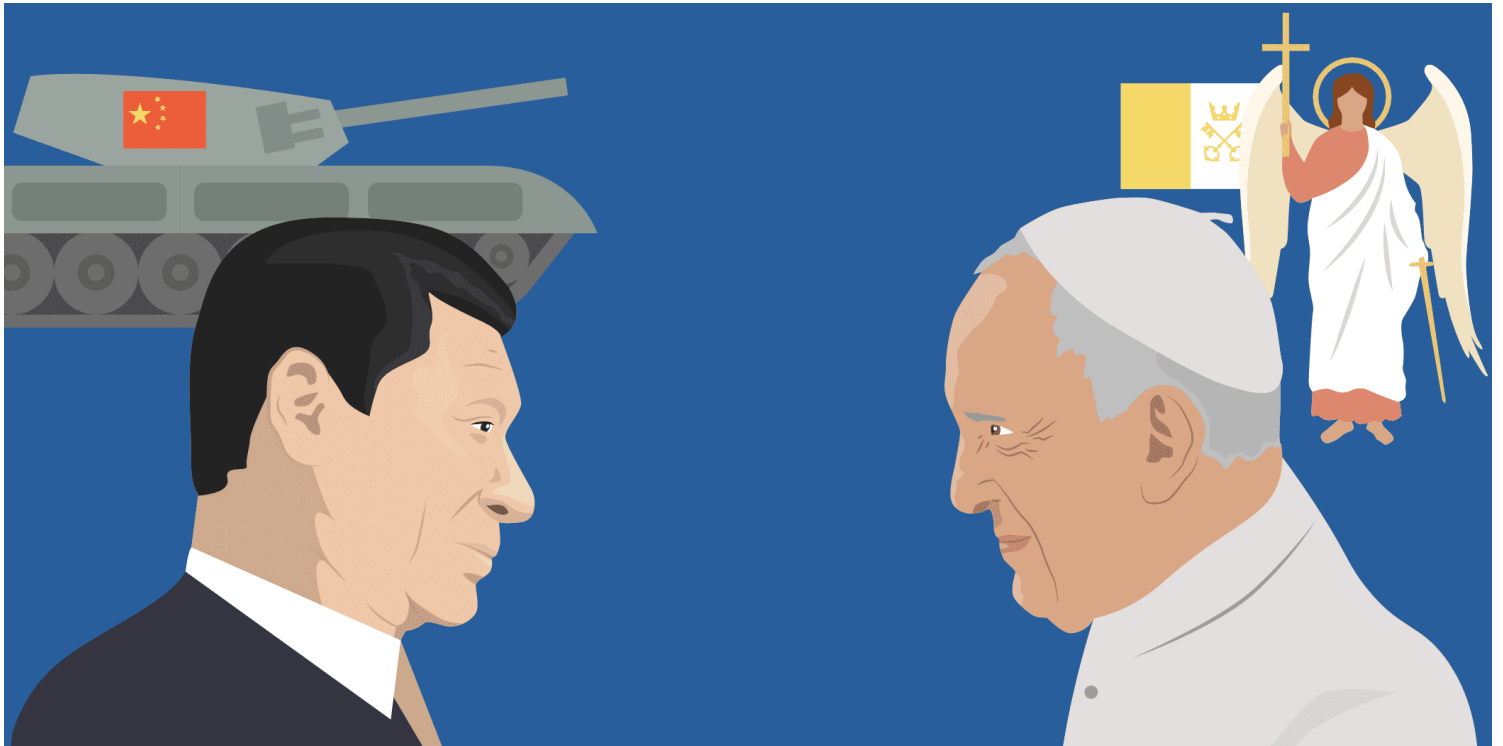


POPE CRITICIZED OVER HONG KONG


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Pope Francis, in his attempt at perfecting the art of the deal, might soon learn that endless compromise with Beijing will guarantee Catholicism's demise.

Category: [NEWS](#)

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All is not well with Hong Kong Catholics.

As reported by the Catholic News Agency (CNA), various human rights advocates [are sounding the alarm](#) on the future of Catholicism—untainted by communism—within the Chinese region. Pope Francis, who is currently negotiating an agreement with Beijing, is however pressing on.

In an [exclusive interview](#) with Reuters, published July 5th, Pope Francis claimed to believe that “the agreement is moving well.” The agreement in question involves the renewal of an older one. In September 2018, the Holy See came to an understanding with Beijing on the activities of the Catholic Church in that country. One condition of the agreement was that the Pope would get final say on naming bishops there.

