



## Evidence Piles Up of China's Ongoing Kill-on-Demand System of Human Organ Harvesting

In November 2014 the *Mindszenty Report* summarized for our readers what was then known about China's grisly practice of harvesting organs for transplant from prisoners of conscience. The Chinese Communist Party insists that since 2015 human organ transplants in its country have been conducted on an entirely voluntary basis, without using organs from executed prisoners. The World Health Organization has applauded China's supposed reforms. Nevertheless, strong evidence suggests that the Chinese government has manipulated its reporting on organ harvesting and should not be believed. The world should no longer avert its eyes from China's appalling barbarity.

The U.S. government and press have not held the Chinese government accountable for its longtime violation of international guidelines for human organ transplants. However, in an important first step toward accountability, the U.S. House of Representatives in March passed the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act of 2023, with overwhelming bipartisan support. H.R. 1154 seeks to sanction anyone involved in forced organ trafficking and requires annual government reporting on such activities taking place in each foreign country. A companion bill awaits action by the U.S. Senate.

In 2019, the Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting of Prisoners of Conscience in China, after holding three hearings where 50 witnesses testified, concluded that *reports of forced organ harvesting atrocities in China could be "likened to the worst atrocities committed in conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,"* including the gassing of Jews by the Nazis, the massacre of Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge or the butchering of the Rwandan Tutsis.<sup>1</sup>

In April 2022, Matthew Robertson, a senior fellow at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, and Dr. Jacob Lavee, a leading Israeli cardiologist, presented evidence published in the *American Journal of Transplantation* that at least 71 donors in China transplant operations from 1980 to

2015 were not brain-dead before their organs were harvested by Chinese surgeons. Furthermore, the researchers found that the number of voluntary (i.e. non-prisoner) organ donors in China was at most 130, representing only about 0.3 percent of the 120,000 transplanted organs reported in this period—assuming that each voluntary donor gave three organs each.<sup>2</sup>

In 2019, Robertson and Lavee raised serious questions about the accuracy of transplant data being reported by the Chinese government. In a close forensic statistical study published in the journal *Medical Ethics*, Robertson and Lavee found "systematic falsification and manipulation of official organ transplant datasets in China." They added that "evidence suggests that non-voluntary donors appear to be misclassified as voluntary."<sup>3</sup>

For those who understand the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) practice of manipulating economic and health data, Robertson and Lavee's conclusion is not surprising. Yet the Chinese government boasts that its "reforms" have won praise from world leaders and health care officials.

### Atrocities to Falun Gong, Uyghurs

Lauding the Chinese Communist Party for its transparency and reforms in human organ transplant policies willfully ignores the brutality of the regime, its genocidal policies toward religious dissidents and ethnic minorities, and its current medical practices in human organ transplant surgery. Chinese officials have become adept at conducting public relations campaigns to the larger world by accusing their critics in the West of falsifying information. Representatives of the CCP are especially skillful in presenting their government as moving toward reform by correcting past abuses. The regime discounts testimony about torture of incarcerated Falun Gong members, Uyghurs and Christians as fabricated.

Chinese government assertions have been brought into serious question by a major report issued in 2019 by the above-mentioned Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting of Prisoners of Conscience in China. This commission, based in London, was headed by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC and joined by a distinguished group of panelists. The panel undertook an extensive investigation into Chinese practices, relying on government and outside publications and eyewitnesses, including former prisoners and surgeons.<sup>4</sup> The tribunal was formed by the nonprofit International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China.

The tribunal's major focus in its investigation was on state crimes against Falun Gong, practitioners of Buddhist meditative exercises. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has regarded the Falun Gong as an "anti-humanitarian, anti-society, and anti-science cult" since 1999. Repression of the group has intensified over the last decades.

The tribunal's work built upon non-governmental investigations beginning in 2009 with the publication of David Matas and David Kilgour's book *Bloody Harvest* (2009), Ethan Gutmann's book *The Slaughter* (2014), and a cooperative effort by those three journalists, *An Update to Bloody Harvest and The Slaughter* (2016). In addition to these books, the tribunal drew on governmental and international investigations including a U.S. House Ways and Committee report in 2001; three reports by the United Nations published in 2007, 2008 and 2009; a European Parliament Report in 2013; subsequent reports by U.S. government agencies in 2016 and 2018; and a 2018 report by the Australian House of Representatives.

## Eyewitness Testimony

These reports provided extensive evidence of state human rights abuses in China. The Independent Tribunal adds further and shocking evidence. The 50-page tribunal report makes for gruesome reading, detailing *systematic torture and harvesting of human body parts, sometimes on live patients, in China*. The testimony of torture is too stomach-turning to reproduce here, but some highlights warrant brief summary.

At the end of the 1990s, Jiang Zemin, then General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, launched a violent campaign against the 70 million Falun Gong adherents as a threat to the state. He established the 610 Office, which was endowed with extraordinary and extra-legal power to make extrajudicial arrests, to imprison Falun Gong followers without trial, and to torture and kill them with impunity.

