

The Practice and Persecution of Falun Gong

YAN YAN

In the late 1990s, if you had gone for an early-morning stroll around a park almost anywhere in China, you would have found a tranquil but powerful scene: the grounds covered with people from all walks of life practicing the gentle movements of Falun Dafa.

Falun Dafa, also known as Falun Gong, has brought better health and inner peace to tens of millions of people in over 50 countries. Although not a religion, Falun Dafa has its spiritual beliefs. Through practicing, one strives to become a better person who is able to contribute more to society, so the goal is similar to that of religions. However, in Falun Dafa there are not any devotional activities or worship, nor any set doctrine or canon; there is also no membership, organization, or hierarchy. Therefore, Falun Dafa is more properly classified as an ancient form of self-cultivation practice. "Cultivation" refers to the improvement of one's mind through the careful study of universal principles based on Truthfulness, Benevolence, and Forbearance; "practice" means doing exercises and meditation to energize the body. Learning Falun Dafa is easy and free. The practice is simple yet powerful. Mr. Li Hongzhi, Falun Dafa's founder, explains the practice's principles in their entirety in the book *Zhuan Falun*, and in the beginner's text, *Falun Gong*. Also essential to the practice are five sets of gentle exercises, including a seated meditation.

Mr. Li Hongzhi, as the founder and teacher of Falun Dafa, is often respectfully referred to as "Master" or "Teacher," but he is not accorded any special treatment, nor does he accept any money or donations. Mr. Li has given lectures on Falun Dafa in many countries, including Australia, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, and the United States. For his contributions to people's health and wellbeing, Mr. Li is a three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee and has been awarded over 600 honors.

A 1998 Chinese government survey indicated that there were 100 million people practicing Falun Gong in China after merely six years since its introduction in 1992. Fearing Falun Gong's widespread popularity was overshadowing his own legacy, the then-Chinese leader Jiang Zemin issued a nationwide crackdown on July 20, 1999. According to a 1999 Washington Post article, "Communist Party sources said that the standing committee of the Politburo did not unanimously endorse the crackdown, and that Jiang alone decided that Falun Gong must be eliminated." Groups like Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Tibetan Buddhists, whose beliefs are not

controlled by the Chinese government, are persecuted as well.

The persecution, which flew in the face of China's own constitution and international laws, called for the "eradication" of the Falun Gong practice and, if necessary, those who practice it. Early jailings and detention soon gave way to sanctioned violence and torture. As many as 2 million people are currently being held captive in forced labor camps. Thousands of eye-

everything," says Dr. Elizabeth Wang, Director of the Global Mission to Rescue Persecuted Falun Gong Practitioners. Many have seen their parents dragged off by police. Others' parents have been killed. In the worst of cases, the kids themselves are jailed and even abused. While some have extended family to care for them, many are left to fend for themselves. Because of the government's vilification of Falun Gong, many of these chil-

from police torture. According to the coroner's report, the mother's neck and knucklebones were broken, her skull was caved in, and a needle was found stuck in her lower back. Her baby, Meng Hao, was not spared. He had deep bruises on his ankles, two black and blue spots marked his head, and blood was found in his nose. The marks on his ankles, it was reported, likely came from being hung upside down. Police

How has Falun Gong responded? In the past five years, Falun Gong practitioners in China have continually made appeals to the Chinese government via peaceful, legal channels, and have resisted the persecution with nonviolent public protests. However, these acts have often led to imprisonment, torture and murder at the hands of Chinese police. Throughout, there has not been a single report of Falun Gong practitioners responding with violence, destroying property, or the like - despite grave injustices. Practitioners and supporters of Falun Gong outside China have taken up long marches, launched letter-writing campaigns, organized rallies, held press conferences, and documented rights abuses - also strictly adhering to peaceful means to raise awareness.