Yet ever since, critics within the Church ([such as now-retired Cardinal Zen](#), former bishop of Hong Kong) have been lambasting the Pope over accommodations made to the Chinese communist government. In 2020, the 90-year-old Zen [voiced concern over](#) Francis’ silence on human rights abuses committed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). He strongly believed, and continues to insist, that this loss of moral authority—evident particularly in the Church’s silence on the detention of more than 1 million Uyghurs in a network of concentration camps in Xinjiang Province—“will damage the work of evangelization,” and that “tomorrow when people will gather to plan the new China, the Catholic Church may not be welcome.”

China’s national security police [arrested Zen](#), along with others, on May 11th, 2022. He is currently suspected of being associated with a relief fund for people involved in pro-democracy protests.

According to the Reuters interview, Francis responded to concerns by saying that the deal from 2018 might not be ideal, but that he still hopes it will get a renewal come October, because the Church “takes the long view,” adding that “diplomacy is the art of the possible and of doing things to make the possible become a reality.”

[REDACTED]

Recently, Zen's warning and those of other cardinals (like Charles Muang Bo of Burma and Ignatius Suharyo of Indonesia) have attained even more relevance. A [leak of a cache](#) containing thousands of internal Chinese police files and footage reveal the inner workings of Beijing's camps, where 1-2 million Muslim Uyghurs and other ethnic citizens from the Xinjiang region are forcibly housed.

The files show an entire group's history and tradition being wiped out, so as to be more easily assimilated. To accomplish this, generations are separated from each other, so that the old (whose minds are harder to mold) are prevented from transmitting their knowledge to the young (who are being heavily indoctrinated, often under the guise of 'vocational training'). It is the largest incarceration of an ethno-religious minority since the Holocaust.

On July 6th, Nina Shea, director of the Center for Religious Freedom at the Hudson Institute, told *CNA* that since the 2018 agreement, "the CCP has all but destroyed the Catholic underground Church [the one not under CCP control] and tightened conformity with its teachings over the patriotic church."

"The six new episcopal appointments used to justify the Beijing agreement are offset by the detention, arrest, or disappearance of six Vatican-recognized Catholic bishops," she said.

Shea detailed the lengths the CCP goes to in order to curtail religious life. "Children are now banned from churches and exposure to religion, Bibles are tightly restricted and censored on the Internet and in app stores." Those churches that are sanctioned by the state are "blanketed with high tech state surveillance," and "its priests and Christian leaders are forced into life-long indoctrination on Christianity according to communist thought, and required to actively support CCP practices, leadership, and core values, even in their sermons," she added.

[REDACTED]

Bishop Paul Lei Shiyin of Leshan, was one of the illegitimately ordained Chinese bishops whose excommunication was lifted by Rome after the Vatican-China deal was signed. On 29 June 2022, the day of the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, he celebrated the birth of the CCP in his local cathedral, *Asia News* [reported](#). Catholics attendees were invited to “listen to the word of the Party, feel the grace of the Party, and follow the Party.”

Shea concluded that “the Vatican should be energetically bolstering the underground church and speaking up for human rights, not making accommodations with the CCP and self-censoring on important moral issues.”

Lending her voice to the choir of the gravely concerned is Reggie Littlejohn, president of Women’s Rights Without Frontiers. The aid and advocacy organization was founded after the CCP kickstarted its one-child policy, forcing abortions while engaging in sterilization efforts. “Since the (Vatican-China) deal was reached, things have [gone from bad to worse](#) for Catholics in China,” she told CNA, adding that the “secrecy of the China-Vatican deal has been used to bludgeon faithful Chinese Catholics.”

Littlejohn is outraged that the text of the Holy See’s provisional agreement with the CCP has been kept secret since its signing in 2018. “Faithful Catholics cannot defend themselves or their Church because they do not have access to this secret deal,” she said, calling for it to be made public.

Meanwhile, the European Parliament has undertaken efforts to secure former Cardinal Zen’s release. A July 7th [resolution](#) advocates for the charges against Zen, who will face trial in September along with four others, to be dropped.

It also “calls on the Vatican to strengthen its diplomatic efforts and its leverage on Chinese authorities to demand Cardinal Zen’s unconditional release and the end of persecution and human rights violations in China.”

For now, no word out of Rome.

