



## A Grisly Harvest in China

### Religious Persecution Persists Amid Reports of Sales of Prisoners' Organs

**W**hile leaders in the United States and Western Europe rightfully denounce human violations in the Middle East and Africa, they turn a blind eye to China, where the communist regime has long brutally suppressed religious and ethnic minorities including the Falun Gong, Tibetans, Uyghurs and Christians. Mass arrests, torture and detention of dissidents in forced labor camps throughout the country more than suffice to warrant world condemnation, but evidence of the harvesting of human organs from prisoners for profit places human rights violations in China into a totally new category.

The Western press and human rights activists have paid little sustained attention to the widespread repression of the Falun Gong, Christian sects and ethnic minorities, but it has not been completely ignored. Award-winning China analyst Ethan Gutmann details the Chinese state's program to eliminate political dissidents while profiting from sale of their organs in his book *The Slaughter*, published by Prometheus Books this year.

### Campaign Against the Falun Gong

**M**embers of the Falun Gong, a Buddhist group, have been a special target of the regime, with reportedly hundreds of thousands of members imprisoned and tortured. This targeting of the Falun Gong seems bizarre because members of this movement espouse a Buddhist morality system based on compassion, truthfulness and forbearance. The Falun Gong emerged in the 1990s as a spiritual movement attracting people across China from all walks of life—old ladies and young soldiers, wealthy industrialists and illiterate unemployed wanderers, urban and rural inhabitants. The movement called for followers to pursue compassion toward others, spiritual peace, and forbearance in this material world. Initially it was apolitical and did not directly challenge the communist regime. Indeed, many members of the Chinese Communist Party joined the movement, proclaiming the health benefits of meditation and spiritual exercises. The movement lacked a centralized organization as the quest for spiritual contentment and physical

health attracted followers. Not until 2006, after a decade of brutal suppression, did its followers denounce the regime.

The exact origins of the Falun Gong remain somewhat obscure. The movement surfaced following the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, when the Chinese government lethally put down pro-democracy demonstrations. While pro-democratic activists directly challenged the political system, across China an exercise craze, called *qigong*, drew thousands of people to gather each morning to undertake collective slow-motion exercises. The purpose of these public exercises was to cultivate the mind and the body.

Out of this *qigong* movement emerged Falun Gong. The leader of this system of spiritual meditation and physical exercise was a 41-year-old man, Li Hongzhi, a resident of the city of Changhun, a city of seven million in northeast China. His book *China Falun Gong*, published in 1993, became a best-seller. Li expressed Buddhist life simplicity. He sought neither riches nor a cult-like following. Tens of thousands of people were drawn to his system of spiritual development, spontaneously gathering in villages, city squares and parks to exercise collectively.

Falun discipline revolved around such exercises as Strengthening Divine Powers and Falun Standing Stance. Testimonials emerged of Falun Gong practitioners finding their health restored. Drug addicts and alcoholics proclaimed themselves cured. Cripples found themselves walking. More commonplace were those who said they found themselves more at peace with themselves. By 1996, Li Hongzhi's subsequent book *Zhuan Falun* became one of China's top ten best-sellers.

Li had little use for hierarchical organization. Although he made it clear that his videotaped lectures and books were to be studied as scripture, he believed Falun Gong was egalitarian. He denounced followers who tried to establish a clinic or to capitalize on the movement in other ways.

## Official Repression Since 1999

Falun Gong's popularity presented a threat to the regime for two simple reasons: It was a mass movement not directed by the Communist Party; and it promoted the Buddhist religion over atheism. Communist ideology always and everywhere has virulently opposed religion. Leading party newspapers called for the support of atheism, the eradication of superstition, and the cleansing of party ranks and the military of Falun Gong influence.

The crackdown came suddenly and brutally. Official party newspapers began denouncing the Falun Gong as a religious cult. Orders for the denunciation appear to have come from Jiang Zemin, China's president, in 1999. Li Hongzhi, having emigrated to New York, told his followers to push back against the media lies. He had no idea of what the party had in mind. The Public Security Bureau, the regime's special secret police, instructed party officials to begin arresting Falun Gong members who gathered at public places for collective exercises. In April 1999, thousands of Falun Gong practitioners flooded into Beijing to appeal to authorities and peacefully present facts to the Chinese leaders. Even at this point, Falun Gong followers believed that there had been a misunderstanding on the part of the leadership about what the Falun Gong stood for. The gatherings in Beijing allowed the Public Safety Bureau to intensify the campaign against Falun Gong as a threat to public order. In July, mass arrests occurred throughout China. Athletic stadiums were transformed into vast holding pens for Falun Gong. In Harbin, more than ten thousand practitioners were detained. Falun Gong followers were forced to register with local party committees and the Public Safety Bureau.

