The Olympics Boycott Series - Part 3: The New Threat to Religious Freedom in Hong Kong

TRANSCRIPT

Discussion

- Reverend L, Christian Cleric from Hong Kong
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Disclaimer: This transcript has been edited for clarity.

A video of the event is available: https://www.hudson.org/events/2069-virtual-event-the-olympics-boycott-series-part-3-the-new-threat-to-religious-freedom-in-hong-kong22022

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Nina Shea:
Hello, and welcome to part three of the Hudson Institute’s Olympic Boycott Series. I'm Nina Shea. I am a senior fellow here at the Hudson Institute and I direct its Center for Religious Freedom. We are sponsoring this series.

The Olympics have offered the People's Republic of China and its Communist Party Government, a golden opportunity to make propaganda and they are masters of that. We at Hudson do not want to lose sight of the horrific religious genocide and repression going on during the Olympics, behind the scenes, in China. We are focusing on various issues. If you’d like to see parts one, two, and four of the Olympics Boycott Series, be sure to go to the Hudson website at www.hudson.org/events.

Today we’re addressing a very important issue and that is: Hong Kong and whether religious repression is coming to Hong Kong and threatening the churches. We have as our guest today a top China expert on the churches in Hong Kong, Reverend L, who is visiting North America from Hong Kong. He is here to enlighten us because very little has been written about this subject or aired up till now. Welcome Reverend L.

Reverend L:
Thanks for having me. My pleasure to be here.

Nina Shea:
Well, thank you. We're not disclosing your full name or whereabouts, because the situation is very menacing right now for any dissident or anyone who dares to criticize or offer critiques, even the mildest critiques, of Beijing today. In some of our other series, we've talked about this, about the abductions and kidnapping, even from safe havens in the West, of Chinese dissidents, and intimidation even on campuses in the United States. Let's start by talking about religious freedom in Hong Kong. Reverend L, is there religious freedom for churches in Hong Kong now? Has there been, and can you give us some granular examples of this?

Reverend L:
As we all know, Hong Kong was not under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party until 1997. Hong Kong has historically enjoyed tremendous religious freedom comparable to any countries in the free world. In regard to Christian churches, there were never any separation between the so-called Three-Self Official Churches or house churches, or any distinction between patriotic church or underground church in Hong Kong. Even in the past 20 years, since the handover, the Hong Kong government has exerted minimal control over the practice of the [Christian] faith until fairly recently. I would say before 2019, 2020, Hong Kong was a beacon of religious freedom in Asia because everyone could practice his or her [Christian] faith freely.

Nina Shea:
Reverend, there wasn’t any censorship of religious literature or internet access to Bibles and readings and religious education - they were entirely free, is that what you’re saying?
Reverend L:
That's right. As we know, in mainland China people under 18 cannot enter into any churches, but in Hong Kong, there is no such restriction so far. In China, the ordination of clergy will require permission from the government, but there's no such restriction or requirement in Hong Kong. In China, thousands of crosses have been taken down by the government, but in Hong Kong churches have remain intact so far. On Christian education, there are basically no Christian schools in China, and yet, we know that there are actually over 60% of the schools in Hong Kong that are run by Christians.

Nina Shea:
Over 60%, you're saying?

Reverend L:
Over 60%. Yes.

Nina Shea:
That's astonishing. I don't think most people outside of Hong Kong realize that.

Reverend L:
Yes, over 60%. In terms of the Bible, you can't really buy a Bible from a bookstore in China, but in Hong Kong, you could easily get a Bible. But recently there have been some troubling signs in Hong Kong. If you go to a church, say in Beijing or China, you could see undercover police taking pictures of people who are at the worship or religious services. I have heard stories recently that this type of stuff is happening in Hong Kong. There are some people undercover, maybe policemen or secret service, taking pictures of people attending religious services.

Nina Shea:
You said recent, how recently did that start?

Reverend L:
In the past six months or so.

Nina Shea:
It's been several years now since President Xi of China said that there would be a sinicization, making Christianity more Chinese. He started passing rules that his sayings should be at the center of homilies and sermons in churches throughout mainland China. We saw crosses being removed from the exteriors of churches. We saw President Xi putting up his own portrait in place of Jesus Christ's image in these churches in China, in some of them. Has that been going on since the announcement of a sinicization policy in 2017, 2018, has that been going on in Hong Kong as well?
Reverend L:

We haven't seen that explicitly and yet there is a very troubling sign. There's a news report from Reuters last month in regards to a meeting in October that took place in Hong Kong. The Chinese Communist Liaison Office in Hong Kong organized a one-day meeting between Patriotic bishops and priests in China and 15 Hong Kong Catholic priests is the first ever official meeting. During the meeting, the mainland clergy briefed the Hong Kong clergy.

