

Action urged to prevent deportation of Chinese Christians

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Sixty-four Christians currently in Thailand face deportation to China—which they fled to escape persecution—unless U.S. officials allow them to resettle in East Texas with the help of area churches.

The [21Wilberforce](#) human rights organization is urging Texas Baptists and others to persuade Congress to intervene on behalf of the Chinese Christians.

Members of the Shenzhen Holy Reformed Church—nicknamed the “Mayflower Church” for their commitment to seeking religious freedom—left China in 2019 after repeated threats and interrogation by Chinese police.

Initially, Pastor Pan Yongguang and members of the church relocated to South Korea’s Jeju Island on tourist visas but were denied asylum.

The [Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission reports](#) the Republic of Korea accepted 0.4 percent of refugee applications in 2020 and only 0.1 percent in 2021.

“From 2017 to 2021, a total of 5,225 Chinese nationals sought asylum in Korea. Only three were recognized as refugees,” a commission report stated.

Members of the Mayflower Church later moved to Bangkok, Thailand, where they filed for United Nations refugee status Sept. 5.

Recently, the Thai government refused to renew the church members' tourist visas. They now face a forced return to China, where they fear severe persecution and possible imprisonment.

In the past three years, members of the church have been stalked, harassed and threatened by Chinese operatives, and family remaining in China have been interrogated and intimidated, the [Associated Press reported](#).



Religious persecution in China today is worse than it has been in decades, former Chinese dissident and longtime international human rights advocate Bob Fu of ChinaAid told told Randel Everett of 21Wilberforce during an event at Dallas Baptist University. (DBU Photo)

Midland-based [ChinaAid](#) has been instrumental in advocating on behalf of the Mayflower Church and working with Freedom Seekers International to enlist sponsors for the church members' resettlement.

A group of churches in Tyler have committed financially and materially to

sponsor the asylum seekers' resettlement in the United States, but resettlement requires governmental permission.

21Wilberforce is spearheading an effort to mobilize Texas Christians to contact Rep. Kay Granger, R-Fort Worth and ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee, and Rep. Michael McCaul, D-Houston and senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

An online letter urges Granger and McCall to advocate for members of the Mayflower Church to be allowed to resettle in the United States. It encourages them to call on President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken to work toward resettlement of the Mayflower Church members, including possibly granting them humanitarian parole.

“The consistent documented harassment, the threat of repatriation back to China, and the sponsorship of local communities point to Texas resettlement as the best option to offer refuge for the church members,” the letter states.

Those who have signed the letter include Elijah Brown, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance; Katie Frugé, director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission; Mark Heavener, director of intercultural ministries for Texas Baptists; and Stephen Reeves, executive director of Fellowship Southwest.

For more information and to sign the online letter, [click here](#).