incident-tracker-monitoring-the-ccps-latest-transnational-repression-and-disinformation-campaign-against-falun-gong/>.

<sup>10</sup> Falun Dafa Information Center, “Beijing’s New Push to Destroy Shen Yun and Silence Falun Gong Globally,” *The Real Story of Shen Yun* (microsite), October 2025, <https://faluninfo.net/ccps-new-push-to-eliminate-falun-gong-and-shen-yun-globally/>.

<sup>11</sup> 自由時報電子報社新聞中心（台北報導），“法輪功神韻藝術團來台巡演 多個機關炸彈恐嚇 疑來自華為,” *自由時報* (Liberty Times Net), April 5, 2025, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/society/paper/1700082>.

<sup>12</sup> Falun Dafa Information Center, “Anti-Shen Yun Protesters Tied to Notorious CCP-Linked Figure in New York,” May 7, 2025, <https://faluninfo.net/anti-shen-yun-protesters-tied-to-notorious-ccp-linked-figure-in-new-york/>.



the Chinese embassy.<sup>13</sup> Coordinated impersonation emails have targeted lawmakers in multiple countries with false claims about Shen Yun, and social-media influence operations—some tied to China-based actors—have sought to stigmatize Falun Gong and its cultural initiatives. Although American law-enforcement actions have thwarted several plots, the scale and coordination of threats, proxies, and lawfare underscore the need for additional action to protect Falun Gong communities, American institutions, and the broader public from CCP transnational repression.

### Why This Matters

For over 26 years, Falun Gong practitioners have resisted the CCP's brutal onslaught, surviving as a faith community against incredible odds. Moreover, they have used creative, nonviolent methods to debunk the regime's falsehoods, expand access to information and free expression for millions in China, and even convince some members of the security apparatus to quietly refuse to cooperate with the party's brutality. Through initiatives like Shen Yun, Falun Gong practitioners have also shared the beauty and vision of a China without the CCP with the world, a China that would pose a much lesser threat to global security and freedom than the current regime. This is precisely why Xi Jinping is investing so many resources to silence Falun Gong and Shen Yun.

Meanwhile, the regime's persistent and nationwide actions to persecute Falun Gong yield a terrible cost, ruining the lives of untold innocent families across China while advancing and refining the mechanisms of surveillance, political control, censorship, and torture that push the country into an ever-deepening cycle of repression and authoritarianism. That toolkit is now increasingly being extended beyond China's borders to chill speech, intimidate U.S. citizens, skew public opinion, and manipulate U.S. institutions. From that perspective, the CCP's campaign against Falun Gong—as with its broader actions to persecute religious believers—poses a fundamental threat to U.S. national security and should be treated as such.

### Policy Recommendations

1. **U.S. officials should condemn the persecution of Falun Gong in public and private.** Government agencies, high-level officials, and elected representatives should make statements on key human rights and Falun Gong-related anniversaries, while mentioning Falun Gong consistently in broader statements on human rights and religious freedom in China.<sup>14</sup> In meetings with Chinese counterparts, officials should call for the release of imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners, including at the highest levels of diplomacy.
2. **The U.S. Senate should pass the Falun Gong Protection Act,** a vital piece of legislation that would not only save lives in China but also protect U.S. universities and medical institutions from complicity in rights violations and unethical practices.
3. **The U.S. Department of State should impose sanctions against key Chinese officials perpetrating human rights abuses and transnational repression against Falun Gong.**<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The Baltic Times, "Foreign Ministry in talks with Chinese Embassy underlines respect for freedom of speech and artistic expression in Latvia," December 17, 2024, [https://www.baltictimes.com/foreign\\_ministry\\_in\\_talks\\_with\\_chinese\\_embassy\\_underlines\\_respect\\_for\\_freedom\\_of\\_speech\\_and\\_artistic\\_expression\\_in\\_latvia/](https://www.baltictimes.com/foreign_ministry_in_talks_with_chinese_embassy_underlines_respect_for_freedom_of_speech_and_artistic_expression_in_latvia/).

<sup>14</sup> Note: The priority dates include December 10 (Human Rights Day), April 25 (anniversary of the Zhongnanhai appeal), May 13 (World Falun Dafa Day), June 26 (UN Day in Support of Victims of Torture), and July 20 (anniversary of the persecution).

<sup>15</sup> Note: Officials to consider include Zhao Leji on the Politburo Standing Committee; Minister of State Security Chen Yixian; Vice Minister of Public Security Chen Siyuan; Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission Chen Wenqing; and former chairman of the Chinese Transplant Congress Zheng Shusen.



4. **Relevant federal agencies should ensure the expanding initiatives on transnational repression include Falun Gong.** Ensure offices and staff working on transnational repression receive minimal education on Falun Gong, that engagement with vulnerable communities to collect incidents includes Falun Gong, and that transparency enforcement for foreign agents includes additional entities that demonize or harass Falun Gong believers. Ensure local Falun Gong community representatives are aware of any available channels to report incidents of transnational repression.
5. **Congress should convene quarterly briefings with Falun Gong victims and experts.** Work with civil society organizations like the Falun Dafa Information Center to provide trainings and connect interested offices with survivors of persecution.
6. **The CECC should continue to document as many Falun Gong prisoners as possible, especially those with relatives outside China.** Such cases are only a small proportion of all detained practitioners, but their inclusion in the Political Prisoner Database (PPD) facilitates advocacy on their behalf, protects them in detention, and aids their efforts to escape China. For example, an entry in the CECC's PPD was recently cited in support of an asylum case for Ms. Liu Pintong, a Falun Gong refugee in London, resulting in concrete protection.<sup>16</sup>

For a more detailed analysis of recent trends in the CCP's persecution against Falun Gong and further recommendations, please see the following written statement for the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission written by the Falun Dafa Information Center in June.<sup>17</sup>

#### Statement of Danielle Wang<sup>18</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a testimony again before the Commission.

My name is Danielle Wang. I am the daughter of Mr. Zhiwen Wang, a long-time Falun Dafa practitioner and one of the earliest volunteer coordinators of the practice in Beijing. Nearly nine years ago, I appeared before this Commission after a heartbreaking trip to China, when police intercepted my attempt to escort my father to the United States. At that time, I said that although he was out of prison, he was still not truly free.

Today, I am speaking out again with the tragic news that my father recently departed from this world. The circumstances of his death are highly suspicious. Every step of his deterioration in the last month of his life had the police's or CCP authorities' involvement.

I am not looking for pity. I am only seeking a space to tell his story. I do not want Beijing to erase, rewrite, or tarnish my father's memory and my family's experience.

For 26 years, my father's life has been defined by persecution. In 1999, when the Chinese Communist Party began its campaign against Falun Dafa, he was dragged from our home, paraded in a show trial on state television, and sentenced to 16 years in prison for crimes he never committed. During those long years, he endured forced labor, indoctrination, and constant surveillance. Even after his so-called "release," he never truly regained his freedom. Instead of

<sup>16</sup> Falun Dafa Information Center, "Finding Freedom in England: Family Rescue Campaign Success," accessed November 17, 2025, <https://faluninfo.net/finding-freedom-in-england-family-rescue-campaign-success/>.

<sup>17</sup> Levi Browde, "The Chinese Communist Party's Escalating Transnational Repression Targeting Falun Gong," written submission to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing, "Transnational Repression: Trends and Policy Approaches," June 24, 2025, <https://humanrightscorrection.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/humanrightscorrection.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/levi-browde-sfr-compressed.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Note: A first-hand account by Danielle Wang, an American whose father died last month in Beijing under extremely suspicious circumstances at the age of 76. His case epitomizes many inhumane dimensions of the regime's persecution of Falun Gong.



sending him directly home, they put him in a brainwashing camp until international pressure forced his release.

When he finally returned home, he found surveillance cameras equipped with motion detection and night vision installed outside all of his doors. On “sensitive” dates, he was ordered to stay indoors or forced to travel outside of Beijing. His phone was tapped. His neighbors were pressured to report on him. Despite all of this, my father never harbored hatred toward anyone. As a Falun Dafa practitioner, he continued to live by truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. He forgave the guards who beat him and the officials who tried to humiliate him. Even though he would have every right to hold grudges against everyone who stole away precious years of his freedom, he chose to remain steadfast in the principles of Falun Dafa and be at peace with the world.

Still, the regime would not let him go.

For over a decade, I worked with Members of Congress, advocates, and many kind people here in the United States to try to bring my father to safety. My father was approved as a U.S. immigrant; all that remained was for him to obtain a passport and leave China. You helped us come so close.

In 2016, my husband and I went to China after getting my father’s visa approved. After a harrowing experience being harassed by undercover agents and police, my father was stopped at the ferry terminal to Hong Kong and his passport was cut at customs. We were separated in the end. And from 2016 onward, every time my father tried to apply for a new passport, the authorities blocked him. His first passport may have been cut up, but he made several more attempts. Each time, they found new excuses, new “technical reasons,” and new forms of intimidation. Each time, they reminded him that he was still a marked man because of his faith. My father informed my family that the regime was trying to find an excuse to put him back into prison.

In mid-September of this year, during his latest attempt to apply for a passport in Beijing, something even more sinister happened. That morning, my father left home in good health and in good spirits. For all the pressure he lived under, he tried to keep up a normal routine. He still studied Falun Dafa’s teachings, did the exercises, and tried to stay optimistic about one day reuniting with me in America. He was in good health, with full function of his body.

At the passport office, as soon as he applied, the police were immediately alerted. They surrounded him and took him back to his house. The police said that there was no way he could leave China. They would restrict him there until he passed away. On a call on October 4th, he told me that the police claimed that he had a cerebral infarction, or a type of stroke, but how could the police suddenly be medical experts? My father also told me that he was able to walk around the house and control his legs.

The police asked him if I could come back to China. He told me not to come back and not to listen to them. He said that all of the passport issues were all the doing of the Public Security Bureau and then the phone was cut off immediately. That was the last time I heard his voice.

In the month following the day he applied for the passport, his leg functions deteriorated. On October 14 he fell at home. Somehow, the police had a key to his house and broke in. My father refused verbally and physically, but the police took him to Beijing Shijitan Hospital, Capital Medical University. This is an enormous flagship hospital, but the police claimed that



there were no regular beds available for him in any departments. Instead, they forced him into a solitary ICU room. From that moment on, he was under the complete control of the authorities.

Family members were not allowed to enter the ICU except for a brief two minutes per day. They were kept outside, forced to peer in through a glass door. Inside the room, police officers and at least one PSB warden stood guard 24 hours a day. Disturbingly, they filmed my father from multiple angles, continuously, from the moment he was brought in. We have to ask: Why would you film a supposedly “sick” patient around the clock, but refuse to let his family near him? How would the police know he had a stroke before he had even been to the hospital? It’s as if the final conclusion had already been determined.

In that ICU room, the police authorized unknown injections and IV drips to be administered to my father. We were never told clearly what drugs he was given. He never consented to them, nor did anyone have the power of attorney to act on his behalf. I was never consulted nor did I give my consent. Within two days, my father—who had been coherent and hopeful just days before—became confused, then incoherent, and then slipped into a coma.

On October 16, he died in that hospital bed, surrounded not by his loved ones, but by the very people who had persecuted him for decades.

The agony that has torn through me since his death is indescribable. When I was finally able to get through to my family at the hospital, they said that my father was moments away from dying, and I could hear the chaos and sadness in their voices. As we spoke, an unidentified police officer suddenly seized the phone from my relative and spoke directly to me. Instead of showing any sympathy or remorse, he asked, in a menacing tone, “So when are you coming back to China?”

That question was not an invitation. It was a threat.

And my father wasn’t dead yet. I was confused why they would ask this at such an inappropriate time. I desperately asked to talk to my dad, to try to reach him and call him back. The officer finally relented, but my father was beyond my reach by then.

What I do know is that Beijing views me—his American daughter, who has spoken openly about the persecution—as someone they want to lure back for unknown reasons. Perhaps it is related to the escalation of the persecution against Falun Dafa. This situation also showed me that even as my father lay dying, the authorities were thinking about intimidation and revenge, not human life.

My father’s death did not happen in a vacuum. It was the culmination of 26 years of persecution: 16 years in prison after a show trial, followed by constant surveillance, harassment, and repeated attempts to block his legal right to travel. It is impossible for me to accept that a man who survived nearly two decades in prison, who remained stable under years of surveillance, suddenly and coincidentally died within two days of being forcibly hospitalized and drugged, just as he tried again to secure a passport to reunite with his family in the United States.

As his daughter, I believe the CCP is fully responsible for my father’s death. He refused to renounce Falun Dafa. He was trying—one last time—to leave China and live in freedom.

The cruelty did not end with his death.

My family in China has not been allowed to grieve normally. They are under pressure and watched closely. Even the second day after my father’s passing, the police asked a family



member if he had a will and went to his house to take photos of his property documentation. Although I was “invited” to go to China, I know that invitation means if I go, I will not be able to return to my husband and my home here. There is no possibility for me to hold a proper funeral for my father in China without risking detention or death myself.

So now, as I remember his smile and his gentle voice, the only thing I can do for him is wear white and mourn from the other side of the world. I hope the world remembers my soft-spoken yet strong-willed father for his life’s legacy to resist communism and atheism with non-violence and invincible faith in the Creator.

I share this today as his life story reflects the broader reality for countless friends and fellow believers in the Falun Dafa community in China. The same system that imprisoned him in 1999, that blocked him at the border in 2016, and that surveilled him at home for years, is the same system that controlled every moment of his final days in that ICU room.

I am deeply grateful for the attention and support that Members of Congress, this Commission, and the American people have shown my family over the years. I truly believe that your concern and actions helped keep my father’s story alive and limit the regime’s persecution of him. My father was incredibly grateful to the United States government for their support. Knowing that his daughter was safe in a free country allowed him to have peace of mind even under such trying circumstances. But his death shows that the persecution of Falun Dafa is not “in the past.” It is ongoing, and it is lethal even now, 26 years after it began.

Out of love for my father and for others who are still in danger, I respectfully ask:

- That this Commission and the U.S. government publicly condemn the Chinese government’s treatment of my father and the circumstances surrounding his death. That the relevant U.S. agencies, including the embassy in Beijing, conduct an investigation into my father’s death, including the drugs administered to him, the role of the doctors at Beijing Shijitan Hospital of Capital Medical University, the names of police and PSB officers present, and the decision to bar family members from his ICU room.
- That U.S. officials press the Chinese government to release all relevant medical records and video footage of his forced hospitalization, and stop intimidating my relatives in China.
- That the U.S. government continue to raise my father’s case as a symbol of ongoing persecution against Falun Dafa practitioners and other prisoners of conscience and impose targeted sanctions on officials responsible for such abuses.

When I first parted from my father in 1998, I didn’t realize it would be the last time I would see him as a free man. For the rest of his life, the Chinese Communist Party tried to break his body and his spirit. They never succeeded in breaking his faith. I know that’s what mattered in the end.

We could not save my father. But by telling you what happened to him, I hope we can help protect others who are alive today and still in danger. The support I received from Members of Congress, this Commission, and the American people is so sincere and true. As I endure ordeals and face my own trials as a follower of Falun Dafa, your friendship has brought warmth and chased away the coldness in my heart. Your sincerity inspires me to try to save more lives.

Please free Falun Dafa and end the CCP’s genocide. Thank you.

TESTIMONY OF  
NINA SHEA, SENIOR FELLOW OF THE HUDSON INSTITUTE, AND  
DIRECTOR OF ITS CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
TO THE  
CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA  
ON  
“China’s War on Religion: The Threat to Religious Freedom and Why It Matters to the United States”  
NOVEMBER 20, 2025

*The Situation Facing the Catholic Church in China*

The Catholic Church in China, numbered between 10 and 12 million, currently faces its most intense religious repression since the Mao era. This repression negates religious freedom and impacts all Catholics there. It is part of the government’s systematic effort to consolidate Chinese Communist Party control over all civil society groups, institutions, leadership and ideologies.

While the CCP applies all the restrictions to Catholics that it does to Protestants, its principal tactic against the Catholic Church in China is to decapitate its leadership by marginalizing the pope and suppressing or replacing the bishops who are essential to the functioning of this hierarchical church. This is specifically calculated to cow, manipulate and diminish the Catholic Church in China, and at the same time avoid more graphic and bloodier measures or ones involving mass numbers of victims that would draw international headlines and Western trade sanctions.

China’s treatment of the Catholic Church is the modern face of religious persecution. It coerces that Church mostly through the quiet methods of leadership control, technology, brainwashing, and indefinite detention rather than the tiger chair tortures and show trials used against some other minority religious groups, such as the Uyghurs, Tibetan Buddhists and Falun Gong. With the recent arrest of Pastor Ezra Jin and other Protestant Church leaders, China may now be using its Catholic model to repress the Protestant Church in China.

At least nine Catholic bishops are currently detained, have disappeared or are otherwise persecuted. Their names are not well known partly due China’s cover up of them and also to the Vatican’s Ostpolitik policy, which it used in Communist Eastern Europe prior to Pope John Paul II. Today, the policy means that the Vatican avoids any criticism of the Chinese Communist Party and even will defend it from criticism by others, including about the [persecution](#).

One Catholic lay person, Jimmy Lai, the Hong Kong pro-democracy hero and a devout Catholic and a major supporter of the Catholic Church, has gained worldwide name recognition as a prisoner of conscience. The West feels free to raise Lai’s unjust imprisonment because he is seen primarily as a free press and pro-democracy advocate.

### **The CCP Decapitates Chinese Church Leadership:**

Uniquely impacting the Catholic Church, the government prevents the Catholic Church in China from having full communion with Rome, as it bars the pope from visiting the Catholic Church there, tightly controls episcopal visits to the Vatican and demands that Catholic bishops and clergy pledge independence from papal authority. It blocks bishops from being appointed to about a third of the dioceses with vacant episcopal sees. Beijing works to further undermine this Catholic leadership structure by naming bishops without prior papal approval or even notice in some cases and by persecuting some bishops with papal approval, including by placing them in indefinite detention. It also has unilaterally redistricted and eliminated certain dioceses. Within the Catholic Church, bishops are the hierarchical leaders essential for communications with the pope, ensuring that Catholic teaching is correctly taught at the local level and for forming and ordaining the priests needed to transmit the faith and administer the sacraments. By obstructing and undermining papal authority over Chinese bishops, Beijing is deliberately thwarting the perpetuation and propagation of the Catholic Church in China.

The state and Chinese Communist Party dictate which Catholic churches are legal or illegal and which Catholic clergy meet official approval, and which are banned. To get official approval, Catholic clergy must be part of the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, which, since 2018, has been overseen by the party's United Front Work Department, its main propaganda arm. Clergy who join the Patriotic Association face a lifetime of party surveillance and indoctrination or "reeducation."

The Patriotic Association has unique implications for the Catholic Church: to join, its bishops and priests are forced to take a pledge of independence from papal authority, which—as Pope Benedict XVI stated in his 2007 [letter](#) to the Catholic Church in China—"Independence" from the "Successor of Peter" is "incompatible with Catholic doctrine." In 2019, the Holy See, under its name, not the pope's, issued pastoral guidelines that normalized membership in the Patriotic Association for the Catholic clergy in China despite that association never having been formally legitimized in canon law by any pope.

Those who refuse the Patriotic Association's pledge cannot be legally registered with the state and are considered part of the "underground" church. The underground church has experienced persecution that has waxed and waned since the Mao era and beginning in 2026 is to be officially criminalized.

The China-Vatican agreement of 2018 has not exempted the Catholic Church from China's directive to conform religion to Chinese Communist Party values, goals and policies. In 2018, Xi Jinping began enforcing in earnest the so-called "Sinicization" of religious regulations, which have been continuously added to and intensified since then. They bar the Catholic Church from administering the sacraments to children under 18 years old, educating them in the faith and allowing them to attend Mass. Catholic priests are required to base sermons on the thought of Xi Jinping and to teach Chinese communist party values, whether or not they conflict with the Gospel and Church teachings. The Catholic Church in China is prohibited from promoting Catholic teachings that conflict with the party's practices and policies. These include teachings concerning abortion, genocide, forced organ harvesting, immigration and political asylum. Catholic parish churches that resist are being shut down and their priests detained and forcibly indoctrinated or defrocked by the state.

As experienced by others in China, all Catholics in China are restricted by a web of regulations on what they can say about religion, whom they can meet with, speak to and educate on religious matters, the time, place, method and form of their religious activities and gatherings, and what information they

may consume, post, and publish about their faith, and religion generally. Enforcement entails the close policing of clergy and churches, including technological surveillance such as facial recognition cameras outside and inside of places of worship, formal registration of clergy and members of the congregations with the state in a computerized system that links to individual social credit scores, and the detention and “reeducation” of clergy by party and state functionaries.

The state censors Catholic literature and restricts access to the Bible, including on the Internet. State religious personnel are embarked on a project to retranslate and reinterpret the Catholic edition of the Bible to reinforce CCP teachings and have pressed Chinese clergy, including those in Hong Kong, to collaborate with them on this.

**The CCP Uses the China-Vatican Agreement as an Instrument of Control Against the Catholic Church:**

In addition, the Chinese Communist Party co-opts and coerces the Catholic Church by exploiting the provisional China-Vatican agreement of 2018. To preserve continuing dialogue with Beijing, the Vatican has withdrawn support for the underground church and it refrains from all criticism of the CCP, while fulsomely [praising](#) Beijing’s climate policies, and Xi Jinping’s “Community of Common Destiny for Mankind,” a project to change the world order under Beijing’s domination. The chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences infamously made headlines when he lauded Beijing for “best realiz[ing] the social doctrine of the Church.” The Vatican does this in the hope that the agreement will strengthen Church “unity” and “communion with Rome”. Repeatedly the Vatican says that the agreement will lead to more Chinese episcopal appointments and Beijing’s recognition of the pope as the head of the Catholic Church in China. So far, those goals have been elusive; rather, the CCP has found the agreement to be a highly effective tool in tightening its control over the Catholic Church in China.