Nina Shea:

If I could just interrupt on that, we'll get to that in a minute. I want to focus on the differences over the years, apart from the last couple months between Hong Kong and China, because we hear this slogan of "one country, two systems," but for those who have not visited the two places, it's hard to visualize. We know that for the last two years, there's been the imposition of the National Security Law in Hong Kong and that has greatly affected the publication industry, the press, the media and it has affected, of course, democracy and free speech. What I would love to know is has that impacted the practice of religion in Hong Kong up until now, or up until the last couple months? Then we can take a hard look at what's happened in the last couple of months.

Reverend L:

Sure. As you mentioned, there has been a crackdown on the freedom of press, freedom of assembly and the freedom of speech. In that regard, I would say religious freedom is the only remaining freedom in Hong Kong at this moment. So far, it has not been explicitly or severely restricted.

Nina Shea:

You haven't had the indoctrination sessions that pastors and priests have been subject to in the mainland where they are actually taken off maybe into a black jail, that is, a secret detention place, for a couple days, and then have to sign a pledge of allegiance to register with the Three-Self Church or the Patriotic Church.

Reverend L:

It hasn't appeared yet, but I think it's going to happen pretty soon.

Nina Shea:

Well, I want to stay on this point so we understand what has existed up until 2021. What about during COVID, have the churches been closed? Are the churches open now in Hong Kong?

Reverend L:

The churches were closed for, I would say, half a year to nine months during COVID and then they reopened again pretty much for most of 2021. But then the government closed all the churches again earlier this year. The government has closed all the churches for the past three weeks because of the Omicron variant in Hong Kong. Despite the fact we only have like maybe like 100 cases per day, the
government is taking very severe measures, restrictions on people's freedom, including freedom of religion, freedom of worship.

Nina Shea:

You mentioned that in the last couple months there have been changes. What were some of the first signs of these changes? What were the first ominous signs of threat?

Reverend L:

The first ominous sign was that meeting between the Patriotic priests and bishops with the Hong Kong clergy in late October, in which the Patriotic priests and bishops briefed Hong Kong clergy on how to implement the Catholic religion according to the thoughts of Xi Jinping. It is an obvious sign, in the sense that this is the first official meeting between Catholic priests in Hong Kong with the Patriotic counterparts in China. It looks like this type of session or re-education program is going to be continued from time to time in the future. This is the very first meeting and it sounds like similar meetings would be repeated in the future. So far as Protestants, we haven't seen anything like that, but it's totally conceivable that they're going to do the same thing to Protestants, as well.

Nina Shea:

Why do you think that they have not implemented? Why hasn't the CCP enforced sinicization along with the National Security Law and the press crackdown. You have the closure of the Apple Media and you have Jimmy Lai facing trumped up charges, possibly life imprisonment for basically holding a candle in support of democracy in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong democracy legislators have either fled and sought asylum abroad, many of them are in the UK, or some of them have been jailed. But you're saying that religion really wasn't touched until October, in Hong Kong.

Reverend L:

Well, I think they definitely have been doing some ground-work for the past 20 years, by trying to liaise with the leaders of different religions, by having annual gatherings, annual dinners with those religious leaders. Even for principals of Christian schools, they have been doing a lot of contacts with these people. But in terms of restricting the right of religious freedom, I think the CCP is doing it step by step. The first thing that they did was to take away freedom of press and freedom of assembly and freedom of speech. Now with all these being gone, they're going after organized religion. The organized religion in Hong Kong, say Protestant and Catholics, compared with political activists or dissidents, they were not as big of a threat before, but now with all these other dissidents being taken down, now they're going after religions.

Nina Shea:

I should say for our audience that the Catholics and Protestants are divided into two different churches, two different, large church groupings. It's non-denominational in mainland China, since the Revolution and they are legal. There's a legal procedure for them. Some religions are completely banned. Others are not legal, but maybe foreign practitioners, foreign religions, like Judaism, could be free in China, but there is no local synagogue that's functioning at this point for a local congregation. They're illegal. And
when we refer to Catholics and Protestants, we’re being quite literal because that’s [China’s] categories under law. What, Reverend L, you have said is that there was no division within those churches between a recognized, licensed church in Hong Kong and an underground movement.

