

The Chinese government has a five-year plan to make Christianity 'more compatible with socialism' in which there will be a "rewrite" of the Bible, a prominent religious freedom activist has told Congress.

The Rev. Bob Fu, a former Chinese house church leader who immigrated to the United States in 1997 and founded the persecution watchdog organization China Aid, provided great detail during a House hearing recently about a plan enacted by leading state-sanctioned denominations in China to "Sinicize" Christianity.

As China's crackdown on religion has seen many house churches demolished and thousands of crosses removed from churches nationwide, Fu warned upfront that what is happening right now in China represents the highest degree of persecution for independent faith groups the country has seen in decades.

"Religious freedom in China has really reached to the worst level that has not been seen since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution by Chairman Mao [Zedong] in the 1960s," he told members of the *House Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations*.

Implementing '*socialist core values*'

China's new regulation on religious affairs that was released last year but enacted on Feb. 1. is according to Fu, to actively guide religion to "adapt to socialist society."

In a written testimony, Fu said that under the new regulations religious activity sites will "accept the guidance, supervision, and inspection of relevant departments of the local people's government regarding the management of personnel, finances, assets, accounting, security, fire protection, protection of relics, health and disease prevent and so forth."

Fu said that in order to comply with the new religious regulations, the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the Chinese Christian Council (CCC) (China's state-sanctioned Protestant bodies) have developed a five-year plan on "promoting the Sinicization of Christianity."

The plan proposes "cultivating and implementing the socialist core values." The plan will be supervised by the national religious affairs bureau and "every province, autonomous region and municipality's TSPM and CCC seminaries and churches will cooperate with it."

Retranslation of Old and New Testaments

One way in which they plan to Sinicize Christianity, Fu said, is by "retranslating" the Old Testament and providing new commentary to the New Testament to make socialist ideals and Chinese culture seem more divine.

"The plan made it clear that 'Sinicization of Christianity' means to change 'Christianity in China' into 'Chinese Christianity,'" he explained. [The plan] emphasized that 'the heart and soul of Christianity's Sinicization is to Sincize the Christian theology,' and even proposing to 're-translate the Bible or re-write biblical commentaries.'"

According to its latest outline, Fu said, a retranslation would be a summary of the Old Testament with some Buddhist scripture and Confucian teachings and new commentary for the New Testament.

"There are outlines that the new Bible should not look westernized and [should look] Chinese and reflect Chinese ethics of Confucianism and socialism," Fu told *The Christian Post* after the hearing. "The Old Testament will be messed up. The New Testament will have new commentaries to interpret it."

Fu said that while over 4,000 to 6,000 crosses of state-sanctioned churches have been torn down, churches that have crucifixes on the inside must "put up pictures of Chairman Mao and Chairman Xi [Jinping] on both sides of the cross."

"In the beginning of every church worship service, the choir of the church has to sing a few communist revolutionary songs praising the communist party before they can sing the worship songs," he detailed.

There have been reports that state officials have gone door-to-door trying to get Christians to sign a statement renouncing their Christian faith.

"For first time since cultural revolution, the communist party is now implementing a policy to mandate the Chinese faithful citizens to sign a form to renounce their faith," he said. "We have produced documentation showing [government officials] going door-to-door to force believers to sign a prepared form claiming that these believers were misled by evangelists into believing Christianity.

Now, after a few weeks of self-examination and political studies, they have realized they made a mistake. This has not happened in the past."

In some provinces, they have even banned children from going to church.

Communist party before God

Although leaders at state-sanctioned churches and denominations have already been approved by the government, Fu said clergy have been forced to go through another round of examination to ensure their loyalty is to party before God.

Slogans are being hung in many Catholic churches, on the walls and on the doors. On the entrance door, it says, 'Listen to the words of the party, follow the path of the party.' How can you have a real independent faith as believers? As Christian believers, we are taught to obey the command of the Lord and listen to the command of the Lord. Essentially, the communist party wants to impose themselves as the Lord over the church."

'Country of particular concern'

Rep. Chris. Smith, R-N.J., chairman of the House of Representatives' global human rights subcommittee, said Thursday that the crackdown should result in a tougher China policy.

"Xi Jinping talks about realizing the 'China Dream.' But when Bibles are burned, when a simple prayer over a meal in public maybe an illegal religious gathering, and when over a million Uyghur and Kazakh Muslims are interned in 'reeducation camps' and forced to renounce their faith, that dream is a nightmare," he said.

"Taking a hammer and sickle to the cross or jailing a million Uyghur Muslims will only ensure a tougher China policy, one with widespread, bipartisan and even global support.

Activists have called on the United State government to label China as a "country of particular concern," a State Department designation that carries with it the potential for additional sanctions.