



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
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*"You can take away my freedom, but you
can't take my prayers. My prayers have wings
and leap over the iron mesh high wall."*

~ John Cao from within prison

CHINA: SPECIAL EDITION

The Communist Party in China has oppressed Christians for decades. Despite that, the church has grown exponentially. Recent crackdowns by the central government, as well as provincial and local authorities, have led to a significant increase in persecution for millions of Christian residents. This week's *Persecution & Prayer Alert* centres on a few recent incidents encountered by those embracing Christianity. For more information, go to www.vomcanada.com/china.htm.

Hostility Towards Foreign Missionaries

Sources: Mission Network News, Liberty Times Net, Voice of America, Bob Fu (Facebook)

After President Xi Jinping was granted a tenure of life in power, he suddenly increased his efforts to suppress religion. Missionaries serving within the country are frequently perceived as foreign spies. Todd Nettleton from VOM USA reports that a number of foreign workers in China have found their visas rejected at the time of renewal.

Two leaders of an American organization that supplies workers to teach English in China were arrested in September, based on claims that they had illegally moved people across borders. These accusations are similar to those facing Pastor John Cao, an American missionary who was sentenced to seven years in prison for allegedly smuggling people across the China/Myanmar border. For more information on Pastor Cao, go to www.vomcanada.com/cn-2019-07-18.htm. To write him an encouraging letter: www.prisoneralert.com/pprofiles/vp_prisoner_264_profile.html.

In response to this growing opposition against foreigners, Bob Fu, director of ChinaAid, posted the following warning via Facebook on October 19th: "It's time for the foreigner Christians to consider urgent temporary exit from China. The danger is real." Referring to the campaign as a

"boxer rebellion-type of serious consequences," he calls fellow believers to pray that each foreign Christian worker will be granted discernment as they determine the best course of action given their individual situations.

Please prayerfully uphold the many Christian residents who are facing uncertainties -- including foreigners presently serving in China -- as they seek God's direction for their lives and ministries. May He give them the discernment they need to navigate the best course of action during these times of difficulty. Despite the mounting oppression being encountered by the churches in China, may the Lord ensure their continued growth by providing His faithful followers overcoming strength and guidance through the enduring presence of the Holy Spirit.

Church Stands Firm Despite Hostility

Source: VOM Korea

Only a few years ago, many churches in China featured crosses atop their large buildings and multi-campus congregations. Even though these churches were not officially recognized by the government, there was a measure of leniency. However, with the officials' recently implemented strategy to close every non-registered church -- resulting in the arrests of numerous Christians and the destruction of their buildings -- the realization has become clear that the true church is comprised of God's people.

When a VOM Korea representative recently met with a pastor in Beijing, he witnessed the faithfulness of a church that had gathered outdoors for worship in small groups throughout the city, regardless of the weather conditions. If one of these small groups was forced to stop meeting, then countless others continued with their gatherings.

Another Chinese church utilizes secure software which allows its congregants to meet online in small groups. Even though their church building has been shut down, this alternative allows them to continue meeting together for worship and Bible study. The perseverance of today's church is tangible evidence that many followers of Christ in persecuted nations of the world are indeed fulfilling the surety of His promise: *"I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18 ESV).

Praise God for His unfailing presence and strength which are empowering His church to rise above today's challenges. Thankfully, they are utilizing innovative ways such as technology, in obedience to His admonition to not forsake assembling themselves together (Hebrews 10:25). Pray for the congregation members of each church group affected by the closures that they will continue to encourage and build each other up in the Christian faith.

Imprisoned with Serious Health Concerns

Source: ChinaAid

Health concerns are a major issue for two Chinese Christians who have been imprisoned for their faith. Although Hu Shigen was taken into custody in July 2015, he was convicted of "subversion

of state power" the following year. A photo of his baptismal ceremony was used as evidence against him, resulting in a sentence consisting of seven-and-a-half years.

While in prison, Hu suffered a heart attack, as well as other health complications. Due to the seriousness of his condition, Hu's family was promised that he would be released on medical parole. Believing that confessing to the accusations would ensure his necessary medical release, Hu pled guilty. However, despite the promise given by authorities, they refuse to release him.

The other infirmed prisoner, Ge Jueping, has been detained without a verdict for three years. Taken into custody in November 2016, as part of a mass arrest of human rights activists in Suzhou, Ge has undergone a trial but not yet received a verdict. His health has since declined severely and includes the diagnosis of cancer. Even though Ge's loved ones have expressed their concerns to officials, no response has been given.

Please intercede on behalf of these two imprisoned believers, and for their concerned family members as well. Ask God to provide each one His peace, strength and encouragement. In addition to Hu and Ge receiving the medical care they so desperately need, pray that the Lord's healing touch will be upon them both -- providing these Christian prisoners renewed health and hope. In the meantime, may the authorities be willing to not only allow them medical leave but also complete vindication from all charges and accusations.

Upcoming Trial for Pastor Wang

Sources: AsiaNews, ChinaAid

Wang Yi, pastor of the Early Rain Covenant Church, was arrested in December 2018 as part of coordinated raids against his church. Facing charges that could lead up to 15 years in prison, he has been patiently awaiting trial. On November 6th, Pastor Wang's lawyer, Zhang Peihong, received notification from the prosecutor that he would not be allowed to represent his client in court. The prosecutor claims that Zhang has too many ties with the pastor and his church.

According to the most recent report, Pastor Wang has appointed two new lawyers to represent him. Thankfully, they have been able to meet with him in preparation for the upcoming trial which is expected to begin soon. For more details on his arrest, go to www.vomcanada.com/cn-2018-12-13.htm.

May God's presence be very evident to Pastor Wang, his family and congregation as they approach the soon-coming trial. Pray that his lawyers will receive wisdom and insight as they prepare to represent him in court. While standing before the judicial authorities during the trial, may Pastor Wang be given the right words to say (Matthew 10:19); powerful words that will have an eternal impact on the hearts of all who are present in the courtroom, as well as those reviewing the transcripts following the trial.

If you would like to post a prayer of praise or petition on behalf of our persecuted family around the globe, visit VOMC's prayer wall at www.vomcanada.com/prayerwall.htm.

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For information on additional ways to support members of the persecuted church overseas, review the list of options at www.vomcanada.com/take-action.htm.