Reverend L:
That's Right.

Nina Shea:
Since October, what else has been happening in Hong Kong?

Reverend L:
I would say the second obvious sign would be, it just happened fairly recently at the end of January, in one of the CCP propaganda newspapers in Hong Kong, Ta Kung Pao, they published four articles on the same day in regard to religious regulations in Hong Kong. One of the articles is dedicated to Cardinal Zen, who is the retired Bishop of Hong Kong, who has stood courageously for freedom, for democracy in Hong Kong. That particular article basically categorized him as the enemy of the Chinese Communist Party.

They put Cardinal Zen in the same category as Falun Gong, which has been heavily persecuted by the CCP in the past 20 years or so. This is a very troubling sign because the tactic of CCP is that whenever they want to arrest or go after a group or a person, they would always begin by writing an article in the propaganda newspapers. The idea is that if we read that, if we see an article in those newspapers in regard to a certain person, it is fairly likely that the government would do something in the near future.

Nina Shea:
As you pointed out, Cardinal Zen was very vocal and allowed to say what he wanted to say and travel around the world. I've welcomed him in my office and he's been in Washington in recent years, but he was never attacked in this way before.

Reverend L:
He was attacked before, but this particular article is so direct. It's part of the series of articles on religions in Hong Kong. I would say this is a very ominous sign in the sense that the CCP is going to go after Christianity in Hong Kong, with Zen being probably the first.

Nina Shea:
He was extremely vocal in warning about the threats to the Catholic Church and also the threats to democracy in Hong Kong, more generally. He's an international figure. Actually, he's been rather quiet recently. I think two years ago he tried to meet with the Pope in the Vatican and was not received and was not successful. He was trying to warn them about entering into another agreement with the CCP government. He's been rather quiet. I know he's secure at this point. He celebrated a milestone birthday just a couple weeks ago. It is a really startling shift if they are now running attacks against him.
Reverend L:

Exactly.

Nina Shea:

When he has really been fairly inactive. I think you mentioned, he's emeritus, meaning he's retired. He's been inactive and for them to choose to start going after him, when it hasn't really been provoked by anything recently is something to pay attention to.

Reverend L:

Exactly.

Nina Shea:

You mentioned these meetings. What is the significance of the meetings, of the mainland government-approved church coming to meet with the Hong Kong church leaders from the Catholic world? What would be the threat there? Hong Kong has always been a place of meetings of co-religionists. Can you explain that a little bit?

Reverend L:

This meeting was organized by the CCP liaison office in Hong Kong. It wasn't initiated by the Catholic priests per se.

It was organized by the liaison office, staffed by the highest ranking Chinese Communist officials in Hong Kong. It sounds like a brainwashing or training session in the sense that Hong Kong clergy were asked to learn about the thoughts of Xi Jinping in relation to the Christian churches -- and how to preach the faith according to the thoughts of Xi Jinping, which is very troubling. They mentioned the idea of sinicization making the faith more Chinese, but as we all know that this is actually very different from inculturation or contextual theology that we understand in the proper Christian manner.

Nina Shea:

Could you get into that a little bit for the viewer who doesn't follow these fine points within the church, because even some church leaders in Rome were saying that this sinicization is inculturation and you're saying that it's not true. What is the difference between the two terms? Because inculturation to me means you can have maybe more Asian sounding music or have some cultural manifestation of Chinese culture in the décor of a church.

Reverend L:

That's right. Well, inculturation is essentially the adaptation of Christian teachings and practices to different cultures. One good example would be Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary who evangelized in China in the 16th century. He would dress like a Chinese man and he would adapt the Christian faith to Chinese thinking. On the other hand, sinicization is totally different. It is an attempt to subsume or even subject the Christian faith to the communist ideology, which is intrinsically atheistic. The CCP is trying to
mistake these two concepts by saying that sinicization is basically the same as inculturation, but this is a blatant lie. These two are totally different concepts.

For example, a Patriotic bishop in China, Vincent Zhan, he said he would carry out the sinicization of religion with determination -- we will continue to follow a path that “conforms” to the socialist society. This is basically subjecting the Christian faith to the socialist agenda. Another professor, director of the Divinity School in Hong Kong, at Chinese University, a Protestant, he said, sinicization implies that the Bible is subjected to “political scrutiny,” and Bible verses like those on the end times that are not in sync with the CCP will be “banned or constrained.” It’s apparent that inculturation has nothing to do with sinicization.

