



## The Persecution of the Underground Roman Catholic Church in China

Testimony of Joseph M. C. Kung, President

January 31, 2007



### The Cardinal Kung Foundation

### Before The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom



Ladies and Gentlemen:

I believe that most if not all of you who are here today understand that there is no religious freedom in China. Yet you may be shocked to learn that all of the approximately 40 underground bishops in China have been either arrested and are now in jail, or under house arrest, or under strict surveillance, or in hiding, or simply have disappeared.

We know for sure that six bishops are now in jail. They are Bishops 1) HAN Dingxiang 韓鼎祥 of Yong Nian 永年, Hebei, 2) LIN xili 林錫黎 of Wenzhou 溫州, Zhejiang 浙江, 3) SHI Enxiang 師恩祥 of Yixian 易縣, Hebei, 4) SU Zhimin 蘇志民 of Baoding, Hebei, 5) YAO Liang 姚良 of Xiwanzi 西灣子, Hebei, and 6) ZHAO Zhendong 趙振東 of Xuanhua 宣化, Hebei. They are all in their 70's or 80's. Three of them have disappeared. (HAN, Shi and SU). Out of these three, Bishop Su has disappeared for approximately 10 years,

Bishop Han has just disappeared approximately one year ago after being detained approximately 5 years, Bishop SHI has disappeared almost six years. We do not know whether they are dead or alive.

Among all the above bishops, one of the most important case is Bishop Su Zhimin.

Bishop SU Zhimin is the underground Roman Catholic Bishop of Baoding in Hebei of China. He was arrested and jailed on October 8, 1997. Inquiries to the Chinese Government from various U.S. government and non-government agencies about Bishop Su's whereabouts and his well being were never answered satisfactorily. For six years since October 8, 1997, we as well as many other concerned organizations could not be certain if Bishop Su was still alive.

The Cardinal Kung Foundation received information on or near November 15, 2003 that Bishop Su Zhimin was taken to the Officers' Ward of the Baoding Central Hospital in Baoding, Hebei for an eye operation and for heart ailments. He was heavily guarded by approximately twenty plain-clothes government security personnel. It was reported that the name of SU Zhimin is not officially registered in the hospital record. As soon as the authorities learned that Bishop Su was recognized, he was immediately removed to a secret location.

Bishop Su is a prominent leader of the underground Roman Catholic Church in China, a leader of several hundred thousand underground Catholics. While scores of Patriotic Church Bishops have met with foreign dignitaries in China and overseas, Bishop Su is probably the only underground bishop who has met a US Congressman. He met privately with Congressman Christopher Smith (NJ) in January 1994 during the Congressman's official visit to China. Immediately after the departure of Congressman Smith from China, Bishop Su was arrested and detained. He was released after 9 days due to very vigorous protest from the United States Congress led by Congressman Smith.

In his interview with Ms. Moreau who is a free-lance reporter, Congressman Smith said: "The (Chinese) government claims that he is missing or cannot be found. That is so not believable. They know exactly where he is, and we believe, we cannot say absolutely, that they have him."

Bishop Su has been arrested at least 5 times and spent approximately 27 years in prison thus far. He was once beaten so savagely in prison that he suffered extensive hearing loss. He escaped from police detention in April 1996 and remained in hiding for 16 months until October 1997 when he was rearrested. While in hiding, he wrote to the Standing Committee of the People's National Congress in China, requesting it "to thoroughly investigate the serious unlawful encroachment on the citizen's rights, and to

administer corrective measures to restore order and control to ensure that the civil rights and interests of the vast number of religious believers are protected."

The United States and other foreign governments must continue to press on Chinese government for an answer on Bishop Su's disappearance and wellbeing. This is our only hope that the Chinese government will keep Bishop Su alive.

Bishops are not the only ones who are missing. There are many missing priests. Among them is Father Joseph Lu Genjun.

Father Lu was the administrative leader of the Roman Catholic Church in the Diocese of Baoding. On February 17 2006, Father Lu was to meet a fellow underground Roman Catholic priest at the Baoding Train Station. On his way to the station, before arriving there, he was intercepted by several public security officials. They dragged him to the police station. He was never seen again.

Father Lu, age 44, is the son of a farmer. He was raised near Baoding. After he finished high school, he joined the Communist army. At night, he had a secret life. He secretly listened to Bible readings on radio stations and news on VOA. After serving in the army, he literally ran to the underground seminary. In May 1989, he was ordained a priest.

