

Human Rights Report on Falun Gong in China

2016-2020

for
The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission

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Submitted by the Falun Dafa Association UK

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Foreword

About Falun Gong in China

Falun Gong (also known as Falun Dafa) is an ancient Buddhist practice. Its core tenets are Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance. Falun Gong teaches that these are the most fundamental qualities and takes them to be a guide for daily life and practice. There are also slow-moving exercises and meditation which improve health as well.

The practice was introduced to the public in China in 1992 by Mr Li Hongzhi and it spread rapidly by word of mouth.

In May 1998 China's National Sports Commission launched an investigation into Falun Gong, and commissioned medical professionals to conduct interviews of over 12,000 Falun Gong practitioners in Guangdong province. 97.9% of respondents said Falun Gong improved their health. The investigation concluded:

"We're convinced the exercises and effects of Falun Gong are excellent. It has done an extraordinary amount to improve society's stability and ethics. This should be duly affirmed."[1]

By late 1998 the State Sports Commission estimated that upwards of 70 million people in China were practising Falun Gong.[1]

Falun Gong became a natural target as it was the largest – and fastest growing – spiritual group in China. It was only a few decades ago that the Cultural Revolution's purpose was to uproot China's culture (namely the Buddhist, Taoist and Confucianist faiths) and replace them with the state faith of Atheism. This fast-growing spiritual group may have seemed like a threat to the Chinese Communist ideology.

During a July 1999 meeting of senior Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres, Jiang Zemin's decision to eradicate Falun Gong was announced. He gave the directive to *"Destroy their reputations, cut them off financially, and eradicate them physically."* [2]

There is no legal instrument in China making Falun Gong illegal to practice. With Jiang's directive the CCP took away the civil rights of tens of millions of citizens and carried out the brutal persecution of Falun Gong without any legal basis or accountability.

It should also be noted that despite how severe and violent the persecution is, Falun Gong practitioners' response has always been non-violent.

Confirmed persecution data

About the data

The data presented here are from Minghui.org, which is the central repository for Falun Gong information. Minghui verifies the reports received through the information blockade in China. These numbers show only what has courageously leaked out of China and does not detail the full scope of the persecution since many people are not able to get through the information blockade, or fear getting caught, or simply disappear into China's vast prison system.

2016

- 8,550 arrested
- 80 died due to the persecution
- 1,162 sentenced to prison
- 2,839 harassed

2017

- 3,660 arrested
- 72 died due to the persecution
- 974 sentenced to prison
- 7,209 harassed

2018

- 4,848 arrested
- 69 died due to the persecution
- 931 sentenced to prison
- 4,127 harassed

2019

- 6,109 arrested
- 96 died due to the persecution
- 774 sentenced to prison
- 3,582 harassed

2020 January - March

- 791 arrested
- 17 died due to the persecution
- 71 sentenced to prison
- 545 harassed

Disappeared

When a Falun Gong practitioner is arrested in China, the family may or may not be notified. The same is true when practitioners are brought to trial, sent to forced labour camps, or sentenced to prison. There are laws requiring notification, but since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is above the law, these regulations are often ignored. In many cases when someone disappears, the family simply does not know why or where they may be and has to go to different police stations and detention centres in search of their loved ones. In other cases, detained practitioners refuse to reveal their names in order to protect their families and employers from government retribution under the established "implication" system. This policy, which originated in feudal times, was resurrected during the Cultural Revolution. It is guilt by association, a method used to control people by punishing their family members or the companies they work for if they do something the government doesn't like - for instance going to Tiananmen Square to appeal for Falun Gong. Although the exact number of Falun Gong practitioners that have disappeared during the persecution is not easily determined, it is believed to be in the tens of thousands. It is feared that many of these missing practitioners met horrible deaths as victims of state-run organ harvesting.

Harrassed

For people who practice Falun Gong in China, they are persecuted for their faith in many different ways. Aside from being arrested, tortured and killed, they can lose their job, pension, housing, schooling or even lose their family.

Police are allowed to ransack and extort money from Falun Gong practitioners. Police have taken computers, books, phones, printers, money and even cars.

Among the 747 practitioners targeted in March 2020, 313 of them had their homes ransacked by the police. Thirty practitioners had a total of 172,800 yuan (£19,500) in cash confiscated, ranging from 200 yuan (£23) to 50,000 yuan (£5,600) per family and averaging 5,760 yuan (£650) per person.

One example, Mr Zhu Benfu:

Mr. Zhu Benfu, a retired military officer, and Ms. Sun Jingmei were residents of Dalian City in Liaoning Province. They were repeatedly arrested in the early years of the persecution so they tried to move from place to place around the country in order to avoid further persecution.

