

Truthfulness



Benevolence



Forbearance



Mark Palmer
Vice Chairman of the Board
Freedom House

FALUN DAFA QUARTERLY

A Journal of Falun Dafa Around the World

A Year in Review

Brutal Suppression
Encounters
Unshakable Faith



A Few Words About Falun Dafa



“[China’s] . . . progress is still being held back by the government’s response to those who test the limits of freedom. A troubling example, of course, is the detention by Chinese authorities, of adherents of the Falun Gong movement. Its targets are not political dissidents. . . But the principle still, surely, must be the same: freedom of conscience, and freedom of association.”

United States President, Bill Clinton

“Certainly what they’ve done to these people...very innocent people practicing their own personal beliefs, expressing themselves in a very peaceful and non-political way is clearly an overreaction, and I hope the Chinese government comes to realize that.”



United States Senator, Richard Durbin



“[Falun Gong] . . . is in my judgement, the greatest single spiritual movement in Asia today. There is nothing that begins to compare with it in courage and importance. So Freedom House feels very strongly that Falun Gong deserves the world’s support.”

Mark Palmer, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Freedom House, former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary

“Falun Gong has almost become the symbol for the struggle for religious freedom. And when thousands and thousands of people have been arrested... imprisoned... tortured, when people have died in prison, it’s impossible for countries to say they are deeply committed to human rights and remain silent. And that’s why we have urged the United States government to speak out.”



Rabbi David Saperstein, Chair, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

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Falun Dafa, also known as Falun Gong, is an advanced traditional Chinese Qigong practice designed to improve the mind and body through exercise and meditation. The practice not only has far-reaching effects in stress-relief and overall mental and physical health, but ultimately has the higher goal of bringing people towards wisdom and enlightenment.



To learn more about the beneficial Falun Dafa practice:

China Falun Gong: the introductory text, recommended to read first.

Zhuan Falun: the comprehensive text of Falun Dafa.

Exercise Instruction Video: a step-by-step guide to the exercise movements.

The above materials can be ordered through your local bookstore OR downloaded, viewed, or printed out for free over the internet by visiting www.falundafa.org.



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From the Editors

Introducing the Falun Dafa Quarterly

Why would an elderly grandmother travel on foot from the countryside for nine days to Beijing, knowing that she faced certain arrest, detention, and likely torture or even worse? Why would a farming couple spend a year's income on train tickets - instead of seeds and piglets - to get to Beijing, also knowing that they faced the same fate as the grandmother?

The answer is their unshakable faith in Falun Dafa, a spiritual practice that has grown beyond China to include more than 100 million practitioners in more than 40 countries, from everyday citizens to leaders in various fields.

With persistence and courage unprecedented in Chinese history, tens of thousands of humble people like these have stepped forward - repeatedly and fearlessly - to appeal to their government for the right to practice their faith, and to proclaim to all the world, "Falun Dafa is Good."

Many of us, fortunate enough to live under guaranteed freedoms of speech and belief, cannot fathom how difficult it is in the controlled society of China to openly affirm such a simple, ringing declaration. But even beyond standing up for their individual rights, these brave souls stand up for a principle: Truthfulness-Benevolence-Forbearance, the fundamental principle of the universe.

This first issue of Falun Dafa Quarterly focuses on the events in China of the past year, when Falun Dafa went from a little-known phenomenon to a dramatic -- yet still under reported -- story in the eyes of international media. Our "Features" section in this issue includes a timeline of significant events, an exploration of why this big story was, and continues to be, missed by American media, comments by prominent figures on the crisis, and a personal story by a San Diego, California scientist about a visit to China that took an unexpected turn.

Our sections "In the News" and "Beyond the News" recap stories that have been featured in the media, and those that have not. In each issue, we will clarify aspects of Falun Dafa. A set of frequently asked questions (FAQ's) about Falun Dafa appears in this issue.

Between these covers we will present a variety of viewpoints, both from those who practice Falun Dafa and those who do not. Objective and subjective evidence overwhelmingly affirm that this positive and peaceful practice benefits not only the individuals who practice it, but also the communities and social milieus where it has taken root.

We welcome you to Falun Dafa Quarterly and cordially invite you to share your thoughts with us.

-Falun Dafa Quarterly Editors



A Day of Worldwide Recognition for Falun Dafa



New York City, United States

It was in May of 1992 that Falun Dafa was first brought to the public. On that day, Mr. Li Hongzhi first introduced this ancient practice to the people of China. To celebrate the eighth anniversary of Falun Dafa, May 13th, was proclaimed **“World Falun Dafa Day”**.

New Zealand was the first country to begin the festivities, followed by Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Scandinavia, Singapore, Switzerland, Taiwan and the United States. A total of 19 countries celebrated World Falun Dafa Day with a variety of parades, speeches, exercise demonstrations and instruction, as well as group practices.

In the U.S., 26 states, in 47 different cities, held World Falun Dafa Day events. Practitioners from New York City decorated Manhattan’s Bryant Park with colorful balloons. The day began with a speech that told the story of Falun Dafa and was presented in 5 different languages. Then, throughout the day, practitioners demonstrated the exercises and gave lessons to hundreds of interested New Yorkers who were very eager to learn. One woman who was passing by the



Paris, France

park cheerfully stated, “There’s lots of different people here. So I felt like maybe I could do it. It’s not something that came from China and is very, sort of, Chinese. It’s something that people who are from America or other countries can actually participate in.”



Sydney, Australia

Unfortunately, the millions of practitioners in China did not have the privilege to freely hold World Falun Dafa Day events. Nevertheless, many courageous practitioners formed small groups outdoors to show their support. Practitioners in Beijing gathered in Tianmen Square and began to do the exercises, but were quickly taken away by plain clothed policeman.

Meanwhile in Europe, the practitioners from the northern part of Germany held a World Falun Dafa Day ceremony in the extremely crowded center of Berlin, the Memorial Church Square. The practitioners demonstrated the exercises until dusk. When the celebration activities were over, the practitioners cleaned up the square before leaving. The police were deeply impressed by the movements and words of the practitioners. A policeman finally asked, “do you only hold this kind of celebration once a year? We would be very glad if you could come often and hold activities. Maybe I could learn how to practice Falun Gong.”



Glasgow, Scotland

Falun Dafa Around the World: A Timeline of Events

“The [Chinese] government’s estimate of 70 million [Falun Gong] adherents represents a large group in a nation of 1.2 billion,” *New York Times* said in a report on April 27, 1999. Falun Gong has become “the largest voluntary organization in China, larger even than the Communist party,” according to a *U.S. News World Report* dated February 22, 1999.

The Beginning

Mr. Li Hongzhi started teaching Falun Gong to the public in China and gave his first public lecture in Changchun, Jilin Province, China.



May 13, 1992

Zhongnanhai Incident

More than ten thousand Falun Gong practitioners held a peaceful gathering in Beijing, China, outside the Chinese leadership compound, Zhongnanhai. The assembly “was apparently set off by an incident in Tianjin, where practitioners staged a protest last week after a local magazine ran an article maligning Buddhist Law [Falun Gong] and the police used force to drive away followers,” according to *New York Times*. The entire event was peaceful and characterized by orderliness. “Unlike student protesters who noisily thronged the streets of Beijing with colorful banners and pungent slogans 10 years ago, Sunday’s demonstrators drew no attention to themselves and attracted no notice until there were suddenly many thousand of them sitting quietly in one of the most politically sensitive locations in the nation,” *New York Times* reported.



April 25, 1999

July 20-22, 1999

1992 - 1998

Falun Dafa Develops in China and Abroad

The China Qigong Association and its local offices, which are affiliated with China’s Society of Science and Technology, organized all 53 Falun Gong workshops for Mr. Li Hongzhi between 1992 and 1994. About 20,000 people attended Mr. Li’s lectures in person during this period of time. Mr. Li received continual praise and recognition from various government organizations throughout this period. In 1996, Mr. Li’s book *Zhuan Falun* became a national best seller in China. Between 1996 and 1998, Mr. Li lectured in countries outside China, such as the United States, Switzerland, Australia, Germany, etc.



The Crackdown Begins

On July 20, 1999, forceful suppression began, with more than a hundred arrests of so-called “key members” of Falun Gong being made across China in the middle of the night. A nationwide ban of Falun Gong was officially announced on July 22, making every sort of Falun Gong activity illegal. According to *New York Times*, “the authorities have detained tens of thousands of people and are spewing a deafening barrage of anti-Falun Gong publicity each day.” Just one week later the Chinese government issued an arrest warrant through Interpol for Mr. Li Hongzhi, then already a permanent resident of the United States. Interpol soon rejected Beijing’s request, saying the approach had political motives. Human rights groups accused Chinese authorities of blatantly violating the legal rights of Falun Gong practitioners. “This crackdown flies in the face of the Chinese government’s commitments to increase social freedom and marks the beginning of yet another cycle of stifled dissent and repression,” Amnesty International said in a statement.



Nation-wide Persecution of Falun Dafa

The Chinese government launched a far-reaching campaign of misinformation about Falun Gong. State-run media flooded the printing presses and airwaves with fabrications about Mr. Li Hongzhi and Falun Gong in attempts to sway and mislead their readers and audiences. Conversely, millions of legally published Falun Gong books, audio tapes, and video tapes have been confiscated, burned, and destroyed across the country. Tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners were detained, thousands were tortured, and hundreds were sent to labor camps and imprisoned. "It's as though we are reliving a bad dream," said a Chinese businessman who expressed amazement at the old-fashioned nature of the anti-Falun Gong campaign to a *New York Times* reporter. Falun Gong web sites based outside China's territory have been blocked and constantly attacked, or even destroyed. Once The Associated Press called the numbers in Beijing listed with an attacker's Internet address, according to *New York Times*, "a person who answered the phone identified



July, 1999 - Present

them as belonging to the Public Security Ministry [of China]. A telephone operator at the ministry said they belonged to its Internet Monitoring Bureau."

Government Action in the United States

On November 18, 1999, the United States House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution criticizing the Chinese government's suppression of Falun Gong. On November 19, the United States Senate also passed a related resolution. The House resolution initiated by Chris Smith of New Jersey said: "The Government of the People's Republic of China should stop persecuting Falun Gong practitioners and other religious believers." President Clinton, in a human rights speech on December 6, 1999, criticized China's crackdown on Falun Gong: "[China's]... progress is still being held back by the government's response to those who test the limits of freedom. A troubling example, of course, is the detention by Chinese authorities, of adherents of the Falun Gong movement. Its targets are not political dissidents... But the principle still, surely, must be the same: freedom of conscience, and freedom of association."



Nov./Dec. 1999

October 30, 1999

The Crackdown Escalates

The Chinese national legislature rushed to pass an "anti-cult" law to retroactively criminalize Falun Gong. "China's communist leaders often insist that theirs is, in fact, a system of laws," *Washington Post* reported. "In the past week, events have proven the leaders absolutely right. When they found themselves without the laws they needed to vigorously persecute a peaceful meditation society [Falun Gong], the Party simply ordered up some new laws. Now these will be applied — retroactively, of course — in show trials that could lead to execution for the group's leaders. This is what the regime calls 'smashing them rigorously in accordance with the law.'" Falun Gong practitioners worldwide made every effort to appeal for a peaceful dialogue with the Chinese government.



At Present

The Courage Continues

At present, Falun Dafa is practiced in over 40 countries around the world. On May 13, 2000, World Falun Dafa Day was celebrated in over 64 cities around the world. In the past six months alone, Falun Dafa Experience-sharing conferences have been held in the United States, Canada, Switzerland, Taiwan, and mainland China. This is the public face of Falun Gong... challenged, determined and unafraid.



"This is in my judgement, the greatest single spiritual movement in Asia today. There is nothing that begins to compare with it in courage and importance."

Mark Palmer, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Freedom House, former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary

Falun Gong: Demonized in China, Downplayed in America

by Danny Schechter

“Inscrutable” is one of those words that often insinuates itself into Western media coverage of China. Sometimes it seems especially pejorative, even racist, when reporters resort to vague references to cultural factors or Asiatic proclivities to explain puzzling developments.

Yet some stories are objectively challenging to decipher—and only a media that is up to the task can possibly do them justice. China, and in particular Washington’s relationship with Beijing, was frequently in the news in 1999. Acres of print were lavished on unproven red menace-type spy scandals, exaggerated threats of war over Taiwan, and the battles involving Beijing’s on-again off-again on-again entry into the World Trade Organization.

More significant than them all was China’s ongoing crackdown on a spiritual practice virtually unknown in the West, Falun Dafa or Falun Gong. The world media missed and frequently misinterpreted this ongoing development. It was distorted and downplayed in mainstream and progressive media alike. When it was covered, it was often covered with a sense of incomprehension. “Has it come to this?” asked the *New York Times* front page on November 4, 1999, “that the Chinese Communist Party is terrified of retirees who follow a spiritual master in Queens?”

Yes, it has come to “this”: “This” being a story involving as many as 100 million people with deep roots in the traditions and contradictions of the People’s Republic of China. It pits one of the most powerful and most repressive regimes on Earth against a nonviolent anti-materialist spiritual practice drawing on Buddhist and Taoist traditions. While Falun Gong is Gandhian in its nonviolent approach, the government has committed pervasive human rights abuses including killings, jailings, torture, and massive book burnings to suppress it.

Inside China, since July 20, 1999, news about Falun Gong has been censored, twisted, and massaged to rein-

force a political decision to ban and “smash” what President Jiang Zemin had proclaimed his country’s number one domestic enemy. The Chinese called Falun Gong a “cult,” accused it of killing people, disrupting social order, and menacing the state. They issued banning orders, rounded up practitioners, and sentenced individuals they labeled leaders to longer prison sentences than those earlier meted out to pro-democracy activists.

The Chinese leadership launched a media war, deploying its state-owned newspapers, radio, and TV stations as if they were instruments in an official orchestra. National newscasts were lengthened by a half-hour to disseminate daily

diatribes on the issue. Dramatic “investigative exposes,” using hidden cameras and informants, were plastered all over prime-time TV to convince the public that Falun Gong was a serious threat to China and its people. In all of these accounts, Falun Gong’s point of view was left out. The views of its supporters, defenders, and practitioners were, quite simply, missing from these government-sponsored accounts.

Balance and fairness, never prized in Chinese state-controlled journalism, was conspicuous in this case by a total absence. That was not surprising, given the role that media pays in China as an appendage of, and cheerleader for, Communist Party policy.

Western media, on the other hand, claims to be free of all restraints, unencumbered by censors or govern-

ment oversight. And, yet, on this issue, China’s controlled media and the West’s ostensibly “free” media dealt with this story in not dissimilar ways. When China’s propaganda turned into a steady drum beat of denigration, with Falun Gong’s founder Li Hongzhi dubbed a “sorcerer,” much of the Western media echoed the refrain. In wire stories and press reports, when the story was covered at all, negative terminology was prominent. The group was branded a “sect,” “a mishmash.” Both mainstream and alternative media were

“The Chinese leadership launched a media war, deploying its state-owned newspapers, radio, and TV stations as if they were instruments in an official orchestra. National newscasts were lengthened by a half-hour to disseminate daily diatribes...”

culpable. In the words of one amused writer for *In These Times*, Falun Gong were a “handful of religious oddballs.”

Getting a grip on what’s happening in China has never been on one of Western media’s strong points. Developments there have often been reduced to a single, simplistic news frame. As James Mann of the *Los Angeles Times* reflected in *Media Studies Journal*, “In the 1950s the ‘frame’ was of China as little blue ants or automatons. In the 1970’s, the frame was of the virtuous (entertaining, cute) Chinese displaying their timeless qualities even under Communism. In the 1980s, the frame was that of China ‘going capitalist.’ And for most of the 1990s, the frame was of a ‘repressive China.’”

Mann’s injunction to journalists best captures the challenge of covering the recent rise of Falun Gong. “Above all,” he concludes, “American media coverage of China needs to challenge existing assumptions and be ready for the unexpected.”

Falun Gong is the unexpected—and most journalists missed its emergence and rapid spread. The press today always appears more interested in what’s happening in the higher reaches of politics than what may be stirring in the parks. Its eye is on the suites, rarely the streets. It looks up at leaders, not down to people at eye level. For seven years, as this spiritual practice

was mushrooming in popularity, it was barely acknowledged in the media or reported on outside of China.

The Falun Gong story does challenge many assumptions. Many of us first heard about it because of an event on April 22, 1999. Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, a new force dramatically burst on the world scene. Ten to fifteen thousand Falun Gong practitioners quietly surrounded Zhongnanhai, the government leadership compound in the heart of Beijing. They lined the streets, sometimes eight deep, quietly, and without placards. They shouted no slogans, just stood there, or sat there—for 12 hours—with great dignity but little expressiveness. Some meditated. Others read books.

When asked, they explained that they were there to file an appeal with the government against what they considered a slanderous attack on Falun Gong published in a state-sponsored magazine in Tianjin, a nearby city. They explained that some of their fellow practitioners, who had challenged the article had been jailed and beaten by local police. When the complaints to the headquarters of the magazine went unheeded, they decided to take their case to the central government. They insisted that as Chinese citizens they had a right to appeal to their own government.

They came, seemingly out of nowhere and vanished quickly after some of their number met with government officials and presented them with a letter seeking official

recognition and legal protection of their rights to free speech and assembly.

The international media was perplexed: Who were they? Where did they come from? What was this about? It was covered internationally only because it happened in the center of the capital. At first, it was pictured as a political protest perhaps because most journalists there were not really familiar with Falun Gong. *Time* magazine, like most of the foreign press, put it in a predictable anti-regime context:

“The silent sit-in was by far the boldest protest in Beijing since the butchering of the pro-democracy movement almost exactly a decade ago “

There had been similar Falun Gong vigils earlier in other provincial cities (the government later cited over 300 “sieges”), but most went uncovered because they occurred outside of media view. This one raised eyebrows, and then the hackles of the Chinese authorities. The international press virtually assured a negative government reaction when they played it as a political challenge to the system.

Later, veteran China watcher John Gittings would rationalize China’s crackdown in the *Guardian* suggesting that the protest was so large that it was a provocation that the government had to take seriously.

Falun Gong activists told me that they didn’t understand why the media kept stressing the size of the protest. “We could have mobilized millions if we wanted to. That wasn’t the point.” In fact, China only singled out Falun Gong because, by that time, its less visible roots had sunk much deeper, across China and even in the Chinese Communist party, and state military and intelligence agencies. The figure that kept being bandied about was 100 million practitioners. Compare that to the Chinese Communist Party, which claims 56 million members.

The English journalist Gittings also put the development in a context one rarely found explained in the American press: “The Falun Gong reflects a grassroots mood in China of greater assertiveness: interest groups, whether they be peasants complaining of corruption or laid-off workers seeking benefits they’ve been denied, are more prepared to protest. As Chinese society becomes more differentiated and more vocal, this is a growing trend with which the Communist Party has to come to terms.”

Falun Gong’s “coming out party” in Beijing was mostly a one-day story. There was little follow-up or background offered. Falun Gong’s founder, Li Hongzhi, a one time granary clerk and soldier, was then living in New York. He had moved first to Houston and then New York after China banned one of his books in 1996. He insists that he only

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spent two years personally teaching in China, and the movement's spread was not the result of an underground conspiratorial apparatus, as claimed by China, but through word of mouth. When I interviewed him in July, he also stressed that contrary to many media accounts, his movement was not political and not against the government. "We are not against the government now nor will we be in the future," he said matter of factly. "Other people may treat us badly but we do not treat others badly, nor do we treat people as enemies." He told me he wanted to dialogue with the government, not overthrow it.

When the crackdown thrust Falun Gong back into the news, a few outlets interviewed Li but his inability to speak English made him an undesirable media guest. 60 Minutes looked into and then dropped the story partly for this reason. "Mike Wallace was calling me every day from his vacation home on Martha's Vineyard," recalled Gail Rachlin, an American practitioner of Falun Gong who became a volunteer publicist because of her background in professional PR, "but then after we arranged a meeting, he never called back." I can understand why: it would be difficult for Mike Wallace to stage one of his showy confrontational interviews with someone he had to talk to through an interpreter. That always slows things down and makes it hard to spring surprise questions. Dan Rather was another prominent CBS journalist who lobbied for the story but then didn't do it.

"What the Chinese government has taken on is a very vicious campaign-and so unnecessary," said Rachlin early on. "But the American media is playing the story their way."

CNN did take the story seriously, covering the crackdown, but often with what appeared to be Chinese TV-supplied footage. "In Beijing, Saturday, the government crackdown continued on members of the now-outlawed Falun Gong meditation group banned on Thursday after several days of silent protest," said one report. "The police have also detained Falun Gong leaders and members." They did show practitioners in detention in stadiums, but of course could not cover subsequent torture sessions that invariably occur out of public view.

ABC's Nightline offered a half-hour report, probably the longest single program about Falun Gong on American TV. Spokesperson Erping Zhang was invited on the show along with a Chinese official who refused to be interviewed in the same segment. Koppel seemed peeved that Li Hongzhi, then in hiding after rumors circulated that hit men were on the way from China to track him down, was not available.

Zhang thought he would get a chance to appeal for help for those detained in China, but host [Ted] Koppel aggressively went after him on other issues. He focused on whether or not Zhang would go to the hospital if he was sick, obviously seeking to discredit the movement or unmask him as a fanatic. When Zhang tried to bring the conversation back around to the repression, Koppel told him curtly that he would decide what subjects could be discussed.

The Chinese official was treated far kinder, with Koppel pressing him to allow ABC News more access to the story. (As a Washington embassy official, he, of course, had nothing to do with media access in China.) The official seemed most upset with Falun Gong's alleged threat to social order.

"They have mobilized so-called demonstrations throughout the country in all 30 cities. They are interrupting traffic, blocking traffic, and social order," he steamed.

At other outlets, producers and editors had little appreciation of the story's context of the content or Li's teachings. He was perceived as a weirdo and Falun Gong a fringe group of fanatics akin to the Moonies. Falun Gong had a video news release produced, which was satellited to all U.S. news programs. Only a very few carried any footage or interviews from it. There was far more coverage in Canada and abroad than in the United States, even though the U.S. is China's largest trade partner-or put another way, perhaps because the U.S. is China's largest trade partner.

Under-covered major stories like these point to key structural and ideological problems in the American

media itself. Most international coverage for U.S. news organizations-what there is of it-relies on correspondents based overseas. They are presumed to have the best access and background even though, in this case, most were uninformed about Falun Gong and limited in covering the story. (Most practitioners in China were terrified of talking with them.) U.S.-based journalists are rarely assigned to cover or seek out background or comments for China-based stories, and team coverage with both overseas and U.S. components is a rarity.

Also, Falun Gong was considered in most newsrooms falsely to be only a Chinese phenomenon. Many journalists did not notice-or chose not to notice-that the practice had actually become internationalized with groups now in 30 countries and 104 cities in 38 states in the United States. Despite its spread, practitioners outside of China somehow lacked "standing" with their local media, who wanted to hear only from practitioners in China or the wire services. Many media outlets wanted Li Hongzhi or no one, an indication

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of the celebrity orientation that drives most interviewers. They like personalities, not issues. Before long the story was driven by the wires with the British agency Reuters and the French Agence France-Presse (AFP) filing most of the stories, with the Associated Press far behind. American newspapers tend to lean more on AP than the others and so the story did not rate regular play.

Another factor: Journalism tends to operate as if politics is the driving force in the lives and interests of most people. Political leaders and their agendas dominate coverage. Spiritual and religious issues are treated marginally, when they are treated at all. Few media professionals have the sensibility or curiosity to explore people's beliefs and convictions. It is not usually considered newsworthy unless they are dramatic, strange, or perceived to fuel conflict. Moreover, in the case of critical coverage of China, there seems to be another and perhaps more significant factor: a decision by media executives in America to downplay human rights abuses there. While the American government is trying to get more access for our corporations to the lucrative China market, media corporations have interests of their own.

A few years ago, Rupert Murdoch dropped BBC from one of his satellites over China for that very reason. (He is now married to someone from Mainland China.) This year, on September 28, 1999, Sumner Redstone, who had just merged the giant Viacom corporation with CBS, was in Shanghai, China for a conference organized by a leading U.S. media outlet, Fortune magazine, and keynoted by President Jiang Zemin. He called for American press restraint in the coverage of China, to the delight of the Beijing government. The media, he said, should report the truth but avoid being "unnecessarily offensive" to foreign governments. "As they expand their global reach, media companies must be aware of the politics and attitudes of the governments where we operate.

"Journalistic integrity must prevail in the final analysis. But that doesn't mean that journalistic integrity should be exercised in a way that is unnecessarily offensive to the countries in which you operate," he said.

Remarks like this by leaders of the American media industry set the tone for news coverage. Redstone was predictably silent on human rights abuses in China. Earlier, human rights advocates, including the Tiananmen Square veterans who publish Human Rights in China, had urged the business leaders at the Fortune conference to speak out on the issue.

Falun Gong's practitioners were then in detention, but

their plight was not discussed or reported upon at this media-organized event. Ironically, the Chinese then censored a Time magazine special on China. As one news report explained, "The edition, whose masthead was emblazoned with the headline 'China's Amazing Half-Century,' fell foul of Chinese censors by including articles written by exiled dissidents Wei Jingsheng and Wang Dan, and Tibet's Dalai Lama."

Falun Gong grew out of Chinese qigong practices with a history stretching back thousands of years. It has a context and a framework that requires background research that is usually not allowed by deadline-driven, headline-oriented, dumbed-down ("let's keep it simple") news operations.

Qigong is a traditional Chinese exercise system with a variety of practices that seek to tap internal energy forces, or our qi (or chi). Many practitioners turn to it for their physical well being as well as moral elevation. Li Hongzhi's contribution within the qigong world was to reconnect the physical exercises with their historic spiritual base.

Falun Gong draws on qigong but also brings in its own philosophy and characteristics based on both Buddhist and Taoist thought. Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, incorporates some Buddhist principles like the Law Wheel and the yin-yang of Taoism, while retaining its own distinctive system of

thought—neither strictly Buddhist or Taoist. Falun Gong promotes physical and mental balance, bringing together mind, spirit, and reality to achieve a closer harmony with nature and the universe. It concerns itself with what the practitioners say is the law of the universe, moral values, and cultivation principles they call the "Fa."

Li says he modified the original practice to make it more accessible to the public at large. That's why there seems to be two names. Falun Dafa stands for the "Great Way of the Law Wheel," while Falun Gong means "Qigong of the Law Wheel." It is a distinction with a difference in China because of qigong's popularity. In essence, it is a "rebranding" calculated to give the practice a broader appeal.

To the casual eye, this exercise system may look like tai chi or some martial art featuring distinctive slow-motion exercises. Yet Falun Gong aspires to a deeper approach to human development, seeking to guide people to a higher understanding of spiritual values and moral consciousness. They call it a "cultivation practice." As one practitioner explained to me, "As a form of self-cultivation, Falun Gong is intended to help an individual develop or cultivate his/her mind-body-spirit principles. As a person's practice deepens, they gradually learn to take more lightly the desires and ambi-

"President Jiang Zemin... called for American press restraint in the coverage of China... The media... should report the truth but avoid being 'unnecessarily offensive' to foreign governments. 'As they expand their global reach, media companies must be aware of the politics and attitudes of the governments where we operate.' "

tions that ordinarily rule human life.”

Falun Gong stresses that it is not a religion, a cult, or a sect. There is no organization to join. There are no priests, temples, or churches. There are no rituals or worship services. Practitioners insist no one is making money off of it, and most of all, that it is not “political.” “We are not interested in politics,” insists 27-year-old Feng Keran, “We do not have political intentions. We are also not against the government. We just try to live for ourselves, cultivate our hearts. Try to be good people.” While they have not been “political,” the Chinese government is in effect politicizing them through its continuing assaults.

Falun Gong’s insistence that it is not a political organization may be understandable given China’s overheated political environment and the reaction that set in after the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Orville Schell blames the Party for encouraging people to abandon politics by its emphasis on getting rich and becoming self-centered. Falun Gong’s anti-political stance represents a rejection of both political correctness from above and the spread of materialism below.

In addition, as people began living longer in China, the country’s health care system was proving inadequate. Older people in particular searched out alternative health care regimes. They flocked to traditional Chinese qigong practices when they began to become popular again, after the reform era started in 1979. (In the 1950s, many Communist leaders practiced qigong.)

Many of these retired people soon discovered Falun Gong’s special appeal, in large part because the teachings were free or at a lower cost than competing qigong practices.

Former New York Times Beijing bureau staffer, W. Huang, offers his mother’s case as an example. She turned to Falun Gong because she was both physically sick, and sick at heart about what was happening to China. “Society is deteriorating,” she told her son, “-rampant corruption within the Communist Party, rising crime rates, drug abuse among young people. People don’t have any goal except to earn money.”

Remarkably, her practice of Falun Gong led to what her son calls a “miraculous recovery.” “As more and more people like my mother become disillusioned, they search for something to fill the ideological and spiritual void,” he wrote in the Christian Science Monitor. “Falun Gong meets the spiritual needs of ordinary Chinese because it has familiar Buddhist and Taoist roots.” Many in Falun Gong also embrace the original spirit of Communism that once was, but no longer is, promoted by the Party. Their key principles are “truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance.”

“High profile writers and publishers did not even condemn the widespread burning of millions of Falun Gong books in China... Falun Gong remains isolated and alone in large part because of the poor job the media has done in explaining who they are and what China is doing to them.”

Falun Gong’s moral appeal and anti-materialist orientation-as something pure and anchored in traditional values-is also reflected itself in an almost Puritan attitude toward money. China says Li Hongzhi is getting rich off of Falun Gong and are busy “investigating” the sale of books and videos. Li says, “I make a comfortable living off my books.” He certainly has received royalties from his writing, but so do most authors. American practitioners like Noah Parker deny that greed is a factor. “If anyone tries to make money or personal gain from the practice, that’s an incorrect approach. You’re not a practitioner. You’re not doing Falun Gong if that’s your attitude toward it. It’s not a money thing at all.”

Falun Gong had many media obstacles to overcome in the West. It was foreign. Its first language was not English. It was complicated and, perhaps more important, it was amorphous and unstructured-without the full-time big-time PR operation that most journalists rely on for handouts and statements.

Li Hongzhi, while charismatic to his followers, was not comfortable as a media celebrity. Most of his propaganda was oriented toward spreading Falun Gong, not promoting himself or an organization. Falun Gong’s New York-based press office had a lot of heart but few resources, perhaps because their members were more focused on their internal growth than their external operation.

Falun Gong may have been newsworthy but it was not news-oriented.

Gail Rachlin’s media “operation” was based in her West Side apartment. It was run with two computers, a fax machine, and a cell phone. It was hardly a match for the Chinese State. And yet the Internet and e-mail enabled it to get reporters to cover the story even if it wasn’t always played prominently.

Specifically, Rachlin was able to encourage the use of less pejorative and more neutral language in coverage. In one instance, the early edition of the Sunday New York Times made a front-page reference to Falun Gong as a cult. A timely phone call explanation to an attentive editor led to the phrase being changed to “spiritual practice” for the late edition. It took months, but Falun Gong’s persistence in lobbying the press and the U.S. government resulted in more coverage and statements by President Clinton and many members of Congress. The U.N. was less outspoken but “appeals” by Falun Gong supporters to Secretary General Kofi Annan did get into the press even if he seemed to think they were aimed at him rather than China’s policy. Nonetheless, overall, there was shameful silence from opinion leaders and even human rights groups on the issue for

months.

High profile writers and publishers did not even condemn the widespread burning of millions of Falun Gong books in China. While other movements criticizing China like the Tibetans have inspired active solidarity movements, Falun Gong remains isolated and alone in large part because of the poor job the media has done in explaining who they are and what China is doing to them.

When the Western media covered the story, the frame was primarily one of repression, not resistance. Few news organizations followed it with any regularity. Reporting was spotty. Most of the alternative media seemed uninterested, too. The United Nations Correspondents Association did invite Falun Gong supporters to present their views, over the objection of Chinese diplomats. The New York Times sent a photographer and a correspondent to the event, but nothing appeared in the paper.

By late October 1999, this began to change when Falun Gong practitioners in China, reacting to an imminent decision by the Chinese Parliament to officially brand Falun Gong a cult, took a more aggressive course of action. They mounted daily protests in Tiananmen Square, and even dramatically called a secret press conference, a daring move in China. The story broke onto the front page of the New York Times, which reported, “A far wider and more profound confrontation appears to be building between clearly unnerved authorities and an uncrushed movement that with astonishing speed drew in millions of ordinary, seemingly nonpolitical Chinese, creating an unexpected challenge to Communist authority.”

In response to the press conference, the police mounted a massive manhunt, tracked down the location and ultimately arrested some of the principals. They didn't stop there. Five western reporters who covered the unprecedented October 28th event had their press accreditation cards seized and were warned against covering illegal events. None were ejected but the intimidating message was sent to their news organizations. No major media outlets want to be barred

from China.

Falun Gong practitioners have shown the world they may be peaceful but they are not passive. In many ways their campaign is comparable to Gandhi's civil disobedience movement in India and the nonviolent civil rights activism of Martin Luther King, Jr., in the American South. Falun Gong may represent as many as 100 million people, but apparently for many Western governments and much of the media, they are the wrong people. You don't have to believe what they believe to support their right to believe it. This story will not go away. In mid-January 2000, after criticisms of

U.S.-China policy started appearing in the Washington Post and on NBC's Meet the Press, the White House announced that it would push for a U.N. resolution critical of China's deteriorating human rights record. After seven months, the Falun Gong issue had moved from the margins to the mainstream and even occasionally from the back of the book to the front page. Credit must be given to some reporters like the Washington Post's John Pomfret and vigilant Chinese journalists in Beijing who stayed with the story, refusing to be intimidated. The rest of the media has yet to catch up. Falun Gong practitioners have continued to press for more and fairer coverage, patiently reaching out week after week to educate a media that sometimes seems allergic to being

“Falun Gong practitioners have shown the world they may be peaceful but they are not passive. In many ways their campaign is comparable to Gandhi's civil disobedience movement in India and the nonviolent civil rights activism of Martin Luther King, Jr., in the American South.”

educated, and won't even take the trouble to visit their Web site.

Look closely at the media coverage of Falun Gong and you realize that the American media and the Chinese media are not as different as they think or perhaps as they should be. All too often the world of news and the world of newsmakers are far apart.

Danny Schechter, author of The More You Watch, The Less You Know, is the executive editor of Globalvision's media channel (www.mediachannel.org) and the forthcoming report and reader Falun Gong's Challenge to China (Akashic Books), 2000.

Congressional Human Rights Caucus Briefing

The People's Republic of China:
Religious Freedom in the Larger Human Rights Context
April 6, 2000; Washington D.C.

Congressman Tom Lantos:

On behalf of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus I want to welcome the four of you. You could not be more cordially received by this Caucus. We have admired your work, we respect you, and we stand shoulder to shoulder. It has a nightmarish quality to read the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in China. Not long ago, most Americans, certainly most members of Congress knew nothing about Falun Gong.

And as we have come to know the work of Falun Gong, our respect has grown, and we find this brutal and ruthless and bloody suppression of Falun Gong practitioners in China appalling, unacceptable, reprehensible, and we will want to do everything in our power to provide the maximum amount of information to the American people concerning the work you do and preposterous treatment you are subjected to in China.

The other Sunday my wife and I walked down on the Mall and met by accident, by happenstance, with a group of practitioners, and we had the great pleasure of exchanging views with them. So let me say this is not the first time that a group experiences persecution, discrimination, imprisonment, but I want you and all Falun Gong practitioners in the United States, across the globe, but particularly in China to feel that they are not alone. And that the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, over 200 members of Congress stand with you and are fully determined to protect your right to practice your faith in any way you choose.

Erping Zhang:

Honorable Congressman Lantos... Honorable Congressman Porter... distinguished caucus members and guests: Thank you for inviting me here to testify today. My name is Erping Zhang and I am a Falun Gong practitioner. We come before you to describe the unfortunate events in China that have thrust our peaceful practice onto the world stage, and to ask your help in resolving the tragic crackdown that has led to the unjust suffering and persecution of millions, and the deaths in custody of at least 11 innocent people. Rooted in ancient Chinese culture, Falun Gong is a peaceful, spiritual discipline that helps people improve health and spiritual enlightenment. It is apolitical and does not oppose any



government. As a large number of independent individuals who share common values and beliefs, we follow the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Forbearance in all our conduct as we strive to be better citizens and improve our bodies, minds, and hearts.

The government of China, perhaps made uneasy by the tens of millions of citizens practicing Falun Gong, made it illegal in July 1999, and commenced a vigorous and

sweeping campaign of official suppression, the scope of which has not been seen since the violent purges of the Cultural Revolution some 30 years ago. Prior to the crackdown, the Chinese government, although atheist, publicly touted Falun Gong's great health benefits and moral contributions to society, and encouraged people to practice it. Particularly in light of the Chinese government's subsequent persecution of other practices with significant popular participation, such as Christian groups and various qigong practices, one can reasonably infer that the true cause for the banning of Falun Gong was its numerical popularity, and not the specific beliefs or behavior of practitioners.

In this campaign against Falun Gong, the government has inflicted on practitioners countless inhumane acts, ranging from job and housing loss, to physical torture, disappearances, and death. Now, on a daily basis, they flagrantly violate several provisions of both the Chinese Constitution and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Arrests in the middle of the night began this campaign. We cannot know the precise totals of all those arrested, but some idea of the scope involved can be gained from the announcement of Chinese Vice Premier Li Lanqing that, from July to October 1999, more than 35,000 practitioners were detained in Beijing alone. Citizens of several other nations, including Americans, have been detained. They serve as eyewitnesses to the conditions, and have experienced torture themselves before being released.

While being arrested, practitioners never offer any resistance, yet are often beaten, kicked, punched, or dragged by the hair, regardless of age, gender, or physical condition. The physical abuse once inside detention facilities only intensifies. Battering; rape; force-feeding with high-density salt water; denial of food, sleep, and toilet use; exposure to ex-

treme hot or cold weather; burning with cigarettes and heated metal; shocks with electric batons - these are just some of the recorded means of torture employed. One woman was pressured to have an abortion in order to prolong her captors' ability to detain her. Several have been subjected to a device known as "Di-lao," translated as "prison in hell," which immobilizes a prisoner in excruciating positions.

More than 100 have been sent to psychiatric hospitals, where they are administered electric shocks and various anti-psychotic and sedative drugs. Drug rehabilitation centers also dispense psychological torture in this campaign of persecution.

The legal system in China has been contorted in order to lock away practitioners. A vaguely worded, hastily passed law was applied retroactively in charging prisoners with crimes, yet lack of evidence even under this new law forced numerous cases of virtual kangaroo-court "show trials," resulting in sentences of up to 18 years. In February, Reuters reported that 5,000 practitioners have been sent to labor camps without trial, and another 300 were sentenced to jail since September.

Beating with blunt instruments, gas poisoning, and breathing failure caused by force-feeding are among the reasons given for the 11 deaths known to have occurred in custody. Thousands of detained practitioners are as yet unaccounted for. Some may have met fates similar to these 11.

The suppression campaign includes other less brutal, but more pervasive violations of human rights. Millions of Falun Gong books and other materials have been confiscated and burned or shredded in public spectacles. Homes of practitioners have been ransacked and valuable property seized, without either due compensation or legal process. Practitioners have been under surveillance and harassment by local authorities; they have lost jobs, pensions, and housing if they would not sign papers renouncing Falun Gong and their practice. One media source estimated that 10,000 university students would be expelled if they do not stop practicing.

The government has extended the campaign into every nook and cranny of Chinese society, and even beyond the borders of China. Family members of practitioners, even those who do not themselves practice Falun Gong, have been subject to coercive threats and economic punishment if their relatives would not stop practicing. Foreign journalists reporting on the campaign have been harassed, and Chinese government officials abroad have pressured other nation's governments and universities, attempting to persuade them to ban Falun Gong activities outside China. The targets for such pressure included, to name just two, local government officials in Columbia, Missouri and administrators at the California Institute of Technology.

Chinese officials in the U.S. have distributed strident anti-Falun Gong books and materials, filled with misinformation, at public appearances, and placed them in university libraries.

The reach of the government's campaign has extended

to the Internet, as a US News and World Report story outlines in its March 13 issue. A US Department of Transportation Web server, which at first appeared to be under attack from volunteer-run Falun Gong Web sites, turned out to actually be the victim of attacks that originated with the Chinese XinAn Information Service - a branch of the Ministry of Public Security, China's secret police...all this, in reaction to citizens exercising their constitutional rights, and in reaction to the peaceful practice of beliefs based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Forbearance.

We highly commend Congressman Lantos, Congressman Porter, and other members of this Congress for championing the just cause of human rights and holding this important briefing on China. Among those voices publicly calling for an end to the Chinese Government's senseless persecution of Falun Gong practitioners are international human rights advocates, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the World Organization Against Torture; the European Parliament, the U.S. government, and many other countries. The text of House Resolution 218 passed last November states it most clearly: "... the brutal crackdown by the Chinese government on Falun Gong is in direct violation of the fundamental human rights to freedom of personal belief and practice, expression, and assembly."

We invite you to read the special report, compiled by volunteers, A Report On Extensive And Severe Human Rights Violations in The Suppression Of Falun Gong in The People's Republic Of China. We also extend a standing and open invitation to all to come and visit our exercise practice sessions so that you can examine Falun Gong firsthand. Whether here in the Washington area, or in your home districts, you will be warmly welcomed by local practitioners.

As a nation founded with the idea of protecting human rights, the United States has worked over the course of its history to extend and speak up for human rights for people worldwide. When America speaks, the world listens.

We practitioners request that you, the members of Congress, act as a catalyst in this acute situation in China, where the human rights of millions are trampled on every day. After all, the matter of human rights is a moral issue. We request that you use all means at your disposal to bring about a peaceful dialogue between the Chinese government and Falun Gong practitioners. We ask not for retribution of any kind against the instigators of the suppression campaign - that they must live with the weight of their actions on their own consciences will be punishment enough for those responsible. We ask only to be able to speak face-to-face with Chinese officials, to sit down and talk as reasonable human beings and explore our common goals and needs. We also wish to, with the help of this Caucus, have an opportunity to brief our President in person on the current crackdown on Falun Gong. We are willing to work out arrangements whereby practitioners can resume quietly practicing, becoming better people as they practice Truthfulness, Compassion, and Forbearance every day in China.

Other Voices

Governmental and Human Rights Organizations Speak Out For Falun Dafa

Statement by T. Kumar, Asia-Pacific Advocacy Director, Amnesty International

“As an international human rights organization... [we are] concerned about the massive crackdown against the members of the Falun Gong. Tens and thousands of Falun Gong members were arrested by the Chinese purely because they were practicing their own belief. These are the people who are ordinary citizens of China. They never harmed anyone... they are not criminals. But [the] Chinese government arrested them and imprisoned them for long [jail] terms, [for] long years after unfair trials. We have documented closed door trials where no one knew what happened during



the trials, and no one knew what happened afterwards. When members were arrested, they usually got tortured and we have reports that at least 19 people were killed during torture during the last eight months or so. That's a high figure compared to other countries. Our concern also goes to the extent of the way people have been tortured. Torture is common in China. But when it come[s] to Falun Gong's practitioners, it has been intensified after the arrest. Because of all these reasons, as a human rights organization [we are concerned] about the continuing crackdown of members of the Falun Gong.

China have called Falun Gong with different names. And it is being interpreted in the Western media as a cult. But to our knowledge, the word that the Chinese use can be interpreted in different ways. One could be interpreted as cult, so to speak. Our main concern is what criteria [the] Chinese government is using to identify a group, a non-violent group, as a cult. From our point of view, China is going after Falun Gong members for political reasons. This is a political crackdown that's taking place. Not [a] criminal crackdown. Not a single member of Falun Gong [was] arrested for criminal offence. Or violent offences, so to speak. They were arrested because they were practicing their own beliefs in a very non-violent, peaceful way.

Amnesty International urges [the] international community to pay attention to what's happening in China to members of Falun Gong. Given the reality that the House has

voted to give Permanent Normal Trade Relationship with China, China is going to get away with numerous abuses against their own citizens. When the international community [has] any relationship with [the] Chinese government, human right[s] should be central to it. One example is the crackdown of Falun Gong. If their own people could be arrested, tortured, and some killed in custody because of their peaceful practice of their beliefs, then [the] international community should voice concerns and demand immediate and unconditional release of tens of thousands of people who have been arrested because... they practice Falun Gong practices.

We also have reports that people have been sentenced to forced labor camps under a special system by which Falun Gong members have been sentenced to three years of forced labor camps. We are also concerned that several members of Falun Gong have been sent to psychiatric hospitals. It's shocking to see that China can get away with this for the past one year... arresting, imprisoning, torturing and harassing even the people who speak out against these crackdowns. That's why [the] international community and human rights organizations should pay special attention to the plight of members of Falun Gong in China.”

Statement by Rabbi David Saperstein, Chair U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

“For the U.S. Commission on International Freedom, charged by the U.S. government to monitor U.S. policy affecting religious freedom, religious freedom is indivisible. If it is not provided for all, it will never work for any. Religious freedom...in United States throughout history, is a foundational right. Our Bill of Rights... our first amendment begins with a commitment to religious freedom. Without that, and freedom of conscience, you cannot have ultimately, all the other freedoms that we cherish under international human rights schema. So we're deeply committed to that. And when we see groups like Falun Gong attacked for what they believe and practicing what they believe, that requires democratic countries to speak out. We're particularly concerned in China, because China in this past year, in the year 1999 and 2000, has significantly, worsened the condition of religious freedom, across the board. For Muslim leaders, for Tibetan Buddhists, for the underground Protestant and

Catholic churches and for groups like Falun Gong. In that sense Falun Gong has almost become the symbol for the struggle for religious freedom more broadly. And when thousands and thousands of people have been arrested, people have been imprisoned for long periods of time, the leadership, when others have been tortured and abused in prison, when people have died in prison, it's impossible for countries to say they are deeply committed to human rights and remain silent. And that's why we have urged the United States government to speak out, why so many religious groups and human rights group in the United States have spoken out in their own right.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other treaties to which China is a signatory, [states] that protecting, human rights on an international level does not distinguish between different types of religious groups. It protects freedom



of belief, freedom of conscience, freedom of religious expression. Under all of those, Falun Gong, however it formally describes itself, and however the Chinese government wants to define it as a cult or a sect, is protected to the same religious freedom other groups are. When countries don't like the religious practices or are frightened by the religious practices of particular religious groups, they tend to call it names, to try and discredit it through the act of attributing a name to it, like a cult. But almost every religion probably at some starting point in its history was regarded as a cult or a sect by...the powers that be here, and those who are frightened by it. If it meets the criteria of a belief system that people organize their spiritual life through, here it is entitled to protection under international human rights and what China calls it is of no particular significance under international law. And therefore it is deserving of full protection of international human rights law.

China right now is at a crossroads. If every time citizens find ways to organize their personal identity through groups in which there are common beliefs that are different than those propagated by the government, we will see the expanding, robust, expression of religious life and spiritual life in China, that we're witnessing in our country, as we are across the world... collide with increasingly repressive and oppressive steps by the Chinese government to prevent people from manifesting the freedom to which they are entitled. That's a no win proposition for China. Or for countries like China. It will result in growing frustration and anger from the grassroots of their own citizenry. It will result in continuing and growing isolation from the court of world opinion amongst those nations that are committed to human rights. On the other hand, if China is willing to take the same steps of, embracing

change, that it's willing to do economically (or appears willing to do economically) in terms of empowering its citizens to play out their spiritual lives and religious lives as their conscience tells them to do, that will be a step widely welcomed and embraced by the world community, and one in the long run that will be good for China and good for the people of China. It would be a tragedy if they took the [other] path at this time. Not just for the Falun Gong and for people of religious belief in China, but for the world community."

Statement by Mark Palmer, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Freedom House, former U.S. Ambassador in Hungary

"Freedom House is concerned about Falun Gong because it's a very important part of a larger picture, and that's what's happening in China. China is clearly going through a revolution, finally joining the modern world. And we feel that this is a time for the whole of the democratic world, which now fortunately includes a lot of Asia, for the whole of the democratic world to join with the democrats in China, including with Falun Gong, and to complete this revolution. To bring prosperity and freedom and spiritual equality to the people of China.

We think that to call the Falun Gong a cult is absolutely ridiculous. This is a movement which is deeply rooted in Chinese tradition, which expresses the best values of China, which is a physical movement, a movement for good health, a good spirit. To



call this a cult is to really engage in just name calling. It's not a serious thing to try to dismiss a movement that involves tens of millions of Chinese, educated Chinese, the best of the people of China. And increasingly, many people in other countries, including here in the United States. People are sophisticated and educated who want to improve their health and spiritual values. You can't dismiss this, any more than you can dismiss Christianity or Buddhism or Islam or any other great spiritual movement. This is in my judgement, the greatest single spiritual movement in Asia today. There is nothing that begins to compare with it in courage and importance. So Freedom House feels very strongly that Falun Gong deserves the world's support...I feel very strongly that this is a special moment for China now. A time to get rid of the backwardness, the dictatorship, the oppression, and to join the modern world."

A Personal View of China's Crackdown on Falun Gong

By Lili Feng, assistant professor at The Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla.
Published in San Diego Union-Tribune, March 10, 2000

Charged, arrested and jailed for “disruption of social orders” by chatting with friends in a private home? This may require a stretch of imagination for Americans to comprehend, but it happened to me: I was jailed in Shenzhen, China, for 13 days, slept on a cement floor and was forced to assemble hair brushes for export to the United States, all because I am a Falun Gong practitioner.

On December 10, 1999, I went to Hong Kong to attend an Experience Sharing Conference of Falun Gong Practice and to visit my parents in Jiangxi Province afterwards. It would be my first trip back to my hometown in 11 years since I came to the United States.

It is only natural for people with similar interests to get together, so some local Falun Gong practitioners whom Chan has known came to visit us on December 14. We talked about the benefits and experiences of our Falun Gong practices, and some also asked me questions about applying for graduate study programs in the United States.

All this happened at Chan's home before 11 p.m. At around 1 a.m. on Dec. 15, we were awakened by local policemen, who came in the house without any warrant, and were taken in for interrogation. Two other practitioners from Northern California, Chen Zhao and Yun Huang, and a Hong Kong practitioner, Ren, were also rounded up at about the same time. We were released at dawn, but were arrested again in the afternoon when we came back for our travel documents and handed a 15-day “administrative detention” for “disruption of social orders.”

The second arrest was apparently more serious than the first one. I was suspected of “conspiracy of external and internal forces against the government” and questioned for contacts and plots. Apparently, my articles and poems on Falun Gong, which were confiscated by the police during our first arrest, made them feel that I could be a dangerous person.

At this point, I realized that my local friends could be endangered, so I claimed that I was the one responsible for calling local people to meet with me. Meanwhile, I insisted that I was not even trying to make a public statement and asked how could I disrupt social order at a private home.

A jail in China is nothing that an American can imagine. The moment you are arrested, you lose every right, and practically disappear from the world. I was not allowed to contact anyone, by phone or by mail. My husband, after being informed of the news by my

friend Chan, called from San Diego to find out which detention center I was in. He was promptly told that criminals couldn't receive phone calls; when he explained that he was trying to locate his wife, he was told to come in person.

During the next few days, he contacted the American Consulate in Guangzhou, his friends in Shenzhen and local Falun Gong practitioners to ask for help to locate me. No one was

able to find out, and all were given the run-around by the police. At one point, he was even told that I was released to the American Embassy. It was not until a reporter from The San Diego Union-Tribune, Angela Lau, persevered in the run-around with the Shenzhen police that my location was determined.

Being cut off from the world was only a small part of the hardship. Since I was not at all prepared to be arrested again, I did not take any extra clothes with me. Two days after my arrest, Shenzhen was hit by the coldest weather in this century. I slept on the cement floor, and I could hear the cold wind howling through the prison wall.

Worse yet, we were not allowed to wear shoes. As a result, my feet became badly chapped, and I still have a deep sore on one foot which is not yet healed. We were also forced to labor from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, making headbrushes or shoes for export to the United States.

After I returned to the United States, some people



asked me what if someone refused to work. Refuse? I witnessed a girl being beaten for being slow in assembling brushes. One inmate recalled that some inmates were beaten badly and stuck with needles in their private parts (so they cannot show the marks to others).

Fortunately, I was able to study and improve the assembly process and prevent more inmates from being beaten up for slow work. For all my forced labor there, I had to pay my own per diem — total of 130 Chinese yuan for my 13 days of detention.

It is in this inhumane environment that I witnessed the amazing power of Falun Gong in the salvation of people's minds and bodies. Of the 38 inmates in the cell I was in, most were prostitutes, drug addicts or both. Some of them were forced into prostitution by their husbands or families.

It is when you are in China that you realize the much-talked-about economic prosperity is being enjoyed by a minority of privileged at the expense of a large group of disadvantaged. Life has been so harsh for many Chinese that they had an absolute negative view about life. However, somehow they know Falun Gong practitioners are good people.

