



United States: Concerned by Harassment

UPDATE: The U.S. Department of State released a statement detailing its serious concern about the brutal beating of Pastor "Bike" Zhang's sons by China's Public Security Bureau (PSB) on October 23. They also condemned the harassment and recent imprisonment of Pastor Zhang by the PSB.

"We are gravely concerned by the brutal beating of Pastor Zhang "Bike" Mingxuan's two sons by public bureau officials. We are also deeply concerned by continuing official harassment of Pastor Zhang, a prominent Beijing house church leader, including his arbitrary detention and the forced relocation of his family," said Robert Wood, The U.S. Department of State, Deputy Spokesman in a press release.

Wood's statement called on the Chinese government to release Pastor Zhang and permit his family to return home. "We call upon the Government of China to condemn the violent acts committed against his [Pastor Zhang's] sons, and to bring to justice those individuals responsible for such acts," the statement said. "We are concerned about a pattern of intimidation of religious freedom and rule of law advocates and their family members. We urge China to honor those international human rights instruments to which it is a signatory that protect the rule of law, freedom of expression and freedom of religion."

On October 16, PSB officials severely beat Zhang Jian, the elder son of Pastor Bike, after they entered Pastor Bike's home, secured the exits. The officers beat him with iron bars for nearly half an hour. As Zhang lay bleeding profusely, his mother called an ambulance. The receptionist told her a higher government authority had directed them not to dispatch an ambulance to rescue Zhang because he is related to Pastor Bike. Xie Fenglan next called her younger son, who rushed to the house. Authorities also then beat him.

"We are encouraged to see the U.S. government speaking out on behalf of this persecuted Christian family," said Todd Nettleton, VOM's director of media development. "We join with the State Department in calling on the Chinese government to release Pastor Zhang and to allow his family to return to their apartment."

This incident is the latest attempt by the Chinese government to stop Pastor Bike and his family from sharing the gospel in China. In August, two days before the Olympics, Pastor Bike was arrested along with his wife and a co-worker. The Voice of the Martyrs and China Aid Association launched an international petition drive advocating for their release. More than 58,000 people signed the petition, and it was delivered to Chinese Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong in Washington D.C. Shortly after the petition was circulated and the Olympic Games ended, all three were released.

VOM encourages you to pray for the release of Pastor Bike and the speedy recovery for his sons. Ask God to protect and encourage them and all believers in China during this challenging time.