

THIS WEEK IN CONSCIENCE & JUSTICE

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Friday, October 3, 2025



China uses torture to suppress religious leaders, report says

China tries to exert total control over religion, and the U.S. Department of State should redesignate China as a “country of particular concern” regarding religious freedom, according to reports by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

USCIRF, a federal commission that monitors religious freedom worldwide, said China uses surveillance, fines, retribution against family members, imprisonment, enforced disappearance, torture, and other forms of abuse to control the Catholic Church and other religious communities in the nation. USCIRF issued an overview of the Chinese government’s persecution of religious leaders from various religious denominations this month.

In 2024, “religious freedom conditions in China remained among the worst in the world,” the USCIRF’s 2025 annual report said. USCIRF called for the State Department to renew its formal designation which can trigger legal action including diplomatic measures, sanctions, or international pressure. China has been redesignated as a country of particular concern nearly every year since 1999.

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Top News

- China uses torture to suppress religious leaders, report says
- Vatican enlists Schwarzenegger to bring muscle to Catholic Church's climate push
- Last pastor forced out of war-torn Sudanese city
- NY Catholic sisters challenge Cardinal Dolan's praise for Charlie Kirk



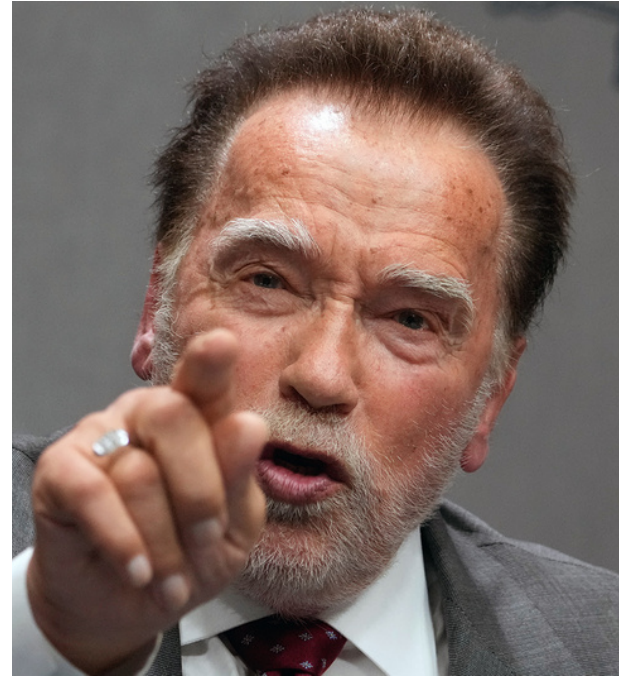
Vatican enlists Schwarzenegger to bring muscle to Catholic Church's climate push

To mark the the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, "Laudato Si'" (Blessed Be), the Vatican has invited more than 1,000 religious leaders, activists and scientists to the papal summer residence for a discussion on climate change, and announced the event on Tuesday (Sept. 30) with the help of a prominent figure associated with existential threats to Earth.

"Hasta la vista, baby! Never give up!" said Arnold Schwarzenegger at the press conference presenting the event, reprising his tagline from the 1990s post-apocalyptic Terminator movies.

Acknowledging the global influence of Catholic faithful, clergy and institutions, the actor, bodybuilder and former governor of California marveled at the potential "power of communication" that the church could unleash to safeguard the environment.

"Every single one of the 1.4 billion Catholics can be a crusader for the environment and terminate pollution!" said Schwarzenegger. He praised the church's efforts in the climate change movement and emphasized the need for all people to work together on the issue.



Former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger attends a press conference at the Vatican, Sept. 30, 2025, to present the "Raising Hope for Climate Justice Conference," promoted by the Laudato Si' (Praise Be to You) Movement, which was inspired by the late Pope Francis' encyclical letter of the same name. (AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia)

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Last pastor forced out of war-torn Sudanese city

A priest of the Anglican Church of Sudan who stayed in El-Fasher, the besieged capital of North Darfur, to serve Christians remaining there is now homeless after paramilitary violence forced him out of his church.

The Rev. Daramali Abudigin, 44, kept his St. Mathew Episcopal church open, even as bombs, stray bullets and hunger killed members of his flock. Recently, he found himself assisting 130 to 150 families from different Christian denominations in the city after all other clerics fled the intensified fighting, he said.

But on Sept. 16, the priest was also forced to flee his church as an attack by armed militiamen from Rapid Support Forces killed two people and badly injured several others. In May, another attack on the church left five people dead.

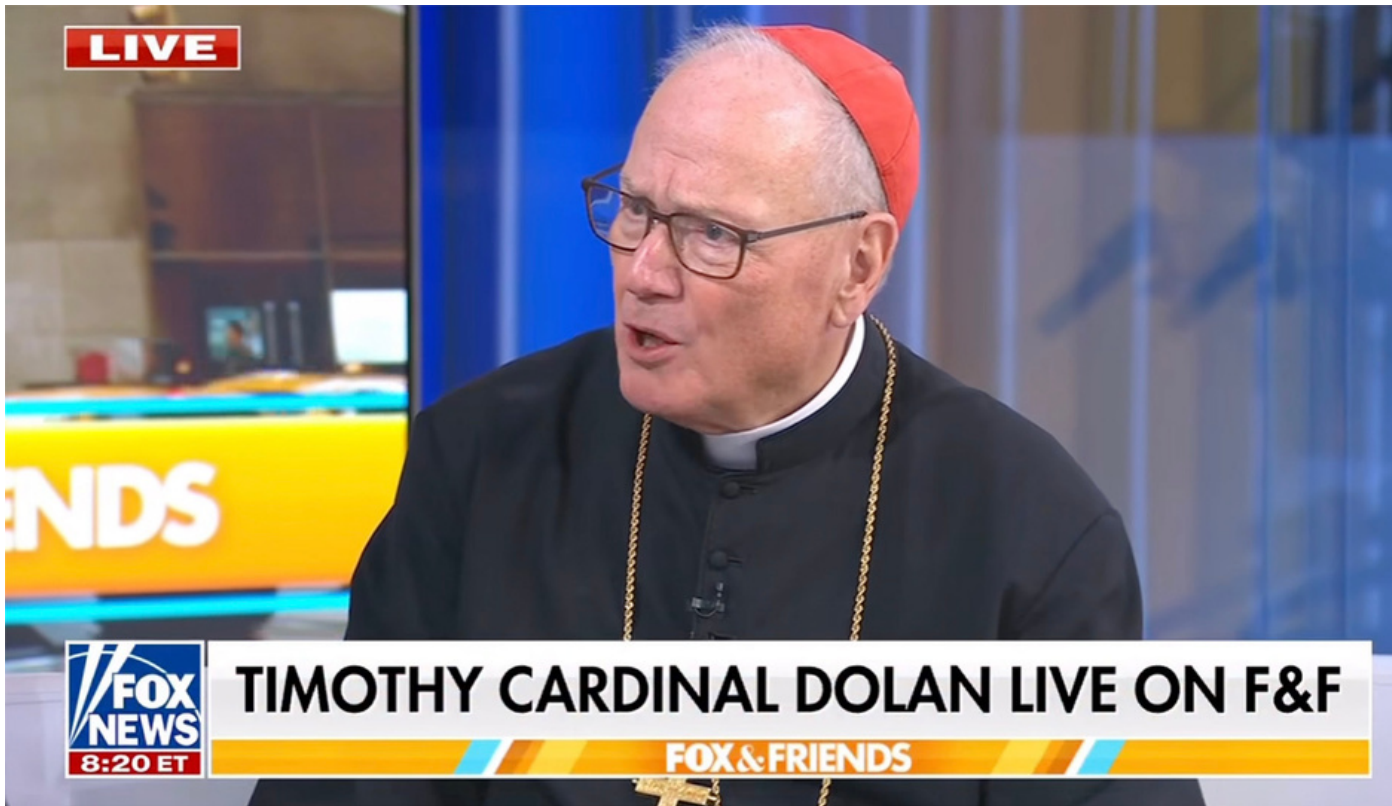
"We are out of the church — we are now homeless," Abudigin told RNS in a WhatsApp call Sept. 23. "... We are now living in an open and empty space in the Abu Shouk area, with no house or any form of shelter. We have no place to go."

The priest is with 45 others — 17 children, 17 women and 11 men — at a temporary settlement on the outskirts of El-Fasher. He said he has been unable to assemble the people for prayers or services.

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NY Catholic sisters challenge Cardinal Dolan's praise for Charlie Kirk



Cardinal Timothy Dolan speaks about Charlie Kirk during an appearance on Fox and Friends. (Video screen grab)

A group of Catholic sisters criticized Archbishop of New York Timothy Dolan for his recent comments about the late conservative activist Charlie Kirk, suggesting the cardinal is “confusing the true witness of the Gospel” by likening Kirk to a biblical saint.

On Wednesday (Sept. 24), Sisters of Charity of New York issued a statement in response to remarks Dolan made earlier this month during an appearance on “Fox & Friends.” While discussing Kirk’s killing, Dolan cast the work of the activist, an evangelical Christian, in religious terms.

“The more I learned about (Kirk), I thought, this guy is a modern-day Saint Paul,” Dolan said. “He was a missionary. He’s an evangelist. He’s a hero. He’s one, I think, who knew what Jesus meant when He said, ‘The truth will set you free.’”

