



10.20.15

CHINA | Governments Asked to Keep Human Rights on Agenda

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) called on the UK and Chinese governments to keep human rights on the agenda during President Xi Jinping's state visit to the UK, which starts Oct. 20.

President Xi Jinping's state visit is the first by a Chinese leader for over a decade and follows Chancellor George Osborne's high-profile trade visit to China in September.

The China NGO network, of which CSW is a member, issued a statement Oct. 19 calling on Prime Minister David Cameron to raise human rights with China and stressing that these concerns must not be overruled by economic interests.

At a stateless lunch address at the House of Commons on Oct. 19 panelists urged the UK government to stand up for the Chinese people and to hold the Chinese government accountable. China Aid Director Bob Fu said that "there are numerous cases of persecutions against Protestants and Catholics in Zhejiang, crosses and buildings are being demolished, and pastors, believers, rights defenders and lawyers are being detained. The UK government should not only honor business whilst people in China are suffering."

Hundreds of rights lawyers and activists have been arrested and detained by the Chinese authorities since July in an unprecedented crackdown. On July 16, five UN independent experts called on the Chinese authorities to stop harassing and intimidating lawyers and their colleagues, stating that "lawyers are essential to ensure the rule of law; they need to be protected not harassed."

In Zhejiang province, over 1,000 crosses have been forcibly removed from churches as part of an on-going campaign since 2013. Buddhists in Tibet and Muslims in Xinjiang province have also been subject to violations of their right to freedom of religion or belief.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We urge the Prime Minister to keep human rights on the agenda in his talks with President Xi Jinping. The arrests of the lawyers are unprecedented in scale but they are at the sharp end of a long-term trend of oppression of rights activists. It is essential that the UK stand with those who seek to uphold the rights of their fellow citizens and fight for rule of law in China and this is an opportunity for the Prime Minister to go on the record, in public, to affirm that human rights and trade are not mutually exclusive; rather,

rule of law and the preservation of rights are essential for a society in which all citizens can flourish and business can thrive.”