

The Chinese Communist Party’s Transnational Repression Targeting Falun Gong

Written Statement for USCIRF Hearing: Transnational Repression of Freedom of Religion or Belief
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Chairman Nury Turkel, Vice Chair Abraham Cooper, and members of the commission, thank you for holding a hearing on such an important topic and for allowing me to submit this written testimony. In this document, I would like to draw your attention to the following dimensions of transnational repression related to freedom of belief and how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its proxies target believers of Falun Gong:

- The CCP and its proxies have been carrying out a campaign of transnational repression against Falun Gong for over two decades, expanding and refining the tactics, mechanisms, and apparatus that today target a far wider array of victim communities.
- CCP-backed individuals or misinformed Chinese nationals have physically assaulted Falun Gong practitioners in the United States and other countries who were trying to raise awareness about violations of freedom of belief in China; in several recent cases, the attackers have faced prosecution for their actions.
- Ethnic Chinese and non-ethnic Chinese Falun Gong practitioners on university campuses across the United States have reported incidents of surveillance, slander, and censorship by Chinese officials, CCP proxies, or other China-linked individuals.
- Dragon Springs, a campus in New York that houses the training facilities for Shen Yun Performing Arts, faces ongoing frivolous lawsuits and surveillance directed by the CCP.

1. A TWO-DECADE CAMPAIGN OF TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a spiritual practice in the Buddhist tradition that combines meditation and gentle exercises with a moral philosophy centered on the core tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance.¹ Descending from an ancient lineage and introduced publicly in China in 1992, Falun Gong is now practiced in more than 70 countries, although the largest contingent of believers—numbering in the tens of millions—remains in China.

Since July 1999, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has engaged in a systematic and illegal effort to eradicate Falun Gong, deploying arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings.² This policy remains one of the most widespread campaigns of persecution in China today.³ Since the inception of this campaign, the CCP’s attempts to intimidate, harass, and suppress Falun Gong practitioners have not remained within the borders of Mainland China. For over 20 years, Falun Gong practitioners outside China—be they Chinese nationals, members of the diaspora, or non-

¹ <https://faluninfo.net/what-is-falun-gong-falun-dafa/>

² <https://faluninfo.net/violent-suppression-of-100-million-people/>

³ <https://library.faluninfo.net/the-persecution-of-falun-gong-key-trends-from-2022-and-what-to-watch-for-ahead/>

Chinese believers—have been a primary target of transnational repression and other forms of harassment around the world.

In a 2021 report, Freedom House found that the Chinese regime “engages in the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive campaign of transnational repression in the world” and that among its targets are Falun Gong practitioners. This is just one example of the documentation of this long-term effort, with other evidence including first-hand accounts by victims, leaked CCP documents, congressional testimonies from defectors, and third-party investigations.

Since July 1999, Falun Gong practitioners outside China have faced break-ins, physical attacks in Chinatown, an assault on an anti-censorship technologist in his home in Atlanta, beatings by Chinese security agents accompanying officials visiting Latin America, and a shooting of Falun Gong activists in South Africa, among other incidents. As early as 2004, the US House of Representatives adopted H.Con.Res. 304, one of the first acts of Congress related to transnational repression that outlined various attacks on Falun Gong practitioners that had occurred in the United States and the intimidation of local US officials supporting their right to freedom of belief, while requesting measures to protect US residents who practice Falun Gong.⁴

These attacks have continued over the past 24 years. In a 2021 case study on transnational repression originating in China, Freedom House relayed its findings regarding cases of the CCP targeting Falun Gong since 2014.⁵

