

*Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler*  
*Foreign Affairs Committee – Member Day*  
*December 12, 2019*

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address you on Member Day. I come before the committee today to discuss China's systematic crackdown on religion. People of all faiths are being persecuted simply for their religious beliefs. The Chinese Communist Party believes any religion could threaten its control over society and is targeting individuals of faith through the "Sinicization of Religion" – a process intended to shape religious traditions and doctrine so they conform with the objectives of the Chinese Communist Party.

Today, I would like to focus on the persecution of Christians. There are over 100 million Christians in China and that number continues to grow. Last year, the Chinese Communist Party began enforcing a massive crackdown to stop the spread of Christianity. This has resulted in widespread forced church closures, destruction of property, and the arbitrary detention and arrests of Christians across China. In 2018, reports indicate more than 5,000 Christians and 1,000 church leaders were arrested, often being labeled as a member of a "cult."

Unregistered churches are not the only target to this persecution. State-sanctioned churches have also faced property destruction, cross removal, and closure. The Chinese Communist Party has installed video surveillance equipment on church properties, authorities have prohibited children and students from attending church services, and online sales of the Bible have been banned. China will reportedly "re-write" and issue a version of the Bible with the "correct understanding" of the text according to the government. This coincides with efforts to remove crosses and replace them with the Chinese flag and slogans praising the Communist Party and President Xi Jinping.

As a nation built on the fundamental principle of the freedom of religion, we have a responsibility to shed light on this persecution and speak for those in China that have no voice. That is why I have partnered with Congresswoman Jackie Speier to introduce H. Res. 493, which condemns the persecution of Christians in China. This bipartisan bill calls on the President to strengthen U.S. religious freedom diplomacy, ensure trade negotiations include religious freedom conditions as mandated by the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act

of 2015, impose sanctions on Chinese officials responsible for the egregious violations of human rights, and raise religious or political prisoner cases to the highest level with Chinese officials.

Chairman Engel and Ranking Member McCaul, by passing this legislation, the House of Representatives will be sending a clear message to China that we will not stand by as they brutally abuse their own citizens. No one should live in fear for practicing their faith and China must be held accountable for their criminal human rights violations. Please join me in supporting the people of China as they face an oppressive and authoritarian regime by acting on H. Res. 493.

Thank you, again, for your time and consideration.

Vicky Hartzler  
Member of Congress