Typical of the victims was Ding Yan, a hairdresser from Hubei Province, who described in an illicit press conference held in Beijing how she was arrested and tortured by the police. The conference attracted press from the *New York Times*, the Associated Press and Reuters, leading to a rollback of press freedoms in China. Ding was again arrested and died two years later, rotting in a dank dungeon within Chegade City Prison, according to Ethan Gutmann's book.

Reports of prison conditions and torture of Falun Gong members have been widespread. Former director of the Longshan Labor Camp Han Guansheng revealed after his defection to Canada how torture, brainwashing and forced labor became systematic in Chinese labor camps. His efforts to prevent the use of high-voltage electric batons to shock and burn the skin of female Falun Gong prisoners proved futile. During the first five years of the anti-Falun Gong repression, 341 confirmed fatalities by torture were reported in Liaoning Province alone. In the Masanjia prison in the province, as Gutmann relates from interviews, guards stripped eighteen

female Falun Gong practitioners and threw them into the men's cells to be raped. Deaths from torture were officially reported as "suicides."

Guansheng's revelations were corroborated by another defector, Cheen Yonglin, a Chinese diplomat who sought asylum in Australia in 2005. He described a vast network of Chinese agents in Western countries, including a thousand agents in Australia, used to monitor Falun Gong and other dissidents including Uyghurs, Tibetans and democratic activists. In addition, Falun Gong believer Jennifer Zeng, who underwent torture, recounted her experiences in a Chinese prison in her book *Witnessing History* (2005), one of the best labor-camp memoirs since Elinor Lipper's *Eleven Years in a Soviet Prison Camp* (1951).

## Dissident Opposition Outside China

While Western journalists have often ignored these abuses occurring in China, Falun Gong practitioners in America have created their own media outlets such as New Tang Dynasty Television, Sound of Hope Radio, and Shen Yun Performing Arts. The latter organization uses dance and music to dramatize the plight of Falun Gong adherents in China and to raise money for the movement. In North Carolina and Northern California, Falun Gong engineers have introduced internet websites to launch spam attacks on official Chinese sites using complex algorithms that prevent the Chinese government from tracing the origins of the attacks. The Chinese government's firewall has been breached by these engineers, creating a permanent internet connection to China from the West.

The Chinese government has responded with typical severity. In 2004, Falun Gong legal activists in Pretoria, South Africa were strafed in a drive-by shooting on a highway outside Johannesburg. Dissident offices in Hong Kong and Taipei have experienced break-ins and vandalism. The computer systems administrator of the Falun Gong in North America, Dr. Peter Li, was attacked in his suburban home by men with mainland Chinese accents. He was beaten and left bleeding.

In 2011, the U.S. State Department began contributing \$1.5 million to support the dissident internet systems Ultrareach and Freegate. Dissidents believe this support will be short-lived because the State Department is only playing a card to pressure the Chinese government to stop its own serial hacking attacks on systems in the West.

Such countermeasures pale, though, next to the scale of the anti-dissident campaign on the mainland. Internal documents from the Chinese government estimate that there were approximately 70 million Falun Gong followers in China in 1999. Estimates from human rights groups of incarcerated Falun Gong followers range from half a million to one million

at any one time. Hundreds of thousands have been arrested and pressured to undergo a “transformation” to recant their beliefs. Many have been “transformed” after long-term sleep deprivation, beatings, starvation and isolation. Threats are made to their families. Female prisoners are threatened with permanent separation from their children. Often those who renounce their belief in Falun Gong later recant their “transformation” and return to their faith.

## The Business of Organ Harvesting

The foregoing abuses cry out for justice. Uniquely chilling, though, are reports from multiple sources of the harvesting of human organs from Falun Gong and other dissident prisoners who have died in Chinese labor camps. In 2006, two prominent and respected Canadian human rights attorneys, David Kilgour and David Matas, presented extensive evidence of organ harvesting in their *Report into Allegations of Organ Harvesting of Falun Gong Practitioners in China*, which was posted on the Web. Their report, as recounted and expanded in Ethan Gutmann’s *The Slaughter*, alleges that through a network of private hospitals, prison authorities, the state police and the army, an immensely profitable system of organ harvesting has been created in China. This system reveals the aggressive entrepreneurial spirit of “new” China combined with the typical corruption and pitiless disregard for human life that come with a communist system.

There is no question that China has had a policy of extracting organs from executed prisoners, for sale and transplantation. In 2006, facing a rash of bad publicity shortly before the Beijing Olympics, the Chinese government announced a policy of using only human organs that had been “volunteered.” Human rights activists charge that this so-called voluntary donation policy is being either abused or ignored by Chinese prison officials. In 2009 Chinese officials actually admitted that two-thirds of all transplanted organs came from executed prisoners (BBC News, “China Admits Death Row Organ Use,” August 26, 2009). In contrast to China, Western countries tightly regulate organ transplantation to prevent these kinds of abuses through restrictions on payment for organs and protocols for allocating available donated organs.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated in 2012 that 10,000 black market operations involving human organs take place every year. WHO collected evidence from a global network of doctors showing that Chinese traffickers ignore official regulations and are “cashing in on rising international demand for replacement kidneys driven by the increase in diabetes and other diseases,” according to the *Guardian*, a British left-wing newspaper (May 27, 2012). ABC News reported on November 17, 2014 that an international human organ tourist industry has emerged in China because of

the availability of organs from “executed prisoners, raising concerns about disease.”

