



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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December 5, 2005

His Excellency Yang Jiechi
Ambassador of the People's Republic of China
2300 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008

BY FAX: 202-328-2582

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

Much of the world, regrettably, has become accustomed to the frequent suppression of religious practice, especially of Christians, in your country. The periodic arrest and detention of bishops, priests, religious and lay leaders of the Catholic Church has become almost routine in certain regions, notably in dioceses in Hebei Province.

However, the news of the brutal attack on defenseless Catholic nuns on November 23 in the city of Xian has come as a shock to millions around the world. These Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart were seeking peacefully to prevent the destruction of their former school by occupying the premises when a group of some forty men, allegedly sent by the district education office, proceeded to attack the nuns. Sixteen of them were severely beaten with sticks and clubs and five of them still remain hospitalized.

One of the sisters was expected to undergo spinal cord surgery today and risks permanent paralysis. Another has lost the sight of one eye. Others sustained severe injuries to the head, back and extremities, with one sister suffering a fractured arm and another a dislocated shoulder.

Mr. Ambassador, this barbaric behavior calls for a thorough investigation and appropriate sanctions against those responsible. Government offers to pay for part of the hospital expenses incurred is implicit acknowledgement of official involvement in the attack and is a thoroughly inadequate response.

My predecessor as Chairman of the USCCB Committee on International Policy, Bishop John Ricard, wrote to you three times over the past two years without receiving a response from your Embassy. I do hope that you will communicate our concerns to Beijing and I request the honor of a reply.

With sincere thanks for whatever you can do on this, I remain

Sincerely,

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy