

WEEK 4, 2023

THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER

KENNY FRANZETTI IMAGES

THE REALITY OF THE

CHINA'S PANDEMIC

A mourner wears traditional white funeral clothing as he carries a photo of a loved one at a funeral home in Shanghai on Jan 14, 2023.

See Page 2



A mourner carries the cremated remains of a loved one as he and others wear traditional white funeral clothing, during a funeral in Shanghai on Jan. 14, 2023.

COVID IN CHINA

China's Funeral Parlors, Suppliers Crushed by Demand Amid COVID Death Surge

EVA FU

Never has the winter felt so suffocating for Zou, who counted about 20 deaths among his social circles amid the massive COVID-19 wave that's gripping China.

Memorial tents, indicating households that have lost family members, are visible on every street in his hometown in the historic city of Yueyang in southern China's mountainous Hunan Province, with a population of about 20,000 people.

It's so many that "it's scary," Zou, who only provided his surname for fear of reprisals, told The Epoch Times.

He said the sky seems darker than usual, without much sunlight, further heightening a sense of dread in the small town as the outbreak casts a huge shadow. In the past three to four days alone, 100 to 200 people have died from the disease, he said on Jan. 23.

In Shaoyang, a city with a population of about 1.5 million people that's about a four-hour drive south, a resident who declined to provide his name for safety reasons said thousands of elderly people have likely died during the outbreak. At one point, four families living on the same alley were in mourning, he told The Epoch Times on Jan. 18, describing it as "unbelievable."

The mounting fears have dampened the holiday spirit amid Lunar New Year festivities, normally the biggest celebration of the year, that began over the weekend.

A video clip circulating on social media two days before the Chinese New Year, captured from a car passing through a residential area, shows a deserted street lined with an unceasing array of wreaths and blue-and-white paper lanterns marking the deceased.

"You watch what happens to your neighbors and worry about your own families," a woman surnamed Bao from Shijiazhuang city in Hebei Province, told The Epoch Times.

Bao declined to provide her first name because of safety concerns. The new year for her went by without the usual visits to her extended relatives, she said.

As the virus sweeps across the country, the Chinese communist regime has continued to conceal the true scale of the outbreak. However, widespread accounts of deaths, overwhelmed hospitals and crematoriums, and a shortage of funeral supplies point to a significant death toll.

The rise in deaths has led to crematoriums around the country scrambling to dramatically expand their capacity.

An Epoch Times review of 10 provinces and major cities found that more than 30 funeral homes published tenders for cremation ovens, ash urns, vans to transport

It's a tragedy in human history. They see this as a funny joke and even want to boast about their accomplishment and make it a model for the world.

Zou, Chinese resident

bodies, and refrigerators over the past three weeks alone.

"Because of the sharp surge in business, we urgently need to buy two ash sorting machines and post-processing equipment," reads one Jan. 19 notice published by Huzhou Funeral House in Zhejiang Province, located south of Shanghai.

In a now-deleted Jan. 6 tender from the Shantou city government in southern Guangdong Province, a funeral parlor solicited an "emergency purchase" of two incinerators to be ready for use in 10 days. At about that time, a major Shanghai crematorium told The Epoch Times that they were burning 400 to 500 bodies every day—four to five times their highest workload before.

Funeral Supplies Exhausted

As mourning displays lined Chinese streets and hearses created traffic jams outside of crematoriums, the price of burial merchandise has surged amid skyrocketing demand.

Multiple ash urn and coffin suppliers confirmed that they were out of stock or running extremely low on inventory when reached by The Epoch Times ahead of the Lunar New Year. Each interviewee either gave only their surname or declined to be identified for fear of reprisals.

An ash urn manufacturer in Henan, the country's third-most populous province, was out of stock and restocking could take about a month, a sales representative surnamed Sun said. Sun noted that this was unprecedented in the nearly two decades that she has been working in the industry.

"It was never like this," Qiu, a representative of a different urn maker in neighboring Shandong Province, told The Epoch Times, pointing to COVID-19 as the cause of the

"storm" of incoming orders.

A coffin maker in Jingdezhen, a city that's famed for ceramic arts, said he had no more than two items on hand for the product lines that haven't sold out and has advised clients to buy whatever is available without choosing.

