

## **MAC: Beijing Must Respect the Basic Human Right to Freedom of Religion**

Date : September 22, 2018

MAC Press Release No. 63

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) stated on September 22, 2018, in regard to the signing of a provisional agreement between Mainland China and the Vatican on the appointment of bishops, that the authorities of the Communist Party of China (CPC) continue to strictly control religion and deprive the people of their basic human right to freedom of faith, causing intense suffering for adherents of all religions. It is hoped that the agreement can lead to real improvements in the appointments of Catholic bishops in mainland China and to pastoral and religious freedom, as well as prevent political interference, suppression, and other thorny issues. The MAC stressed that the government will continue to watch the implementation of the agreement and religious development in mainland China. It will also strengthen cross-Strait religious culture exchanges and interactions to protect the basic human right to freedom of religion and promote communion between the Mainland church and universal church.

The MAC stressed that the Chinese Communist regime has always taken a hostile and defensive attitude towards religion. In order to survive, the regime has recently intensified promotion of "Sinicization of religion" policies and forced religion to serve the Communist Party ideology. There has been a steady stream of increasingly strict religious policies and laws, forced demolition of churches, limitation of evangelization and assemblies, monitoring and persecution of believers, and deprivation of faith. The CPC has also preemptorily intervened in religious personnel arrangements, resorting even to re-education internment camps and other brainwashing techniques to eradicate traditional minority faiths. Such actions have led to internal instability and evoked strong concerns in Taiwan and the international community. They also underscore the Chinese communist regime's contempt for universal values.

The MAC indicated that the Vatican is an important European ally of Taiwan. The friendship between the two sides is founded on the jointly shared universal values of democracy, freedom, and human rights. The Holy See is a non-secular state. Pope Francis

has also stated that he will not abandon any member of the flock. The Republic of China respects and protects freedom of religion. It will continue to strengthen alliances. It will also continue to watch the implementation of the provisional agreement between Mainland China and the Vatican on the appointment of bishops and religious developments in mainland China. We call on the CPC authorities to protect religious freedom for all faiths and cease political interference and persecution. The government will also encourage cross-Strait religious exchanges and cooperation, share the principles of freedom, fraternity, and peace, and enhance respect for religious belief in mainland China and support awareness and understanding between the two sides through civil exchanges.