When the agreement was concluded, the Vatican heralded it as a historic “breakthrough” that would benefit the Catholic Church there. Since then, the Vatican, like Beijing, has insisted that the agreement is working, and in October 2024 renewed it for four more years. But this deal, whose contents are kept secret, is gradually delivering over the Catholic Church in China to the CCP. The agreement appears to have allowed Beijing to determine whether bishops can be appointed at all and, if so, to lead in determining who should be picked. China immediately began using it to pressure bishops into joining the Patriotic Association. The agreement’s implementation by the CCP is designed to eventually transform the Catholic Church in China, diocese by diocese, into a party apparatus.

Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who had a pivotal role in brokering the deal, revealed that the agreement concerns the sharing of power between the pope and Beijing in the appointment of Catholic bishops in China. Two years after signing it, Beijing published regulations on appointing bishops that omitted any papal role and, in several of the dozen or so episcopal appointments since the signing, the pope seems denied even a veto. For example, in 2022 the government transferred one bishop behind Pope Francis’ back to a diocese the government created for which the Vatican issued a formal note of “regret.” Because Beijing continues to block appointments of bishops to vacant episcopal sees, even as some bishops pass away, about 30, or about one-third, of China’s dioceses remain without a bishop to lead them.

As the agreement has played out over the last seven years, we see the Communist government unilaterally naming bishops to posts that the pope eventually ratifies. For example, On April 29, in the period after Pope Francis’ death when the papal chair was vacant, the China Patriotic Catholic

Association unilaterally picked Father Joseph Wu Jianlin, then a priest, to be a bishop and decided that he should serve as auxiliary bishop in Shanghai. Three and a half months later, on August 11, Pope Leo XIV “approved his candidacy within the framework of the Provisional Agreement.” On October 15, 2025, Fr. Wu’s episcopal consecration took place in Shanghai’s St. Ignatius Cathedral. Meanwhile, the Vatican already has an approved auxiliary bishop for Shanghai but the CCP keeps him locked up. Bishop Thaddeus Ma is in his thirteenth year of indefinite detention, a form of house arrest, for quitting the Patriotic Association.

Moreover, in 2023, the Patriotic Association’s council of bishops unilaterally appointed Bishop Joseph Shen Bin, its own head, to be the principal bishop of Shanghai, the Chinese Church’s most important diocese. Bishop Shen expressed full commitment to the CCP’s demand for autonomy from the pope. In a 2023 diocesan [interview](#), he had declared with fervor:

“We must . . . adhere to the principle of independence and autonomy in running the Church, adhere to the principle of democracy in running the Church, and adhere to the direction of Sinitization of the Catholic Church in China. This is the bottom line, which no one can break, and it is also a high pressure line, which no one should touch.”

It was Shen who shocked the Hong Kong clergy in 2022, [stating](#): “It is necessary to jointly promote [with the government] the translation and interpretation of the Bible.”

Pope Francis waited three months before approving Shen’s transfer to Shanghai and stating that he approved for the sake of “unity and communion.” Cardinal Parolin explained that this was needed “to rectify the canonical irregularity” of Shen’s unilateral appointment by the CCP-controlled body. He also [hoped](#) in vain that cooperating with China might “favor a just and wise solution” for Bishop Ma and his predecessor Bishop Xing, who had disappeared from his Shanghai episcopal post in 2011.

Since the seventeenth century, Shanghai has been China’s largest and most important diocese. It was the diocese of Ignatius Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei, the world’s first Chinese Catholic bishop, who endured thirty-three years of imprisonment for refusing to renounce the pope. This venerable diocese is now dominated by the Patriotic Association.

Other episcopal posts have been filled with CCP zealots, approved by the Vatican, while the faithful bishop is replaced and persecuted, as shown below in the case of Bishop Vincent Guo.

#### **The Persecuted Bishops**

A year ago, I wrote a 50-page report documenting [at least ten Catholic bishops](#) in China that were then in indefinite detention or otherwise restricted in their ministries for opposing government control over their church. One of those, Bishop Jia, died while forcibly confined.

On October 29, 2025, having spent a total of over 20 out of 30 years interned in prisons and secret places of detention, the prelate of Hebei’s Zhengding diocese, **Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo**, aged 91, passed away at his residence while under house arrest. In a statement sent to AsiaNews on the day of Bishop Jia’s death, Hebei province’s Catholic community gave a moving tribute to their deceased shepherd:

“We are grateful to you, for your extraordinary courage in founding and leading multiple dioceses, transmitting the flame of the Church; we are grateful because, even when you were

repeatedly arrested and imprisoned, you continued to care for the flock, preserving the flame of hope in the darkest nights.”

As bishop, he spread the Gospel, resisting state-imposed impediments and demands that would have compromised his principles. He inspired many young Catholics and ordained several of them as priests, and four as bishops. He is credited with rebuilding the Hebei Catholic Church after Mao left it shattered.

Bishop Jia had been imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution for 15 years until 1978 and was rearrested for foreign collusion in 1982 and imprisoned until 1987. After that, he was detained without charges multiple times, including being confined to house arrest in 2018, the year the agreement was signed. In recent years, police dismantled the orphanage he ran for 30 years with the help of Catholic nuns and the support of local Buddhists. There, in defiance of state “Sinicization” laws, he allowed children to pray. “The Church must be open to all, even to minors under the age of 18,” he said in 2020, as AsiaNews.it relates, calling it his “final battle.”

At least nine Chinese Catholic bishops, all Vatican-approved, remain persecuted. They are either in indefinite detention, have disappeared, been forced from their episcopal posts, or are under open-ended investigation by security police.

1. Baoding’s **Bishop James Su Zhimin** suffers the longest continuous secret detention: 28 years so far, after he led a large procession to a Marian shrine in his diocese. The CCP had previously imprisoned and severely tortured him.
2. In April 2025, Chinese state security authorities indefinitely detained **Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin** of the Catholic diocese of Wenzhou. This is the sixty-one-year-old underground prelate’s eighth detention without due process over the last seven years. While detained, he is isolated and subjected to communist indoctrination sessions, which can be reinforced by threats, humiliation and psychological torture. During the times of his release, he is always on edge, uncertain when his ministry will again be suddenly ended for months or years at a time because he cannot in good conscience pledge “independence” from papal authority.
3. **Bishop Augustine Cui Tai** of Xuanhua diocese was last arrested in April 2021 and placed in secret, indefinite detention for the fourth time since the agreement was signed. This continues a cruel 30-year pattern against him.
4. In May 2021, local police closed the seminary of Xinxiang’s **Bishop Joseph Zhang Weizhu** and placed him in indefinite detention at an unknown location. He was arrested soon after having cancer surgery.
5. Shanghai’s **Bishop Joseph Xing Wenzhi**, at age 48 and having served as a bishop for six years, went missing in 2011. Last year, in a tacit acknowledgment that he is being persecuted, the Vatican [expressed hope](#) for a “[just and wise solution](#)” to his case as well as to that of his successor, Bishop Ma (below).
6. **Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin**, who succeeded Xing as Shanghai’s auxiliary bishop, has been detained at a seminary since 2012 by state authorities, after renouncing his membership in the

Patriotic Association. He was immediately put under house arrest in a seminary where he remains imprisoned without due process. In April 2025, during the time after Pope Francis' death when there was no pope, the government named the priest Fr. Wu to replace Ma as the auxiliary bishop, which was approved by Pope Leo in August.

