

Rights advocates decry Chinese record

Written by Taipei Times

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International human rights campaigners yesterday testified at a Legislative Yuan hearing on religious persecution and human rights violations in China, while lawmakers and rights advocates called for a refugee law to be enacted and aid sent to persecuted Chinese.

US-based China Aid Association president Bob Fu (傅博) said a series of religious persecutions in China's Zhejiang Province began in July at an unprecedented rate, with more than 1,300 people detained, interrogated or missing, and crosses at more than 1,700 churches demolished.

Showing videos of cross removal and police violence, Fu said the Chinese government is initiating a state persecution campaign, with house churches and even government-sanctioned churches subject to persecution.

The pastor said 248 human-rights lawyers have been interrogated, held in custody or are missing after defending the rights of Christians and other persecuted groups, he said.

Christian pastor Philip Woo (吳勝) from Hong Kong said authorities in Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province, interrogated him in July for organizing a religious workshop in Hong Kong and accused him of breaching Chinese religious regulations.

Canadian-Chinese actress and human rights advocate Anastasia Lin (林慧) said that Chinese authorities tried to muzzle her by pressuring her father in China after she won the Miss World Canada competition this year.

Her father told her to stop her advocacy of human rights in China, or else he would have to sever contact with her, Lin said.

Teresa Chu (朱麗), a human-rights lawyer for Falun Gong in Taiwan, said that the nation has to act because China is killing people, adding that religious freedom is a fundamental human right.

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China has earned a place on human rights watchdogs' blacklists for violations of religious freedom, Chu said.

She called on the government to condemn organ harvesting among Falun Gong members in China and demand that the Chinese government stop religious persecution, and release prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders.

Taiwan's Association for China Human Rights president Yang Hsien-hung (楊憲宏) called on legislators across party lines to push through legislation of a draft refugee law that passed its first reading in 2012, but has since been mothballed, as well as a revision of the Act Governing Relations Between the Peoples of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area (兩岸人民關係條例) to provide a legal basis to take in Chinese refugees.

He proposed that the Mainland Affairs Council and Ministry of Foreign Affairs blacklist Chinese human rights violators from entering Taiwan, or even prosecute them.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Yu Mei-nu (余梅奴) said the council specifies that people entering Taiwan illegally will not be granted asylum.

This effectively excludes most political prisoners, because they usually have to sneak into a country to seek asylum and refugee status, Yu said.

At the end of the hearing, DPP Legislator Tien Chiu-chin (田秋堃) proposed that a draft refugee law be finalized and that the council should try to devise a mechanism to screen human rights violators from entering Taiwan.

Tien also said a proposed act for Taiwan and China to set up a liaison office in each other's territories should be halted before the establishment of the refugee law and the screening mechanism.

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The Ministry of the Interior should compile a list of human rights violators to be provided by non-governmental organizations and register them as such on the nation's visa application system, Tien added.

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