Practitioners of Falun Gong, a spiritual movement banned in China, also face regular reprisals from China and from Chinese agents. These include frequent harassment and occasional physical assaults by members of visiting Chinese delegations or pro-Beijing proxies at protests overseas, as in cases that have occurred since 2014 in the [United States](#), the [Czech Republic](#), [Taiwan](#), [Brazil](#), and [Argentina](#). Media and cultural initiatives associated with Falun Gong have [reported](#) suspicious break-ins targeting sensitive information, vehicle tampering, and pressure from Chinese authorities for local businesses to cut off advertising or other contractual obligations with them. Multiple Falun Gong practitioners in Thailand have also faced detention, including a Taiwanese man involved in uncensored [radio broadcasts](#) to China and several [cases](#) of Chinese refugees formally recognized as such by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In October 2017, a Falun Gong practitioner who had survived a Chinese labor camp and become a high-profile informant on CCP abuses—sneaking a letter into a Halloween decoration when detained and later filming a documentary with undercover footage—died of sudden kidney failure in Indonesia. Some colleagues consider his death [suspicious](#), but no autopsy was performed.

These incidents are not accidental. Behind them lies a deliberate policy, massive bureaucratic structures, and guidance from the highest levels of the CCP security apparatus. Two insiders who defected to Australia in 2005 offered a glimpse of this system. Hao Fengjun, a former officer in the extralegal 610 Office security agency in Tianjin, relayed: “Falun Gong practitioners all over the world are under CCP surveillance. I personally received intelligence information about Falun

⁴ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/108th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/304/text>

⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression/china>

Gong practitioners in Australia, the United States, and Canada.”⁶ Chen Yonglin, a former officer in the Chinese consulate in Sydney, testified before Congress:

In each Chinese mission overseas there must be at least one official in charge of Falun Gong affairs. The head and the deputy head of the mission will be responsible for the Falun Gong affairs. I am aware of there being more than 1,000 Chinese secret agents and informants residing in Australia, and they have partaken in efforts to persecute the Falun Gong. The number in the United States should be higher. The United Front uses the overseas Chinese diaspora, including students, businesspeople, media, and so-called Chinese community groups to influence, manipulate, and pressure foreign citizens, politicians, and business leaders to toe the Party line on Falun Gong.⁷

More recently, in a 2015 speech to party cadres from the 610 Office, Meng Jianzhu, then a member of the CCP Central Committee and head of the Political Legal Affairs Committee that oversees the security apparatus, called on those listening to “actively expand and deepen the overseas battlefield” against Falun Gong and other banned religious groups. In the speech, which was leaked and published online by the Europe-based Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Religious Freedom, Meng further explains:

The struggle against ‘Falun Gong’ and other xie jiao organizations is actually a serious political struggle. It is a political contest with the anti-China forces in the West. ... We must strengthen the top-level design, coordinate the domestic and foreign fronts, and treat the countries and regions with serious ‘Falun Gong’ activities such as the United States as the main battlefield... We must fully play our party’s political and institutional advantages, and coordinate and urge all relevant departments to do a good job on intelligence information, crackdown control, and education transformation.⁸

One point of information to note is that unlike other ethnic minority and exile groups targeted by the CCP, the Falun Gong community does not consist solely of members of the Chinese diaspora or those who have fled China. In addition to the many practitioners outside China who are of Chinese or Taiwanese descent, there are tens of thousands, if not more, people from a wide range of ethnicities who practice Falun Gong and have no connection to the country other than practicing this Chinese spiritual and meditation practice. Many do not speak Chinese and have never been to China. From Cape Town to Cannes, Bangladesh to Berlin, Tel Aviv to Tehran, Falun Gong is practiced in over 100 countries and its spiritual teachings have been translated into 50 languages.⁹ Earlier this year, a small community of Falun Gong practitioners in the African nation of Togo celebrated the 10th anniversary of Falun Gong’s introduction to the country.¹⁰ These and other believers are nationals of countries other than China and locally integrated into everyday society. Nevertheless, because of their faith and identity as Falun Gong practitioners, the CCP sees them as a threat and targets them as well. Non-ethnic Chinese adherents have been barred from parades,

⁶ <https://faluninfo.net/espionage/>

⁷ http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa22579.000/hfa22579_of.htm ; <https://faluninfo.net/confessions-of-a-chinese-consular-official/>