Father Lu was first arrested in 1990, shortly after his ordination. He was there for one month. In an article, Theresa Moreau wrote: "He was beaten, handcuffed for 24 hours a day for many days. His head and face were hit so hard that his lower jaw was seriously injured and his teeth loosened, making chewing food impossible for many days."

Father Lu was arrested again in May, 1994 and released after a short period of detention.

In April, 1998, Father Lu was arrested again and released after a short time.

In March 2001, Father Lu was arrested again. But, this time it was different. He was almost immediately sentenced to three years labor camp. The court document stated that Father Lu was guilty of 1) receiving theology training in 1986, 2) being ordained a priest, 3) a priesthood that is not recognized by the Patriotic Association, 4) his refusal to recognize and to follow the directives of the Patriotic Association, 5) conducting illegal evangelization activities causing social disturbance, and 6) conducting illegal evangelization that created a comparatively big impact. For these charges, Father Lu was sentenced to three years in a labor camp in Hebei.

This document is extremely significant. This court document is a de facto admission by the Chinese government of its religious persecution policy. This court document also clearly proved that Article 36 of the Chinese constitution guaranteeing freedom of

religious belief does not mean freedom of religion. Otherwise, how could the Chinese government put Father Lu in the Labor Camp for three years for the so-called crimes as described by this court document? A copy of this court document, both in Chinese and English, is attached to this presentation.

On March 30, 2004, Father Lu was released. However, the arrests soon began again.

On May 14, 2004, while he was preparing to give talks for local Catholic young married couples on Catholic moral theology and natural family planning, the police arrived and took him away. He was locked up for a few days.

Then, Father Lu was arrested again on his way to the train station last February in 2006 as I described above, and was never seen again. Neither his diocese nor his family has further news on him.

Priests, seminarians, nuns and laypersons face similar harassment. We know for sure that there are approximately 25 of them in jail or in labor camps. This list is by no means complete, because of the difficulties in obtaining details. Many cases are not reported here. My educated guess is that there are hundreds in jail. Sometimes, the government simply removes a priest or bishop and do not place them into the jail system, so that there is no official record of this religious prisoner. This is one of the new methods of persecuting the underground church.

The following 10 arrests of religious were made by China's Security Bureau since July 2005:

1. December 29, 2006: Police of the northern province of Hebei 河北 arrested nine underground Catholic priests of the diocese of Baoding 保定 on December 27, 2006. The group had met to study in a place 30 km south of Baoding. The reason for their arrest is unknown. It is likely that they were arrested just because they were meeting for a time of prayer during the Christmas season in a place unknown to the government.
2. September 29, 2006: Two underground Catholic priests of Wenzhou 温州 diocese, Father Shao Zhoumin 邵祝敏, the vicar general of Wenzhou diocese in Zhejiang 浙江 Province, and Father Jiang Shuiian 姜溯讓, the chancellor of Wenzhou Diocese, while thousands of miles away from their home, were arrested in Shenzhen 深圳 of Guangdong 廣東 on their way home from a visit to a number of cities in Europe, including Rome, Italy.

3. August 2, 2006: Underground Catholic Bishop Yao Liang 姚良, 82 years of age, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Xiwanzi 西灣子 in Hebei Province, was arrested again by the Chinese authority on July 30, 2006. On August 1, Father Li Huisheng 李會生 of the same diocese was arrested. 500 police attacked the Catholic community in Zhangjiakou 張家口 and arrested some 90 underground Catholic faithful.

4. February 23, 2006: Two Underground Roman Catholic Priests Arrested in Hebei.

Father LU Genjun 鹿根君, 44 years old, and Father GUO Yanli 郭彥利, 39 years old, who belong to the diocese of Baoding 保定 in Hebei 河北, were arrested on February 17 while waiting for a friend at the Baoding train station. Father GUO was sent to Xushui County 徐水縣 detention center while Father Lu was sent to an undisclosed location. We do not know why they were arrested and have no other information on their arrests.

5. January 4, 2006: An Underground Roman Catholic Priest Arrested in Hebei. Another Underground Bishop Has Disappeared.

Father Wang Wenzhi 王文芝, fifty years old, a priest in the diocese of Yongnian 永年 in Hebei, was arrested by Chinese security officials after he finished offering his Mass in a family's private home on December 11, 2005 in Fengfeng City 峰峰市, which is located southwest of the City of Handan 邯鄲市, Hebei. He has been kept in the detention center of Guangping county 廣平縣 ever since. We understand that the Chinese government is attempting to brain-wash and force Father Wang to cooperate with the government in order to join the official communist-established Patriotic Church. We have been informed that the government has not been successful in its attempt to convert Father Wang to their official Church.

In the meantime, Bishop Han Dingxiang 韓鼎祥主教 of Yongnian has disappeared. He had been arrested by the Chinese government more than six years ago in December 1999. Since then he was kept in a government-run hostel somewhere in the diocese of Yongnian and, up until now, people were sometimes able to get a glimpse of him at his window. But, no longer: he has been transferred to an unknown location and we have no news of him. His health has been poor.

6. November 28, 2005: Six Underground Roman Catholic Priests Arrested.

Six underground Roman Catholic priests, all belonging to Bishop Jia Zhiguo's (賈志國) Diocese of Zheng Ding (正定) in Hebei (河北) Province, were arrested ten days ago on November 18. Father Wang Jin Shan (王進山) and Father Gao Lingshen (高嶺深), both in their 50s, were not only arrested, but were also severely beaten. Father Gao Lingshan bled profusely from his mouth. In addition, Father Guo Zhijun (郭志軍), 36 years of age, Father Zhang Xiuchi (張秀池), 60 years of age, Father Peng Jianjun (彭建軍), 30 years of age, and Father Zhang Yinhu (張銀虎), 45 years of age, were first ordered to be under house arrest on the same day, but were later officially arrested and were detained in the Gaocheng (高城縣) security bureau. No other details are available.

7. November 17, 2005: An Underground Roman Catholic Priest and Ten Seminarians Arrested.

A Roman Catholic underground priest, Father Yang Jianwei 楊建偉, and ten seminarians were arrested in the afternoon Beijing time November 12, 2005. Six seminarians are from outside of the Baoding 保定, Hebei 河北 area. The other four are from Baoding. The arrest took place in a nearby village of Xushui City 徐水縣城 in Hebei 河北 by approximately 20 government security officers. We do not know why they were arrested. Many religious books and RMB 7,000 were taken away by police. After being detained for three days, those six seminarians who are from outside of Baoding were released and were sent back to their home towns instead of being sent back to their seminary. The other four seminarians from Baoding are still kept in police custody, and their whereabouts are unknown. They are FAN Fubin 范富彬, WANG Yongliang 王永亮, WANG Chunlei 王春雷 and LI Yutao 李玉濤. Father Yang, who is 33 years of age, is still kept in police custody and his whereabouts are also unknown. Father Yang was ordained an underground priest in 2000 and was born in Shakou Village 沙口村 of Xushui City 徐水縣城. Shakou Village has an underground Roman Catholic population of approximately 1,000 people.

8. November 9, 2005: Underground Roman Catholic Bishop Jia Zhi Guo Arrested Again in China. Two Other Underground Priests of the Same Diocese Also Arrested.

Bishop Jia Zhi Guo 賈志國主教, the underground Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Zheng Ding 正定 in Hebei Province 河北省, was arrested again by

Chinese government security officials at his house at approximately 8:00 am Beijing time yesterday November 8, 2005. The officials, having ordered the bishop to bring his clothing, drove the bishop to Jinzhou City 晉州市 where several other security officials were waiting in order to drive the bishop to Shijiazhuang City 石家莊市. The security personnel told the public that the bishop was taken away for a "study session." We have no idea how long Bishop Jia will be taken away.

One day before the bishop's arrest, Father LI Suchuan 李素川神父, 40 years of age, and Father YANG Ermeng 楊二孟神父, 35 years of age, both of whom belong to Bishop Jia's Zheng Ding Diocese, were taken away by the security personnel separately on November 7 from their parishes in Zhoujiazhuang Village 周家莊 and Zhoutou Village 周頭村, both of Dingzhou City 定州市, respectively. We understand that they were taken to the Security Bureau of Jinzhou City 晉州市. They still have not returned home at the time of this writing.

Bishop Jia is 70 years old and was ordained a bishop in 1980. He was previously in jail for approximately 20 years and has been under strict surveillance for many years. He takes care of approximately 100 handicapped orphans in his house. This is the eighth time we are aware that Bishop Jia was arrested since January 2004.

