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The real story of **Falun Gong**

Falun Gong, also known as

Falun Dafa, is a modern form of the ancient practice of qigong, a "cultivation" practice which aims to "improve the mind and body through exercise and meditation."¹ It is a peaceful and nonviolent form of personal belief.²

The basic principles of Falun Gong are truthfulness, benevolence and forbearance, its followers claim that it is free from any political or commercial motivations.³ Introduced to China in 1992 by Mr Li Hongzhi, numbers taking up the practice were estimated at 70-100 million by 1999.⁴ After the crackdown, the Chinese government lowered the estimate to 2 million in 2000.⁵ Today the movement is found in sixty countries worldwide.⁶

Why is Falun Gong only being persecuted in China?

Originally, Falun Gong practitioners were seen as "benign qigong devotees";⁷ the practice was very popular, attracting all people including Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members and officials.⁸ However, spiritual elements from traditional culture found in Falun Gong and other qigong groups soon became targets for crackdown in mid 1990s. These crackdowns intensified in 1998 in the context of nationwide "anti-superstition" campaigns.⁹ In April 1999, many were arrested in a peaceful appeal in Tianjin against vilifications in a media. With indications from the local authority that practitioners should talk to the central leadership, over 10 000 responded in

Beijing on April 25th 1999 requesting that the arrested practitioners be released, the ban on Falun Gong books be lifted, and harassment at practice sites cease.¹⁰ The practice was officially banned on July 22 1999 in China.¹¹

Falun Gong's huge following by 1999, meant that "The CCP's half century of monopolising power in China was suddenly in the personal view of its current leader [Jiang Zemin] in grave danger."¹² According to David Ownby, Director of the Centre of East Asian Studies at the University of Montreal, "China has essentially reacted out of fear of Falun Gong's ability to mobilise its followers."¹³

How are practitioners being persecuted?

Before the official ban on Falun Gong, the Chinese leadership established the 610 Office (later known as the State Council Office for the Prevention and Handling of Cults).¹⁴ In July 2002, US Congress passed Concurrent Resolution No.188, recognising that these 610 offices persecute using "organized brainwashing, torture and murder" and then take "Official measures...to conceal all atrocities."¹⁵

Human Rights Watch says that laws have been enacted retrospectively and in violation of international criminal justice standards, and the breaking up of Falun Gong practitioners doing



gentle exercises or holding up banners violates the right to freedom of assembly, as established in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹⁶

Brainwashing and torture

Falun Gong practitioners have been imprisoned in labour camps by local authorities or police, "without charge or trial" for "re-education through labour". Practitioners have been coerced into giving up or even publicly denouncing Falun Gong.¹⁷ The United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief has expressed concern about reported arrests, detention, torture, sexual violence, denial of medical treatment and death of Falun Gong practitioners.¹⁸

Organ Harvesting

Recently, international human rights lawyer, David Matas, and former

Canadian Secretary of State, David Kilgour, investigated the allegations that in China Falun Gong practitioners have had their organs removed whilst alive for use in transplant procedures. They concluded in a July 2006 report that "there has been and continues today to be large scale organ seizures from unwilling Falun Gong practitioners."¹⁹ Their evidence includes admissions from medical officials who have used Falun Gong organs; extremely short waiting times for organ transplants in China, despite the scarcity of organs around the world; systematic blood testing of practitioners - a prerequisite of organ donation; family members seeing their loved ones' bodies with surgical incisions; and the confession of a surgeon to his wife that he had personally removed the corneas from 2,000 Falun Gong Practitioners.²⁰

A man who... got out of Auschwitz and told the world what was going on there in I believe 1943 and everyone said "This can't be happening"... and of course we all know what was happening in Auschwitz.²¹

David Kilgour.