Nina Shea:

I have studied this and written about it on the mainland, that is, the churches are becoming gradually, with the sinicization program, instruments of the Chinese Communist Party. They are becoming part of the United Front operations of the party in the sense that they’re carrying out surveillance on their congregations and on each other. They are indoctrinating, learning President Xi sayings or learning Communist Party's thought is a form of indoctrination. And then ultimately controlling, stopping anything that the Communist Party doesn't direct you to do.

I was reading something about humane animal treatment that someone was attempting in the mainland. It had nothing to do with religion, but that was stopped though it seems so innocuous and benign and desirable actually for society. It was a movement away from eating dogs and cats in marketplaces. It sounds like it's also a good move in light of disease, a health move. That was shut down recently this fall by the Communist Party only because it wasn't initiated by the party. This kind of independent social activity is forbidden. That seems to be another function of the sinicization program of the churches, that they control their congregations, make sure that they don't protest abortions or protest the policy of returning immigrants to North Korea. That kind of thing.

Reverend L:

That's right.

Nina Shea:

This is going to be a hard job for the Communist Party though, because Hong Kongers do have an identity of being independent and being separate from the Communist Party, of being free. They run a phenomenal number of schools, which I'm very amazed to hear you say. What are they going to do about all those schools? They need those schools to keep going. In what sense are they Christian schools and how will they touch them, do you expect them to change any time soon?

Reverend L:

I think the first thing that the CCP would do in the near future would be to control Christian schools. They really want to control education so that they could control the minds of the young people. I think that will be the first item on the agenda. The National Security Law actually has an article about
education, mandating all schools in Hong Kong from kindergarten to college to educate students on the National Security Law, which is, in a sense, brain washing education.

**Nina Shea:**
It’s definitely the first step.

**Reverend L:**
Well, given the fact that 60% of primary, elementary, secondary schools are Christian, and then we have a Baptist University in Hong Kong and then the Chinese University also has a divinity school.

**Nina Shea:**
A very important divinity school.

**Reverend L:**
Right. The indication is that in order for you to graduate from these schools, you have to pass that National Security Law exam, a course that is a mandatory in all schools. Just imagine that if some of these concepts are contradictory to the Christian faith because it’s an attack on the fundamental freedom of human beings, and yet schools, they have no choice. They just have to keep teaching it.

Otherwise, the government would just take the school away from you, from the churches so that they could no longer run those schools, which is very troubling. Now the situation is that a lot of Christian schools are actually attached to churches. They are located on the same campus. If the government says it’s not happy with what the school is teaching, it could just take the school away from the church at any time. When that happens, if the church loses the school, it could even lose the place of worship. That could be very problematic.

**Nina Shea:**
It holds the churches accountable for the school and charges them with a national security offense.

**Reverend L:**
Exactly. Once they control the school, they could control the churches fairly easily. The churches won’t resist because if they resist, then the churches would probably be closed by the government because of that.

**Nina Shea:**
Again, it’s a very deceptive way of just seizing control of religion. You lay a trap for the churches through this gateway into the churches, through the schools, and the schools themselves are an end too, because they do want to control the minds. Of course, in the mainland, anyone under 18 is banned from learning about religion and identifying as a Christian. This must be seen as a huge thorn in their side and that they want to get control of.
Reverend L:

Exactly. I mentioned, in the Ta Kung Pao newspaper from yesterday, one of the articles is dedicated to statistics of Christian schools in Hong Kong. They lay out the statistics of how many, the percentage of, schools in Hong Kong are run by Christians. They are very much aware of the fact. And they say that a lot of the young protestors who were involved with the prodemocracy movement were graduates from Christian schools and in order for Hong Kong to return to peace, we really have to clean all these messes by ensuring that Christian schools are teaching proper stuff about socialism or Chinese Communist Party.

Nina Shea:

It's really an ideological war that the Chinese Communist Party is waging. They want to monopolize the ideology.

Reverend L:

That's right.

Nina Shea:

Hong Kong has relatively few Christians compared to mainland China. I don't know the exact numbers. I know that in the mainland, it's estimated to have as many as 100 million and that's Protestants and Catholics combined, underground, patriotic combined. If Hong Kong's Christianity is crushed, what impact do you think that will have, if any, on the mainland churches?

