



THE CARDINAL KUNG FOUNDATION



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The Cardinal Kung Foundation



Arrest of An Underground Catholic Priest in Hebei Province And An Appeal to the Chinese Authority to Release Religious Prisoners

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Stamford, Connecticut, U.S.A. - The Cardinal Kung Foundation, based in Stamford, Connecticut, USA, reported today that Father Song Wanjun (宋万军), a Roman Catholic priest belonging to the underground diocese of Xiwanzi (西湾子教区), was arrested at about 4 p.m. on August 7 (Beijing Time) at the Qiaodong District of Zhangjiakou City (张家口市桥东区) in Hebei province. He was arrested by more than 10 Chinese Public Security officers while he was driving and was taken to the Public Security Bureau of Qiaodong District (桥东区), and then to Zhangbei County (张北县). We do not know where he is at this time. We understand that the Chinese Public Security tried to arrest him some time ago, but the priest managed to get away. The Chinese Authority finally arrested him yesterday.

The Xiwanzi Diocese is located in north Hebei Province. It has a remarkable Catholic population of the Underground Church in China with its territory ranging from some parts of Hebei Province to Inner Mongolia. In recent years, the Chinese government repeatedly put priests of this diocese into custody and tried to force them to join the Patriotic Association. In previous years, the Chinese Communist Authorities had arrested or house arrested a number of priests of this Diocese, such as Bishop Yao Liang (姚良) (deceased), Father Li Huisheng (李慧生) (seven-year sentence), Father Wang Zhong (王忠) (three-year sentence). Many other priests were "invited " forcibly to participate in "Study Sessions" in an attempt to convert them to the Patriotic Association without much success.

Father Song Wanjun (宋万军), aged thirty-nine, was ordained a priest eleven years ago. He conducted apostolic missions at Zhangbei County (张北县) for years. He was assigned to serve the Catholics at Chongli County (崇礼县) before he was arrested two days ago.

Joseph Kung, the President of the Cardinal Kung Foundation, reminds the public that there is still no freedom of religion in China and the persecution of various religions, especially the Roman Catholic Church, is ongoing. The following two examples together with many other continuing arrests of those of other religious faith are evidence that religious persecution is very much alive in China at present.

Bishop SHI Enxiang (師恩祥), the underground Roman Catholic bishop of Yixian (易縣), Hebei (河北), was arrested while visiting in Beijing (北京) on Good Friday, April 13, 2001 - more than twelve years ago. We do not know where he is detained at present and how he is healthwise. Other details of his arrest are unknown. Bishop SHI is now over 90 years old and was ordained a bishop in 1982. He was previously in jail for about thirty years. He was last arrested in December 1990, held in custody for three years, and released November 1993. The authority tried to arrest him in 1996, but failed, as Bishop SHI got away. He then went into hiding until his arrest on April 13, 2001.

Another bishop must not be forgotten is Bishop Su Zhiming (蘇志民). He is the underground Roman Catholic bishop of Baoding (保定), Hebei. He is now over eighty years old. He was arrested at noon on October 8, 1997 in Hebei after 17 months in hiding and after many previous arrests. He, too, has been held incommunicado for the last sixteen years. No one knows where he is at present and how he is healthwise.

We appeal to all people, especially to those who have power and authority, international religious communities, and major renowned social services organizations like Red Cross who partners with the Chinese government, not only to remember those confessors of Faith who are still suffering in the Chinese jails for such a long period for their religious faith, but also to exercise their influences so that these religious prisoners could be released immediately and enjoy this very basic human rights of religious freedom. Could these organizations request the Chinese government to at least allow them to visit these religious prisoners to find out their situations?

Thank you.

Joseph Kung
President
Cardinal Kung Foundation