The first night when my fellow practitioner Zhao and I walked in the cells, they jumped in excitement — “Hey, Falun Gong!” — and stayed up all night listening to our stories of practicing Falun Gong. I was given the name “Falun Gong 21” because I was the twenty-second (there was a “Falun Gong 0”) to have been detained in that cell. (You can imagine how many Falun Gong practitioners have been detained in thousands of jails in China.)

During the next 13 days, most, if not all, of our inmates became Falun Gong practitioners. Fighting, beating and abuses were dramatically reduced, and by the time we were released, the three most powerful and vicious inmates, announced that they were going to adopt Falun Gong's principle of “Truth-Benevolence-Forbearance” to run the cell.

A 19-year-old girl promised to me: “Professor, I will never sell my body once I get out. The next time I am in jail, it will be for Falun Gong.” Her statement silenced the whole cell and moved me to tears. Another prostitute who became a Falun Gong practitioner told me that she would go to Beijing after she is released to tell the government that Falun Gong saved her.

There was an inmate who had a three-day overlap with me in the cell. At the time of her release, she begged the police: “Can I stay for a few more days? I want to learn more about Falun Gong.” When we first met, she was talking about revenge against her neighbors using sulfuric acid, but told me that she would never do a bad thing after learning Falun Gong.

All the drug addicts together with me not only did not feel any craving for drugs any more, they did not even have the usual symptoms associated with drug withdrawal. Falun Gong may not be the only solution for these social and mental problems, but it is certainly the most powerful one that I have ever known.

I was released on the 13th day of my detention. The police refused to give me a reason for my arrest, but they hinted at the reason for my early release.

I was told that there were dozens of phone calls every day from different news media around the world. After I arrived in Hong Kong, I learned that my husband, my fellow practitioners, friends, colleagues, The Scripps Research Institute, world news media, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the State Department and many San Diegans that I do not know worked tirelessly for my rescue. It is the love, attention, support and pressure from these people that have won my safe return.

My experience in China is by no means unusual. In fact, compared with others, I was treated well. Falun Gong is simply a popular movement of mental and physical cultivation. The



spiritual practice and study we do is no different from the Bible studies and church-goings of millions of ordinary Americans, and the meditation exercise we do is no more vigorous than jogging, aerobics or other physical exercises millions of ordinary Americans do.

Yet in China, millions of Falun Gong practitioners are stripped of their rights to a peaceful mind and a healthy body, tens of thousands of them are being jailed for their faith, some are forced to divorce, some sexually are abused, and some are tortured to death. What is happening in China is beyond the violation of human rights, it is a violation against the most basic human existence.

The crackdown on Falun Gong by the Chinese government is not different than its 50-years of ongoing suppression and destruction of human nature — the crackdown on Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, Catholics loyal to the pope, the crackdown on democracy movement, these are all of the same — seekers of totalitarian evil power against seekers of individual freedom.

Regaining my own freedom makes me realize how precious and basic it is to any human life; 1.3 billion people is a lot of people, and 50 years is a long, long time.

Here, I would like to ask you to give the same love, attention and support that you have given me to the innocent Falun Gong practitioners in China. I appeal to the U.S. government and to the United Nations: We can no longer afford to side-step the issue of human rights in China.

If we sit idle and allow a nation to kill off its best and most peace-loving citizens, the world will become a dangerous place for us all. Injustice somewhere is injustice everywhere. Indifference today perils the world tomorrow.

In the News

Excerpts from Media Reports Over the Past Year

Practicing Falun Gong was a Right, Ms. Chen Said, Up To Her Last Day

Excerpt from The Wall Street Journal, (April 20, 2000)
By Ian Johnson (Staff Reporter)

WEIFANG, China — The day before Chen Zixiu died, her captors again demanded that she renounce her faith in Falun Dafa. Barely conscious after repeated jolts from a cattle prod, the 58-year-old stubbornly shook her head.

Enraged, the local officials ordered Ms. Chen to run barefoot in the snow. Two days of torture had left her legs bruised and her short black hair matted with pus and blood, said cellmates and other prisoners who witnessed the incident. She crawled outside, vomited and collapsed. She never regained consciousness, and died on Feb. 21.



Pyrrhic Victory?

Ms. Chen's tale is one of extremes. On one end is the Communist Party, which is so determined to break Falun Gong that it has resorted to public-security measures on a scale not seen since 1989, when an antigovernment movement led by students was crushed in Tiananmen Square. The government's victory in this fight, should it come, may well be Pyrrhic; its heavy-handed approach has disillusioned millions of ordinary people, such as Ms. Chen's daughter, who were apolitical until last year's events. It has also damaged China's international standing just as it needs foreign help on an array of pressing economic issues.

On the other end are people such as Ms. Chen, who in their simple, and perhaps naive, way are at the forefront of a slow trend to demand the freedoms guaranteed by China's laws and constitution.

While many Falun Gong practitioners have compromised - by practicing secretly at home, for example - thousands have insisted openly on their right to freedom of belief and assembly. "We're good people," Ms. Chen's friends recall her telling officials from the Weifang city government who interrogated her in her barren concrete cell two days before she died. "Why shouldn't we practice what we want?"

Although barely literate and never before interested in politics, Ms. Chen resisted the ban. She joined thousands of fellow practitioners by traveling to Beijing. Since the ban in July, many had gone to Tiananmen Square and sat

cross-legged with their arms stretched in an arc over their heads - the classic starting pose for Falun Gong exercises.

Carte Blanche

... Ms. Chen was taken back into the room. After again refusing to give up Falun Gong, she was beaten and jolted with the stun stick, according to two prisoners who heard the incident and one who caught glimpses of it through a door. Her cellmates heard her curse the officials, saying the central government would punish them once they were exposed. But in an answer that Falun Gong adherents say they heard repeatedly in different parts of the country, the Weifang officials told Ms. Chen that they had been told by the central government that "no measures are too excessive" to wipe out Falun Gong. The beatings continued and would stop only when Ms. Chen changed her thinking, according to two prisoners who say they overheard the incident.

Asia Wall Street Journal (4/23/00) : Zhang Xueling was arrested by police last Monday. Ms. Zhang had recounted the details of her mother's death to The Wall Street Journal. She had explained how her mother, Chen Zixiu, was beaten by local officials, shocked with cattle prods and forced to run barefoot through the snow after she refused to renounce Falun Dafa. Ms. Chen died in custody on Feb. 21.

Before being detained, Ms. Zhang said that she was aware of the risks of talking to a foreign reporter, but that she wanted to tell her mother's story. "I don't know what else to do," she said.

Chinese Secret Agent Pose as Falun Gong Practitioners, Employ Split Tactics

HONG KONG Jul 5, 2000 — (BBC Monitoring) Secret agents from the mainland's shadowy State Security Ministry (SSM) are infiltrating Falun Gong organizations in Hong Kong and overseas in an attempt to split them, says Hong Kong Association of Falun Dafa convenor Kan Hung-cheung... "Some of the SSM agents infiltrating overseas Falun Gong organizations have been identified," Mr. Kan said. "There have been two to three in Hong Kong, four in Japan and three in the United States." "But in China, the figures are unknown." He said the agents would join the organizations as ordinary practitioners and then spread rumours that defamed the movement's US-based master, Li Hongzhi, or tell practitioners he should not be trusted. "Sometimes, the agents would distribute fake scriptural articles to confuse the practitioners," Mr. Kan said. "In China, some agents use violence or encourage other practitioners to use violence to oppose the government, giving the authorities an excuse for suppression. "In one instance, someone used a large photograph of their master (Mr. Li) to cover

In the News

a picture of late chairman Mao Zedong. “On some occasions, spies have provoked the use of force by law-enforcement officers.” ...The infiltration technique is called implosion, which is widely used when the mainland government wants to bring down an organization that is proving difficult to suppress. Secret agents join the organization and create conflicts between its members through agitation, blowing the organization apart.

Mass Sweep Nets 1,200 Arrests as Protests Continue in China

HONG KONG (Agence France Press) - June 27, 2000 - Chinese police detained at least 1,200 members of the banned Falungong spiritual movement after a series of protests around the country last week, a rights group said Monday. The Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy also alleged that a Beijing University professor and Falungong member named Zhao Xin was left paralyzed after being tortured by police following her arrest. The Hong Kong-based rights group said the 1,200 were detained between June 18 and June 25 during protests and public demonstrations of Falungong in nine provinces. The statement said she was detained at Qinghe detention center in the Chinese capital where she suffered serious injuries to her cervical vertebra during torture, which left her paralyzed.

Listen Up: World Falun Gong Radio Goes on the Air and the Net July 1, 2000

Practitioners to Counter China's Ongoing Defamation, One-sided Propaganda Blitz

Falun Gong will take to the shortwave radio band daily for the launch of World Falun Dafa Radio. The hour long broadcasts begin July 1, 10:00-11:00PM (Beijing Time) broadcasting to China in Chinese, on Short Wave 9.915MHz. The program will also be available online at falundafaradio.org. According to a Falun Dafa press release: “The goal of World Falun Dafa Radio is to inform the public in China of the true extent and nature of the persecution, to break the information blockage intentionally set by the Chinese authorities, and to help practitioners in China whose basic freedoms have been taken away and whose lives are in danger.” The radio is operated by Falun Dafa practitioner volunteers. “Falun Dafa World Radio is a response to pervasive censorship of information”, says the statement. “To justify their brutal crackdown, the Chinese government launched an intensive defamation campaign against Falun Gong. It fabricated horror stories and distorted facts to cover the truth. These lies

flooded the nation's media and were also distributed internationally. All communications with the outside world were blocked. Pro-Falun Gong web sites were sealed. Telephones were tapped. E-mail was monitored, and foreign reporters were threatened or detained for contacting Falun Gong practitioners.”

Chinese Army Officer Sent to Mental Hospital for Spiritual Beliefs

BEIJING (AP) - June 28, 2000 - A Chinese army officer has been committed to a psychiatric hospital for refusing to renounce his belief in Falun Gong, a rights group said Wednesday. Lt. Col. Zhao Xinli was sent last month to an army psychiatric hospital in Beijing where at least five other Falun Gong adherents from the military are being held, the Hong Kong-based Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy said. The group said Zhao took part in a New Year's protest by Falun Gong followers on Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

#22: Another Falun Gong Practitioner Killed in China

Su Gang Tortured in Mental Hospital; Human Rights Group, Family Outraged

BEIJING (AP) — A follower of the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement died after his release from detention in a psychiatric hospital, where he was injected with nerve-destroying drugs, a human rights group said Sunday. Su Gang, a 32-year-old computer engineer, was in fine health before he was sent to the hospital on May 23 but was weak, slow, stiff-limbed and unable to eat when he was released eight days later, the Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy said, quoting Su's father, Su De'an. Su died of heart failure on June 10, less than two weeks after his release, the Hong Kong-based Information Center said. While detained in the hospital, Su was forcibly given daily injections of nerve-damaging medicines, it said. The Information Center said at least 22 Falun Gong practitioners have died of mistreatment and other reasons since the Chinese government banned the group last July as a threat to public well being and to the authority of the ruling Communist Party.

Beyond the News

Stories from Inside China That Went Unreported

March 2, 2000

Victim: Lu Yunzhen (female 31 yrs)

Location: Fengcheng City, Jiangxi Province

Lu Yunzhen was a 31-year-old pregnant women. In January of 2000, Lu went to the Appealing Bureau in Beijing to tell the truth about Falun Dafa. She was detained and sent back to Fengcheng police station. In order to detain her for a longer time, the police forced her to have an abortion.

September 20, 1999

Victim: 16 yr old girl

Location: Yaojia Detention Center, Nanguanling, Dalian City, Liaoning Province

A 16 year old student of a business/accounting school in Dalian City who lived in Pu Lan Dian. She was arrested when she was doing Falun Gong exercises outdoors. She was forced to endure the same torture and punishment that had been applied to the adult practitioners in prison. After she was released she was expelled from school.

January 8, 2000

Victim: Cheng Fengrong (female 42)

Location: Nihe Detention Center, Shunyi County, Beijing

Cheng Fengrong, a 42 yr old woman was arrested by Shunyi Police department. She was handcuffed to a tree and slapped. Later she was brutally beaten with a broom by the policeman. She was hit so hard the broom broke into two pieces. Then she was forced to stand barefoot in the snow and squat down while still handcuffed to the tree. She was punched and kicked when she could no longer stand up. The police poured two basins of cold water down the back of her neck and the water froze in a pool at her feet.

January 8, 2000

Victims: 6 arrested Falun Gong practitioners

Location: Guangrao County, Shandong province

Six Falun Gong members were forced to parade in the town of Guangrao, in Shandong province, with large paper hats and signs that read "diabolic cult." This type of public ridicule tactic is a revival of the methods used in the Cultural Revolution.

July 2, 2000

Location: Kunlun Town, Zichuan District, Zibo Oil

Several practitioners from Linzi, Zhangdian and Zichuan were sent to the psychiatric hospital because of refusing to give up Falun Gong or their appealing effort. Among them, Mr. Gang Su was persecuted to death, some became handicapped from the persecution. Recently, the Mental Illness Section of Kunlun Hospital in the Zibo Mineral Department accepted over twenty more practitioners and injected them with over-dosages of psychiatric drugs along with other methods of persecution.

The telephone number of the director of the Hospital, Cui Xiankun, 011-86-533-5861701; The number of the director of the Mental Illness Section, Dai Mingsheng, 011-86-533-5861725; The address of the hospital is: Kunlun Town, Zichuan District, Zibo Oil.

May 26, 2000

Location: Beijing

The death of 44-year-old Mei Yulan at a Beijing hospital was confirmed by police and hospital staff who admitted she had died after a hunger strike, but declined to elaborate on the exact circumstances of her death. Mei was arrested on May 13th and began a hunger strike the next day, and that when police tried to force-feed her on May 17th, 2000, the feeding tube was wrongly inserted causing serious injuries. The source said Mei immediately lapsed into a coma and was taken on May 18th, to Minghang hospital where she never regained consciousness and died on Tuesday, May 23rd.

April, 2000

Location: Beijing

Victim: Zhang Shuying (female 35)

Zhang Shuying, a practitioner from Beijing, was detained in the Dongcheng District Detention Center for unfurling a Falun Dafa banner on Tiananmen Square on April 13. She was sentenced to one year of forced labor. As soon as she entered the detention center, she started to abstain from food and water. Seven days later, she was tortured with electrical needles and all those being held in the detention center

Beyond the News

could hear her anguished screams. She lost consciousness from the torture. She was sent back to her cell after she regained consciousness. However, during the night, Ms. Zhang Shuying lost consciousness again and was sent to the hospital for emergency treatment. When she was sent back to the detention center from the hospital, she was paralyzed.

March, 2000

Location: Huai-an City

Victim: Mr. Zhang

According to Mrs. Zhang, her husband was “murdered by the Chinese police.” “My husband,” she reports, “was a former contact person of the Falun Gong Assistance Center in Huai-an. He was detained in the Detention Center of Huai-an City from March 2nd to March 25th of 2000. Police tortured him brutally on March 25th and he was later sent to the First Hospital of Huai-an City for emergency treatment. After his surgery, he was receiving oxygen therapy and infusion. Suddenly, about 40 to 50 police officers came into the hospital and closed off the ward and the hallway.” According to Mrs. Zhang, several police officers then forced the doctor to cut off her husband’s oxygen supply and intravenous feed, and injected him with an unknown substance. They then seized her husband’s body and took it to the city crematorium. According to the Hong Kong-based Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy, Mr. Zhang may still have been alive when he was cremated.

Location: Beijing

A Chinese military instructor who belonged to Falun Gong has been sent to a mental hospital and force-fed psychiatric drugs, a human rights group said Wednesday. Li Qun is one of five members held at the Nanjing Psychiatric Hospital in the eastern city of Nanjing. Li was given drugs that left her “slowwitted and seriously injured her brain,” the Information Center said. It said a nurse at the hospital reported that she was unable to receive telephone calls or visits from relatives. In another incident, a woman who complained about these abuses in mental hospitals was herself committed to one... Ms. Li Qun, a young teacher in the Institute of Communication Engineering was thrown into the Nanjing Men-

tal Hospital because she had written an appeal letter to the government denouncing the practice of detaining practitioners in mental hospitals illegally and the use of inhumane treatments.

March, 2000

Location: Wuhan City, Hubei Province

Victim: Ms. Tian Shasha (female 26)

The police department of Wuhan created a unique torture device to persecute detained Falun Dafa practitioners. They fixed the practitioners to a board in the form of a crucifix after stripping their clothes off and made their bottoms face a hole on the board for excretion.

Practitioner Ms. Tian Shasha, 26 years old, was detained last November for going to Beijing to report the truth of Falun Gong to the central government. She was transferred to Hankou Police Station after 15 days of administrative detention. Last December, she was found still practicing Falun Gong in the Police Station and was thus sent to the City Women Detention Center directly without any legal procedure except for the verbal commands from the Municipal Committee and the Committee of Politics and Law. She was then tortured using the "crucifix" method for over 30 days. At that time, it was the middle of the cold winter. She had only a thin comforter covering her privacy parts. Her family members were prohibited to visit her during that period. When she had her menstruation, the guard used only cold water to clean her. Because of uncleanness, it started to smell in a few days. The smell became stronger and stronger as time went by. The guards then became frightened and requested the director of the police station to stop torturing her.

This March, Ms. Tian Shasha was transferred to the Hewan Labor Camp of Wuhan City and continued to suffer more inhumane tortures such as being put into confinement, being burnt while being hung up, etc. She has been monitored by 4 criminals 24 hours a day up to now. According to the news sources, over 30 practitioners are being detained in the Hewan Labor Camp.

Recent Events

Chicago Conference Demonstrates Falun Dafa's Growing Popularity Among Americans

Chicago, June 17, 2000: Approximately 600 practitioners gathered at the Congress Plaza Hotel for the third Chicago Falun Dafa Experience Sharing Conference. The event began and ended with a well-attended group practice sessions near the hotel on South Michigan Avenue in the bustling Loop of Chicago (see photo). Practitioners traveled from the Midwestern US, Canada, Sweden, and elsewhere. The group then gathered in the hotel banquet hall to share their experiences in Falun Dafa. About 20 practitioners told their personal stories on how Falun Dafa has enriched their lives. Of those speakers, more than half were Westerners. The following day, about 75 English-speaking practitioners from at least four continents (Asia, Europe, North & South America) gathered in a Chinese restaurant. In lively groups at each table, they discussed how to bridge the gap between Chinese and Western cultures, an issue that emerges when sharing a practice that originated in China but is taking root and flourishing all over.



Over 1,000 Practitioners Meet in the Big Apple Despite Opposition from the Chinese Consulate

New York City, April 22, 2000: People from all over North America gathered in Manhattan's New York Sheraton Hotel — the same hall that Mr. Li Hongzhi gave a public lecture last year. Although members of the Chinese consulate tried to persuade hotel personnel to stop the conference, over 1,000 eagerly listened to the courageous and heart-warming stories of approximately 20 Falun Dafa practitioners. The speakers ranged from a 12 year-old girl who said that Falun Dafa has helped her learn how to share with her school-mates, to several women who told their story of being tortured in China.



Ironically, the Sheraton's staff required that the hall be set with round banquet tables, because of President Clinton's visit the following day.



During the lunch break, over 900 practitioners gathered at Lincoln Center for a group practice. Because of the large number of participants two different practice sessions were held.

The following day, practitioners split up and held small exercise demonstrations in 18 different locations around New York City. After lunch, several discussion sessions convened back at the Sheraton. One group of about 200 people attended a 'scientific verification of Falun Dafa', where two scientists discussed research findings that validate Falun Dafa's profound health benefits. Another discussion session focused on the topic of bridging the 'cultural barrier' for Americans who are interested in becoming practitioners of Falun Dafa.

Recent Events

Falun Dafa Conference in Geneva Focuses on UN Human Rights Resolution

Geneva, March 20th, 2000: Over 1,000 Falun Dafa practitioners from around the world joined in front of the United Nations in Geneva to show their support for a peaceful resolution of the human rights situation in China. Under pressure from the Chinese government, Swiss officials hesitated to approve the practitioners' application for group practice in front of the UN main entrance, even though three previous applications had been approved. The solemn and compassionate scene of 'silent protest' attracted bystanders and several reporters.



Meanwhile, in the Journalists' club of the UN, practitioners conducted a press release on the human rights situation in China. Four U.S. practitioners,



who personally experienced serious human rights violations while in China, called for the goodwill of all people worldwide to extend their support. The meeting quickly turned into a fiasco of events after journalists from the Chinese State media began a non-stop barrage of interruptions, making it impossible to conduct normal interviews. Surprised at the poor manners of the Chinese officials, reporters shook their heads with a sigh and were forced to schedule personal interviews with the practitioners.

Practitioners took the day off from protesting at the UN to attend an experience-sharing conference held in Geneva. The atmosphere was inspiring and refreshing, as 25 people told how the ancient Chinese practice had greatly improved their lives.

A Presentation of Falun Gong at Harvard University

Cambridge, April 27, 2000: Harvard University's Divinity School invited four Falun Gong practitioners to present the truth of Falun Gong and its persecution in China.