7. **Bishop Melchior Shi Hongzhen** of Tianjin has been detained for one and a half decades in his parish church compound. He spends his days reading in his study, except when the government has allowed him out to hold last rites. In August 2024, the Vatican reported that China "officially recognized" the then 95-year-old bishop and [declared](#) this "a positive fruit of the dialogue" and some Catholic media reported it as a "hopeful" sign. It's bitter fruit, considering his advanced age. The gesture, aimed to influence public opinion in the weeks before the agreement, was to be renewed. It is on par with Beijing's cynical practice of releasing prisoners of conscience once they are on their deathbeds. Bishop Shi insisted that the government's episcopal "consecration" of him occur in a hotel instead of his cathedral on the basis that he was already a bishop, consecrated with papal approval in 1982. There have been no reports about him or his ability to carry out his episcopal ministry since the 2024 announcement.
8. As a precondition of the agreement, in 2018, China had Pope Francis demote **Bishop Vincent Guo Xijin** from his position as Mindong diocese's principal bishop, and replace him with a government-appointed bishop, whose previous excommunication was then lifted by Francis. Then auxiliary bishop, Guo faced restrictions in his pastoral ministry and was evicted from his home, forcing him to sleep on the street in wintertime. Later, the government cut off his utilities and arrested and tortured some of his priests. In 2020, he resigned under pressure because he resisted joining the CCP Patriotic Association and said he would "retire to a life of prayer." Catholic mission sources at AsiaNews.it report that since then he has been confined to his residence behind a heavy, chained gate that imprisons him and keeps out visitors. In January 2025, the 67-year-old prelate was photographed on the 40th anniversary of his priestly ordination distributing communion to well-wishers through the bars that lock him in his compound. A video shows the faithful passing rosaries and religious objects through the bars for him to bless.
9. **Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun**, bishop emeritus of Hong Kong, is a prominent figure in the Catholic Church, known worldwide for his public criticism of China's repressive policies, including those targeting the church. It has been widely recognized, including by Pope Francis, that he is being persecuted because of this. Zen explained in his 2016 open [letter](#), "I speak out because I am the voice of the voiceless. In China there is no freedom of expression!" Now, the CCP is stifling his political dissent. In 2022, police arrested him twice. For two months, the nonagenarian endured the daily ordeal of a trial over a minor regulatory infraction for helping pro-democracy protestors, for which he pleaded not guilty, and was convicted and fined. Authorities also began an open-ended investigation of him under a national-security law and confiscated his passport, which they returned twice only for brief visits to Rome during prescribed periods of a few days. Not only could he face a life sentence in a national security conviction for the sweeping charge of "[colluding with foreign forces](#)"; the diocesan school

system could also be at stake, as Beijing's *Ta Kung Pao* newspaper threatened. No doubt he feels compelled to self-censor any criticism of the CCP because of this threat.

Few outside China know of these persecuted bishops. Yet they are an essential part of the faithful leadership needed to ensure that the 400-year-old Chinese Catholic Church continues in communion with Rome and follows Catholic teaching. They stand as a testament to the reality that China represses the Catholic Church along with all its other religions.

Prohibiting papal authority over the Church in China and repressing the ministries of a significant part of that church's faithful leadership also denies religious freedom to millions of Chinese Catholic faithful. This is a repression of the Chinese Catholic Church at large.

American policymakers and public figures should recognize Beijing's tactics against the Catholic Church in China for the religious repression it is. Religious freedom and human rights play an important role in American foreign policy, and for this reason it is important for the United States government to recognize that China's Catholic Church, as with all religious minorities in China, is repressed and persecuted, though the methods vary. It is apparent that the CCP aims to suppress all religions—including Christianity—and replace them with the dogma, values, and images of the party.

1. President Trump should use the White House bully pulpit to highlight the suffering of these nine persecuted bishops, Catholic layman Jimmy Lai, Protestant Pastor Ezra Jin, Pastor Wang Yi, and all other prisoners of conscience. This would bring more attention to their cases and could help protect them from further abuse and restrictions. The president should follow the example of President Ronald Reagan, who frequently raised the names of the persecuted in the Soviet Union, personally intervened with Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev on behalf of prisoners of conscience, and met with their family members when possible. Jewish refusenik Natan Sharansky, Lithuanian Catholic cleric Father Alfonsas Svarinkas, and Russian Orthodox priest Vasili Shipilov are among those who credit Reagan with freeing them and saving their lives. The president should give a major address to the American people about China's religious repression against Catholics as well as other Christians, Turkic Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and Falun Gong.
2. The secretary of state should raise these bishops' cases and other religious freedom concerns in every bilateral meeting with China. The State Department International Religious Freedom Office's annual reports should include religious persecution against these bishops and others in the Catholic Church in China. The American embassy in China should seek meetings with the persecuted bishops and visit their dioceses.
3. The U.S. government should facilitate the dissemination of information on religious persecution in China digitally inside China and Hong Kong. This information should also be translated into other languages and disseminated worldwide, particularly in Latin America and Africa. As the United States competes with China for allies and trading partners, it should make known the ugly coercion undergirding the CCP's political system. In China, only the CCP's version of history is permitted, and the party routinely conceals its human rights violations.

4. The State and Treasury Departments should impose Magnitsky sanctions against the CCP security officials responsible for the bishops and other prisoners of conscience being persecuted, including those mentioned in my testimony, Pastor Jin and Jimmy Lai.
5. The Justice Department should continue to prosecute Chinese agents who interfere with religious freedom on U.S. soil. In one case, the Federal Bureau of Investigation [identified](#) a Chinese spy who was fraudulently acting as a Catholic priest in the Church of the Transfiguration in the New York Archdiocese. In another case, the Justice Department brought [charges](#) against Chinese agents who threatened violence against a Christian-American pastor running for Congress. The department should issue a report on the status and disposition of all such cases on American soil of persecution and harassment by China and its agents.
6. President Trump should issue an executive order to ban all public and private American cooperation with, and support for, China's organ transplant sector. In 2021, 12 UN human rights experts asserted that they had received credible evidence of forced organ harvesting that targets all religious minority groups in China.



The U.S. Response to China's War on Uyghurs  
Written Statement submitted by Omer Kanat, Executive Director, Uyghur Human Rights Project

Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC)  
Hearing on "China's War on Religion: The Threat to Religious Freedom  
and Why It Matters to the United States"  
Nov 20, 2025

I welcome the opportunity to submit a written statement to CECC and thank the Staff and Commissioners for your leadership.

China's war on the Uyghurs is brutal and shocking. The U.S. has an obligation to carry out policies pursuant to the January 2021 policy finding of genocide and crimes against humanity. The evidence and legal analysis remain valid, and indeed both the Biden administration and the second Trump administration have re-affirmed that genocide is taking place.

On August 12, 2025, the State Department confirmed once again that China's atrocity crimes against Uyghurs continue. The annual China Country Report begins: "Genocide and crimes against humanity occurred during the year in China against predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang."