Mr. Zhu and Ms. Sun were both sentenced to seven years for their faith in 2006 and were tortured non-stop while in prison.

After they returned home police constantly harassed the couple. Mental pressure from police intimidation continued to consume their health. Two years after her release, Ms. Sun passed away on 16 April 2017. She was 61.

In early 2019, Mr. Zhu applied for retirement benefits when he reached 60, only to be told that his 31-year record of working in the military had been wiped from the retirement system and that he wasn't entitled to any benefits because of his faith.

The financial devastation left Mr. Zhu in deep distress. After yet another police harassment in August 2019, his health quickly deteriorated. He passed away on 28 October 2019, leaving behind his elderly parents and daughter.

Arrests and detention

At any time of day, police can arrive at a Falun Gong practitioner's home or workplace and take them away. Some have been abducted right off the street after shopping or dropping off their children at school. Once taken into custody, they are interrogated at length about their faith and Falun Gong contacts, and their homes are usually ransacked while looking for 'evidence' like Falun Gong books or leaflets. They can be detained indefinitely, held in detention centres, prisons, psychiatric hospitals and "black jails" which are extralegal facilities for political indoctrination (also known as "brainwashing centres").

The CCP uses aggressive measures to "transform" practitioners of Falun Gong to renounce their belief through physical and psychological torture. This forced conversion has been central in the effort to wipe out the practice and occurs in all of the detention facilities where transformation quotas and financial rewards are given for the successful transformation of Falun Gong practitioners.

Common transformation tactics include isolation, humiliation, sleep deprivation, inundation with anti-Falun Gong propaganda, threats of indefinite incarceration, emotional manipulation, economic punishment, use of former practitioners, ideological indoctrination, physical and psychological abuse, among many other methods.

For those who sign renouncement statements under intense pressure, the mental anguish of being forced to renounce one's deeply held spiritual beliefs does not stop there. The "transformed" practitioner is then immediately required not only to stop believing in Falun Gong, but also to turn against it. Once a transformation statement is signed, practitioners have often been taken in front of television cameras and made to read the statement with their "new understanding" about Falun Gong which is then used in propaganda materials. If the statement is not satisfactorily repentant or disparaging of Falun Gong and its founder, the process must be repeated. The recently transformed practitioners are obliged to take an active role in transforming other detained practitioners, lest they be returned to intensive torture sessions themselves.

While detained, forced labour is usually required. Detainees are forced to work up to 20 hours per day without pay. Those who refuse are beaten, tortured, or starved. Many of the products they make—Christmas decorations, toys, chopsticks, and much more—are sold in America, Europe, and Australia.

"At least 43 psychiatric hospitals all over China are being used to detain and torture [Falun Gong] practitioners. ... We know some of the drugs the hospitals force on sane individuals in an attempt to destroy their will and spirit. ... We know of the widespread use of psychotropic drugs by ordinary police in jails, brainwashing centers, and labor camps."

– Abraham L. Halpern, M.D. Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry, New York Medical College Former president, American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law

Example no. 1 from a UK practitioner

My name is Wen Feng. I now live in Edinburgh.

In 2016, my mother Sumei Wu was sentenced to 2.5 years imprisonment and fined 8000 RMB (£900), my third aunt Suyue Wu was sentenced to 1.5 years and fined 5000 RMB (£560). In Jan 2017, I was detained for a week.

In prison, while they refused to renounce their faith, they were kept in solitary confinement, given meagre amounts of food, and watched by two inmates who verbally insulted them every day. They were given a plastic bucket as a toilet, not allowed toilet paper, not allowed to wash their face or brush their teeth, not to mention changing clothes or taking a shower. Also the audio speaker was on very loud every day, playing audio that slandered Falun Gong. Videos of a similar kind were also played and they were forced to watch from the beginning to the end.

After watching or listening, they were then forced to write a reflection. If they refused to write or wrote something the prison officers considered 'containing dangerous thoughts', they would be tortured in different ways. My aunt told me that because of refusing to write the reflection, she was asked to stand straight from early morning till late at night. The next day, she still refused to write, the same torture took place again. Day after day she stood there weakly while two inmates insulted her as "half human half ghost". As well, they were forced to do slave labour, processing socks, hats, etc.

Example no. 2 from a UK practitioner

Ms. Han Fei, 49 and a Beijing resident, was arrested on 4 December 2019, for her faith in Falun Gong. Her daughter, Ms. Li Hui, a UK resident, is calling on the international community to help rescue her mother and she is also demanding that the police release her mother immediately.

Ms. Li said she called her mother on 4 December 2019, but no one responded. When Ms. Li contacted her father around 6:00 a.m. on December 5, her father told her that Ms. Han had been arrested before he returned home from work on 4 December.

Their home was a mess after the police raid. Ms. Han's Falun Gong books, informational materials, computer, and printer were missing. Ms. Han's husband learned from a neighbour that about ten police officers arrived in two cars around 5:00 p.m. on 4 December and arrested his wife. She was taken away in handcuffs.

Ms. Han's husband wasn't allowed to visit her and was told that only a lawyer could visit her. He talked to several law firms on 10 December, but they all said they didn't dare to take Falun Gong cases.

Her husband learned from insiders that the living conditions in the detention centre were extremely poor, with 47-49 people crammed into a small room measuring 50 square metres. Only a few people had the luxury to lie down and sleep while most inmates had to stand or sit up at night.

Deaths

According to Minghui, there are over 4,000 documented cases of Falun Gong practitioners who have died as a result of torture and abuse in police custody since July 1999. The 2016-2020 period shows no abatement. This number of documented cases is just a fraction of the true number of Falun Gong practitioners killed for their faith in China.

Discovering and verifying information inside China related to wrongful deaths is difficult and dangerous. Some who have exposed the torture and killing of Falun Gong practitioners have themselves been tortured and killed.

Cumulative Total of Falun Gong Practitioners Persecuted to Death

Documented cases with known years as of January 12, 2020



Seventeen Falun Gong practitioners died since January 2020 as a result of being persecuted for their faith.

The practitioners, of which nine were female, were all ages and from all walks of life including a music teacher, a former military doctor, a retired school principal, and an aircraft engineer.

One example, Mr Hu Lin:

Mr. Hu Lin, a 47-year-old aircraft engineer was arrested on 23 May 2019 for distributing information about Falun Gong.

Mr. Hu was sentenced to two years by Faku County Court on 20 June 2019. He was held at a detention centre before being sent to Kangjiashan Prison on 30 October 2019.

While Mr. Hu was in the Faku County Detention Centre, he went on a hunger strike to protest the persecution. On his bed he was tied in a spread-eagle position and force-fed. The guards left the feeding tube in his stomach to increase his suffering.

When Mr. Hu's family visited him in prison on 7 November 2019 he was emaciated. He also lost sensation in his legs and suffered multiple organ failure.

His family demanded medical attention for him but the prison authorities refused and blamed Mr. Hu for shouting "Falun Dafa is good" after he was taken there. The prison guards said they wouldn't release him even if he died.

In the next few months the prison authorities repeatedly told Mr. Hu's family that they wouldn't bear the responsibility for his life as he was still on a hunger strike and shouting "Falun Dafa is good".

Mr. Hu's family went to different government agencies to plead for him, but the local prosecutor said he wouldn't consider who should bear responsibility until Mr. Hu was dying. The officer overseeing the prison, Liu Xing, also refused to meet with Mr. Hu's family..

With the outbreak of coronavirus during the Chinese New Year, the prison prohibited his family

from visiting or even calling him.

On the evening of 14 February 2020 the prison called Mr. Hu's older brother, Mr. Hu Shuang, and said that Mr. Hu had been sent to the hospital for resuscitation.

His family rushed to the hospital and saw him being treated in the intensive care unit. Mr. Hu passed away at about 1 p.m. on 16 February.

Prison sentencing

Although sentenced in court, Falun Gong practitioners' trials lack due process and violate Chinese law. Communist Party committees advise and manipulate judges behind the scenes to arbitrarily impose prison terms. There is no legal instrument in China making Falun Gong illegal to practice so the standard pretext used to sentence Falun Gong practitioners is the charge of "undermining law enforcement with a cult organisation", even though Falun Gong is a traditional Buddhist faith and is not a cult.

Human rights lawyer Mo Shaoping, a prominent Chinese attorney, reflected on the case of Ms. Liu Jin who was sent to a prison camp for three and a half years after accessing information about Falun Gong online: *"She downloaded from the internet articles that are good in her judgment and passed them to others to read—[this] caused no harm to society. Liu Jin's behaviour is consistent with provisions of China's Constitution about the freedom of speech and freedom of belief and provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."*

In December 2019 and January 2020, 193 Falun Gong practitioners were sentenced for their faith. A total of 162 sentencing cases took place in December alone. The previous months in 2019, from January to November, recorded a number of cases ranging from 41 to 99, with a monthly average of 65 cases.