"Frankly, too many people died this year, and the demand is too high; we just can't make enough," he told The Epoch Times.

Accounts from the locals across the country were equally grim.

Liang Yan, who used a pseudonym for safety reasons, from Suzhou, a city near Shanghai, lost three older family members, including her mother on the same day earlier this month. The local funeral home had set a limit of 400 spots over a 24-hour period. On Jan. 5, she and several others from her family tried to grab a number when the spots opened at midnight; in 28 seconds, they were placed at about 160th. The funeral cost for her mother was more than 10,000 yuan (about \$1,474), double the amount for such a service in the past.

The extreme shortage of funeral supplies meant that there were no cardboard or wooden coffins available for her mother's remains. All that was left was a paper bag and shroud, she told The Epoch Times.

On the same day that a top Chinese state-backed university released a report indicating 900 million infections during the latest wave of COVID-19, officials at Beijing's Center for Disease Prevention and Control convened a conference celebrating three years of anti-outbreak work, during which they gave out dozens of awards.

Chang Chun, Yi Ru, and Frank Fang contributed to this report.



Patients are cared for by relatives and medical staff in the lobby of a busy hospital in Shanghai on Jan. 13, 2023.

\$14,740

Funeral costs in China have doubled to about 10,000 yuan (about \$1,474), according to a resident of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China.

US-CHINA

US Would Run Out of Munitions in War With China: Report

ANDREW THORNEBROOKE

The United States would likely run out of critical munitions during a major conflict with China's communist regime due to its inability to adequately mobilize the defense industrial base, according to a new report.

The report, titled "Empty Bins in a Wartime Environment," examines how the United States has depleted key arms reserves by supplying Ukraine's resistance against Russian invasion, and extrapolates how a similar situation could negatively impact the nation in a wartime scenario.

"The U.S. defense industrial base is not adequately prepared for the competitive security environment that now exists," says the report published on Jan. 23 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a security-focused think tank.

"In a major regional conflict—such as a war with China in the Taiwan Strait—the U.S. use of munitions would likely exceed the current stockpiles of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), leading to a problem of 'empty bins.'"

"Empty Bins" follows closely behind the release of results from CSIS wargames, which found that the United States would suffer from low levels of vital munitions in a war with China over the continued de facto independence of Taiwan.

That wargame found that Japan and the United States could likely defeat an invasion of Taiwan by communist China, but only at great cost in lives and materiel. In such a conflict, the United States would likely run out of long-range anti-ship missiles (LRASMs) early on.

"The problem is the U.S. has such low stockpiles for those long-range anti-ship

missiles that in our wargames, in multiple iterations of the wargame, we run out [of LRASMs] in less than a week virtually every time," said Seth Jones, the author of "Empty Bins," in an associated video.

"We cannot fight in that case in protracted war because we don't have sufficient supply of munitions."

US Unprepared for a Major War

The United States' ill-preparedness for a conflict with communist China has long been a point of contention among lawmakers and defense policy experts.

Back in 2021, for example, Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.) warned that the United States would "probably lose" a war for Taiwan, and noted trends in wargames over the past several years in which the United States regularly lost to China in simulated invasions of Taiwan.

"Empty Bins" adds further context to the issue by analyzing how the United States has rapidly depleted critical munitions through its support of Ukraine, noting that the nation's stockpiles of Stinger surface-to-air missiles, 155-millimeter howitzers and ammunition, and Javelin anti-tank missile systems have plummeted.

The report notes that the United States has sent more Stinger missiles to Ukraine in the last year than have been built for all non-U.S. customers over the last 20 years. Likewise, the nation has delivered more than 1 million 155-mm artillery rounds to Ukraine, and only placed orders to replace a fraction of that amount.

"More broadly, the war in Ukraine has demonstrated that competition and conflict between major powers will require a strong industrial base in the United States and in key ally and partner countries," the report says.



Taiwanese navy launches a U.S.-made Standard missile from a frigate during the annual Han Kuang Drill on the sea near the Suao navy harbor in Yilan county, Taiwan, on July 26, 2022.

We cannot fight in that case in protracted war because we don't have sufficient supply of munitions.