What has been the United States' response, and that of the international community? The US government has been unequivocal in its opposition to China's actions against Falun Gong. In November of 1999, the US House unanimously passed resolution 218, with the Senate concurring, which condemned Beijing's actions and called for the immediate release of all jailed practitioners. The even stronger House Resolution 188 was passed unanimously in July of 2002. In late 2004, the 108th Congress unanimously passed

House Concurrent Resolution 304 further condemning the Chinese government's oppression of Falun Gong. Former President Clinton, President Bush and Secretary of State Powell have spoken out and issued statements

on the persecution of Falun Gong. Governments around the world have responded with similar force. Human rights groups and other organizations have been outspoken in their support for Falun Gong's freedom of belief. Among these groups are Freedom House, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, and the National Organization for Women.

Luckily, victims of this brutal persecution can find recourse in functioning legal systems of the U.S. and other democratic nations. Jiang and his accomplices are being sued for genocide, torture, and crimes against humanity in the U.S. Federal District Court in Chicago. Already in the past three years, three other high-level Chinese officials involved in the persecution of Falun Gong have been found guilty of crimes against humanity in the U.S. District Courts of New York and San Francisco.

I encourage you to visit www.falundafa.org for more information.



Over 1000 people sit in formation of the Chinese characters for "Truthfulness, Benevolence, Forbearance" remembering those who were tortured for practicing Falun Dafa.

witnesses and victims have reported severe and systematic tortures used on Falun Gong practitioners to force them to renounce their beliefs. Such methods include shocking sensitive body parts, such as the genitals, nipples, anus and mouth, with electric batons, violent beatings with pipes and red-hot irons as well as gang rape, and other savage sexual assaults. As of January 21, 2005, the New York-based Falun Dafa Information Center has verified that over 1288 practitioners have died from the persecution, most of which resulted from torture and extreme violence. However, government sources inside China indicate that the actual death toll could be as high as 7000. Furthermore, human rights organizations have documented over 38,000 specific cases of torture or severe abuse.

In addition, over a thou-

"...tortures include shocking sensitive body parts (with electric batons), violent beatings with pipes, branding with red-hot irons, and savage sexual assaults."

sand healthy individuals have been tortured in mental hospitals, and over 500 Falun Gong practitioners have been sentenced to prison terms of up to 18 years.

Children across China - probably, some say, numbering in the millions - have fared terribly in this nationwide suppression. "These children have lost

and officials in China continue to deny all wrongdoing, and some, reportedly, have even received promotions for their

dren face alienation. Neighbors or even family who might care for them risk the ire of the Beijing regime. Such "sympathizing" could cost them their jobs, homes, or freedom. "These children have lost their dignity," says Wang. "They've been discriminated against and defamed awfully - in society, schools, and even kindergartens. They are labeled as 'bad kids,' or 'kids of bad people.' Often they are left with nobody to turn to." The suppression has cut the deepest wounds at home, in the family. Children have been made to bear the trauma and emotional pain of having their parents taken away to unknown fates. Such was the case, similarly, for two-year-old Wang Shujie, of Shandong Province. Shujie watched in horror as police screamed at and beat his father right before him.

The sight was so disturbing that the boy passed out and began a fever. His head for long after was in constant pain and his state lethargic. He had trouble eating and sleeping, and progressively wasted away. He died a few months later.

In the most chilling of episodes, Chinese authorities have directed violence at the children themselves. Horrific is the case of Wang Lixuan and her eight-month-old son, Meng Hao. The mother and child were arrested in Beijing in November of 2000, when Wang sought to file a grievance with the government. Within a matter of days, both mother and child were dead

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violent measures. Amnesty International noted, "Whereas officials responsible for deaths in custody during normal police operations may be investigated and prosecuted, in all cases [in China] where the victims were Falun Gong practitioners, the government has denied any wrongdoing, even in the face of multiple eye witness testimonies."

To conceal these atrocities, Jiang and the Chinese Communist Party have fabricated and spread numerous lies about Falun Gong. The Jamestown Foundation published a report showing that the Party owns or controls nearly all Chinese-language TV stations and newspapers in North America - even overseas Chinese people cannot escape the Party's long-reach propaganda. With its information stranglehold in China and paid staff in Chinese consulates and other agencies in other countries and state-controlled media, the Communist Party has misled people into believing that Falun Gong is an anti-government cult, when in fact Falun Gong does not advocate superstitions and is by no means political or against the Chinese government.