

# Hong Kong Christian groups join in honouring Nobel laureate Liu

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Hong Kong, December 13 (ENInews)--About 1000 people in Hong Kong joined a celebration co-organized by Christian groups to honour imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo in a celebration coinciding with the Nobel ceremony in Oslo.

The Hong Kong Christian Institute and the local Roman Catholic Justice and Peace Commission organized the gathering with non-governmental groups to commend Liu, urging Beijing to release him and other political prisoners on 10 December.

Liu has been imprisoned since 2009 as part of an 11-year sentence for "inciting the subversion of State power".

"Beijing should know that to confer the Nobel Peace Prize on Mr. Liu is not to confront the Chinese people. Human rights are universal values, and should be abided by all," Catholic Hong Kong legislator Alan Leong Kah-kit told ENInews at the Hong Kong meeting.

In Beijing, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson had reiterated on 9 December that Liu is in the eyes of the Chinese government a criminal and did not deserve any honour.

In Hong Kong, the Catholic Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun linked the empty chair for Liu in Oslo with the empty chairs for Chinese bishops at a Vatican synod in 1998. At that time Bishop Matthias Duan Yin-ming and his assistant bishop were banned from attending the meeting.

The Cardinal wrote on his blog on 13 December that Beijing had "successfully" blocked Liu and Chinese bishops from joining the overseas meeting, but it was actually a "failure" of the government in that it violated its aim to build a harmonious society.

The Christian Institute and the Catholic groups had issued a statement on 7 December criticising Beijing's use of diplomatic pressure "to threaten other countries not to send representatives to attend the award ceremony", and for curbing freedom of speech in China by blocking the flow of information about the first Chinese Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

"The Chinese government has even gone further to continue to badmouth Liu Xiaobo," they said. "All these show to the international community how repressive and arrogant the Chinese government is and they prove to the world how meaningful it is for the Nobel Committee to give the award to Liu Xiaobo."

At the same time, a scholar specialising in Christianity in China said that the Christian faith has influenced Liu in his struggle for human rights and democracy in China.

Professor Ying Fuk-tsang said at an 8 December public forum that Liu has said that he is "a liberal who respects Christianity" and views God as "a spiritual presence on earth".

Ying, the vice-director of the Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religions and Cultures, has studied the writings of Liu and notes that Christianity fostered Liu's personal commitment to non-violence and spiritual growth.