CSIS report

"The effort to deploy, arm, feed, and supply forces is a monumental task, and the massive consumption of equipment, systems, vehicles, and munitions requires a large-scale industrial base for resupply."

Thus, the report says, the problem is not that the United States is providing support to Ukraine, as a defense of Taiwan would draw largely on different kinds of munitions and weapons platforms. Instead, the problem rests in the United States' sluggish procurement processes and lack of a robust defense industrial base for munitions manufacturing.

The Javelin surface-to-air missile system, for example, requires a production lead time of approximately 30 months. This means that, if the United States were to order new units of the system today, it would take more than two years before they were in the hands of the military.

Notably, such slow estimates are what is achievable in peacetime. During war, procurement could take much longer when supply chains are disrupted and vital components like rare earth elements are scarce.

"These shortfalls would make it extremely difficult for the United States to sustain a protracted conflict—and, equally concerning, the deficiencies undermine deterrence," the report says.

"They also highlight that the U.S. defense industrial base lacks adequate surge capacity for a major war."

To that end, the report recommends creating a "break-glass" plan in which the government could streamline industrial production, acquisition, and deployment in wartime.

Similarly, the report suggests that the United States create a strategic munitions reserve that would include subcomponents with long production lead times, like metals and electronics.

Only by shoring up its defenses and rebuilding its stockpiles now, the report says, can the United States deter or win a conflict later.

"The main problem is that the U.S. defense industrial base—including the munitions industrial base—is not currently equipped to support a protracted conventional war," the report says.

"With growing competition between the United States and China—along with continuing threats from Russia, Iran, North Korea, and terrorist groups—the U.S. military needs to be prepared to fight at least one major war, if not two."



Servicemen of Ukrainian military forces move U.S.-made FIM-92 Stinger missiles and the other military assistance shipped from Lithuania to Boryspil Airport in Kyiv on Feb. 13, 2022.

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TRUTH and TRADITION

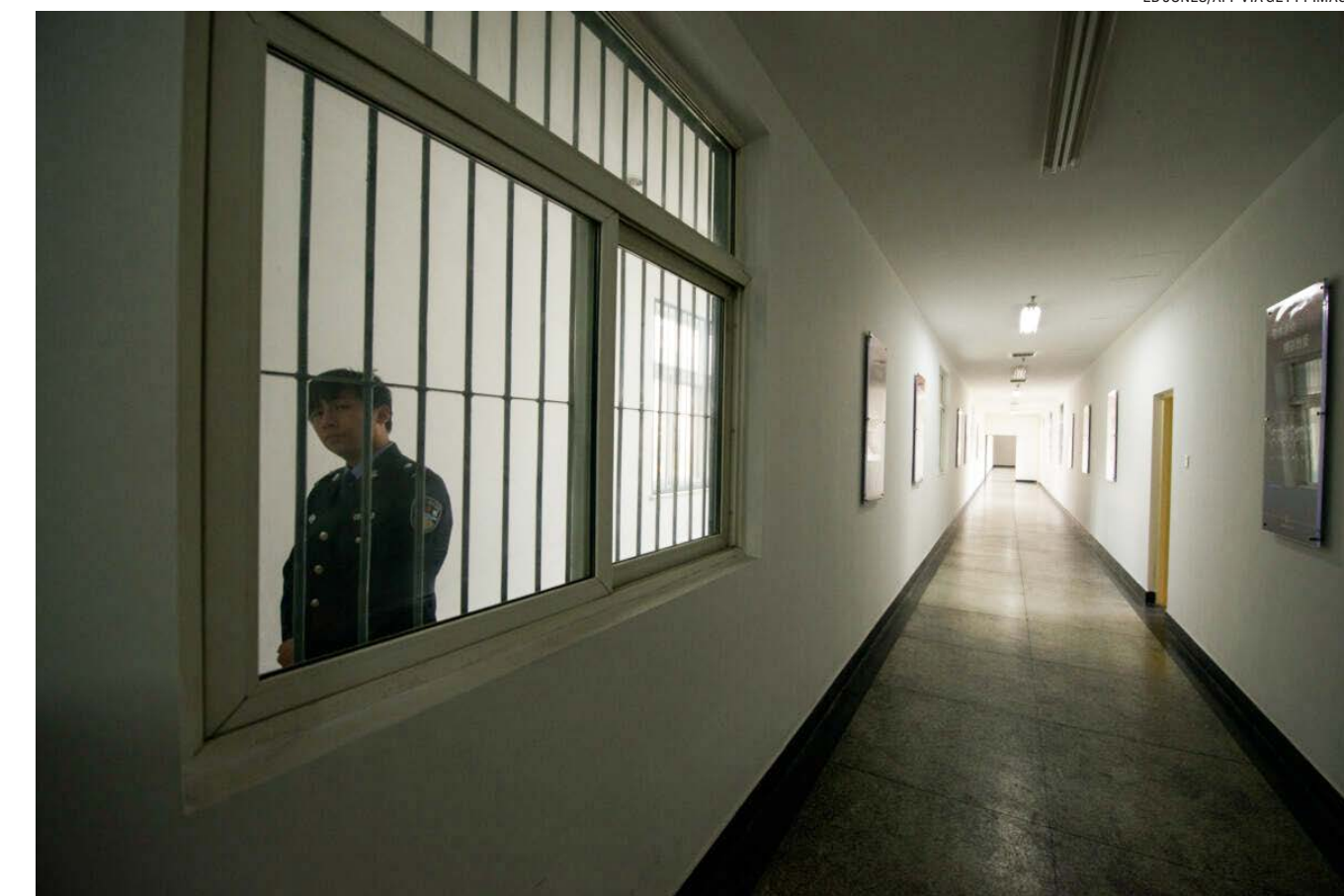
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Funeral workers load bodies into vans to be taken for cremation at a busy local funeral home in Shanghai on Jan. 13, 2023.



