

Table of Contents

- [US Report Chide China for Crackdown on Religion](#) - (05.09.2000)
- [Persecution Watch: North Korea](#) - (03.05.2000)

US Report Chide China for Crackdown on Religion

AP (05.09.2000) / HRWF International Secretariat (07.09.2000) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - The U.S. State Department chided China and North Korea for repressing religious freedom -- using tactics including torture -- in an annual report card on worldwide religious persecution.

China's "respect for religious freedom deteriorated markedly" in the last six months of 1999, including a crackdown on Catholics and on the Falun Gong spiritual group, the State Department said.

"Genuine religious freedom does not exist," in North Korea, the report says, citing unconfirmed reports of executions of Christian church members.

The State Department report does not impose any trade or arms sanctions. The U.S. Congress is moving toward approving a permanent trade accord with China and the Clinton administration recently eased trade sanctions on North Korea. The U.S. has also moved to increase trade with Vietnam, and is considering allowing more trade with Cuba.

Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Vietnam, Cuba, Burma, and Laos were also cited in the report for repressing religious activity. These governments supported "totalitarian attempts to control religious belief or freedom," the report said.

In Iraq, a decade-long campaign of murder against Shi'a Muslims and more recently, Christians, continues, the report said.

The ruling Taliban in Afghanistan was cited for serious abuses of religious freedom, including persecution and murder of religious dissidents. A spokesman for the Afghanistan mission to the UN -- which represents the exiled Taliban opposition, agreed with the U.S. assessment of Taliban abuses.

U.S. President Bill Clinton will join Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in New York for a United Nations summit on poverty, AIDS and the environment this week, to be attended by many leaders of the governments criticized in the report.

Spillover Effect

The Chinese government's "unremitting campaign against the Falun Gong and other 'heretical cults' plus exhortations by senior leaders to 'strengthen religious work' had an inevitable spillover effect," on treatment of Muslims and Catholics, the report said.

"There were credible reports of religious detainees being beaten and tortured," in China, the report said.

Officials at the Chinese Embassy in Washington were not available for comment.

Human rights advocates pointed to similar abuses during the stormy debate in the U.S on whether to grant China permanent normal trade relations. The Clinton administration points to those same abuses as proof that the trade restrictions are failing.

"It is clearly our hope that granting China permanent trading status will create better conditions for human rights," said Thomas Farr, director of the State Department's Office of Religious Freedom.

Human Rights Abuses

The watchdog group Human Rights Watch wants Clinton to bring up human rights abuses when he meets with Chinese President Jiang Zemin in New York this week at the UN meetings. The group issued a report this week citing a rise in persecution of political dissidents in China.

In June, Clinton eased sanctions on North Korea on trade in food, petroleum, consumers goods and financial services, as well as air travel and mining investment.

The U.S. is eager to ease tensions with the communist North, which in turn is seeking relief from a decade-long economic collapse that has seen its economy shrink about 30 percent.

Officials at both the North Korean and Iraqi missions at the UN were not aware of the report and could not comment on it.

The State Department, under mandates from Congress, issues similar reports on countries' arms exports, drug policies and human rights abuses.

"It's a problem when you start legislating all these things; if everything is important, then nothing is important," said Robert Manning, an Asia scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations. "We are passing judgments on the entire world."

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Persecution Watch: North Korea

Charisma News Service (03.05.2000)/HRWF International Secretariat (12.05.2000) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - More than 20 Christians have been publicly executed by firing squad in the last seven months, reported Open Doors (OD). Most of them were young Christians who were converted while living in China--where many North Koreans have fled to avoid their country's famine--and returned to their homeland to share their new faith.

One of those who died had his teeth broken by a North Korean officer as he was dragged to the firing range to prevent him from preaching the gospel, said OD. Two women were shot in HaeSan city on charges of illegal smuggling--just one of the false criminal offenses for which Christians have been executed, according to OD.

The deaths were "only the tip of the iceberg" of the ongoing persecution in the country, where believers face being sent to harsh labor camps if they are discovered praying or attending a meeting of the underground church, OD said. Around 500,000 Christians are believed to meet regularly in secret, some of them gathering in caves.

New Christians are most at risk in North Korea, as older believers have learned how to avoid some of the persecution, said OD. "It is assumed that since 1995 several hundred North Koreans Christians have been martyred."