Media campaign to influence public opinion

Amnesty International has raised concerns that official campaign of public vilification has created a climate of hate, which may encourage violence against practitioners of Falun Gong.²² Early accusations against Falun Gong from the Chinese State controlled media ranged from "organising illegal sit-ins" and "leaking state secrets" to "causing death"; the latter in particular

has been used to justify the crackdown. The "self-immolation" of five Chinese citizens in Tiananmen Square in January 2001 has been highly publicised, however the incidence and the identities of its participants have since been widely viewed as suspicious²³ or even staged,²⁴ while the essential teachings of Falun Gong explicitly forbid violence of any kind.²⁵

Today the Chinese government continues to call Falun Gong an "evil cult";²⁶ a claim disputed by independent observers.²⁷

In order for fundamental freedoms such as the right to life, and freedom of religion to be respected, the allegations about the persecution of Falun Gong must be investigated independently and... "The repression, imprisonment and severe mistreatment of Falun Gong practitioners must stop immediately" ²⁸

1 Falun Gong Human Rights Working Group "UN Reports on China's Persecution of Falun Gong (2004)" p.v

2 US Congress (July 2002), 107th CONGRESS 2d Session Concurrent Resolution 188 <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c107:H.CON.RES.188.EH>:

3 Falun Dafa: A Brief Introduction (n.d.) Falun Dafa [Online]

4 The New York Times (4/27/99) "In Beijing: A Roar of Silent Protestors" by Seth Faison...the Government's estimate of 70 million adherents..." [Online]

5 Amnesty International (2000) People's Republic of China: The crackdown on Falun Gong and other so called "heretical organizations" p.4 (pdf) [Online]

6 Falun Dafa Information Centre (2002) Sources of Statistical Information [Online]

7 Human Rights Watch (2002) Defiance and Response: A Chronology [Online]

8 Amnesty International (2000) The crackdown on Falun Gong ... op. cit., p.4

9 *ibid.* p.7

10 Falun Gong Human Rights Working Group (2005) Home Page [Online];also, Falun Dafa Clearwisdom (2005) Former Employee of the China Academy of Science: Falun Gong Was Systematically Framed Prior to the "April 25" Appeal [Online]

11 UN Commission on Human Rights (2005) Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir March 15

12 Matas, David and Kilgour, David (2006) Report into Allegations of Organ Harvesting of Falun Gong Practitioners in China, p.8 [Online] <http://investigation.go.saveinter.net/>

13 *ibid.*

14 UN Commission on Human Rights; Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir (E/CN.4/2005/61/Add.1, March 15 2005)

15 US Congress (July 2002), Concurrent Resolution 188

op. cit.

16 Human Rights Watch (2002) op. cit.

17 *ibid.*

18 UN Commission on Human Rights (2005), Asma Jahangir op. cit., p.17

19 Matas, David and Kilgour, David (2006) op. cit., p.41

20 *ibid.*, p.18-35also Summary Document of this Report, Smith, Wesley J. (2006) Organs for Sale [Online]<http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=MDkzOTNiMDczYzRmZTNmODM4OWJkNWZlMDI5NDhlMmVl>

21 Stewart, John (2006) Australia backs call for investigation into Chinese organ harvesting, 16 August [Online]<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2006/s1716792.htm>

22 Amnesty International (2006) Falun Gong Persecution Fact Sheet [Online]

23 Washington Post. 4 February 2002. Philip P. Pan. "Human Fire Ignites Chinese Mystery" <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=416268>

24 Media Channel "The Fires This Time: Immolation Or Deception In Beijing?" by Danny Schechter <http://www.mediachannel.org/views/dissector/falungong2.shtml>

25 Beijing is Burning, More lies from the PRC. By Ann Noonan <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment021301a.shtml>

26 Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Australia (2006) Report on harvesting Falun Gong practitionersorgans groundless: official 28 July [Online]

27 Ownby, David in Matas, David and Kilgour, David (2006), op. cit., p.8

28 Matas, David and Kilgour, David (2006), op. cit., p.43

Just Action

- Write a letter to your local member of Parliamentarian requesting the government to openly condemn the persecution of Falun Gong in China, and to support the recommendations in the Matas-Kilgour report.

- Write a letter to your local newspaper.

- Check out "Witnessing History: One woman's fight for freedom and Falun Gong" by Jennifer Zeng, a Falun Gong practitioner who was detained in a Chinese labour camp before fleeing to Australia.

- Join the Coalition to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong (CIPFG) either as a supporter, investigator or observer by sending an email to sympa@erc.org.au with "subscribe falun.gong" in the "subject".

- Visit CIPFG website and sign a petition <http://eng.cipfg.org/>



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