The U.S. must not countenance profits from complicity with the government's comprehensive forced-labor program, which has continued to grow stronger with new policies and implementation. Implementation of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, a global landmark introduced by this Commission, requires additional resources as well as systematic cooperation with our trading partners. Implementation of President Biden's executive orders barring U.S. capital from financing repression is also urgent.

A robust U.S. response to China's weaponization of supply chains and investment flows serves both national security and national interest. From critical minerals to pharmaceuticals to the entire automotive supply chain, Americans' needs cannot be held hostage by the PRC government's use of forced labor, subsidies, and other unfair trade practices.

Finally, the U.S. must take stronger action to punish and deter the PRC's transnational repression, further brutalizing the victims of its war on religion, even when on U.S. soil.

#### **Recommendations to Congress**

##### **Ending profits from complicity and imposing costs for atrocities**

1. Congress should urge the State Department to issue the mandatory reports and impose additional Magnitsky Sanctions, as required under the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020.

2. Also pursuant to the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, CECC should seek information on the justification for the 2023 removal of the Ministry of Public Security's Institute of Forensic Science from the Commerce Department Bureau of Industry and Security Entity List.
3. Congress should press the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF) to add new entities to the UFLPA Entity List.
4. Congress should seek information from the U.S. Trade Representative on implementation details of the forced-labor bans included as commitments in the trade agreements negotiated in 2025.
5. CECC should investigate and hold hearings on potential additions to President Trump's Executive Order 13959 of November 12, 2020, and President Biden's amendments announced June 3, 2021, banning U.S. investment in securities of companies based in the the PRC, to compile additional companies that should not receive American investment due to their involvement in human rights violations.
6. Congress should seek information on the State Department's implementation of the U.S. Visa Restriction Policy to Address the Forced Return of Uyghurs and Members of Other Ethnic or Religious Groups with Protection Concerns to China, [announced](#) March 14, 2025.
7. Congress should seek information from the State Department on actions taken under the 2022 [visa ban](#) intended to promote accountability for transnational repression committed by People's Republic of China (PRC) officials.
8. CECC and USCIRF should hold an annual joint hearing and continue to press for implementation of their recommendations to address atrocities, as detailed in their respective annual reports.
9. CECC should press for the House Foreign Affairs Committee to hold annual hearings on its annual reports, as mandated in Title III, Sec. 302 (i) (1), HR 4444.
10. Congress should pass the following bills:
  - [Uyghur Genocide Accountability and Sanctions Act \(H.R.4830/S.2560\)](#)
  - [Uyghur Policy Act \(H.R.2635/S.1542\)](#)
  - [Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act of 2025 \(H.R.1503\)](#) (The Senate should take it up and pass it.)

#### **Punishing and deterring transnational repression on U.S. soil**

1. Congress and the Department of Justice should seek information from federal and state law-enforcement on their actions to punish and deter transnational repression (TNR).
2. Congress should pass the following bills:
  - [Preventing the Forced Return of Uyghurs Act \(S.2502\)](#)
  - [Combating the Persecution of Religious Groups in China Act \(H.R.5838/S.3056\)](#)
  - [Transnational Repression Policy Act \(H.R.4829/S.2525\)](#)
  - [Strengthening State and Local Efforts to Counter TNR \(H.R.2139\)](#)
  - [Law Enforcement Support and Counter TNR Act \(H.R.2116\)](#)
  - [Countering TNR Act of 2025 \(H.R.2148\)](#)

### **Key features of genocidal religious persecution of Uyghurs since 2016**

#### **Mosques, Shrines, and Cemeteries**

In 2019, UHRP published a [report](#) on the Chinese government's destruction of Uyghur mosques, shrines, and cemeteries. The report focuses on over 100 mosques that have been fully or partially destroyed since 2016. The iconic Kargilik Grand Mosque, built in 1540 CE, was completely demolished. Many mosques that remain have been altered by removing Islamic symbols and architectural features like domes, minarets, crescent moons, and Arabic script. While the destruction of Uyghur mosques is not new, the scale increased dramatically after the Chinese government launched its "Mosque Rectification Program" in 2016. Under this new campaign, authorities [destroyed](#) an estimated 5,000 Uyghur mosques in just three months, claiming that the buildings were in poor condition and posed a safety risk.

The government's actions are part of a deliberate campaign to eliminate not just these physical sacred spaces, but the Uyghur religious and cultural heritage they represent. By destroying places of worship, imprisoning religious leaders, and suppressing religious expression, the Chinese government has effectively prevented the Uyghur people from passing down their faith to the next generation. Rahile Dawut, a prominent Uyghur ethnographer who has since been sentenced to life in prison for "endangering state security", predicted this tragic fate in a 2012 interview: "If one were to remove these ... shrines, the Uyghur people would lose contact with earth. They would no longer have a personal, cultural, and spiritual history. After a few years we would not have a memory of why we live here or where we belong."

#### **Chinese authorities' increased use of the formal prison system in the war on Uyghurs**

A [UHRP analysis](#) published in 2024 found that the Uyghur Region has the world's highest incarceration rate, with 1 in 26 Uyghurs and other non-Han Turkic peoples in the Uyghur Region being imprisoned. Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples make up more than a third of China's total prison population, despite only being 1% of China's overall population. However, these statistics only include those who were formally imprisoned from 2017 to 2022. The total number of Uyghurs and other non-Han Turkic peoples detained in so-called reeducation camps, forced labor facilities, and other forms of arbitrary detention remains unknown.

To be clear, these statistics do not indicate increased criminality among Uyghurs. Rather, they demonstrate the criminalization of ordinary behavior and the disproportionate punishment Uyghurs face in the PRC judicial system. Other UHRP reporting, including a [2024 report](#) on the mass imprisonment of Uyghur religious women, reveals that Uyghurs have received long prison sentences for so-called crimes such as reading religious texts, fasting, and dressing modestly.

#### **Imprisonment of Uyghur imams and female religious teachers**

UHRP [compiled](#) an extensive database to arrive at a count of 1,046 confirmed cases of detention and imprisonment of imams and other religious figures by Xinjiang authorities. Of the 1,046 recorded cases, 428 have been sent to formal prisons, including 304 sentenced to prison terms, 202 have been detained in camps, and 18 have died while in detention or prison. The

remaining cases are likely being held indefinitely or sentenced without reporting. The dataset confirms that hundreds of religious figures have been sentenced, without due process, to prison terms for quotidian religious practice and expression protected under Chinese law and internationally recognized human rights treaties. Imams have been sentenced for “illegal” religious teaching (often to children), prayer outside a state-approved mosque, the possession of “illegal” religious materials, and communication or travel abroad.

The research found prison sentences of 15 years or more for “teaching others to pray,” “studying for six months in Egypt,” “refusing to hand in [a] Quran book to be burned,” and a life sentence for “spreading the faith and for organizing people.”

The figures presented are not comprehensive, given extreme secrecy and lack of transparency in the Uyghur Region, and very likely represent a small fraction of the total number of religious figures detained. Nonetheless, the data provides an alarming indication of the scale and severity of the Chinese government’s persecution of religious figures since 2014. Reference: [China Detaining and Sentencing Uyghur Imams en Masse, UHRP Reveals](#)

#### **Female religious teachers known as Būwi**

In a [2024 report](#), UHRP documented the mass incarceration of Uyghur women for religious practice. Uyghur female religious leaders, known as būwi, have been especially targeted. Būwi serve as religious teachers, lead women’s religious gatherings, and conduct rituals. While most previous reporting focused on the persecution of Uyghur imams, UHRP’s reporting reveals that Uyghur religious women, [including](#) elderly women, have also been detained, prosecuted, and incarcerated amid the CCP’s “anti-extremism” campaigns beginning in 2017.

