

3 Pastors Imprisoned for Faith Reveal Sick Truth of Christian Persecution

Save the Persecuted Christians (STPC), which advocates on behalf of 300 million Christians facing heavy persecution worldwide, is increasingly concerned about ongoing severe persecution of people of many faiths in China, where several religious leaders have recently made international headlines for being imprisoned.

But they are just a few among tens of thousands of Chinese Christians who suffer in silence and live in danger daily at the hands of a communist government.

“The Chinese government routinely commits atrocities against Christian believers in China, including offering cash rewards to those who turn in members of underground churches,” said Dede Laugesen, executive director of Save the Persecuted Christians. “Likewise, church doors are closed, and congregants arrested simply for worshipping Jesus Christ. China’s government is attacking its own people for their faith. It’s for this reason that we continue to urge the prominent U.S. law firm Squire Patton Boggs to stop its representation of and lobbying for the People’s Republic of China, which has for decades been a top violator of both religious and human rights.”

One of the first examples involves the United States Commission on Religious Freedom (USCIRF) calling on “Chinese authorities to immediately and unconditionally release” Hu Shigen, an underground church leader and religious freedom advocate. Hu disappeared more than four years ago as part of a larger crackdown on human rights lawyers and activists. Three years ago this month, he was tried and convicted for

“subversion of state power.” USCIRF adopted Hu in 2018 as part of its Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project.

USCIRF also reports that the Chinese government has intermittently harassed Hu for his political activism and his religious beliefs, while also documenting China’s abuses against Christians, Uighur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, Falun Gong practitioners and others in its 2019 Annual Report, where the organization recommended that the State Department again designate China as a “country of particular concern” for its “systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom,” as it has done since 1999.

Then, Pastor Wang Yi of the shuttered Chinese Christian mega church, Early Rain Covenant, has been hit with more charges several months after his arrest along with 100 of his congregants in their home country. Wang, his wife and the church members were arrested in December. While the pastor’s wife and most of the others have been released, Wang and four of his parishioners are still being detained. The new charge of “illegal business activity” could carry up to 10 years in prison, reports The Christian Post. Wang had previously been charged with “inciting subversion.”

Thirdly, according to CBN News, a Chinese appeals court last month upheld the ruling against North Carolina-based Pastor John Cao, a permanent resident of the United States, stating he will serve the remainder of a seven-year sentence in a Chinese prison. “The Christian minister,” reports CBN, “was arrested while carrying out a humanitarian mission to the people of China and neighboring Burma (Myanmar), something he has done for more than 30 years.” Cao has already been imprisoned for two years, after being charged with “organizing others to illegally cross the border”—a crime more commonly applied to human traffickers.

In May, Save the Persecuted Christians and 45 other civil society leaders representing Christians, Muslims, Falun Gong

practitioners, Buddhists and other persecuted faith communities signed a joint letter asking Squire Patton Boggs to stop promoting the interests of Communist China—as well as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Palestinian Authority and Cameroon—known for gross violations of human rights and oppression of religious freedoms. More than 5,000 on Capitol Hill, including members of Congress, their staff and others, have also received the letter and have been informed about the accountability campaign to implore the law firm to stop its representation of these nations.

For believers in China and around the world, Save the Persecuted Christians seeks to bring awareness about targeted Christians through the “The People of the Cross” exhibit, a series of vertical traveling banners that details Christian persecution in various countries around the world.

The exhibit’s banners feature images, facts and quotes from recent news stories about the persecution of Christians in multiple countries, such as China, where Communists are increasingly hostile to people of faith and churches are demolished; North Korea, where Christians are tortured or worse; Syria, where Christian girls and women have been sold into sex slavery; and Nigeria and East Africa, where terrorists are exterminating Christians with genocidal intent. A majority of the countries highlighted in the banners are high on Open Doors’ 2019 World Watch List. The exhibit has toured the United States, reaching tens of thousands. “The People of the Cross” exhibit is available for churches, public venues and special events. To learn more about hosting “The People of the Cross,” contact Save the Persecuted Christians or visit the website, where panels are available to view online.

The mission of Save the Persecuted Christians is to save lives and save souls by holding the persecutors accountable and creating costs for their crimes against humanity. To that end, it will disseminate actionable information about the magnitude

of such crimes and bring to bear a movement of concerned Americans determined to hold persecutors accountable for such crimes and create real costs for perpetrating them against those who follow Jesus.

According to Aid to the Church in Need, which released its biannual report on Religious Freedom in the World in November, over 300 million Christians experience persecution. According to Open Doors USA World Watch List, 245 million Christians are victims of high to extreme levels of persecution (that is, torture, rape, sex-slavery, expulsion, murder and genocide), an increase of 14% over 2018. Open Doors also estimates 1 in 9 of the world's Christians experience persecution and that every month: 345 Christians are killed, often in public and without regard to gender or age; 219 Christians are abducted and imprisoned indefinitely without trial; and 106 churches are demolished.

Because most of these crimes are not covered in the media, Save the Persecuted Christians developed a dedicated news aggregator—to capture current instances of persecution and to provide readers an easy way to share these heartbreaking stories with others.

With so much of the world's Christian population being attacked, imprisoned and/or exiled for their beliefs, such as persecuted believers in China, the need has never been greater for the sort of grassroots campaign STPC's SaveUs Movement is working to foster. Its efforts are modeled after a miraculously successful one that helped free another population suffering from heavy persecution—Soviet Jews—by penalizing those in the Kremlin responsible for such repression. Through this movement, Save the Persecuted Christians endeavors to provide American policymakers with the popular support they need to effect real change worldwide and alleviate systemically the suffering being experienced by so many of those following Christ.