

REBELNEWS

Testimony on Ohio House of Representatives Bill H.R. 194

“Urge addition of Canada to Religious Freedom Special Watch List”

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to testify on H.R. 194. I also wish to extend my gratitude to Representatives Stoltzfus and Ginter, as well as co-sponsors Representatives Bird, Click, Ferguson, Gross, Hall, Johnson, Powell, Riedel, Schmidt, White, Young and B. for bringing forward House Resolution 194 in this 134th General Assembly of the Ohio House of Representatives. I am also honored to provide this first-hand testimony of the severity of the violations that I have witnessed in terms of religious freedoms being trampled upon in our once free nation.

As a journalist with Rebel News, I was on the frontlines of and witness to the arrests of several pastors in my own province of Alberta. One of whom is named Pastor Artur Pawlowski, and he has been in solitary confinement in Calgary for the better part of 43 days. He has endured five arrests, ex-parte court orders, Soviet-style compelled speech sanctions and now three incarcerations all stemming from opening his church, feeding the homeless and preaching to truckers at the Coutts border blockade in defiance of seemingly arbitrary Covid-19 measures that are no longer in effect.

Sadly, while Pastor Artur Pawlowski was certainly among the highest profile arrests, he was not the only pastor thrown behind bars. Pastor James Coates of GraceLife Church, in our province’s capital city of Edmonton, was incarcerated for nearly five weeks. His church building was fenced up to prevent people from gathering for worship in a truly dystopic scene you might expect to see in Communist China, not Canada.

Another Calgary pastor, Tim Stephens of Fairview Baptist Church, was twice arrested in front of his large family in gut-wrenching fashion, once at his place of worship and again at home. He too sat in jail for daring to open his place of worship.

These three pastors, each very different men with very different styles, all garnered the wrath of authorities for daring to hold their religious freedoms as paramount. They trusted that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Criminal Code of Canada would safeguard them from undue and targeted harassment, but these safeguards were ignored by unelected health officials, politicians and police forces across our nation.

Pastors across Canada were arrested, and dozens more faced massive financial penalties — all for simply opening their churches.

It became so bad that for a time, a number of Canadian Christian congregations took to worshipping in secret, moving their worship to undisclosed locations and even outdoor parks in an attempt to pray in peace. A veritable underground church took root, not in Communist China, but in Canada.

Government authorities employed surveillance, going so far as to use helicopters, to track these communities down and punish them for gathering, even once it was legal to gather outside.

Shockingly, non-Christian religious institutions near the targeted churches that were violating the same Covid-19 restrictions, and in some cases had significantly higher attendance, were seemingly left entirely unfettered by the state. To the best of my knowledge, across Canada, exclusively Christian pastors and their congregations were being ticketed, fined and arrested.

It is worth noting that Canada recently underwent a spate of vandalisms and arsons against Christian places of worships. No fewer than 56 churches were set ablaze or vandalized, with some being entirely destroyed. The response of our Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was that the attacks are “understandable” given some of the historical abuses that occurred under the banners of some Christian faiths.

Violence and destruction against any faith community is not acceptable, but apparently in Justin Trudeau’s Canada, Christians are exempt from the protections, concerns and safeguards extended to other belief systems.

The collective anti-Christianism within Canada, as evidenced by the targeted enforcement of laws seemingly used exclusively against Christian places of worship, and the relative indifference of elected officials to ongoing attacks against these same faith communities, makes evident the need for significant corrective actions, of which adding Canada to the Special Watch List of countries where the government engages in violations of religious freedom would be a

Thank you for your time and careful consideration,

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