Dolan joins many conservatives who have publicly compared Kirk to Christian saints and martyrs after he was shot and killed while speaking at a college campus in Utah earlier this month.

The Sisters of Charity of New York condemned the comparison, noting Kirk’s history of inflammatory rhetoric — which includes criticism of Catholicism itself — and arguing that conflating him with biblical heroes could lead Catholics astray.



The Sisters of Charity of New York logo. (Courtesy image)

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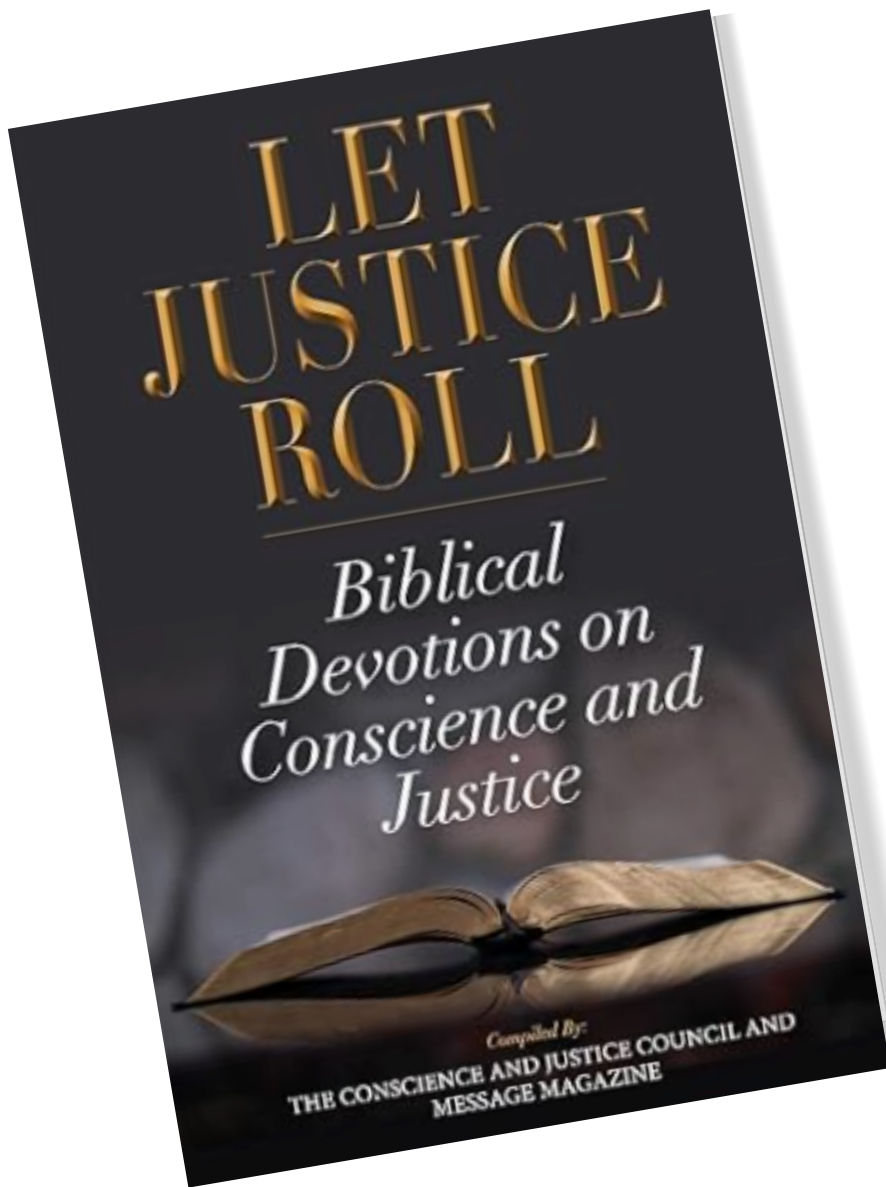
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WATCH VIDEO





Let Justice Roll: Biblical Devotions on Conscience and Justice

"Let Justice Roll" is a compelling devotional that walks the reader through 365 days of biblical insights in freedom of conscience, and social justice. This compilation of articles represents the work of a nationwide network of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) advocates and other connected community activists.

The components of conscience and justice ministry include conscience, discipleship, engagement, fellowship, the power of the Holy Spirit, love, and prophecy. This is a must-read book for all followers of Christ and those who seek spiritual growth. Get ready to explore the profound biblical insights in this masterful book.

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OUR PURPOSE

This newsletter aims to highlight news articles relating to religious liberty, civil rights, and social justice. The Conscience & Justice Council desires to be attuned with society so that we may change the nation by impacting one community at a time. Articles linked above are meant to provoke thought and discussion on important topics, and do not always express options or views endorsed by the CJC.

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