

Falun Gong: A Decade of COURAGE

In 1999, Falun Gong was an immensely popular spiritual practice that was virtually unknown outside China. Its success in China led to the communist regime declaring it illegal on July 20, 1999. Since then, the 70-100 million Chinese people practicing Falun Gong, as well as their families, friends, and colleagues, have been the targets of a campaign of disinformation and unfathomable violence. The Epoch Times presents a two-part series to shed light on the peaceful and courageous spirit of the people, inside and outside China, who practice Falun Gong.



Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) THE EPOCH TIMES



Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX) THE EPOCH TIMES

Congress Members Unite on Capitol Hill

By CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON & SHAR ADAMS
Epoch Times Staff

WASHINGTON D.C.—Members of Congress applauded Falun Gong practitioners for their courage in standing up to the Chinese Communist Party, saying they are heroes and champions of freedom.

The congressmen and women were speaking at a rally on Washington's Capitol Hill to mark ten years of persecution of Falun Gong by the Chinese regime. Representatives from human rights, religious freedom, and community organizations also spoke in support of Falun Gong practitioners' efforts to end a decade of repression.

"Can you imagine a crackdown on a spiritual movement?" said Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), "Unbelievable."

In the past decade, there is no known instance of violence from a Falun Gong practitioner against the Chinese authorities.

Rep. Ros-Lehtinen recently introduced a House resolution supported by over 40 congressional co-sponsors, that recognizes the continued persecution of Falun Gong in China. Forty co-sponsors, however, is "not enough" she said calling on the crowds at the rally to inform more people about the extent of the persecution.

"Why is Falun Gong being persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party?" she asked, answering at once, "Falun Gong stands for the principal of truthfulness, for the principal of compassion, for the principal of tolerance, and these characteristics represent the very antithesis of what the Communist Party in China stands for—it stands for lies, it stands for brutality, it stands for intolerance."

Falun Gong is a spiritual meditation practice rooted in ancient Chinese culture. It has been persecuted in China since July 20, 1999, at the behest of then-president Jiang Zemin.

"The methods that they have used to eradicate Falun Gong have been particularly brutal," said

Rep. Ros-Lehtinen. "Falun Gong practitioners have been beaten, they have been tortured, and they have even been killed for seeking only to uphold freedom of conscience."

The Falun Dafa Information Center lists more than a dozen torture methods used against practitioners, including the use of high-voltage electric batons, forced-feeding, beatings, brainwashing, and sexual abuse. Fair trials are not granted, and a new directive from the regime bans a "not guilty" verdict to be given to Falun Gong practitioners, according to paperwork obtained by The Epoch Times.

Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ), pushed for more action from around the world. "Your presence here today reminds the White House that we can no longer have business as usual," he said. "We need to remind President Obama that human rights come first, and trade and economics come second."

Rep. Smith expressed concern over the Chinese regime's influence in Western societies. "If you look at the way the Chinese regime hunts down Falun Gong practitioners in the U.S., that is an abomination as well. You are free. We will fight very hard to ensure that someday the Falun Gong will be free in China as well."

Rep. Smith along with Democrat Congressman Rob Andrews (D-NJ), sponsored a letter asking President Obama to give "all possible public and private diplomatic support to Falun Gong practitioners in China." It was signed by 60 other members of Congress.

One such member is long-time supporter of Falun

Gong, Dana Rohrbacher (R-CA).

"It is our job to reach out to the rest of the people of the world and form an incredible coalition of people of moral human beings," he said. "We will stand together against this type of tyranny and we will build a better world. And the Falun Gong is in the forefront of this effort."

Rep. Rohrbacher said the years of persecution against Falun Gong will not be forgotten.

"You have remained courageous, you have gained the attention of good people throughout the world—that is what will change the world."

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—Dana Rohrbacher (R-CA)

Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) said he is reminded of the principles of Falun Gong when he is in the House of Representatives—the word "tolerance," one of the three abiding principles of the practice, is inscribed in wood on the floor.

Rep. Diaz-Balart said the Chinese Communist Party is an embarrassment to humankind.