Reverend L:

Hong Kong has around 1.2 million Christians out of a 7 million populations. Probably around 15% of the population are Christians. In regard to Hong Kong churches’ connection with Chinese churches, churches in China, there were actually many interactions between us and them before 2019. Mainland Chinese Christian ministers would often come to Hong Kong over the summer to take courses in theology. That basically stopped after 2019. But before that they would come every summer. On the other hand, Hong Kong Christians, we would go back to China to help do some missionary work by forming the clergy, the ministers, pastors, helping them to do some Christian marriage counseling. But this has also stopped since 2018, 2019, with the restriction of religious freedom in China.

Is not easy for Hong Kong Christians to go to China anymore. In that regard, they switch to online. They have been using Zoom or different online channels to connect with Chinese Christians. But then the problem is the Chinese Communist Party has recently imposed cyber restriction on religious preaching or instructions starting in March. Starting in March this year, no organization, no individual would be allowed to disseminate information about religious ceremonies on the internet, unless they have a license from the Chinese government. That would make it impossible for Hong Kong churches to do online stuff with the counterparts in mainland China.
Nina Shea:

This is the same set of regulations I think that banned any depictions on the internet of incense, as petty as that. You had an educational component, you had exchanges among co-religionists. I know that there are libraries in Hong Kong, religious libraries, the Holy Spirit Center had a repository of information. Maybe this is all online now, but it was a center of learning about the history and the status of the church for people from the outside world. That will end as well in Hong Kong.

Reverend L:

Exactly because they want to rewrite history. If they want to rewrite history about the underground church, they would of course have to confiscate their archives in Hong Kong about underground church in China.

Nina Shea:

Of course, Hong Kong was the place where you had the Apple Daily, where you had Cardinal Zen, you had information and a center of news and analysis on events in China and in Hong Kong, itself. That's shutting down too, from what you're saying. This is going to be quite a change, a hardship. I always saw Hong Kong as a kind of lifeline for the mainland churches. It gave them a lot of support and a little space for them to breathe free.

Reverend L:

Yes.

Nina Shea:

Now that may change, it sounds like.

Reverend L:

That's right. We used to give a lot of support providing resources, financial, educational, theological. But it seems like in the future it's going to be the other way around. We have to learn from the house churches in China on how to survive under this regime.

Nina Shea:

What comes next for the Hong Kong churches if the walls are closing in like you say, and it's becoming more like the mainland church. Will they form an underground?

Reverend L:

Yes. I was talking to some friends who are Protestant pastors in Hong Kong. Probably the next step is that the Hong Kong government would establish a religious affairs bureau in Hong Kong, basically like the one in China but taking care of all religious affairs in Hong Kong. They would require all the clergy to register with the government in this way and even take the oath of fidelity to the government. When that happens, most likely a lot of the Protestant denominations are going to split. Some are going to go
underground using the model of house churches in China. Some of them will probably cooperate with the government and form the so-called Three-Self Church. I think they're going to split.

It really depends on the pastor. That's for Protestants. I think there's going to be a huge divide. Some underground, some will join the government. For Catholics, I think it's a little different. It's not as easy for Catholics to go underground because, if you know about the history of underground church in China, if you want to form an underground diocese, you need an underground bishop. You need a bishop who is willing to resist the government, not cave into the demand of the CCP. But honestly, given the current Vatican administration, I don't think the Vatican would be too happy if the Hong Kong bishop would go underground. Of course, I cannot speak for him. But if you look at the news, it doesn't seem likely that the Vatican would be happy that the Hong Kong bishop would go underground.

Nina Shea:
They might see it as jeopardizing their agreement with Beijing.

Reverend L:
That's right.

I would think that it is not easy for Catholics in Hong Kong to go underground. But for Protestants, I would say, in fact, some pastors are already training leaders, lay leaders, so that they could lead Bible study in their homes in case they can no longer go to church for fellowship or worship services. They are already making preparation.

Nina Shea:
Well, I think that the Protestant churches adapted fairly well to the crackdown in China on religion after Mao. They came out of the revolution at a much lower number than the Catholics and the Catholics have grown slowly from 1 or 2 million to 12 million, in mainland China. The Protestants have grown from less than a million to maybe 60 million, 80 million, 100 million. We don't know, but it's definitely the dominant branch of Christianity in the mainland. One of the other things that, of course, you need as a Catholic since it is a hierarchical church, you need priests and then you need bishops to ordain priests.

Reverend L:
Right.