So-called “signs of religious extremism” used to justify detention include reading the Quran, fasting during Ramadan, daily prayer, eating halal foods, and dressing modestly – all ordinary, innocuous religious practices observed by Muslims worldwide. UHRP documented evidence of many women receiving 10+ year prison sentences for these religious practices. The longest sentence uncovered by UHRP’s reporting is that of Aytıla Rozi, an Uyghur woman sentenced to 20 years for teaching the Quran to a small group of women between 2009 and 2011. Many of these so-called “crimes” occurred decades ago, when the accused women were children. Leaked police files reveal that 91 women from a single county were detained simply for registering with the state as būwi, continuing a disturbing trend of retroactively criminalizing actions once permitted and even endorsed by the state.

Example from the leaked Xinjiang Police Files:



**Helchem Pazil (海里且木·帕孜里)**

- ID no. 652801194401100020
- Born: 1944
- **Detained:** Unknown
- Evidence of criminal activities: "Inciting ethnic hatred and discrimination" and "disturbing social order."
- **Sentence:** Ten years

In 2022, RFA Uyghur Service [reported](#) that Pazil was sentenced for participating in religious gatherings.

#### **Forced renunciation of faith under threat of torture**

CECC has heard from a number of survivors of the Chinese government's so-called "re-education" camps. They [recount](#) being forced to renounce belief in God and declare loyalty to Xi Jinping and the CCP. Detainees are required to confess and criticize their past religious activities and beliefs. Camp survivor Omir Bekali recalls another detainee sharing this self-criticism: "I was taught the Holy Quran by my father and I learned it because I didn't know better." Those who refuse to renounce their faith and comply with so-called "lessons" face horrific physical, sexual, and psychological torture. As UHRP reported in 2018, a Chinese-language tract stated that those sent to re-education were "sick in their thoughts," having been "infected" with extremism, comparing religious extremism to a drug, cancer or a virus. Those "infected with terrorist thought" need to be sent to re-education to undergo "hospital treatment." Thus, their detention is justified, not as punishment but rather an intervention, to ensure their entire family does not contract an "incurable disease." (See Szdiewski, Henryk, [The Mass Internment of Uyghurs: "We Want to be Respected as Humans. Is it too much to ask?"](#); Uyghur Human Rights Project, August 23, 2018.

#### **Forced marriage violating religious freedom**

In 2022, UHRP published a [report](#) on forced and incentivized inter-ethnic, inter-faith marriage affecting mostly Uyghur women. Chinese state media videos, government sanctioned stories, and accounts from women in the diaspora offer evidence that government incentivized and forced interfaith and interethnic marriages have been occurring in the Uyghur Region since 2014. Based on this evidence, UHRP has concluded that it is highly likely the Chinese government is systematically imposing forced interethnic marriages on Uyghur women.



Officials in the Uyghur Region have been directed to actively promote interethnic "contact, exchange, and mingling," including interethnic

marriages, just as they have done in Tibet. Local officials have offered financial incentives for newly married interethnic couples, with one county including an “ethnic intermarriage reward fund” in their 2018 budget. The Chinese state maintains that interethnic marriage promotes ethnic unity and social stability. However, evidence indicates that the government’s program to incentivize and promote interethnic marriage is in fact a tactic intended to assimilate Uyghurs into Han society.

In August 2020, a video depicted the wedding of a Han man and Uyghur woman, featuring the couple thanking the CCP for the “beautiful life” the government had given them. The Uyghur voiceover with Chinese subtitles explains that there is an “urgent need” for 100 brides to “actively respond to the call from the government to promote marriage between Uyghurs and Han.”

A Uyghur camp survivor told Voice of America (VOA) that her neighbors “had to agree to wed their 18-year-old daughter to a Han Chinese out of fear that they could be sent to internment camps.” Local government officials forced the marriage after a Han Chinese man approached the young woman in the factory where she worked and took a photograph with her, which the officials claimed was proof that they were dating.

#### **Transnational repression of Uyghur Americans**

UHRP has [reported](#) extensively on the Chinese government’s extraordinary effort to hunt down and persecute Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Turkic peoples from East Turkistan, in a series of 9 recent reports and briefings published since 2017. Reference: [Transnational Repression of Uyghurs \(collected reports and policy recommendations \(uhrp.org\)\)](#).

The research documents:

- 1,546 cases of serious human rights violations experienced by Uyghurs outside China from 1997 through March 2021.
- 292 known cases of Uyghurs deported to China from Arab states alone.
- 74% of diaspora Uyghurs living in democratic countries reported digital risks, threats, or forms of online harassment (according to a 2021 UHRP survey). Only 44 percent felt that their host governments take the intimidation seriously, and only 21 percent felt that the host governments would fix these issues.

UHRP’s 2019 report, “[Repression Across Borders: The CCP’s Illegal Harassment and Coercion of Uyghur Americans](#),” documents how the Chinese government routinely carries out surveillance, threats and coercion on American soil to control the speech and actions of Uyghur Americans. The Chinese government’s program of transnational repression is an ambitious and well-resourced campaign affecting all Uyghur Americans, especially the many brave journalists, activists, and students engaged in raising awareness about the crisis of repression in their homeland.

The threats come by text, chat apps, voicemail, email, and messages delivered by third parties. Some members of the community report receiving such messages on a weekly or even a near-daily basis. Non-compliance could result in family members being taken to a concentration camp.

This intimidation campaign constitutes an ongoing series of crimes committed with impunity on U.S. persons. It is illegal under U.S. federal and state law to issue threats that interfere with free-speech rights. For the Uyghur American community, the enduring and menacing presence of the Chinese government in their daily lives deprives them of their constitutionally protected rights and freedoms.

U.S. federal law enforcement recognized these issues in an unclassified FBI counterintelligence bulletin on violations of Uyghur civil rights on U.S. soil (PRC), [issued](#) in August 2021. UHRP recommends seeking an update and engagement with U.S. law enforcement to provide data to assist with implementation of law enforcement efforts upholding the civil rights of members of persecuted religious groups on U.S. soil against violations perpetrated by foreign state actors. In particular, Congress should seek to ensure that the FBI has a full understanding of the risks and other data, based on the CECC Annual Report and other fact-finding resources in relation to these two public documents on transnational repression on U.S. soil:

- [Transnational Repression — What is it, How you can get help to stop it | FBI](#) (undated).
- [Unclassified FBI Counterintelligence bulletin on violations of Uyghur civil rights on U.S. soil \(PRC\)](#), August 11, 2021.