A guard looks through the window of a hallway inside the No.1 Detention Center during a government guided tour in Beijing on Oct. 25, 2012.

OPINION

Sanction China for Taking Hostages

Beijing's arbitrary detention of up to 200 Americans

ANDERS CORR



China's communist regime has wrongfully detained as many as 200 Americans, according to a nonprofit humanitarian organization cited by Reuters on Jan. 18. As the country ends its COVID-19 lockdowns and again tries to attract tourists and businesses, they should realize it is an exceedingly unsafe country.

U.S. travelers to Russia, Iran, North Korea, Syria, and Venezuela also take undue risks of arbitrary detention.

Beijing and its allies sometimes detain Americans on spurious charges, allowing them little contact with the outside world. Detainees have been denied access to their families, health care, and U.S. consular officials. They can be held in solitary confinement, tortured, and deprived of food and clothing unless families arrange for delivery.

The families of the detained are understandably distraught. They pressure U.S. officials to prioritize their loved ones, but officials have limited bandwidth to negotiate. They have other priorities.

With Russia, U.S. diplomats prioritize ending the war in Ukraine that has so far caused 200,000 casualties. The United States also prioritizes damping down inflation, which has arguably caused trillions of dollars in U.S. stock market losses. Keeping Russian oil flowing at below the \$60 price cap is one anti-inflationary measure pursued by U.S. officials.

With China, the priorities are similarly peace and prosperity very broadly. The country does over \$650 billion in annual trade with the United States, and U.S. institutional investors had over \$2.3 trillion invested in China at last count. Many of those dollars profit major corporations with much more clout in Washington than the clout of family members

of the arbitrarily detained. Unfortunately, for the detained, the risk of war between nuclear-armed superpowers, including over Taiwan and Ukraine, and trillions in global trade, usually take precedence over individual cases.

The prisoner swap of Huawei's chief financial officer—who all but admitted committing fraud to cover up Huawei's trade with Iran—for Canada's "Two Michaels" was a victory for the detained and their families. The same goes for the work of a Russian illicit arms dealer for basketball star Brittney Griner.

Countermeasures that do not give in include confiscation of rogue state assets for compensation of the detained and imposition of tougher travel restrictions on these countries.

But these exchanges were failures for international norms. Suspected criminals got away because their terrorist governments took hostages.

The United States has a policy of not negotiating with terrorists. The more rogue states violate international norms, the more they resemble terrorist organizations. Giving into their hostage-taking is arguably giving into proto-terrorism.

