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Cardinal: Tiananmen victims martyrs for democracy

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HONG KONG -- Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun called the victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre martyrs who died to promote democracy and a clean government in China.

More than 600 Catholics attended a May 29 Mass celebrated by Cardinal Zen, retired bishop of Hong Kong, at the city's cathedral.

The cardinal reminded the congregation that the Tiananmen incident had not come to an end because, even now, "exiles of the event cannot go back home; mothers of the victims cannot pay their respects to their deceased sons and daughters publicly; no one knows how many people were imprisoned due to the event."

He said he feared that the new generation in mainland China might lose its memory of the event, because 20 years had passed and the government still treated discussion of it as taboo.

Cardinal Zen also asked Catholics to pray for the church and China.

The Chinese government said about 240 were killed June 4, 1989, when Chinese tanks attacked protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. According to the Chinese Red Cross, 2,600 people were killed.

The Hong Kong Catholic Justice and Peace Commission has organized a series of events to commemorate the June 4 massacre, including a special prayer service that day.

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