It is bad enough for government officials to profit from the deaths of prisoners through the sale of their organs, even if the prisoners committed crimes justifying capital punishment. It is truly horrifying for the Chinese government to execute harmless dissidents for the purpose of profiting from the sale of their organs as well as quelling dissent. Evidence is mounting that this has happened on a large scale.

The report by Kilgour and Matas should be taken seriously. Kilgour was a member of Canada’s parliament for 27 years and served as secretary of state for Asia-Pacific affairs. Matas is a prolific and trusted human rights lawyer and director of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development. Their report, later published as *Bloody Harvest*, relied on transcripts of recorded phone conversations with Chinese doctors, written testimony from mainland dissidents who experienced prison detention, comparative data on human organ transplants, and related data on the human transplant industry in China.

Interviews with former prisoners, including members of the Falun Gong, the fringe Christian group Eastern Lightning and Tibetan monks, tell of prisoners undergoing physical exams by prison and military physicians. Prisoners were told that these were health exams, but the tests involved only blood tests (with up to seven vials of blood samples taken), electrocardiograms and x-rays. Throats, ears and eyes were not checked—the kinds of normal things done by a doctor during a physical exam. Later many of those tested disappeared from the camps without any explanation from Chinese officials as to what happened to them.

Human organ transplants indisputably are big business in China. Advertising for human transplants, aimed at a foreign and domestic market, is pervasive. Websites, stickers in phone booths, ads in trade newspapers, and flyers on bulletin boards openly advertise these services without disclosing the source of the organs.

## ‘Donor’ Deaths Scheduled in Advance

Western physicians provide further evidence of the nature of this macabre business. Gutmann interviewed Dr. Franz Immer, chairman of the Swiss National Foundation for organ donation and transplants, who reported that during his visit to Beijing in 2007, a hospital invited him to watch a heart transplant operation. The organizer asked whether he would like to have the operation performed in the morning or the afternoon. Immer explained, “This means that the donor would die, or be killed, at a given time, at the convenience of the visitors. I refused.”

Another physician, Dr. Jacob Lavee, a cardiac surgeon and director of the heart transplantation unit at the Sheba Medical Center in Israel, reported that one of his patients with a severe heart condition was told by his health insurance company that they had identified a transplant opportunity in China two weeks hence. They gave him a specific date. It appeared to be a prescheduled execution. Dr. Lavee became a leading figure in Doctors against Forced Organ Harvesting and headed a successful campaign to change Israeli organ-transportation laws. Interviews with Japanese physicians also suggest that human organs are readily available in China and can be ordered ahead of time.

Kilgour and Matas's statistical analysis bolsters the evidence of this trade in human organs. They found that in 2005 alone, China completed 10,000 kidney transplants and 4,000 liver transplants. That number was double the number of kidney transplants in 2000. After running correlations, Kilgour and Matas concluded that voluntary donations could not account for the number of kidney transplants being performed. They estimated that from 2000 to 2005 more than 63,250 organs were transplanted. Based on statistical evidence as well as extensive interviews with former prisoners and former prison officials, they concluded that many of these organs were harvested from Uyghurs, Tibetans, Falun Gong and Christians.

The amount of harvesting from these prisoners cannot be fully confirmed. The evidence is partly circumstantial, based on interviews and statistical correlation, and impossible to obtain from the Chinese authorities.

What is undeniable is the overwhelming evidence of ruthless political repression of religious dissidents in China, which shows just how hollow the talk of a "new" China is. Chinese government officials count on Western Europe and the United States to ignore these violations in the name of good will, their desire for profit and their heavy reliance on China to maintain economic growth in the midst a global economic slowdown. Most Americans have never heard of the Falun Gong, but fortunately we have a free press that allows newsletters such as the *Mindszenty Report* to explain that the "new" China is still what we used to call "Red China," just as dangerous and repressive as always.

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## Veterans Day

At the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in the year 1918, World War I ended. Since then, November 11 has been observed as a day to honor our military veterans, living and dead. Now in 2014, we again remember and thank our warriors for their many sacrifices and pray for God's blessings upon them.

## Thanksgiving Day

In the Proclamation that set the precedent for America's national day of Thanksgiving, President Abraham Lincoln called for "a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens" and recommended that citizens "ferently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation."

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