

Uproar regarding Shincheonji, Unfairly Blamed for COVID-19

Religious Leaders in North and South America Mobilize, Call for an End in the Mistreatment of Shincheonji Church in South Korea

DAEGU, SOUTH KOREA, July 7, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Faith leaders from North and South America advocate for Shincheonji and its Chairman Man Hee Lee against false media portrayals and excessive government measures during the Coronavirus outbreak in South Korea in February.

In April, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) issued a statement "condemning" the stigmatization of Shincheonji during the pandemic.

The USCIRF cited the government's excessive measures to exaggerate Shincheonji's role in the outbreak, ranging from criminal charges, to a lockdown of the church and its activities.

"Governments around the world are undoubtedly busy responding to the public health crisis, but they still have an obligation to respect and protect religious freedom, especially for minority communities during and following this crisis," USCIRF Vice Chair Gayle Manchin added.

To understand why Shincheonji was heavily stigmatized and targeted during South Korea's outbreak, one must understand the country's religio-political dynamic. Christian Protestantism is "predominant and mainstream, marginalizing moderate and liberal churches." Their majority influence allows them to target groups such as Shincheonji church through politics and media.

"It is clear that religious and political leaders alike who are known opponents of Shincheonji are using their influence to blame an entire country's pandemic on one organization" said Pastor Jerimiah Martin of The Well Church in United States.

He joins other international Christian leaders who are advocating for Shincheonji.

"People who have worked with Shincheonji and personally come to know Chairman Lee will see beyond the rhetoric being used" said Martin.

One of these individuals is Juan Carlos Urquhart de Barros, Bishop of the Anglican Church of Uruguay. Urquhart de Barros is among many faith leaders working with Chairman Lee to bridge

peace between religions. Through countless hours of talking and working together, he has seen Chairman Lee's dedication to his faith.

"I am personally amazed by his ability to testify according to the Bible, on the standard of prophecy and fulfillment from beginning to end, without adding or subtracting. It is the best truth" said Urquhart de Barros. "Not only this, [Chairman Lee] lives every second according to it. Does a man in his late 80's, who skips sleep and meals on world-travels in order to make time to discuss peace, really have much to gain personally? Does he not live in a sacrificial way to benefit others?"

In the United States, Ambassador of Sikh Dharma Bhai Sahib Satpal Singh Khalsa shared a similar perspective of Chairman Lee as he witnessed "the dedication and sacrifice he and his organizations commit themselves to for a better humanity."

In fact, those who have worked alongside Chairman Lee have not only seen his sacrifice to make the world a better place but also the fruition of their peace efforts. Reverend Tuy Nguyen, the Vice President of Public Relations of the Cao Dai Temple in Texas attended peace summits in South Korea in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2019. Through the span of five years, she saw a change in herself and her community.

"Since that day [in 2014], I started to believe in the possibility of peace and dedicated myself to become a Peace Messenger in every angle of my life. I started to create peace dialogues within my inner self, create a peace culture in my family, my community, my workplace and wherever I went whoever I spent time with.. [The volunteers] truly created a Peace Culture, and it points back to the work of one true Ambassador of Peace - Chairman Man Hee Lee."

Recently, Chairman Lee encouraged the members of Shincheonji who recovered from COVID-19 to donate their plasma toward a vaccine, restating their commitment to protect the health and safety of their fellow citizens.

"I promised to cooperate for the benefit of humanity and the government's policy and conferred with our church members so that the estimated 4,000 congregants who recovered from COVID-19 can provide their plasma to develop a good medicine to solve this infectious disease," said Lee."

As members volunteered to donate, Chairman Lee, who knew well their difficulties in recovery, thanked them for their effort.

"Our congregation members have received the blood of life of Jesus, the Son of God, and have been freed from sin. Like Jesus, through our blood (plasma) donation, I know that you have gathered your hearts in our collective wish to free all the people of the world from the pains of this disease," Lee said.

“This is the work that needs to be done as citizens of this country and as true believers. It is keeping the command of Jesus of loving your neighbor as yourself, and I am thankful that you have gathered your hearts for this good work and in making this decision that is like the light. Let us all pray in the name of Jesus to exterminate COVID-19.”

Despite the donation, the city of Daegu is seeking 100 billion won (\$82.3 million) for losses it claims is a consequence of the virus spreading through Shincheonji church. But international faith leaders say city officials are holding the church to an unfair standard and must immediately withdraw the lawsuit.

“The international community is watching. If the city files a lawsuit against Shincheonji, this means all over the world, every business or church or temple should have to pay fines for their members or workers getting sick. However, other countries are not doing that. Why is Korea prosecuting a religious organization for their members getting sick?” said Pastor Pedro Lopez of New Generation Church in United States.

“For those who have personally worked with Shincheonji and Chairman Lee as we have, Shincheonji is a bright light in South Korea that is shining and making a positive impact around the world. Leaders and citizens of South Korea, we ask of you to stand on the side of justice” said Martin.

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