

La Chiesa Di Dio Onnipotente

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Working Session 7: Fundamental freedoms 1: Including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief

Title: Chinese religious refugees in Italy

Ladies and gentlemen,

I'm a Christian of The Church of Almighty God in China now living in Italy. First of all, I appreciate that the OSCE gives me this opportunity to make a statement about our situation. I want to raise the issue of our Church members whose asylum application were rejected in Italy.

In recent years, religious freedom in China has been worsening for all faiths. The fact that The Church of Almighty God is persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party has been progressively known to the world and noticed by several international human rights organizations.

However, in Italy, it is very difficult for our Church members to get political asylum. As of August, only 52 applications among 689 were approved and 308 were rejected. A concrete case of the tragic consequences of such rejections is that Zhang xx, 31, born in Henan province, was denied asylum in Italy.

In 2012, she became a Christian of The Church of Almighty God in China. In December, she was arrested for preaching the gospel. She was interrogated and threatened during her detention. In June 2013, more than 100 members of the local church were arrested. She was forced to leave home and flee to avoid another arrest. In September 2014, dozens of church leaders were arrested again but she had nowhere to hide in China and she arrived in Milan in 2015 with a valid visa.

In November 2015, she applied for political asylum in Italy. In March 2018, she was heard by the Milan Territorial Commission of Interior. She talked about her participation in the file of her Church, the persecution by the government of the Chinese Communist Party, and the practice of her religion

in Italy. The Church of Almighty God in Italy investigated and confirmed her membership. However, Italy did not recognize her affiliation to the Church of Almighty God and turned down her asylum application. She has appealed the decision.

The Chinese Communist government has kept intensifying the persecution against The Church of Almighty God. A document has been leaked to the Western media indicating that a major action was in progress to ban our Church. Thousands of church members have been recently arrested - 700 for the sole province of Liao Ning - and thousands of our brothers and sisters were forcibly displaced.

The asylum applications of brothers and sisters from our Church are massively rejected. If they are sent back to China, there is a danger for them of being arrested, tortured, sentenced and even being killed.

In Italy, there are more than 300 Christians facing the same situation. We appeal to the government of Italy to pay special attention to the members from The Church of Almighty God, not handing them to the killers by deporting them to China. Thank you very much and thanks for your attention to our desperate situation.

Recommandations

We urge the Italy authorities not to deport the members of The Church of Almighty God but to grant them political asylum. None of them has committed any illegal act in Italy. At the same time, we call for the support of OSCE, to ensure our basic human rights in Italy and other OSCE participating states.