

## Hearings on Religious Persecution in China: Xiqiu (Bob) Fu Oral Testimony

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(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

Xiqiu (Bob) Fu

MR. FU: Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Seiple, and honorable Commissioners and guests, I am privileged to be here to speak about the true situation of China churches, especially the persecuted churches. Let me give you a brief introduction about my family and my life.

I was born in a peasant family in Shandong province in northern China. After activity and during college, in support of the 1989 pro-Democracy movement, I read powerful Christian biography and became a follower of Christ. Though I was teaching English in the Beijing party school of the Communist Party, which is a job with light work, I spent most of my time in doing house-church ministries. In 1995, in order to help the rapid need of Bible teachers, several of my coworkers in Beijing, my wife and I, founded an official Bible school outside Beijing to train younger house-church leaders whom we recruited from several meager house-church groups.

This led to our detention by public security group of Beijing in the name of illegal evangelizing in May 1996. In those two months of the imprisonment, we were treated as hardened criminals and almost all of our properties, even our wedding video, were confiscated without a receipt. Under house arrest after our release, we managed to flee and reach Hong Kong in September.

There, waiting for evangelical -- for almost nine months after intervention by the U.S. Christian Chinese communities evangelical leaders, Congressional leaders, and U.S. government, my wife and I with our son Daniel left Hong Kong on June 27 just before its return to China. Now

we are residing at Philadelphia where I am studying at Westminster Seminary. We have been receiving updated information on the situation of house churches through various channels such as faxes, phone calls, handwritten letters brought by visitors to China from other countries.

The whole history of Chinese house-church movement is a history of persecution by the Chinese government. In May of 1950 the Chinese Communist Party created a patriotic organization among the Protestants. This organization was formerly organized as the Chinese Protestant Anti-American and Aid-Korea Three-Self Reform Movement in April of 1951.

At the initial state of this organization, the three-self movement published a Christian manifesto on July 28, 1950, which stated that in the past the Christianity was used by Western imperialists to conduct aggression in China, and that if Christianity is to have any future in China it must cut off its relations with foreign missions and to declare its support for the new regime. All Christians leaders were asked to sign this document to prepare their support for the new government. Those who failed doing so led to severe punishment, from execution to life sentence, as counterrevolutionaries.

By 1958 the visible institutional church established by foreign missions over 107 years were practically destroyed by the Chinese Communist Party through the agency of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Missionaries were drawn out by January of 1951. Most Christian publishing houses, Christian schools, colleges, and seminaries were dissolved during 1952 to 1954. Most church buildings were taken over by the state.

With this kind of situation, the Christian community was confronted with a new challenge: how to carry on church life and ministry without church organizations, without pastor leadership, without church buildings. Furthermore, it was dangerous to meet privately at home as the TSPM had announced that all home meetings are illegal and their leaders subject to arrest by the state. Under such crucial circumstances, lay leaders rose up to lead home meetings at great personal risk. This was the beginning of the house-church movement in contemporary China.

During the cultural revolution, practically all Christians suffered. Brother Li by name began to itinerize in his home town in Hunan after his release from ten years of imprisonment in 1970 before he was arrested again in 1974. Brother Peter Xu, the well-known house-church leader who gathered a group of young people and formed a team of itinerant evangelists, followed him. This is group that later developed perhaps one of the largest mission groups of over 8,500 full-time itinerant evangelists

during the last 20 years. And Peter Xu was imprisoned again in 1997, and now he is still in the labor camp.

#### The Tiananmen Square

massacre of June 4, 1989 marked the death of Marxism in the hearts of the Chinese people; particularly the students and the young intellectuals became ultimately disillusioned with the ideology of Marxism, Leninism, and the thought of Mao Zedong.

#### Christian

faith -- fearing what had happened to Eastern Europe might take place in China, Chinese government began to put more pressure on the church. Although the Chinese government requirement for house churches to register with the government and to come under the TSPM has been in place since 1982, a more systematic campaign to bring them under control was launched from early 1994.

On January 31, 1994, the state council issued two decrees; number 144, number 145. The first one is to control foreigners' religious activity in China. The second one is an ordinance is required in all places of religious activities be registered with the Religious Affairs Bureau, RAB, and be placed under the management of the TSPM.

Many of the larger house meetings were forced to be closed. One church in Wenzhou was blasted to the ground. Several well-known house-church leaders have been arrested and mercilessly sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Very few of the house churches register with the Religious Affairs Bureau.

#### Here

I want to emphasize why house churches do not register and refuse to join to TSPM, as I was asked this question very often. First of all, the alienation between the house churches and the TSPM has been deeply rooted in the history of the church in China since 1950. Christians in the 1950s witnessed how the government used the TSPM to destroy both of the institutional churches established by western missions and indigenous churches founded by Christian believers. Even today in many cases, the TSPM pastors work as informants of house-church activities to the government, resulting in the latter arrests and imprisonment.

Thus, to the house churches, the TSPM is an agent of the government. House church leaders do not regard the TSPM and the China Christian Council as authentic representatives of the Chinese church. Hence, it is hard for them to be reconciled with their betrayers who are still betraying them.

Secondly, once a house church registers with the government and joins the TSPM, its activities are limited to Sunday worship. Even midweek prayer meetings and fellowship groups in the believers' home are forbidden.

Thirdly, once a house church registers and joins the TSPM, it can no longer engage in evangelism outside the church building or designated places of church.

Finally, the most important reason why house churches refuse to register and join the TSPM is their belief in the lordship of Christ over the church. "Who is the head of the church, Christ or the state?" they would ask. The TSPM accepts the state as the supreme authority of church affairs.

Among the prohibitions issued by the state and repeated in patriotic covenants issued by the TSPM are: First, support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and uphold the ideology of Marxism, Leninism, and the thoughts of Mao Zedong in the church; second, faithfully implement the religious policy of the state by observing the above three designates (sic); third, refrain from evangelizing or baptizing those under years old; fourth, when production and leaders' life conflicts in priority to production; fifth, refrain from making contacts with overseas church groups; sixth, refrain from listening to gospel radio broadcast from abroad or receive Christian leadership on tapes from abroad, et cetera. House churches are committed to obedience to Christ.

In China -- in concluding, in China there is a certain forms of freedom of religious beliefs and freedom of worship in the state-approved churches. Those who worship and serve there, accept the limitations imposed upon them by the state and try to serve God within the sphere of such limitations in exchange for legal standing and freedom from persecution.

House churches which are committed to the leadership, headship of Christ in the church and to evangelism must operate as legal groups conducting, quote, "legal religious activities," end of quote, and consequently must suffer the administrative penalties inflicted by the state. State persecution and Christian suffering take place within this context of illegality.

And ladies and gentlemen, I want to call your attention on the following facts: In the past few years, Chinese Communist Party have sent many of their officials from TSPM, Chinese Christian Council, Religious Affairs Bureau, and the United Front Work Department to do propaganda in the U.S. in defending their repressive policy to house-church leaders and believers.

Unfortunately, some of their visits were invited by some American Evangelical organizations, such as in 1998, American Evangelical called International led by Mr. Ned Graham invited a group of Chinese leader officials who are mostly the initiative or the practitioners of the persecution of the house churches in China. One of the excuse they often use for the arrest of the house-church leader is that because they are "evil criminal cults" despite the invalidity for an atheist Communist government to define who is the orthodox, who is the cult. Actually, throughout the house-church movement, they always label any religious activities out of the Chinese Communist Party's control as "evil criminal cults."

Following the severe suppression upon Falun Gong last year, the persecution to the house-church leaders and believers have been escalated severely. CCP has been doing a nationwide crackdown campaign toward all those unregistered house churches. Churches and believers' houses were destroyed and more house-church leaders got arrested and are being tortured mercilessly.

Let me give you some cases which happened recently. Because of the nature of the limitation of the time, I'll just give you a few. In January of this year, according to trustworthy source, a pastor's son of the Lisu minority was beaten to death just because they had a Christian gathering in their group. The cattle and oxen of their fellow believers were confiscated, which left them without any means of making a living.

On October 19, 1999, the same day when President Clinton met with the Commission members on international religious freedom, 200 PSB police arrived at the house of well-known pastor Li Dexian in Guang Zhou Province. Pastor Li and his wife and three others were arrested and being detained many, many times in the past few months. Actually, I just left for his conference. I was told by a source that Pastor Li was detained on the day before yesterday by ten public security bureau members. Although Chinese Communist government persecute them cruelly, Christians of the house-church movement do not hate them, nor have any attempted to subvert them; rather they are praying ceaselessly for a prosperous future and for the rulers of China.

Then last

November five major house-church groups, who represent 20 to 30 million Protestant Christian, issued their Common Confession of Faith, showing the government, as well as to the world, that they're not evil cults, but good citizens. They believe that one more Christian, one less criminal; one more church, one less prison in China. They also issued an appeal to seek dialogue with Chinese government and TSPM, but the government's reply is arrest, beating, electric sticks, and heavy fines. Now three of the signers were sentence from one to three years' reeducation through labor.

Finally, I call to the United Nations, its recommendation to have a full investigation on the abuses and the persecution to the religious minorities directed by Chinese government. Let the justice prevail. Let the real criminals be punished.

I call to American business community, while you are gaining millions of dollars from Chinese cheap labor and their pockets, please remember, they are not only needing Microsoft and Mc Donald's but also more importantly, they want to labor as real human beings with dignity and the integrity and freedom of belief and expression that God has given them. Don't sell your conscience with your contracts.

Of course I call to the American government, legislators, and judicial branches, while you are seeking to build strategic partnership with Chinese Communist government, please remember thousands of innocent people are suffering in China prisons, labor camps and detention centers just because they share the same value as your forefathers did. Don't forget your national foundation "In God We Trust" when you are lobbied by the dollar bills.

I call to the American parents, while your boys and girls are enjoying your cheap precious toys from China, please remember your spiritual brothers and sisters with their beaten hands and broken legs made many of those toys. Don't forget the boys and girls are crying by missing their imprisoned parents, without a toy.

I call to American religious community, while you are worshiping God freely most of the time, please remember thousands of your fellow coworkers have been chained for the sake of freedom of worship for 50 years. God bless China. God bless America.