The month of January 2020 registered 31 cases, most of which came shortly before the large-scale lockdown of Chinese cities due to the coronavirus pandemic.

For the 193 cases in December and January, the prison terms ranged from 5 months to 12 years, with an average of 3.3 years. Fifty-four practitioners were fined by the court for a total of 990,000 yuan. The fine ranged from 2,000 to 60,000 yuan, averaging 18,679 yuan (£2,100) per person.

Renowned human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng said, *"The prison terms and fines imposed on Falun Gong people are in complete violation of basic legal principles and contemporary legal norms."*

Forced organ harvesting

Since 2006, independent investigators gathered evidence showing that Falun Gong prisoners of conscience were being killed to fuel the state-run organ transplantation industry.

In 2016, David Kilgour, David Matas and Ethan Gutmann worked together to meticulously examine the transplant hospitals in China and produced a 680-page report titled "Bloody Harvest/The Slaughter: An Update."

The authors of "An Update" stated, *"We found that China came to perform the most transplants in the world in just a few years despite the lack of an effective organ donation system. Furthermore, the industry continued to grow after live organ harvesting gained international attention in 2006. Through examining statements and policies regarding China's officially recognised organ sources,*

and summarising the industry's history and relevant government regulations, we have pieced together evidence showing that state, military, and civilian institutions that have been mobilized to carry out this medical genocide."

"The ultimate conclusion is that the Chinese Communist Party has engaged the State in the mass killings of innocents, primarily practitioners of the spiritually-based set of exercises, Falun Gong, but also Uyghurs, Tibetans, and select House Christians, in order to obtain organs for transplants."[3]

In 2018 the China Tribunal, lead by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, was created. It is an international, independent people's tribunal established to determine what international law crimes, if any, have been committed by state or state-approved bodies, organisations or individuals in China that may have engaged in forced organ harvesting of prisoners of conscience.

Over the course of 12 months experts of the China Tribunal conducted a robust analysis of all available evidence. They also encouraged China to provide evidence at each step of their deliberation. The final judgment, released on 17 June 2019, stated:

"forced organ harvesting has been committed for years throughout China on a significant scale and that Falun Gong practitioners have been one - and probably the main - source of organ supply. The concerted persecution and medical testing of the Uyghurs is more recent and it may be that evidence of forced organ harvesting of this group may emerge in due course. The Tribunal has had no evidence that the significant infrastructure associated with China's transplantation industry has been dismantled and absent a satisfactory explanation as to the source of readily available organs concludes that forced organ harvesting continues till today."[4]

One example, Mr He Lifang

Mr. He Lifang, a resident of Qingdao City, Shandong Province, died in custody on 2 July 2019, two months after his last arrest for refusing to renounce his faith in Falun Gong.

Mr. He's family noticed a sewn-up incision on his chest and an open incision on his back. The police first claimed that the incisions were a result of an autopsy before changing their story and saying a medical examiner would come shortly. No coroner ever showed up.

Mr. He's loved ones suspect that his organs may have been harvested. They also suspect severe abuse since he lost the ability to speak and became unresponsive within 17 days of being detained.

Mr. He's passing marked an end to the years of suffering for upholding his belief. The 45-year-old was repeatedly arrested and tortured – he was once beaten by 17 inmates while in detention. His ID was confiscated and he was forced to flee from home for 17 years to avoid further arrest.

The police deceived Mr. He into coming to the police station under the pretext of issuing him an ID card on 5 May 2019. He was arrested upon arrival and later subjected to force-feeding and severe abuse. His health declined quickly and he was rushed to hospital on 30 June.

Over 200 police officers were dispatched between 30 June and 3 July to stop local Falun Gong practitioners and Mr. He's family from approaching the hospital.

Mr. He died on 2 July, but his family weren't notified until the following day. They were pressured into agreeing to have his body cremated that same day. Over 30 officials and four vans of police officers were present to monitor the cremation process.

Electronic surveillance

The Chinese Communist Party also uses surveillance to persecute Falun Gong practitioners. It is very aggressive in bugging phones, using mobile phone tracking, video and internet surveillance.

Video

After banners with the words “Falun Dafa is good” were found in January 2017 in Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province, police tracked practitioners by using video surveillance, phone tapping, location tracking, and vehicle monitoring. This led to the arrests of at least five practitioners, four of whom were sentenced to prison.

The Great Firewall

In May 2000, China began to implement its national information filtering and monitoring system, commonly referred to as the Great Firewall which is still used very heavily today.

The equipment and technical support from major technology companies include Cisco Systems Inc, Nortel Networks Corporation and Huawei Technologies Co Ltd.