"They rule by brute force and when we see the brutality that the regime practices we are embarrassed for mankind," he said. "And when we see that mankind acts as though ... [it is] business as usual, with a regime that thugs, then it is an embarrassment for mankind. And when the world treats it as though it is a normal peaceful law-abiding regime, and the Olympics, a symbol of peace, are allowed to go to that regime, that is an embarrassment to mankind."

"I admire you—know you have friends here in the halls of this Congress," Rep. Diaz-Balart assured.

Congressman Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD) of Maryland said he was impressed with the vibrancy of Falun

Gong practitioners as they visited his office. "I would think that the Chinese government would want everyone to be as positive and upbeat and as happy as members of your group are," he said. "[But,] I guess totalitarian government would see it as a threat ... please know that we in this country are with you 100 percent of the way."

"How tragic that we even have to come here today," said Texan Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX), stressing the bipartisan support for Falun Gong. "We stand here as righteous fighters and believers in your cause of truthfulness."

Congressman Lucy Lay (D-MO) said the rally is not about politics—it is a statement about conscience and community.

"The sense of the Congress of the United States, is simply this: detention must end, torture must end, and repression has no place in society," he said. "I applaud the courage and the non-violent nature of the practitioners of this ancient pathway to enlightenment. Your struggle for freedom is just and we will continue to support you."

Congressman Gus Bilirakus (R-FL) said tens of thousands of practitioners have been persecuted and tortured by communist authorities solely because of their religious belief. "Religious persecution is the weapon of tyrants," he said. "You have not surrendered to the tyranny, you have fought against it with the power of your hearts and minds and I commend you for it."

Rep. Bilirakus said he will ensure the Falun Gong voice is heard in the House of Foreign Affairs, of which he is a committee member. "I stand with you," he said.

Congressman Joseph Cao, (R-LA) reminded the audience of the hundreds of years that have been spent fighting for religious freedom. "Freedom, especially freedom of religion, is what brings this world together in tolerance and cooperation," he said. "I am a religious man and I understand the necessity of religious groups and leaders to speak out against religious persecution."

Silent Summer

An American student at the 'MIT of China' discovers Falun Gong in 1999

By MATTHEW KUTOLOWSKI

I was staring at a notice tacked up on a tree, in an eerily quiet park in Beijing.

It was July 22, 1999, and Falun Gong was now officially illegal.

I was witness to the beginnings of a state-orchestrated campaign that would have done Mao proud, a program the likes of which China hadn't seen in the ten years since the Tiananmen Massacre.

"Falun Gong has been banned by the People's Republic of China," the notice declared in official diction.

"It is hereby illegal to gather to practice or propagate the teachings of Falun Gong, just as it is to disseminate any literature or materials that do similarly." I read on, but the words soon failed to register.

Shock set in as I tried to fathom that the way of life, if not very identity, of my friends and acquaintances had just been outlawed. Literally, overnight.

I looked in vain for my closest associates at Tsinghua University. Huang Kui and Jun were nowhere to be found. Nor were Zhao Ming or the others.

I could not find them. Nor could I find out much of anything about what was happening.

STATE-CONTROLLED MEDIA

BLITZ AND BOOK BURNINGS

Sure, there was news aplenty about Falun Gong's banning. But it was little more than thinly-veiled diatribes, eerily the same in every state-controlled publication. All pretenses to objectivity were cast to the wind in favor of the official mandate to discredit Falun Gong. The portrayals of adherents as irrational, cultish, and dangerous would later pave the way to officially sanctioned violence.

At the end of one month, the (unapologetically named) People's Daily alone had run 347 articles criticizing Falun Gong. The airwaves, for their part, were saturated with starchy news anchors reading barbed scripts parroted the same tune. On the street, everyone was talking about the ban.

The one voice that wasn't present was that of Falun Gong themselves. That was the idea of course, as planned by the Party-state apparatus. To silence the group was the first step toward crushing it. And only with Falun Gong silent could the Party redefine it. Carefully choreographed public book burnings soon ensued.

FALUN GONG WINNING HEARTS

Tsinghua was dealt an especially heavy blow since it provided such a counter-example to the Party line: here were China's leading thinkers and scientists, doing the allegedly "backwards" Falun Gong. Just how serious the Party took this challenge was evident when the military was dispatched to campus, brandishing machine guns.

