News

Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, retired bishop of Hong Kong, arrives at the West Kowloon Magis

Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, retired bishop of Hong Kong, arrives at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts in Hong Kong Sept. 26, 2022. The 90-year-old cardinal and five others returned to court Oct. 26 to face charges of failing to register a legal fund meant to help those involved in anti-government protests. (CNS photo/Tyrone Siu, Reuters)



by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Hong Kong — October 27, 2022

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun and five other activists returned to court Oct. 26 to face charges of failing to register a legal fund meant to help those involved in anti-government protests.

Prosecutors said the now-defunct 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund should have been registered with police due to its "massive" size and "systematic" mode of operation, according to the South China Morning Post.

In September, the West Kowloon Court found that defendants had a case to answer over their alleged failure to register the fund within a specified period.

The case involves the Societies Ordinance, which says "any club, company, partnership or association of persons, whatever the nature or objects, to which the provisions of (the) ordinance apply," must register with the police commissioner or ask for an exemption.

Advertisement

Zen, 90, is being prosecuted as a fund trustee along with former lawmakers Margaret Ng Ngoi-yee and Cyd Ho Sau-lan, singer Denise Ho Wan-see and Hui Po-keung, a former university professor. Sze Ching-wee was charged as the organization's secretary. Offenders can be fined HK$10,000 (US$1,274).

Principal Magistrate Ada Yim heard the fund had handled in excess of HK$453 million in donations between June 2019 and October 2021.

The court will hear submissions from the defense Oct. 31. Zen's lawyers have argued that the definition of a "society'' was ambiguous and the defendants had "mistaken but honest and reasonable belief" that the fund did not require registration.

The defendants, including the cardinal, face more serious charges on national security grounds, but there has been no news on when, or if, they will proceed.