If every time the United States captures a foreign fraud or arms dealer, the perpetrating country can arbitrarily detain an American, knowing it will pressure Washington to free the suspect, deterrence is undermined.

Less than six weeks following the Griner prisoner exchange, for example, Russia on Jan. 19 arrested another American on dubious charges.

Rather than an unending cycle of submitting to demands from

Moscow and Beijing, Washington should increase deterrence in anticipation of prisoner exchanges. If the U.S. reaction to the hostage-taking of American innocents is the detention of their non-innocents, then subsequent prisoner exchanges are arguably not giving in.

We can arrest more criminals from the rogue nations that wrongfully detain Americans, so we have something to bargain with that we would not otherwise have. We can let rogue nations know we do this, which will deter hostage-taking in the first place.

Other countermeasures that do not give in include confiscation of rogue state assets for compensation of the detained and imposition of tougher travel restrictions on these countries. The Biden administration has increased warnings to travelers about the risks of traveling to rogue states, but warnings are insufficient.

Guileless travelers keep visiting countries they should not, risking not only themselves but U.S. national security. When detained, the U.S. government must expend resources, including through possible policy concessions, to get their return.

Since 1961, the United States has imposed a travel ban on Cuba. We can and must gradually increase such bans on other rogue states. This would simultaneously provide more leverage to get detainees released, and encourage economic decoupling from countries that do not follow norms.

Tourists, businesses, and their dollars would be channeled to friendlier nations that support democracy, ultimately strengthening U.S. alliance systems.

To avoid rewarding hostage-taking, we can create new sanctions on China and its allies that explicitly link to the issue of arbitrary detentions. Those sanctions can be bargained with for detained Americans without offering concessions on existing issues. That way, we prioritize freeing detainees without giving in to terrorism.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

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This screen grab made from a video released on Sept. 25, 2021, by Chinese state broadcaster CCTV shows Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou receiving flowers after she arrived following her release, in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China.

EDITORIAL

The Reality of China's Pandemic and the CCP's Demise

EDITORIAL BOARD

The pandemic is spreading like wildfire again across China. Since December, an estimated 900 million people in China have been infected, according to Peking University. The number could reach as high as 80 to 90 percent of the population, according to prominent Chinese infectious disease experts.

Ever since the first wave of the virus in Wuhan in 2019, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has done everything in its power to cover up the true extent of the outbreak and its death toll.

In reality, the spread of the virus in China continued over the past three years, resulting in an immense societal impact and a massive death toll.

Sources on the ground in China have described the severity of the situation to Epoch Times reporters. Residents say it is difficult or impossible to secure a cremation or burial site for their loved ones.

Cremation centers across China have been overloaded and are working non-stop. In many cases, crematoriums have weeks of backlog, and refrigerator units for meat storage are being repurposed to store dead bodies. Cremation centers and funeral homes have sharply increased their spending on items such as body bags and cold storage containers.

For example, Reuters reported on Jan. 20 that in Shantou city, a funeral home made an "emergency purchase" of two additional cremation ovens. In the city of Zigong, a funeral service center ordered nearly 200,000 liters (more than 52,000 gallons) of diesel after being "almost exhausted." And in Jiesshou city, officials said "the funeral hall's remains refrigerator cannot meet the current unit demand," leading them to order 10 additional large-scale freezers. A manufacturer of incinerators in Shandong Province says its plant has recently been operating at full capacity and "working overtime 24 hours to meet the urgent procurement needs."

One way the CCP has kept the death toll artificially low is by forcing family members to sign papers claiming the deaths of their loved ones are unrelated to CO-

The ancients believed that plagues punished humankind when its sins became too great.

Ultimately, the best cure for this plague is to reject the CCP.

VID-19, in exchange for allowing the bodies to go through the system and actually be cremated. Meanwhile, staff members at cremation centers have received strict instructions not to share with the outside world any information on the number of bodies being burned.

The CCP has more than 100 years of experience in lying to deceive the public. Whenever a disaster hits China, no matter how bad, the CCP will turn it around and use it as an opportunity to glorify the Party and its response.

Between 1958 and 1961, at least 40 million people died in the Great Famine caused by the CCP. While starving its people, the regime celebrated its achievements, and the true death toll wasn't known until decades later.