This wasn't to be a bloodbath, like Tiananmen, however. Falun Gong was more a moral threat than a political one. It represented a threat, a potential, that it could not live with: that people might find something meaningful in their lives that was altogether unmediated by the Party or governed by its scarcity economy. It represented an alternative site of fulfillment, a new, spiritual economy if you will. And as such, it didn't exactly mesh with the vision of a Party-led modernity that certain officials wanted, or needed.

Unwittingly, with its metaphysical path to health and happiness, this adherents as irrational, cultish, and dangerous would later pave the way to officially sanctioned violence.

etic education" could for the Party. It had won the hearts of the people.

Such being the case, the ban on Falun Gong was implemented with startling intensity.

SURVEILLANCE, ARRESTS, EXECUTIONS

Some adherents were swiftly arrested and removed from site, particularly those who might be "influential" in the public's eye. Some were pressured to the margins, as was the case for many Tsinghua students; dozens were kicked out of school. Others had to go underground to avoid arrest.

I myself became subject to surveillance. Regularly I would spot undercover police following me, or even filming me. One individual revealed that my phone was tapped and my emails were being read. One well-placed source said that executions had begun.

What was to be a year-long stay thus ended after two months. I reluctantly forfeited the fellowship I had won and returned home. It was no longer safe to be in Beijing.

I never did find my closest Falun Gong friends again that summer, before leaving. Only two years later would I learn what had become of them. Two, Kui and Jun, had been arrested, a news story told, and sentenced to five and seven years in prison. Jun had committed the "crime" of printing an informational leaflet about Falun Gong from the Internet. Kui had tried to form an independent newspaper. That paper was in fact the Epoch Times.

Both friends, I later learned, were subjected to torture while in custody. One has not been heard from to this day. The other recently escaped China, and is trying to put his life back together in the U.S.

Zhao Ming, meanwhile, was sent to

a labor camp on the outskirts of Beijing, where he was brutally tortured with electric batons for months.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE

While I had traveled to Beijing the summer of '99 primarily for language training and out of socio-historical interest in Chinese physical culture, I left with a very different, and rather complicated, view of today's China.

My experiences with Falun Gong, and the remarkable oppression it met, have led me to rethink much about China and its state of arrest.

What is one to make of a ruling entity that so arbitrarily wields power, even to the point of attempting to legislate the inner, private, spiritual life of its citizens? And on what footing is a nation to enter the future if it is so insecure, or undecided, about its past?

I also believe we continue to see the fallout of all this, albeit in less obvious ways. Before leaving China, I often asked myself what would become of this nation when its leaders arrest and torture citizens who embrace values like honesty and kindness? What happens when you criminalize being a good person?

The litany of contaminated goods fiascoes (such as melamine in baby formula) issuing forth from China has provided a sad answer. I doubt China's rulers have made the connection. They're probably too busy silencing their critics.

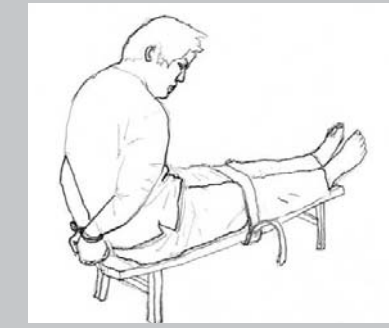
Though I haven't been back to Tsinghua for some time, I'm told the park remains largely unchanged. And silent.

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Torture Methods

Falun Gong practitioners have been subjected to all manner of torture methods that the communist regime has spend decades refining. Below are depicted just a few of these inhumane techniques.

Tiger Bench



The practitioner is tied to a narrow wooden or iron bench. They suffer great pain as bricks are positioned under the feet causing the legs to be hyperextended.

Objects Forced into Fingers



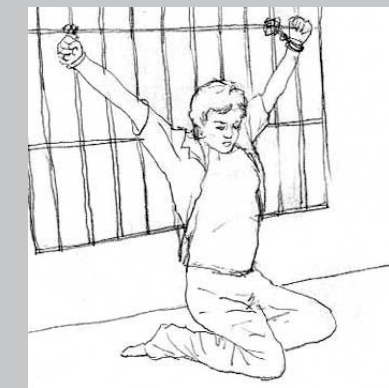
Objects such as bamboo sticks, needles, or nails are inserted, or hammered in, under the fingernails, or pierced through the fingertips.

Forced Feeding



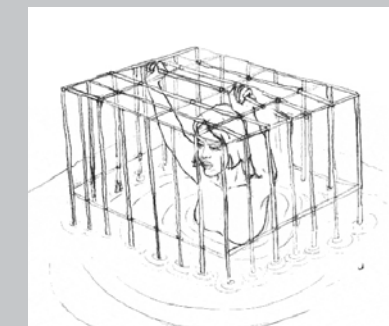
Unsanitary rubber tubes are shoved into a practitioners nose and down the stomach, often rupturing or damaging tissue; sometimes the tube enters the lungs. Detainees are often fed irritants such as highly concentrated salt water, hot pepper oil, boiling water, detergent, or even human feces.

Handcuffed and Beaten



Practitioners are handcuffed to cell bars and then beaten. This often results in deep cuts on the wrists, and broken bones.

Water Dungeon



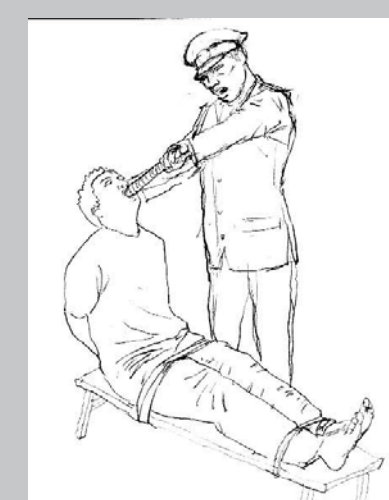
The torture tool under earth jail makes one unable to stand up or lie down. The torture tool under earth jail makes one unable to stand up or lie down. The torture tool under earth jail makes one unable to stand up or lie down.

Biting by Animals



The police threatens the practitioner with a dog attack. Other animals used include insects and snakes.

Electric Baton Shocking



The practitioner is abused—sometimes over a few hours—by up to a dozen electric shocks to the face, including the eyes, on the genitals, nipples, and other sensitive body parts.

From Peking University to Labor Camp

By MARY SILVER
Epoch Times Staff

In July 2008, Beijing was rife with extremes—of pride and rage, of professed political stability and underlying social unrest.

Jin Min was pedaling a bicycle home along a street in Zhong Guan Cun—a busy and hustling area in Haidian District, Beijing, known as China's Silicon Valley. She and her husband had a small home there. It is where China's two most prestigious universities, Peking University and Tsinghua University, are located. To enter these two universities, one needs to score in the top 0.03 percent among close to 10 million students who take the National College Entrance Examination. Jin Min graduated from Peking University with a degree in economics. Her husband studied architectural engineering at Tsinghua University.

Her eyes were filled with busy colors and images—of gigantic banners, slogans, balloons, and red icons, all professing national pride in hosting the Olympics. Her mind was on a different world beneath the surface of China's much vaunted "Peaceful Rise to Great Power Status."

From a letter smuggled out of Xin An Labor Camp and word of mouth from the Tian He Labor Camp, she had learned that some of her friends had been transferred out of Beijing. The labor camps had run out of space to hold the newly arrested Falun Gong practitioners.

To prepare for a "stable" Olympics, the Chinese Communist Party issued the order to "strike hard" at hostile forces at home and abroad, such as ethnic separatists... and "heretical organizations" like the Falun Gong.

The heavy-handed strike led to deaths. One of them was Min's Beida alumnus, Yu Zhou, 42, a popular folk singer. Yu was arrested with his wife Xu Na, a poet and painter, on their

way home from a performance by his band. Eleven days after their arrest, Yu died in police custody.

Min was worried about her friends in the labor camps. She knew the "strike hard" also applied to those already incarcerated—increased torture and harsher treatment.

She knew it because she had been a prisoner before.