The presentation was arranged by distinguished Professor David Little of the Harvard Divinity School. Professor Little began by reciting parts of the "Annual Human Rights Report of US State Department", which describes the crackdown on Falun Gong by the Chinese government. Then, Feng Yuan, a Harvard alumnus and Falun Gong practitioner, lectured on the historical and cultural background of Falun Gong.



Next, three practitioners shared their views and experiences with Falun Dafa .

An American from Rochester, New York talked about his experiences with Falun Gong as a scholar of western religion. Another practitioner, a physician of both the western and Chinese medicine for many years, explained the evident curative effects of Falun Gong on illnesses and its overall positive impact on physical fitness. The third practitioner presented the documented facts of the extent of the persecution against Falun Gong in China.

The audience was then shown a documentary video which was followed by a question and answer session. The presentation was concluded with a demonstration of the Falun Gong exercises.

Frequently Asked Questions About Falun Dafa

Q: What is Falun Gong or Falun Dafa?

A: Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is an ancient practice for mind and body that originated in China. The practice involves some slow, gentle movements and a meditation. It is easy to learn, enjoyable to practice, and free of charge. A central component of Falun Gong practice is studying the higher principles of *truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance*.

Q: Who practices Falun Gong, and how do they find it beneficial?

A: Falun Gong is practiced by people of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds, in over 40 countries worldwide. Almost everyone who practices reports significantly improved health, reduced stress, and increased levels of energy.

Q: Who is Mr. Li Hongzhi?

A: Mr. Li Hongzhi introduced the practice of Falun Gong to the general public in China in 1992. He then taught the practice publicly for two years in China, after which the practice continued to grow primarily by word-of-mouth. In keeping with Chinese tradition, Mr. Li is sometimes respectfully referred to as “Master” or “Teacher.” He is not accorded special treatment, nor does he accept money or donations from students of Falun Gong. He has ensured that the practice be available to all people, and without any terms or conditions. Mr. Li has given occasional public lectures over the past few years in various countries, including Australia, Switzerland, Canada, and the USA.

Q: Is Falun Gong a religion or a sect? Is it a cult?

A: There has been some confusion about how to categorize Falun Gong, but this is easy to clarify. Falun Gong is neither a religion nor sect – it has no temples, no rituals, no clergy or priests, and no ranks. It never collects money or accepts donations, and there is no initiation or membership. Neither is Falun Gong a cult, of course. Practitioners lead normal lives and participate actively in their communities. The practice is an individual choice and is centered on the improvement of one’s self. There are no obligations, and everyone is free to come and go as they choose.

Q: Why has the Chinese government persecuted Falun Gong practitioners?

A: Falun Gong has no political agenda or affiliation. The Chinese government has perceived Falun Gong as a threat, just as it has other groups that are popular or that involve principles not directly related to their Communist ideology. Starting in July, 1999, the Chinese government banned the practice of Falun Gong and started persecuting its estimated 70 million practitioners inside China. Since then tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been detained, and many of them have been beaten, forced from their jobs, homes, schools, and sent to labor camps without trial. In the past year at least 22 practitioners have died while in police custody.

Q: How are Falun Gong practitioners responding to the Chinese government’s crackdown?

A: Falun Gong members have appealed to the Chinese government via the proper legal channels, but without response. Thousands continue to be arrested in China simply for asking to be allowed to practice in peace. Not a single practitioner has struck back or physically retaliated against police despite enduring beatings and torture. This kind of conduct, in the face of such torment and injustice and exhibited on such a large scale, has spoken volumes to the world about the fundamentally peaceful and compassionate nature of Falun Gong. The international community and practitioners from all around the world have been calling for an open dialogue between Falun Gong and the Chinese government. Falun Gong has received support from many international organizations, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and groups within the United Nations.

How Can You Help?

To raise awareness in your community about the truth of Falun Dafa:

1. At your invitation, local Falun Dafa contact persons can create an event tailored to your time and interests. Host an event through your local...

- community organization
- school or university
- senior citizens' group
- workplace
- or any formal or informal group, even in your own home

We can speak on the current situation in China, provide information about the practice, and/or show the documentary videos (see below). Falun Dafa practitioners have made formal presentation at the following US universities, among others: Harvard, Stanford, Notre Dame, University of Minnesota.

2. Sponsor the showing of the documentary videotapes "*Falun Gong: The Real Story*" Parts 1 & 2. These were produced by a three-time Emmy-award winner. PBS affiliates and cable networks around the US have shown these video specials, and your local channels may welcome the chance to present them as public service programming.

We can create an event for you or obtain copies of the videos for you. US contact persons are listed below, or call 1-877-FALUN-99. Put us in touch, and we can make the arrangements - we welcome your calls!

Volunteer Falun Dafa Contacts Around the United States

St. City	Contact	Phone			
AL Birmingham	Xiaoxu Lin	(205) 422-4330	MN Plymouth	Mingwei Shu	(763) 550-0719
AR Fayetteville	Wade Yang	(501) 527-9980	MO Columbia	Cuirong Ren	(573)771-0054
AZ Tucson	Yan Liu	(520) 622-8103	MO St. Louis	Larry Liu	(314)781-2016
AZ Phoenix	Jie Meng	(480) 941-9564	NC Raleigh	Jeff Chen	(919) 846-5539
CA Los Angeles	Lisa Li	(310) 208-2064	NE Lincoln	Haiying Liu	(402) 438-8287
CA Pasadena	John Li	(626) 568-8889	NH Portsmouth	Dayong Li	(603) 422-8877
CA San Diego	Wenyi Wang	(858) 638-7269	NJ North Jersey	A. Adler	(201) 913-5123
CO Denver	Shaoway Xia	(303) 818-2908	NJ South Jersey	Gregory Xu	(908) 769-3927
CT Hartford	Ted Lin	(860) 652-8852	NV Las Vegas	Kaijin Liang	(702) 363-2680
CT New Haven	Tracy Zhu	(203) 624-5292	NY Brooklyn	Nadine Leichter	(718) 832-5295
CT Orange	Zhenyu Sun	(203) 795-9683	NY Buffalo	Yong Yin	(716) 636-0073
DC Washington	Shantao Lai	(202) 255-3587	NY New York City	Levi Browde	(212) 737-1391
DE Newark	Xiaoyan Qi	(302) 234-1541	NY Westcheste	Kevin Wu	(201) 934-6906
FL Miami	Ping Zhang	(305) 284-2325-x6	OH Columbus	Junshui Ma	(614) 688-9619
FL Orlando	Elly Xu	(407) 673-1255	OH Cincinnati	Sunny Lu	(513) 759-6218
GA Atlanta	Yuan Li	(678) 462-2800	OH Cleveland	Liming Wang	(440) 349-6826
HI Honolulu	Sam Cui	(808) 528-4542	OR Portland	Hongyu Zhao	(503) 228-1690
IA Ames	Julia Jiang	(515) 292-5716	PA Philadelphia	Shiyu Zhou	(215) 790-1278
IL Chicago	Sen Yang	(847) 839-9463	PA Pittsburgh	Weihua Li	(724) 327-6390
IN Bloomington	Beixin Ni	(812) 857-0331	TN Nashville	Joe Zhang	(615) 479-5150
KS Kansas City	Jiyun Kuang	(913) 962-6382	TX Dallas	Xuehai Li	(972) 727-0957
KY Louisville	Xiuming Jia	(502) 638-1022	TX Houston	Jina Wei	(713)842-2814
MA Boston	Yufeng Liang	(978) 538-9930	UT Salt Lake City	Sheng Mei	(801)-450-0044
MD Baltimore	Changhe Shang	(410) 377-3561	VA Arlington	Mindy Ge	(703) 685-2564
MD Gaithersburg	Pei Wang	(301) 610-5334	VA Richmond	Juan Li	(804) 673-1389
ME Portland	June or Bill Kirk	(207) 797-5153	WA Pullman	Zhiqiang Xia	(509) 334-1431
MI Ann Arbor	Weibiao Wu	(734)764-2388	WA Seattle	Kim Eng	(425) 643-3659
MI Detroit	Tim Sun	(248) 626-1394	WI Madison	Ye Zhao	(608)238-9417

Statement by Ken Roth, Director of Human Rights Watch

“We are deeply concerned about the fate of the Falun Gong members. It’s clear that some of them are facing quite severe abuse. There have been unconfirmed reports of torture, possibly even deaths in custody. Clearly a significant number of them there are at least being thrown in prison often without trial. They’re being put through the so called reeducation through labor process, in which the government can simply administratively detain somebody for up to three years without even giving them a criminal trial. It’s clear that all the tools, all the weapons in the government’s arsenal are being deployed to try to stop this seemingly innocuous popular collection of ordinary people who simply want to do their own thing, who don’t...have an area of their life that the government doesn’t control.

I think it’s clear that the Falun Gong is not a classic political opposition organization. And that may even make it more scary from the government’s perspective. The government has shown itself able to deal quite ruthlessly with the classic dissident, look at what they did in Tiananmen Square. But this is something different, this is a group of people who say we want our personal space. We want an area where we can group together with others, who we choose, and do what we want to do. To practice...Falun Gong. And it’s that autonomy that the government wants to deny the Chinese people. It’s willing, increasingly, to allow them the personal autonomy to choose individually how they’ll work, how they’ll educate their children, where they’ll travel, where they’ll live. But it’s not willing to give them the autonomy to band together with others. Because it sees that as a fundamental challenge that ultimately, indeed probably does endanger the Chinese government, this particular regime. Even though it in no sense has political aspirations.

Certainly the more the Chinese government pursues

these ordinary people, who had no political aspiration other than to lead their own lives and band together with other people who shared their interests, the more it’s gonna push them to become an opposition movement. Because at first they were simply defending their right to do what they wanted to do in their own autonomous realm. But increasingly if they feel that’s impossible to do that with this government in place, they may will be pushed to the logical next step, which is to say we have to change this government. We can’t tolerate this degree of intrusion in our personal autonomy. So it may well become the government’s worst nightmare, simply by virtue of the government’s strategy in dealing with it.

The Chinese government has been determined to use the term cult. To classify Falun Gong along with the worst organizations you can imagine. But the classification doesn’t really work. Because if you look at what Falun Gong is, it’s just ordinary people. This is not a cult...These are people who want to go out and exercise as a group...This is not the kind of cult that legitimately is repressed. This is really not a cult at all, it’s a group of ordinary people that deserves to be able to band together as they’ve chosen to do - but that in and of itself is so threatening to the Chinese government that it resorts to this name calling.

I think part of the problem is that the American press doesn’t know quite what to call Falun Gong. It’s not a religion. It’s not really just an exercise group. It...doesn’t fit into an easy label. And so perhaps out of laziness, many Western journalists have simply started using the Chinese government’s terminology. Which is that of cult. It’s another example - if you repeat a lie often enough, it’s taken as the truth. And that’s something that’s happening.”

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