Recently, the CCP publicly celebrated its self-proclaimed "success" in combating COVID-19 and claimed the death toll was as low as 60,000 people. However, this is statistically nonsensical, as it would suggest that the virus was over 160 times more deadly in the United States than in China.

The regime's nearly three-year-old "zero-COVID" policy has proven to be a humanitarian catastrophe. In the name of combating the outbreak, the populace was forced to endure extreme conditions. Hundreds of millions of people were put in quarantine centers or confined to their homes, leading to prolonged isolation and lack of access to food, basic supplies, and crucial medical care. Many were even forcibly sealed inside their apartments.

With Beijing's draconian control over all parts of society, no official number in China can be trusted. Even the total size of China's population is disputed. Last year, a data breach suggested that the CCP had been manipulating the country's official birth rate, and a 2020 analysis suggested that the actual population could be 130 million fewer than the official number of 1.4 billion.

Foreign research firms, such as London-based Airfinity, Ltd., are now estimating that 36,000 people will die from COVID-19 per day in China by the end of January.

The real number is likely many times higher.

Citing accounts of crematoriums oper-

ating continuously, Sean Lin, a virologist and former lab director at the viral disease branch of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, estimated that Chinese funeral homes may have burned 6 million bodies in the past month. And because people in the countryside lack access to cremation services, the actual death toll could be as high as 10 million for the month—a conservative estimate, he said.

The Epoch Times reported in March 2020, just months after the initial outbreak of COVID-19, that the number of cell phone users in China had dropped by 21 million within three months. Cell phones in China are an indispensable part of everyday life, even being used for official identification. Data points such as this one suggest the real death toll over three years could be in the hundreds of millions.

During previous disasters, top CCP officials considered themselves protected by their ill-begotten wealth and power.

However, in recent weeks, information has leaked out about the deaths of many high-ranking CCP officials, including former senior military members, retired officials, academics, and industry experts. These officials, who are typically entitled to privileges, including every medical and life-saving treatment at the Chinese regime's disposal, are now dying in high numbers.

Notably, the astronomical spike in infections and a massive death toll in China since December haven't been seen in other parts of the world, despite China opening its borders in early January.

So why is the situation in China disproportionately worse than in the rest of the world?

The ancients believed that plagues punished humankind when its sins became too great.

In Eastern thought, specifically, there's the concept of karma, which is acquired as a result of committing bad or immoral deeds.

The Chinese Communist Party has, for the past 70 some years, committed numerous sins. Not only did it destroy China's rich traditions and culture, but it went so far as to destroy those who believed in the divine. Its campaigns have resulted in an

estimated 80 million unnatural deaths.

Most recently, the CCP has engaged in a whole-of-society persecution targeting an estimated 100 million practitioners of the spiritual discipline Falun Gong. The persecution was launched in 1999 by then-CCP leader Jiang Zemin, who died in November last year.

The persecution has affected all Chinese people and all aspects of society, with the CCP spending upward of a quarter of its GDP on carrying it out in the early years. Students are indoctrinated with propaganda smearing Falun Gong in school, while university applicants have been forced to sign a statement opposing the practice as a requirement for college entry. The regime has demanded that neighbors, family members, and coworkers report Falun Gong practitioners to authorities, turning members of society against one another.

Practitioners themselves, who believe in cultivating goodness based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance, have been subjected to torture, arbitrary detention in labor camps, and the harvesting of their organs while still alive.

"Pandemics and plagues are part of a divine plan and inevitable in the course of history. When people become immoral they generate karma, become sick, and experience disastrous things," wrote Mr. Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Gong, in an article titled "Stay Rational" at the outset of the pandemic in March 2020.

"But a pandemic like the current Chinese Communist Virus (or 'Wuhan Virus') comes with a purpose behind it, and it has targets. It is here to weed out members of the Party and those who have sided with it," Mr. Li wrote.

History has shown us previous examples of this. In ancient Rome, the persecution of Christians resulted in four plagues, and the powerful Roman Empire declined and eventually perished. In China's history, a change of dynasty often occurred when the court became corrupt and social morality degraded; plagues frequently resulted.

Ultimately, the best cure for this plague is to reject the CCP.

We hope every person can survive this disaster safely and help to usher in a brighter tomorrow.

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