The leading NGO for electronic freedom, EFF, stated in 2016:

“Cisco custom-built the Great Firewall of China, also known as the ‘Golden Shield.’ This system enables the Chinese government to conduct Internet surveillance and censorship against its citizens. Company documents also revealed that, as part of its marketing pitch to China and in an effort to meet its customers needs, Cisco built a special Falun Gong module into the Golden Shield that helped the Chinese authorities identify, locate, and ultimately persecute practitioners of that religion by, for example, creating profiles of them that could be used during interrogations and forced conversions (i.e., torture).”[5]

Huawei

In 2018 the Epoch Times published a special report on Huawei. They interviewed a person named Mindy who was married to an IT engineer employed by Huawei. Mindy said that when the persecution of Falun Gong began in China, Huawei toed the Party line and adopted a policy of requiring new recruits to sign a contract stipulating they would not practice Falun Gong. A rule in the Huawei employee handbook also forbade any employee from practising Falun Gong.

Minghui confirms some Falun Gong practitioners who were reported to police by Huawei management and subsequently imprisoned for their faith. Aside from Huawei policing its employees, however, the Epoch Times report states that *“It has helped put in place the tools used by the Chinese regime to track Chinese citizens and censor what information they can access, thus enabling the persecution.”*

In 2018 a 172-page internal Huawei document was leaked on the internet. According to Chinese commentator Chen Simin, this leaked document shows Huawei’s deep involvement with the CCP’s surveillance programs “Golden Shield”, which is used to block access to information, and “Skynet System,” used for surveillance of the whole society.

The surveillance tools Huawei has helped to develop are used for many purposes, but among them is the tracking of Falun Gong practitioners.

Chen said that the initial demands for the Golden Shield Project came from the Public Security Bureau and the 610 Office, the Communist Party executive commission tasked with carrying out the persecution of Falun Gong.[6]

Conclusion

Amnesty International reported in 2018, *“Falun Gong practitioners continued to be subjected to arbitrary detention, unfair trials and torture.”*

For the tens of millions of people trying to practice their peaceful faith of Falun Gong in China, the brutal persecution by the Chinese Communist Party shows no sign of abating in the 2016-2020 period covered in this report.

Although the numbers of Falun Gong practitioners persecuted were lower in the beginning of the year due to the coronavirus pandemic, as restrictions eased the persecution continued, for example the number of Falun Gong practitioners arrested or harassed in March (747) was almost double that in February, which recorded 395 arrests and harassment cases.

Shortly after the lockdown was lifted in Xishui County, Hubei Province in late March, the county government issued an order to increase surveillance of local Falun Gong practitioners and prevent them from talking to people about Falun Gong and the pandemic. They posted a 1,000 yuan reward for anyone who reports a practitioner for raising awareness about the persecution.

In Shandong, Jiangxi, Hebei, Liaoning, Guizhou and Jilin provinces, the authorities are holding brainwashing sessions in order to achieve “complete transformation” of local Falun Gong practitioners.

In Guizhou Province, the local authorities issued a “zero out plan”, in which they are attempting to “transform” every practitioner by the end of 2020. The officers are visiting every practitioner on their list and forcing them to sign statements to stop practising Falun Gong. They said that the government is being “lenient” towards practitioners now, but will impose severe punishment if practitioners refuse to renounce their faith.

Recommendations for Her Majesty's Government

- Cease trade with China until they stop persecuting their citizens for their faith.
- Speak publicly against China's persecution of prisoners of conscience.
- Huawei persecutes Chinese citizens for their faith directly and by providing technology to enable persecution by the Chinese authorities. We recommend that HM government does not support Huawei through trade.
- Hospital confidentiality on organ tourism makes it impossible to know how many UK nationals are travelling to China as organ tourists. We know some have volunteered this information so we are sure they are going. But to what extent are we unknowingly complicit in the killing of innocent people in China?

We recommend therefore that anyone taking organ anti-rejection drugs in the UK must disclose the source of their organ and that this information is not held as confidential.

- Inform UK nationals through travel advisory web pages and NHS that organ transplants in China are sourced almost entirely from prisoners of conscience who are killed for their organs.
- Enact legislation banning transplant tourism which penalizes any transplant patient who receives an organ without consent of the donor.
- Prohibit UK pharmaceutical companies from exporting or testing transplantation drugs in China until China has a transparent donor system.
- Prohibit UK medical personnel from travelling to China to train or collaborate in transplantation until China has a transparent donor system.
- Require from Chinese medical personnel who come to the UK for transplant training or collaboration to sign an agreement that they won't use organs from non-consenting donors in China.

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