

Hong Kong cardinal joins protest for religious freedom in China

by [Francis Wong](#)

June 30, 2011

Hong Kong, 30 June (ENInews)--Cardinal Joseph Zen Ke-kiun, the retired bishop of Hong Kong, joined a protest outside the Chinese Liaison Office in Hong Kong yesterday, asking Beijing to stop harassing Catholic bishops and priests in mainland China. Zen and the event's organizer, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, criticized Beijing for interfering with recent bishop ordinations.

An ordination on 29 June in Leshan, Sichuan, took place without papal mandate. On the same day, however, one with a papal mandate was stopped by the authorities in Handan, Hebei. The candidate, Fr. Joseph Sun Jigen, was arrested.

Cardinal Zen and about 50 others marched around the Chinese Liaison Office building after saying a mass for China at a chapel nearby. When they stopped at the entrance of the office, the Catholic commission delegate, Patrick Poon, read aloud a statement urging China to respect religious freedom.

"We are forced to take to the street today. Chinese authorities have hurt our brothers and sisters. Their basic human rights, especially the freedom of religion, are being severely abused," the commission said. "July 1 is the 79th birthday of bishop James Su Zhimin, of Baoding. He was arrested and has been missing for 14 years."

The commission also pointed out two incidents earlier this year in which priests were taken away and beaten.

Zen and the commission urged Beijing to disclose the whereabouts of missing priests and bishops, including bishop Shi Enxiang of Yixian, who has been missing since 1997, and to guarantee their safety. They also asked Beijing

to stop harassing church members, saying the church should apologize and provide compensation to those victims, respect their religious freedom, and stop allowing ordinations without papal mandate.

To conclude the protest, Zen said a prayer for the faithful in China, expressing hope they can stand firm with their faith and that priests can resist temptation and not violate church doctrines and laws.