In hearing evidence of human rights abuses in this state campaign, the Independent Tribunal brought forward eyewitnesses. Enver Tohti, a former general surgeon in a hospital in Urumqi, the capital of the Uyghur Autonomous Region, reported that in 1995 he and two assistants were ordered to extract organs from a prisoner shot in the right part of his chest. Tohti was ordered by the military to keep the victim's heart beating. According to Tohti, the victim was tied down while Tohti removed the victim's liver and both kidneys. Tohti said that the victim struggled and bled when cut, leading Tohti to deduce the victim was still alive.

Another doctor, Zhiyuan Wang, testified that in 2002 he received a call from a prison guard who had tortured a woman for a week and saw two military surgeons cut open the victim without anesthetic for her heart and kidneys. During the operation, the victim shouted, "Falun Gong is good." A former nurse testified that her ex-husband, a surgeon, removed corneas from 2,000 people between 2001 and 2003—Falun Gong practitioners who had been executed by lethal injection.

## Large-Scale State Involvement

The tribunal found abundant evidence of organ harvesting by Chinese government authorities dating back to 1978. In 1984, multiple Chinese government bodies and ministries joined together in issuing a regulation allowing the bodies and organs of executed prisoners to be used at will by the state. As a result, large numbers of military and police hospitals became involved in transplantation of human organs.

Muslim ethnic minorities—Uyghurs, Kazaks and Uzbecks—also became a focus of a CCP crackdown, including mass incarceration in hundreds of "patriotic re-education" camps. Journalist Ethan Gutmann gave evidence to the tribunal in December 2018, stating that "over the last 18 months, literally every Uyghur man, woman, and child—about 15 million people—have been blood and DNA tested, and that blood testing is compatible with tissue matching."<sup>5</sup>

Based on the evidence, the tribunal found that widespread acts of torture have been inflicted and continue to be inflicted on Uyghurs. Torture of Uyghurs has been "systematic in nature and designed to punish, ostracize, humiliate, dehumanize and demean Uyghurs."<sup>6</sup> Sexual violence against Uyghur women is common. Yin Liping testified that she was incarcerated in the spring of 2001 in the Masanjia Labor Camp, where she was locked up with 40 men of unknown identity and raped by these men, one of whom video-recorded her ordeal.<sup>7</sup> Amid such

dehumanizing treatment, the horrors of forced organ harvesting are tragically plausible.

## Big Business of Transplants

The availability of organs ready for transplant surgery and the short wait time for surgery have made this industry a big business for China. Public Chinese statements have acknowledged that more than 50,000 organ transplants are expected to take place in 2023. *China has become a center for transplant tourism from Western countries as well as Japan, Korea and the Gulf states. Those coming from the Gulf states especially prize organs from Muslims, so-called “halal” organs.*<sup>8</sup>

The PRC has approved at least 146 licensed transplant hospitals, but an estimated number of unapproved hospitals is well over 700. An estimated 60,000 to 90,000 transplant operations occur annually in China. Although organ “donations” from death row prisoners are no longer legal, the number of kidney and liver transplants continues to rise. Evidence suggests that many of these transplant organs are coming from Uyghurs.

Wait times for organs for transplant surgeries can be many months and often years in Western European countries and the United States. For example, an average wait time in the United Kingdom for a liver transplant is 135 days, and for kidneys about 2.5 years. Heart and lung transplant wait times are even longer.

*In China the wait time is about two weeks for these organs.* Organs from Muslims come at a higher price. Uyghurs do not drink, so their livers and kidneys are considered better. The activist group Campaign for Uyghurs reported in 2020 that in China the cost of a liver can be upwards of \$100,000, but a Muslim liver can be triple that amount.<sup>9</sup> Falun Gong organs have also been valued in recent decades because of the healthy lifestyle practices of Falun Gong adherents.

Torsten Trey, M.D., Ph.D., co-founder with Dr. Jacob Lavee and executive director of the international medical ethics advocacy group Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting, is a tireless leader of the global movement against forced organ harvesting in China, calling it an “unprecedented evil, the state-sanctioned, large-scale killing of vulnerable prisoners of conscience committed by a totalitarian regime.” A U.S. physician, Trey was featured in the award-winning documentary *Human Harvest* (2014) and is co-editor of the book *State Organs: Transplant Abuse in China* (2012). His organization published a 56-page peer-reviewed special report, “Forced Organ Harvesting from Living People in China,” on December 10, 2022 in honor of International

Human Rights Day. The report called the CCP’s two-decades-long persecution of the Falun Gong a “cold genocide” and concluded that *forced organ harvesting from living people “continues to occur unabated in China.”* The Independent Tribunal had reached a similar conclusion in 2019.<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Lavee was galvanized to assume an activist role in 2005 after a patient of his in Israel told of flying to China to obtain a heart transplant on a date scheduled two weeks in advance. Shocked, Dr. Lavee realized that the death of the heart “donor” must have been scheduled for that date. He worked successfully to pass laws in Israel prohibiting transplant tourism and insurance reimbursement for surgeries in countries not meeting international standards for ethical transplantation. More such laws are needed in other countries.