Nina Shea:
I'm vaguely aware that there was once a sub rosa agreement or under the table permission from the Vatican to the bishops in China, to ordain other bishops without papal involvement during the very harshest periods in mainland China and that's how the Catholic churches survived. That is no longer the case.

Reverend L:
That has come to an end.
Nina Shea:

It doesn't seem to be the case anymore. There're no underground bishops being ordained without Vatican involvement in recent years. Of course, that was the subject of the Vatican agreement with Beijing: who gets to do what in the appointment of bishops. We don't quite know all the details of that, but certainly the government got approval for a very large role from the Vatican.

Reverend L:

That's right.

Nina Shea:

The other point that I think our viewers may not understand is that part of the sinicization, a very big part of it, is that the churches have to be what they call “independent” churches. It means independent of foreign influence, like the Pope or the Vatican or churches internationally in the West, but it's not being independent of the Chinese Communist Government. In fact, it means being extremely under the “active guidance,” as they put it, of the CCP. Is that your understanding?

Reverend L:

That's right. They just want to control. When they talk about independence, it's independence from so called foreign powers.

Complete submission to the Chinese Communist Party, that's what they want.

Nina Shea:

That's what registration means when you register under the Religious Affairs Bureau, with the Patriotic or Three-Self churches.

Reverend L:

Right. Once you are registered, you become part of the system with all the surveillance or the continual education you have to undergo. It's not a one-time thing. It's not like you just sign it and then that's it. No, you are beginning the whole process of learning about Christianity, according to CCP.

Nina Shea:

Being brought into the party.

Reverend L:

That's right.
Nina Shea:
My last question is how will this affect Hong Kong? What's next? What's left of Hong Kong? The two systems, what is left of the Hong Kong system if you have already the democratic political system subverted and the independent press crushed? Then you have the churches taken under control?

Reverend L:
I think the future is very bleak. Most of the fundamental freedoms that we read in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are taken away by the CCP within a span of two years. It's very bleak. It's a big change. It's a dramatic change.

Nina Shea:
Well, we're seeing that part and parcel of this is the erosion of the rule of law and the due process that Hong Kong was noted for. I think even businesses are probably going to see that they're not so secure there anymore.

Reverend L:
That's right. I heard lots of American companies are thinking about pulling away from Hong Kong, not only because of the National Security Law, but because of the COVID restrictions that are very severe. I would imagine there will be an exodus of foreign companies leaving Hong Kong for Singapore or Tokyo in the next few years. With all this freedom being gone, Hong Kong is going to lose its international status as international financial center.

Nina Shea:
The very last question is what should Western leaders do? Are we doing enough to help the churches at this point? What can we do? Does it help or hurt for our religious leaders to speak out? It's easy for me to speak out in the think tank world, but should our religious leaders be speaking out more?

Reverend L:
I think they should. I was just reading a book about Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II. They were actually good friends back in the '70s and '80s. They cooperated to take down Soviet Communism. But too bad we can't find religious and political leaders like them in this day and age who have the same courage and wisdom to counter the CCP. I think we really have to start from grass roots. We have to tell our friends about the atrocities completed by the CCP on Christians, on the Muslims, on the Tibetans. I think the West should no longer turn a blind eye on the CCP for the sake of economic interests. We have to do something to stop that because otherwise, the CCP is going to expand to different parts of the world.

Nina Shea:
Well that's right. They want to set the new order, be the role model.
Reverend L:

That's right. They're not going to stop in Hong Kong. They're going to try to get Taiwan. All of this stuff they're doing, they have a big plan.

Nina Shea:

It's clear now that they're seeking political, economic, military dominance. That's right. They can't let churches be a voice of dissent against that. It's no surprise, although it's hard to accept, that this is happening to Hong Kong, which was such an outpost of freedom across the board and including really up until recently, the last few months, and maybe even still now to a large degree in Hong Kong.

Reverend L, thank you so much for joining us.

Reverend L:

Thank you very much.

Nina Shea:

It's good to have your voice. Church voices have been lacking. Cardinal Zen was an exemplar of courage on this and of insight and I pray that he will be safe and he will continue to speak out. But in the meantime, we do need voices like yours. We also pray that you remain safe. Thank you very much.

Reverend L:

Thank you very much. Let's pray for religious freedom for everyone in China, in Hong Kong.

Nina Shea:

Let me conclude by saying, for those viewers who would like to see all four parts of our series, please go to, www.hudson.org/events.