

Latest Developments of Persecution in China

Anti-Falun Gong campaign continues under new Party leadership

In July 1999, then-Communist Party head Jiang Zemin made the fateful decision to wipe out Falun Gong, at the time practiced by over 100 million Chinese. Fifteen years and two leadership rotations later, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) continues to dedicate significant resources towards this aim.

Over the past several years, officials responsible for instigating the detention, torture,

and death of Falun Gong practitioners—including Zhou Yongkang, Bo Xilai, Wang Lijun, Li Dongsheng—have faced investigation and/or imprisonment. Yet their punishment has been on charges of corruption rather than for the abuses committed against so many innocent Chinese, reinforcing the ongoing impunity for such crimes.

New three-year “transformation” campaign launched in 2013

In 2013, central CCP agencies launched a new, nationwide campaign to eliminate Falun Gong via the “transformation” (forced conversion, often violent) of known practitioners. In November 2013, the *Epoch Times* newspaper published a collection of 56 circulars from official agencies across China, revealing such an effort was underway. “Carrying out the ‘2013 to 2015 Final Battle on Education and Transformation’ is the scientific decision made by the Party Central based on the current struggle,” states one official website. “Convert all the unconverted Falun Gong adherents by the end of 2015 and continue the propaganda criticizing Falun Gong,” states another.

“In 2013, the party launched a new three-year initiative to coerce [Falun Gong] adherents to renounce their beliefs. While some Falun Gong practitioners were released from detention as part of the closure of labor camps, authorities seized hundreds of others in home raids, sending them to extralegal detention centers for forced conversion or sentencing them to long prison terms.”

— *China, Freedom in the World 2014*,
Freedom House

Over 3,700 Falun Gong deaths recorded since 1999, Tens of Thousands More Feared Dead

According to sources inside China reporting to the Minghui website, as of June 2014, 3,769 Falun Gong practitioners were documented to have died since July 1999 as a result of the persecution, with the vast majority losing their lives due to abuse or torture while being held at prisons, labor camps, detention centers, and “brainwashing” facilities.

One recent case is that of Mr. Zhu Jinrui,

who died in custody on May 6, 2014 at Bei’an prison in Heilongjiang province. He was 45 years old.

Multiple independent investigators estimate that tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been killed so their vital organs could be extracted and sold for organ transplantation – a lucrative business in China.

Despite labor camp closures, practitioners sent to prisons, brainwashing centers

After years of international and domestic calls for the abolition of China's "re-education through labor" camp system, throughout 2013, official statements and human rights groups' reports pointed to the closure of many camps in China. However, abductions continue and a growing number of Falun Gong practitioners have been sentenced to long prison terms after sham trials or have been sent to extralegal detention facilities for forced conversion. Such venues are often

called "legal education centers" by officials and "brainwashing" centers by activists. According to Minghui.org, a US-based website with an extensive network of sources throughout China, the number of practitioners sentenced to brainwashing centers in the second half of 2013 was four times that of the number in the first half — precisely the time during which the doors of forced labor camps were being shuttered.

"Many of the policies and practices which resulted in individuals being punished for peacefully exercising their human rights by sending them to RTL have not fundamentally changed: quite the contrary. There is ample evidence that such policies and practices are continuing in full force. ... Falun Gong practitioners continue to be punished through criminal prosecution and being sent to "brainwashing centres" and other forms of arbitrary detention."

—"Changing the soup but not the medicine?' Abolishing re-education through labour in china", Amnesty International, December, 2013

"On a scale of worse to the worst, torture occurs far more frequently and cruelly in detention centers than in jails, and labor camps were still worse, but the so-called legal education centers are the worst of all. The number of innocent citizens tortured to death in these centers across China is in four figures."

—Teng Biao, prominent Chinese lawyer and scholar, April 2014

Latest Developments of Resistance and Support

Chinese citizens organize historic petitions to free Falun Gong neighbors, friends

Over the past three years, tens of thousands of Chinese citizens have signed collective petitions, often with their real names, urging local authorities to release a neighbor or friend imprisoned for practicing Falun Gong, or investigate a practitioner's death in custody. Many of the petitions cite the local practitioners' role as a respected and well-liked member of the community and condemn the CCP's policy of persecuting such good people.

Such an open and public display of protest against the regime was completely unheard of up until 2011. The historic significance of petitions is not lost on Communist Party leaders. In May 2012, reports surfaced that a petition for a Falun Gong practitioner with 300 signatures and thumb-prints had been circulated among top-level officials. The petition, one source revealed, had stirred fierce debate at the highest levels of the Party with some officials advocating a peaceful end to the Falun



A petition signed and thumb printed in red ink by 15,000 Chinese citizens calls for justice over the death in custody of a Falun Gong practitioner in Heilongjiang

Gong persecution campaign.

More recently, in January 2014, 4,984 people in Qinhuangdao of Hebei province had signed a petition urging the release of 16 local Falun Gong practitioners.

Falun Gong continues to grow in China; support even from police

Despite the Chinese authorities' ongoing efforts to stamp out Falun Gong, the practice continues to grow in China, with new people taking up the discipline in an effort to improve their physical and mental well-being. In May 2014, thousands of Falun Gong practitioners from across China and from a multitude of professions (including within the government and military) sent greetings to the Minghui website, wishing the practice's founder Li Hongzhi a happy birthday and expressing appreciation for the benefits that Falun Gong had brought

them.

In addition, 15 years of Falun Gong practitioners' grassroots efforts to counter the CCP's propaganda and explain their innocence to police and ordinary Chinese are yielding fruit. The Minghui website routinely features anecdotes from Falun Gong practitioners in China relaying how individuals within the security system had quietly sought to protect them, expressed sympathy for their plight, or refused to detain them despite orders from above.

More international actors urge end to forced organ removal

In 2012, the U.S. House of Representatives held a hearing about the force harvesting of organs from religious and political prisoners in China, including from tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners. This was soon followed by a joint letter from 106 Members of Congress to the U.S. State Department requesting that any information about transplant abuses in China—including any details obtained from former Chongqing police chief Wang Lijun—be made public.

Throughout 2013 and early 2014, such concerns were echoed internationally. In December 2013, the European Parliament passed a resolution demanding an immediate end to China's state-sanctioned organ harvesting from executed prisoners of conscience, including Falun Gong practitioners. In late 2013, the advocacy group Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting delivered a petition with 1.5 million signatures to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights urging an investigation of China's "slaughter of prisoners of conscience for organ procurement." At a



Witnesses addressed a congressional hearing about organ harvesting in China on Sept. 12. Tens of thousands of prisoners of conscience have had their organs taken from their bodies while still alive.

meeting of the Human Rights Council in March 2014, the Canadian government voiced its concern over the persecution of Falun Gong and the practice of harvesting organs from prisoners.

Amidst threat of imprisonment and torture, rights lawyers increasingly defend Falun Gong practitioners in court

For over a decade, a contingent of human rights lawyers have defied CCP threats and represented Falun Gong practitioners, arguing their innocence in court and affirming their right to religious freedom. They have used various non-violent tactics to expose abuses, investigate torture, and try to save practitioners' lives. Many of the lawyers have themselves been subject to disbarment, abduction, and torture. Nevertheless, the number of lawyers

taking up Falun Gong cases continues to grow. In March 2014, in an effort to rescue Falun Gong practitioners held at a "brainwashing" center in Heilongjiang province, four lawyers visited the facility and demanded the practitioners' release. The lawyers were themselves detained and severely beaten, prompting many of their colleagues to call for their release and protest their mistreatment.