#### **About the Uyghur Human Rights Project**

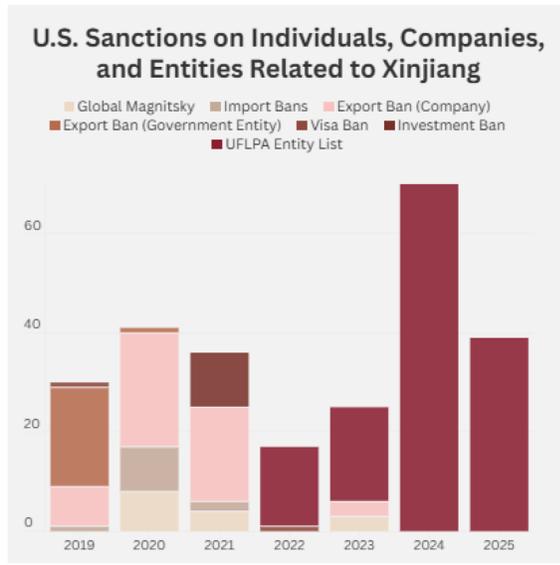
The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) promotes the rights of the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim peoples in East Turkistan, referred to by the Chinese government as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), through research-based advocacy. UHRP documents violations; highlights human rights defenders, survivors, and victims; and researches avenues for defense and positive promotion of Uyghurs' human rights, especially in the arenas of policymaking, grassroots action, and cultural rights promotion. See more at [uhrp.org](http://uhrp.org).

#### **UHRP reports cited:**

- [Twenty Years for Learning the Quran: Uyghur Women and Religious Persecution](#), 2024, Dr. Rachel Harris and Abduweli Ayup.
- [UHRP Analysis Finds 1 in 26 Uyghurs Imprisoned in Region With the World's Highest Prison Rate](#), 2024, by Ben Carrdus and Peter Irwin.
- [The Persecution of Uyghur Senior Citizens](#), 2024, by Dr. Henryk Szadziewski.
- [Forced Marriage of Uyghur Women: State Policies for Interethnic Marriages in East Turkistan](#), 2022, by Andréa J. Worden, Nuzigum Setiwaldi, Dr. Elise Anderson, Dr. Henryk Szadziewski, Louisa Greve, and Ben Carrdus.
- [Islam Dispossessed: China's Persecution of Uyghur Imams and Religious Figures](#), 2021, by Peter Irwin.
- [No Space Left to Run: China's Transnational Repression of Uyghurs](#), 2021, by Bradley Jardine, Edward Lemon, and Natalie Hall.
- [Repression Across Borders: The CCP's Illegal Harassment and Coercion of Uyghur Americans](#), 2019, by Greg Fay.

**Additional References**

[UHRP U.S. Sanctions Tracker](#)





**United States House of Representatives  
Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

**“Truth in Testimony” Disclosure Form**

*In accordance with Rule XI, clause 2(g) of the Rules of the House of Representatives, witnesses are asked to disclose the following information. Please complete this form and attach it to your written testimony and it may be made publicly available in electronic format.*

1. Date of Hearing:
  
2. Hearing Title:
  
3. Your Name:
  
4. Organization, organizations, or government entity you are representing:
  
5. Position title:
  
6. Are you an active registrant under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA)?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

**False Statement Certification:**

Knowingly providing material false information to this commission, or knowingly concealing material information from this commission, is a crime (18 U.S.C. 1001). This form may be made part of the hearing record.

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**Witness Signature**

**Date**

*Witness Biographies***Ambassador Sam Brownback, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom (2018–2021), Governor of Kansas (2011–2018), U.S. Senator (1996–2011)**

Sam Brownback served as Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom from February 2018 to January 2021. He served as Governor of Kansas from 2011 to 2018. Prior to that he represented his state in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives. While a member of the Senate, he worked actively on the issue of religious freedom in multiple countries and was a key sponsor of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. Prior to his public service, Ambassador Brownback practiced law and taught agricultural law at Kansas State University. He earned a B.S. from Kansas State University and a J.D. from the University of Kansas. Ambassador Brownback currently serves as co-chair of the International Religious Freedom Summit and chairman of the National Committee for Religious Freedom.

**Ismail “Ma Ju” Juma, Hui Muslim Human Rights Advocate**

Ismail Ju Ma is a dedicated human rights activist and community organizer with a background in the study of religious history. He has been actively involved in defending the rights of persecuted communities, supporting refugees, and promoting interfaith dialog. As the founder of Hope Umbrella International Foundation (HUIF), he works to protect freedom seekers, assist new immigrants, and foster reconciliation between ethnic and religious groups.

**Bhuchung K. Tsering, Leader, International Campaign for Tibet Research and Monitoring Unit**

Bhuchung K. Tsering was born in Tibet. His family fled to India in 1960 in the wake of the Chinese Communist invasion. He studied in India and received his B.A. in English literature from the University of Delhi in 1982. Thereafter, he worked as a journalist with Indian Express in New Delhi, before joining the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamsala, India, in January 1984. He worked as the editor of Tibetan Bulletin, the official CTA journal and served in the Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala as well as at the Office of Tibet in Switzerland. He joined the International Campaign for Tibet in Washington, DC in 1995 and currently leads the Research and Monitoring Unit. He was a member of the task force set up by the Central Tibetan Administration to work on issues relating to the dialog process with Chinese leadership.

He was also a member of the team led by the envoys of H.H. the Dalai Lama in the discussions that they had with the Chinese leadership between 2002 and 2010. He has contributed articles on Tibet and related issues to Indian, Nepalese, Tibetan, Swiss, and American journals. He has also testified before Congress on behalf of the International Campaign for Tibet and spoken at universities and think tanks. He was awarded the Truman-Reagan Freedom Medal by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in 2023.

**Bob Fu, Founder and President, ChinaAid**

Bob (Xiqiu) Fu is one of the leading voices in the world for persecuted faith communities in China. Fu was born and raised in mainland China and was a student leader during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989. Fu graduated from the People’s (Renmin) University in Beijing and from 1993 to 1996 taught English to Communist Party officials. Fu was also a house church leader in Beijing until he and his wife, Heidi, were imprisoned for two months for “illegal evangelism.” Bob and Heidi fled to the United States as religious refugees in 1997 and founded ChinaAid in 2002 to bring international attention to China’s gross human rights violations and to promote religious freedom and the rule of law in China. As president of ChinaAid, Fu has testified before the congressional Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Foreign Press Association, the European Commission, and European Union Parliament. Fu regularly briefs the State Department and Members of Congress on the status of religious freedom and the rule of law in China. In 2008, Fu was invited to brief President George W. Bush on religious freedom and human rights in China. Fu has a Ph.D. from St. John’s College at the University of Durham and a master’s degree from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He was awarded an honorary doctoral degree from Midwest University, where he served as a distinguished professor on religion and public policy. A member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Fu currently serves

as the Family Research Council's Senior Fellow for International Religious Freedom. He is the winner of the 2020 Wilberforce Award from the Colson Center and the Editor-In-Chief of the Chinese Law and Religion Monitor. Fu is the author of "God's Double Agent and The Politics of Inclusive Pluralism."

**Grace Jin Drexel, daughter of Pastor Mingri "Ezra" Jin**

Grace Jin Drexel is the daughter of Pastor Ezra Jin Mingri of Zion Church in China. Zion Church is one of the largest and most influential house churches in China. In October 2025, Pastor Jin and 22 others were arrested and are currently detained in Beihai, Guangxi as part of the largest crackdown against independent house churches in China in the last 40 years. Grace has been advocating for her father ever since. She currently serves as a National Security Research Analyst at the U.S. Senate and previously worked as a Research Associate at the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, where she focused on religious freedom and freedom of expression. She has an MA in Transnational Justice and Human Rights from Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a BA from UCLA.