⁸ <https://www.adhrrf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/20160124.pdf>; https://faluninfo.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022_09_08_PRIV-Overseas-Influence-Operations-of-CCP.pdf

⁹ <https://faluninfo.net/falun-gong-around-the-world/>

¹⁰ <https://faluninfo.net/togo-africa-10th-anniversary-celebration-parade-of-falun-dafas-introduction-to-togo/>

been beaten by Chinese thugs in Latin America, or been detained and deported from European countries when trying to peacefully demonstrate against visiting Chinese leaders. In Russia, under CCP pressure, Falun Gong's spiritual text was banned, a situation which the European Court of Human Rights recently ruled a violation of the charter.¹¹

The Falun Dafa Information Center has been tracking these and other cases of transnational repression targeting Falun Gong, especially in the United States, although we are trying to expand our documentation efforts globally. Within the past three years, Falun Gong practitioners around the world have continued to experience the long arm of the CCP's persecution. This testimony highlights three key dimensions of this broader campaign.

2. PHYSICAL ASSAULTS AND PROSECUTORIAL ACTIONS

Facing fierce persecution in China alongside systematic censorship, one way in which Falun Gong practitioners around the world have tried to counter the negative effects of the CCP's persecution has been to set up information booths, especially in Chinatowns or at sites frequented by tourists from mainland China. Volunteers and recent refugees take turns manning the booths, distributing information debunking CCP false propaganda about Falun Gong, exposing rights violations in China, and urging individuals to reconsider their affiliation with the CCP.

These sites have emerged as a primary target for assault by individuals affiliated with CCP proxies or deceived by Chinese state-run propaganda that demonizes Falun Gong. The attacks tend to be more frequent in cities where a Chinese embassy or consulate is present.

Since 2008, volunteers at Falun Gong information booths in Chinatowns, including in New York and San Francisco, have faced such harassment, heckling, and physical attacks. In some cases, the attackers had clear links to the CCP and proxy entities like the China Anti-Cult Association (CACA) but in other cases, they may have been individuals who were simply incited by CCP propaganda.¹²

The most recent attack happened on February 16, 2023. Zhongping Qi physically assaulted Falun Gong practitioner David Fang unprovoked, injuring David's hand, neck, and chin. The attacker has a history of verbally abusing Falun Gong booth volunteers. He often cursed and made unprovoked slurs towards the volunteers at Falun Gong booths in Queens, New York. Later that week, police officers from New York's 109th Precinct arrested and charged Zhongping Qi with third degree assault.¹³

A similar incident happened in 2022. Then 32-year-old Zheng Buqiu began vandalizing a Falun Gong booth outside Queens Public Library where he tore down a poster before being stopped by volunteers. Every day for a week, Zheng destroyed booths across Flushing by punching and kicking display boards, knocking over tables with informational booklets, and breaking volunteers' portable speaker by stomping on it. The attacks continued at three different information booth

¹¹ <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-222771>

¹² <https://faluninfo.net/pro-communist-mob-changes-tactics-as-violence-against-falun-gong-persists-in-flushing/> ; <https://faluninfo.net/daily-news-falun-gong-supporters-in-flushing-say-theyre-targets/>

¹³ <https://faluninfo.net/suspect-in-new-york-charged-with-third-degree-assault-for-attacking-falun-gong-volunteers/>

locations until NYPD officers arrested Zheng on February 15, 2022. Police charged him with criminal mischief in the fourth degree and a hate crime. One volunteer at the booth said that Zheng had been seen with Li Huahong, the president of the CACA, an entity linked to the 610 Office, who has herself been arrested four times since 2008 by NYPD for vandalizing Falun Gong booths, indicating Zheng may not have been acting alone.¹⁴

In 2019, an individual believed to be affiliated with the Chinese consulate pretended to be a Falun Gong practitioner for six months, collecting information and bringing his son to meditation sites in Hermann Park in Downtown Houston. In the fall of that year, the individual attacked and attempted to sexually assault a female Falun Gong practitioner in the parking lot. Multiple practitioners witnessed the incident and after blocking his assault, discovered he was not actually a Falun Gong adherent. After that incident, this individual and his son were never seen again.¹⁵

Such attacks are not limited to the United States. In October 2022, Chinese nationals Kang Zhao and two accomplices (including Zhao's wife) in Canberra, Australia, were caught vandalizing signs attached to at least two Falun Gong practitioners' cars, one of which belonged to Nancy Dong. After being notified by witnesses, Dong arrived at the parking lot and tried to film Zhao and his accomplices, as they spray painted over the sign "CCP ≠ China" atop her car. Zhao took Nancy Dong's phone away and elbow slammed her to the ground by her neck, proceeding to kick and punch her until she almost lost consciousness. The altercation led to bruising on her arms and injuries to her lower body. In December 2022, Zhao was arrested by police after trying to leave the country. He plead guilty in court to charges of common assault, property damage, and defacing property.¹⁶

3. SURVEILLANCE, SLANDER AND CENSORSHIP ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

The Falun Dafa Information Center will release a report later this month analyzing how the CCP's persecution of Falun Gong impacts students and faculty who practice Falun Gong on university campuses in the United States, based on publicly available reports and a survey conducted in early 2023. The following are five key takeaways from that report.

1. At least 45 university campuses across the United States have students or faculty who practice Falun Gong. One-fifth of respondents to a 2023 survey reported feeling uncomfortable self-identifying as a Falun Gong practitioner due to Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda or other influences.
2. Physical and digital surveillance of both Falun Gong practitioners and Chinese international students—and resulting Chinese government reprisals—are a major area of concern. One non-ethnic Chinese PhD candidate studying in Minnesota reported, "Whenever I and my club held a booth for our Falun Dafa student club, there was always a suspicious Chinese student wandering about and pretend[ing] to be on their phones and constantly checking on us. They never engaged with us but were just there to monitor us."

¹⁴ <https://faluninfo.net/chinese-thug-arrested-for-hate-crime-against-falun-gong/>

¹⁵ Interviews with Falun Gong practitioners from Houston who wished to remain anonymous.

¹⁶ <https://faluninfo.net/young-man-assaults-falun-gong-practitioner-in-australia-found-guilty-by-court/>

The same student remarked that the presence of these individuals seemed to deter Chinese students from engaging in Falun Gong club activities on campus.

3. Chinese Student and Scholars Associations (CSSA) have engaged in multiple attempts since 2017 to censor or penalize Falun Gong-related activities on US university campuses, with long-term repercussions even when demands were not met. The associations are known to have ties to local Chinese consulates. In one case, a graduate student and Falun Gong practitioner in Illinois had joined the Chinese Student and Scholars Association (CSSA) to access the resources it offers to international students from China. He reported that Chinese diplomats in the United States caused his removal from the group, “I was told by the then-CSSA President that the Chinese embassy in Chicago asked him to remove me from CSSA due to my involvement in Falun Gong activities. I had a personal website that published content about Falun Gong. I was later told that somehow the Chinese Consulate of Chicago has noticed my connection with Falun Gong and asked then CSSA administration to remove me from the CSSA.”
4. CCP propaganda demonizing Falun Gong causes apprehension among practitioners and university representatives. University representatives have appeared unprepared for false claims made about Falun Gong and have not always provided equal opportunity for Falun Gong Club representatives to respond.
5. Chinese-language textbooks being used at some US universities contain inaccurate and damaging depictions of Falun Gong.

Case study: Reprisal campaign for a film screening about Confucius Institutes

A graduate student at a major university in Pennsylvania reported a month-long, coordinated campaign in March and April 2021 aiming to slander and delegitimize the Falun Dafa Club for co-hosting an online screening and panel discussion on the documentary film, *In the Name of Confucius*. The club had hosted the event with the Athenai Institute and Students for a Free Tibet, which the official student government body, the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) had also helped advertise on their newsletter and social media. The film screening was relevant to campus discussions regarding Confucius Institutes, gifts to the university from China, and the presence of a CSSA club on campus.¹⁷

In the week following the event, at least 79 students and former graduates associated with the CSSA sent multiple emails to GAPSA, with complaints that the event promoted by GAPSA was too political. In the emails, the CSSA members claimed that the Falun Dafa Club, Students for Free Tibet, and Athenai Institute were “anti-China” organizations with the mission to slander China and Chinese people. They petitioned the association to respond to the claims that the Falun Gong club had violated university policies, and that the GAPSA promotion of this event was an

¹⁷https://web.archive.org/web/20111120050149/http://thedp.com/index.php/article/2011/11/confucius_institutes_to_be_reconsidered_by_penn; <https://www.inquirer.com/business/university-pennsylvania-foreign-donations-china-saudi-arabia-20200224.html>

act of marginalization against the Chinese community on campus.¹⁸ An investigation revealed, though, that many Facebook posts about the event from Chinese international students revolved around slandering Falun Gong and opposing the Falun Gong club's right and eligibility to host events.¹⁹ Faculty members involved with GAPSA held a roundtable on March 30, 2021 to address the petition and the "controversy," inviting groups including GAPSA representatives and CSSA members to attend; however, the Falun Gong Club president was not provided a similar presentation opportunity. During a second meeting, one CSSA member presented a slideshow that included CCP politicized propaganda against Falun Gong, falsely misrepresenting the faith as a "cult."

After a week of deliberation, the faculty members acknowledged that the Falun Gong Club and its president had not violated any university policies, but the incident nevertheless had a long-term impact. It is unclear if the CSSA members were acting of their own accord or under pressure from Chinese officials, but the attempt fits a pattern reported at other university campuses of Chinese students lodging complaints about events critical of the CCP, claiming they promote anti-Asian hatred.²⁰ After this stressful and upsetting experience, the Falun Gong Club president went on to hold one last documentary screening of *Letter from Masanjia* about forced labor in China before her graduation that June, but reported experiencing ongoing trauma and anxiety from the harassment. The campaign against *In the Name of Confucius* also affected GAPSA, which did not promote this second documentary screening or future events held by the university's Falun Gong Club on their social media or in public event notices.

4. CAMPAIGN TO MONITOR AND SLANDER DRAGON SPRINGS

Beginning in the early 2000s, Falun Gong practitioners in New York built a campus with Buddhist-style temple buildings modeled on Tang Dynasty architecture. The campus is called Dragon Springs. Today, it also houses two accredited academic institutions—Fei Tian Academy of the Arts and Fei Tian College—and the training center for Shen Yun Performing Arts, an internationally renowned classical Chinese dance company.²¹

According to leaked CCP documents, targeting this campus for surveillance, espionage, and legal harassment is a priority for the regime. A 2017 document from the CCP's Henan Provincial Committee states: "Tightly focus on the overseas xie jiao core backbones, the headquarters [Dragon Springs] base and foreign political figures, carefully organize strategies to strike and divide them. Pay close attention to the trend of overseas activities of Falun Gong... collect early-warnings, forward-looking, action-oriented intelligence information, and thus serve the overall struggle

¹⁸ "GAPSA Petition," <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-fSS-pVN27Jh6Q6O-tY2RwoBcmVhRNZIEMfmwRKlSog/edit>

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/UPennGAPSA/photos/a.396584083685914/5556632307681040/>

²⁰ At Purdue University, for example, graduate student Zhihao Kong publicly posted support for victims of the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, and quickly received threats from other Chinese students at Purdue and even the Ministry of State Security warned his parents to prevent Kong's participation in future events <https://www.propublica.org/article/even-on-us-campuses-china-cracks-down-on-students-who-speak-out>

²¹ <http://www.dragonsprings.org/>

situation.”²² The campus has faced vandalism, frequent spying via drones, and localized social media campaigns spreading falsehoods about the campus.

Many who work at the Dragon Springs campus are refugees who escaped religious persecution or survived torture in China. Many have relatives back in China who have faced intimidation, harassment, and even arrest by security forces due to their having family members working at or attending Fei Tian Academy, Fei Tian College, or working for Shen Yun. One recent case is Aihua Liu, the mother of US citizens Steven and Lydia Wang, who was sentenced to four years in prison in China last month. Steven Wang, her son, is a principal dancer for Shen Yun.²³

A particularly damaging tactic that the CCP and its apparent proxies have used, has been to weaponize the US legal system by filing baseless lawsuits to harm the reputation of Dragon Springs in the local community and force lengthy, costly legal cases. Since 2019, the campus or its residents have faced three lawsuits by an American national and/or his associates who spent 15 years in Tianjin and then moved to the area. The lawsuits portend to relate to environmental protection but are based on mistruths, ultimately failing in court. All three of these lawsuits have been dismissed, but the plaintiffs seem poised to continue filing further suits.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The CCP’s ongoing campaign against Chinese citizens who practice Falun Gong remains one of the most severe human rights crises and sources of religious freedom violations in today’s China. As described above, this campaign of persecution extends internationally. In this context, the Falun Dafa Information Center urges policymakers and members of civil society to take the following steps to condemn, deter, and prevent acts of transnational repression against Falun Gong believers in the United States and around the world.

(A) Take action to protect Falun Gong communities from transnational repression

1. Punish diplomats who engage in intimidation, harassment, surveillance, or pressuring members of the Chinese diaspora to marginalize Falun Gong or take action against practitioners. Declare diplomats who commit transnational repression against Falun Gong targets persona non grata.
2. Investigate and prosecute anyone who assaults Falun Gong practitioners who were peacefully exercising their right to free speech, as authorities in New York City have done.
3. Investigate proxy groups, such as the 610 Office-linked Anti-Cult Association that are at the forefront of harassing Falun Gong practitioners in locations such as Flushing, NY.
4. Investigate digital surveillance of Falun Gong communities and pressure China-based companies like Tencent or ByteDance to be transparent about moderation policies and data collection. Urge them to avoid censorship and surveillance of Falun Gong-related information on popular apps such as WeChat and TikTok outside of China.

²² https://faluninfo.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CCP_Infiltration_FG_LeakedDocs_Chn_Eng-22-0902-1.pdf

²³ <https://faluninfo.net/mother-of-steven-wang/>

5. Ensure local Falun Gong community representatives are aware of any available channels to report incidents of transnational repression.
6. University faculty, administrators, and relevant US government agencies must take further action to pre-empt, monitor, deter, and counter CCP activities that undermine freedom of expression, freedom of belief, and non-discrimination for Falun Gong practitioners and for others on campus.
7. Representatives from relevant Congressional committees and US government agencies—such as the National Security Council, Department of Homeland Security, and Department of State—should meet with Falun Gong representatives, torture survivors, victims of transnational repression, and relatives of jailed practitioners outside China. This enables them to receive up to date information about conditions in China. Given the severity of the persecution in China and risk of reprisals, it is too dangerous for local adherents to meet with foreign government officials inside the country. As such, US officials and diplomatic staff should make a particular priority of meeting with Falun Gong practitioners prior to their travel to China or during visits to their home country. High-level officials, including presidents, vice presidents, prime ministers, secretaries of state, and religious freedom ambassadors should also meet with Falun Gong torture survivors, victims of transnational repression, or relatives of jailed practitioners to better understand conditions in China and to signal support for their freedom.

(B) Vocally condemn transnational repression against Falun Gong in public and private

1. US officials should make public statements condemning incidents of transnational repression targeting individual Falun Gong practitioners and their families.
2. Local, state, and federal officials should make public statements on key anniversaries, such as May 13 (World Falun Dafa Day) and July 20 (the date of the CCP's launch of its violent persecution)—that express support for US residents and citizens who practice Falun Gong and condemn ongoing transnational repression.
3. Members of Congress, the US Ambassador to China, and human rights groups should advocate for the release of imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners, especially those with family members residing outside China.