Jin Min was arrested in June 2001 with her husband when they were placing information pamphlets about Falun Gong in bicycle baskets in a residential area on Tsinghua Campus. Two plainclothes police caught them and took them to Zhong Guan Cun Police Station. The couple were asked to curse Falun Gong's founder and promise not to practice it any more. The police told them if they followed the order, they would be released. If not, they would be sentenced.

The couple refused. Both were sent to labor camps.

"Practicing Falun Gong is my right," Jin Min said. "I want freedom and don't want to be jailed. But what kind of freedom is it if you have to give up your unalienable rights for it?"

Min was sent to a women's labor camp and her husband was sent to a men's one. More than 90 percent of inmates in the labor camps were Falun Gong practitioners.

In her year and half of imprisonment, Jin Min experienced and witnessed various kinds of abuse: beating, electric shocks, slave labor, sleep deprivation, violent brainwashing, humiliation, and complete isolation from family.

She was up before dawn and made to work on disposable chopsticks until midnight. Three meager meals were served. The meal was usually a steamed bun with a bowl of soup—water with cabbage leaves. To get the meal, inmates were made to chant the following: "My name is so and so. I am detained here because of my misconduct. Please give me some food."

Min also knitted luxury wool gloves. The guards told them, "Be careful of your work. These are luxury products to be exported to Europe."

During the first six months of imprisonment, Jin Min's parents, both doctors of traditional Chinese medicine, had no information about where their daughter was. All they knew was she had been arrested as a Falun Gong practitioner. Having experienced and witnessed the torture and tragedies of the Cultural Revolution, when millions of intellectuals were persecuted to death and insanity, Jin Min's parents almost broke down.

They asked friends, colleagues, and acquaintances to help search for Jin Min. They spent money and effort to get to speak to Party officials—people whom they thought had the power to influence their daughter's fate. They spoke to a People's Congress Representative. The answer was the same—nothing can be done.

"We could save your daughter even if she were a criminal sentenced to death penalty. But since she is Falun Gong, we can do nothing about it. The handling of Falun Gong is beyond our control—they don't follow normal judicial process. It is directly handled by the 610 Office," one government official told Min's parents.

Established by the former Chinese Communist Party head Jiang Zemin, the 610 Office—named after the date of its creation on June 10, 1999—is an extrajudicial police task force responsible for carrying out the mission of eliminating Falun Gong.

Min was released from the labor camp on October 7, 2002.

After she was freed, she began to try to rescue her friends from the camp. Min contacted Li Heping, one of China's most prominent rights lawyers. Li took up some high-profile cases on behalf of victims of human rights abuses and pressed for accountability from the Party.

After phone conversations, Min re-

alized her phone was tapped and noticed police cars parked at her apartment building day and night.

She learned Li had been beaten, kidnapped, and placed under surveillance by the Public Security Bureau.

Urged by her parents to escape the great risk and danger in China, Jin Min arrived in Pittsburgh with her parents on April 23, 2009. She is now staying with her sister, also a medical doctor. She is on a visitor's visa, borrowed time. She is applying for asylum to stay in the safety of the U.S. Here she can freely practice Falun Gong exercises in a park without fear of being jailed.

The tale of Jin Min is one of many stories happening to millions of ordinary Chinese citizens. They want to lead a quiet and private life. Many distance themselves from politics, only to find themselves cast into an unavoidable battle with the world's largest and most deadly totalitarian regime.

Asked if she regretted forgoing freedom, fortune, and prosperity in China, Jing Min said, "No. What's the point of having 'prosperity' when you don't even have basic human rights?"

Dr. Frank Xie, a China expert who teaches at Drexel University's Business School said, "Min's answer filled a critical gap in the prevailing argument to find the West in the past two decades—trade, investment and doing business with the Party will inevitably bring freedom and democracy to the Chinese people. Twenty years have passed, this inevitable result never happens—Chinese people are paying more for the fight of their rights. The ten-year persecution of Falun Gong is a perfect example."

Jin Min is continuing the fight for it, in the peaceful way characteristic of Falun Gong. She joined thousands of her fellow practitioners in Washington D.C. last weekend for a series of public events to commemorate ten years of sacrifice by Falun Gong.