9. September 4, 2005: Under Roman Catholic Priest and a Recently Graduated Seminarian arrested in China.

Underground Roman Catholic priest Father PANG Yongxing 龐永興 and a recently graduated underground seminarian Mr. MA Yongjiang 馬永強 were arrested at approximately 3 PM on Friday, September 2, 2005, by the Security Bureau of Qing Yuan Xian (county) 清苑縣, Hebei. Seven or eight police vans were mobilized for this arrest.

The 32 year old priest, Father PANG, was born in Pang Qu Village 龐家庄 of Qing Yuan County 清苑縣, Hebei. The Cardinal Kung Foundation reported on July 26, 2002 about Fr. PANG's last arrest in 2001 when he was sent to a labor camp for three years. Since his release one year ago, he has been working in an underground church in Qing Yuan County which has approximately 800 underground Catholics.

Mr. MA recently graduated from an underground seminary and has been assisting in Father Pang's parish.

10. July 28, 2005: Underground Roman Catholic Priest and His Parishioners Beaten and Arrested in China.

Father LIN Daixian 林代先, an underground Roman Catholic priest belonging to the Pingtan 平潭 parish of the Fuzhou 福州 diocese in Fujian 福建, a seminarian and 9 parishioners were arrested by Chinese security personnel on July 25 at approximately 8 o'clock in the evening (Fujian time). The arrest was carried out during the celebration of a private Holy Mass in a private home in Pingtan, attended by approximately 50 faithful praying for the recovery of a cancer parishioner. In arresting Father LIN Daixian, the security police beat savagely the parishioners who tried in vain to prevent the arrest of Father LIN. In the process, many parishioners were beaten and suffered severe injuries, including broken bones and teeth, brain injuries causing severe swelling, fainting, and many other kinds of injuries. The private house where the arrests took place was totally ransacked and severely damaged. Father LIN, the seminarian, and nine parishioners are now detained in the Pingtan detention center.

We do not know the name of the seminarian and the nine parishioners who were arrested with the priest.

From the two examples of Bishop Su and Father Lu together with the above ten arrests that I have presented, you can see that religious persecution in China is not ancient history. It is on-going. The persecution continues when China is making significant economic progress, when China has joined the World Trade Organizations, and when China will host the Olympic Games in 2008.

The goal of the Olympic Games is "to build a peaceful and better world through sports practice .....characterized by friendship, solidarity and fair play." The open persecution of peaceful religious believers by an Olympic host country makes a mockery of this goal of the Olympic movement. Obviously, the current Chinese government religious policy is the direct opposite to the Olympic goal. Therefore, the spirit and the noble name of the Olympic Games are being downgraded and severely tarnished by their coexistence with the evil acts of religious persecutions and human rights violations in China.

I am here to speak not only for Bishop Su and Father Lu, but also for all others who are jailed or have disappeared for their religious activities. I appeal to this committee, President Bush, the officials of his administration, congressmen and senators: when you negotiate anything with the Chinese government officials, please remember that releasing these religious believers and exonerating their so-called crimes should be one of the top priorities on their agenda.

I have also written a letter to President Hu Jintao, the President of the People Republic of China and appealed to him "to bring modern China into an era of true religious freedom," reasoned with him that "a country without religious freedom is never peaceful and constructive" and challenged him to realize "the importance of changing the world's perception of China's human rights policy for the better." We also not only appealed to President Hu that "all these (religious) prisoners, both living and dead, be officially and posthumously exonerated of so called crimes, some as long as five decades ago," but also appealed to him "to release all current religious prisoners from prison and labor camp..." We concluded that "to do so will be a powerful testimony to the Chinese government's respect for and adherence to human rights and liberty. To do so will also prove that China is honoring the spirit of the Olympic Games that (she) will have the honor of hosting in 2008." [A copy of this letter is attached to this presentation.](#)

I have discussed the Vatican-China relations in my op-ed article published by the Asian Wall Street Journal in April, 2005. [This article is attached to this presentation.](#) The situation of Vatican-China relations has not changed much since 2005. The Vatican continues to reach-out to China. Recently there was a conference on China held in the Vatican. There was no major official release on the conclusion of the conference. However, according to an interview by Yahoo News on January 26, with Cardinal Zen, the bishop of Hong Kong said "It was time for the Vatican to take a more uncompromising line toward the Chinese government." According to the Vatican, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI will write an open letter to the Catholics in China. We are anxiously waiting for this letter.

Thank you.

Joseph Kung