

What Will Kerry Do About Christian Persecution in China?

Secretary of State John Kerry chose an interesting place to deliver his first foreign policy address. The former Massachusetts senator spoke at the University of Virginia. He was introduced by the university's president, Teresa Sullivan. Dr. Sullivan noted that the university's founder, Thomas Jefferson, had served as the first Secretary of State.

Unlike today's foreign policy elites, Mr. Jefferson thought religious freedom was fundamental to our political liberties. He authored the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which he introduced into the state's General Assembly in 1779. It was a world historical event. When James Madison, Jefferson's loyal lieutenant, pressed that bill through to adoption in 1786, Jefferson was serving as this country's second Minister Plenipotentiary to France. He took pains to have the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom translated into French and circulated widely in Europe.

All of this is worth noting because religious freedom is not on the back burner in this administration. It ain't even in the kitchen.

We have seen numerous summits, official state visits, and extensive bilateral negotiations with the People's Republic of China. None of this has slowed China's brutal one-child policy. That policy has led to forced abortions and tens of millions of unborn baby girls being killed. This continuing horror has barely gotten a nod from the Obama administration or the State Department.

With the single exception of granting asylum to the blind Chinese human rights activist **Chen Guangcheng** (for which we

thanked them and gave them our sincere praise), the Obama administration's record on Christian persecution in China has been one largely of indifference.

Now, we see a new report on how China's rulers plan to wipe out House Churches. In China, you have to "register" your church. That is something Christians in America resisted in the 1770s, and something the Virginia Statute forever abolished. A House Church, therefore, is one not recognized by the atheist regime. And China's Communist rulers are not interested in American views of human rights.

China Aid is a human rights group that monitors the religious persecutions undertaken by Beijing. We should add that it is not just Christians who are being suppressed in China. The Falun Gong sect and the mostly Muslim Uighurs (WEE-gurz) in Xinjiang Province in the Northwest have also suffered brutal repression under the heel of Communist rule.

China Aid reports instances of Christian persecution have increased 42 percent in the last year. Beijing—the capital—witnessed the highest number of incidents against Christians. This is significant because many an oppressor state will try to put on a friendly face in its own capital, while leaving the bloody work of persecution to the provinces. What this means is that Chinese authorities have no concerns about Western protests. They know they can crush Christians all along the travel routes taken by such figures as John Kerry with little fear of protest.

Sec. Kerry did, of course, lodge a loud protest at . He denounced in strong terms any congressional inaction on budget matters that would jeopardize U.S. foreign aid.

He believes foreign aid is essential to the U.S. mission in the world. So, presumably, the regime in Egypt will continue to pocket billions in American aid as it runs armored personnel carriers over Coptic Christians protesting in Cairo.

The deaths of Christians at the hands of the Morsi administration evokes little concern from our leaders.

It will be left to NGOs to raise alarm over this continuing cold indifference toward Christian persecution from our State Department. We thank monitors such as the Institute on Religion & Democracy (IRD), the Ethics & Public Policy Center (EPPC) and Prof. Thomas Farr and the Berkley Center on Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University.

Our group, Family Research Council (FRC), plans to host China Aid Founder Bob Fu in Washington on April 24th. We can help by giving a Washington platform to human rights activists like Bob Fu. In January, we hosted Women without Frontiers leader Reggie Littlejohn, who has done so much to raise awareness of the war on baby girls in China. In these ways, we hope to keep alive the spirit of religious liberty and of human rights.

John Kerry is a successor to Thomas Jefferson. We challenge him to honor Jefferson's commitment to religious freedom, in China and around the world. And we remind him of Jefferson's understanding of the basis for human rights: "The care of human life and happiness—and not their destruction—is the first and only legitimate object of good government."

Ken Blackwell is senior fellow for Family Empowerment, and **Bob Morrison** is senior fellow for Policy Studies at Family Research Council.