The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, an organization chartered by Congress, published a detailed report in 2020 by Matthew Robertson entitled “Organ Procurement and Extrajudicial Killing in China: A Review of the Evidence”.<sup>11</sup> This report contained chilling conclusions about the likely source of many of China’s organs for transplant: extrajudicial killings of prisoners of conscience, especially Falun Gong and Uyghurs.

## The CCP Responds

The Chinese government has conducted an extensive public relations campaign to counter allegations of human rights violations. In typical CCP fashion, this campaign has included aggressive denials of specific charges, while courting praise for its efforts at reform from the international community. This campaign follows a common pattern for communist dictatorships: deny the allegations, announce supposed reforms, denounce continued critics as falsifiers, and win over state leaders and international agencies anxious to avoid disrupting relations with the communist regime. *What the regime does not do is provide convincing explanations for the large numbers of organ transplants scheduled on short notice.*

Illustrating the regime’s approach, the Chinese Mission to the European Parliament denounced the parliament’s May 5, 2022 resolution condemning reports of continuing organ harvesting in China and accusing the regime from carrying out persistent, systematic and inhumane organ harvesting from criminals and members of the Falun Gong. A spokesman for the Chinese Mission described reports of forced human harvesting in China as “a big lie fabricated by the Falun Gong cult and some anti-China forces to smear

China.” The spokesman said that the European Parliament resolution was based on “disinformation and without factual basis”—a “typical example of prejudice and arrogance.”<sup>12</sup>

The spokesman went on to say that “China’s Regulation on Human Organ Transplant clearly stipulates that no organization or individual may buy or sell human organs in any form” and emphasized that donation of organs is “only done on a voluntary basis.” The spokesman contended that Chinese organ donor and surgery practices are “open and transparent,” having won plaudits from the World Health Organization and relevant professional associations.<sup>13</sup>

A year earlier, in August 2021, the Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations Office in Geneva released a single-spaced four-page report attacking members of Falun Gong who reported what they had witnessed in Chinese prisons. The report specifically described two named witnesses as “actors” who “repeatedly engage in slander and rumor mongering.”<sup>14</sup>

## Facts Belie Propaganda

**T**he Chinese Communist Party displays ruthless practices toward Uyghurs, Falun Gong, ethnic minorities in Tibet and dissidents in Hong Kong. (The *Mindszenty Report* has also frequently called attention to China’s repression of Christians, most recently in our issues dated October 2022, April 2021 and March 2020.) More than 900,000 Uyghur children are in state boarding schools, separated from their parents. They are being indoctrinated by loyalists to the Chinese Communist Party and consider it a high honor to fight in the People’s Liberation Army.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile their parents and relatives are in forced labor camps, slave laborers for the CCP.

Similarly, over a million Tibetan children have been separated from their parents and placed in government-run boarding schools, where they are indoctrinated to become loyal citizens of China, reject their Tibetan roots, and look

upon the People’s Liberation Army as their saviors.<sup>16</sup>

In Hong Kong, the crackdown on pro-democracy dissidents has been severe. The CCP has undertaken mass arrests and has overhauled the remaining remnants of democratic rule to ensure regime control of a once prosperous and democratic island the British left behind.<sup>17</sup> Prominent, courageous elderly Hong Kong Catholics, including Jimmy Lai and Cardinal Joseph Zen, have suffered in this crackdown.

But murdering prisoners of conscience on demand to harvest their organs and sell them to wealthy patients is in a class of barbarism all by itself.

<sup>1</sup> <https://chinatribunal.com/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ajt.16969>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://bmcmedethics.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12910-019-0406-6>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://chinatribunal.com/>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://chinatribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/EthanGutman.pdf>, page 3.

<sup>6</sup> <https://chinatribunal.com/>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.newarab.com/news/china-harvested-organs-prisoners-likely-uyghurs>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://campaignforuyghurs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Halal-Organs.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.theepochtimes.com/report-details-unprecedented-evil-of-chinas-state-sanctioned-forced-organ-harvesting\\_4919100.html](https://www.theepochtimes.com/report-details-unprecedented-evil-of-chinas-state-sanctioned-forced-organ-harvesting_4919100.html).

<sup>11</sup> <https://victimsofcommunism.org/publication/china-organ-procurement-report-2020/>.

<sup>12</sup> [http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/fyrjh/202205/t20220506\\_10682061.htm](http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/fyrjh/202205/t20220506_10682061.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> <https://spcommreports.ohcr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gld=36489>.

<sup>15</sup> <https://bitterwinter.org/indoctrination-militarization-of-uyghur-children/>.

<https://www.cfr.org/background/china-xinjiang-uyghurs-muslims-repression-genocide-human-rights>;

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<sup>16</sup> <https://time.com/6253481/china-tibet-million-children-separated-residential-schools/>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/d329bad9-0a9a-4b9d-a936-f28c41801074>

<https://apnews.com/article/hong-kong-democracy-electoral-overhaul-138fbc46d70593f22050ed81a24fce30https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/02/06/world/asia/hong-kong-47-democracy-trial.html>.

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