

Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) Hearing “Dissidents Who Have Suffered for Human Rights in China: A Look Back and A Look Forward”

Personal Statement by Xiaodan Wang
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Thank you for having me as a part of this important hearing. While I am grateful to be here to speak, I am also heartbroken because it means the persecution against Falun Dafa has not ended and my father, Zhiwen Wang, is still not truly free.

2017 will mark the 18th year of persecution, the 18th year my father has been subject to cruel, unjust, and unfair treatment, and the 18th year I have been trying to bring my father home to freedom.

Growing up, my father was my home. He was safety and warmth for me. No matter how busy he was he would ride his bike home from work to make lunch for me. Every day he put me before himself and protected me from the communist influence of society.

We began practicing self-cultivation through Falun Dafa together. With its five exercises and principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, our hearts became brighter and we felt that we had found true happiness in letting go of pursuits and desires. My home was full of joy as excited practitioners came by to share their experiences with the practice. Some spoke of personal conflicts they had resolved while others had experienced massive health improvements. Looking back, these things were truly incredible and yet so common. Had I known better, I would have tried to soak in every smiling face and cherish every fleeting moment for they would soon be plunged into darkness.

Although it was difficult for my father to see me go to the United States, he has always wanted the best for me. I parted from him in 1998 without the slightest awareness it would be the last time I would see him for more than a decade and a half.

In the year that followed, we kept in touch every week on the phone. In early 1999, my father mentioned that some things had been happening with the government, but he never doubted they would be peacefully resolved.

In April of 1999, thousands of practitioners gathered near the government headquarters in Beijing to voice their concern that they had been mistreated. My father was not even present until he received a call that someone from the government wanted to speak to some practitioners. Since he had been practicing for a long time and had helped setup some of the Falun Dafa seminars, they called him to the meeting. By all counts, it seemed the meeting went well and practitioners would not be bothered for practicing anymore.

Had it not been for Jiang Zemin, this may have been true.

When this peaceful appeal happened in April 1999, Jiang, as leader of the Chinese communist party (CCP), made it his mission to destroy the practice. The mandate from him and his faction towards practitioners was to "ruin their reputations, bankrupt them financially, and destroy them physically." Think of what an absurd direction for a government to have toward its own citizens! On top of that, these were upstanding people like my father who contributed his best work to his job and volunteered so much of his time to helping others become healthier, better people.

In July of 1999, the curtain descended upon China and everything that was bright and good was covered in horrifying persecution. My father was dragged from his home and disappeared for months without a trace. It wasn't until December that he was put on a show trial and sentenced in front of the world on live TV for crimes he never committed. He couldn't defend himself as he was in a courtroom run by the same regime that was driving the persecution!

I could do nothing but cry. I was suffocating in despair as I watched my kind, good father being sentenced to 16 years in prison. As a practitioner of Falun Dafa, we strive to overcome hardships and endure with kindness. I could feel this darkness was trying to destroy that hope and that light within me. This feeling went on for what felt like an eternity until I came to the realization that I must stand up for him and put all my effort into ending the persecution.

For fifteen years I called for help, attended rallies, went to international events, met with government officials, and took interviews with the media. In my heart, I only wanted my father's suffering to end and for him to be released early. That day came on October 18, 2014, but rather than going home, the regime sent him to a brainwashing facility. It was as if the 15 years in prison had not been enough – as if the stroke he suffered in September of that year had not caused enough damage. They still wanted to break him down further.

When he finally made it home it was to video surveillance and neighborhood watch programs. Police regularly visited and on "sensitive days" he was advised to stay home and out of sight. By no means had he truly returned to a normal life, but given his grace and kindness as a Falun Dafa practitioner, he had let go of any ill feelings and bore no grudges against those who had mistreated him. Despite the regime's relentless effort to break his spirit, he remained with truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance guiding his life. He lived under constant pressure for a year and a half until he received his passport in January 2016. That was when we thought and hoped a new chapter would begin.

In July of this year, my husband and I traveled to China to escort my father through the legal immigration process. He had all his documents in order and a new passport ready to go. What should have been a straightforward trip became a nightmare of spying, intimidation, and harassment.

To even meet with my father, he had to evade the constant monitoring of three newly installed agents outside his home in Beijing. Although we were on edge, we had to keep moving forward. Of course we were not doing anything wrong, but from the very start it felt like they were trying to get under our skin.

On August 1st, we managed to fly from Beijing all the way to Guangzhou in the south without incident, but as soon as we went for his medical examination we were being monitored. On August 4th, we went to pick up his medical results and go to his immigration interview at the U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou. From the moment we entered the medical facility, my father's photo was taken and the spying was set in motion. After we had the medical results we went to a nearby Starbucks to wait for the interview. In that short time, multiple agents cycled in and out of the store to take our photo.

We went to the Consulate next and it was crowded with people standing around. A network of spies and undercover agents are stationed around the U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou and we even saw some agents coming out from the Consulate gate marked "Federal Tax Agency 国税局." There were unmarked Buick minivans stationed on the street in front of the building and undoubtedly there were agents watching everyone who came and went.

After years of being crammed into small jail cells with other inmates and being watched constantly, my father is very sensitive to being watched. After our successful immigration interview we were followed by car and on foot. When we exited our taxi over a mile from the Consulate, there were undercover agents watching us almost immediately. My father was the first to notice an agent taking his photo. It got to the point that I had to confront the undercover agents so my dad and husband could leave without being followed. We thought we had made it back without being followed, but there was a suspicious man waiting in the lobby where we were staying when we got back as well.

The next day, we noticed more suspicious things happening. As I left to pickup the approved immigration visa, I saw two "electricians" and a building security man were acting strange in the hallway. After I was gone, my husband saw one of them trying to look into our place through the peephole and under the door. Later that night a group of 10 police and undercover agents showed up at our door, trying to force their way in. There were another 20 officers and agents on street level. The police made up various excuses as to why they were there, but it was clear that their goal was to take away my father. We refused to let them in and my husband called the consulate for help. Eventually the police and agents relented, but we felt extremely unsafe there.

The next day we left for Dongguan, south of Guangzhou, to take a ferry to Hong Kong to fly home. We left early in the morning and were immediately followed. Even after driving 1.5 hours on the highway, spies were waiting for us at the ferry terminal. When we tried to exit through customs, they said my father's passport had been canceled and they cut the corner off. This destroyed the usefulness of the passport, but also shattered everything we had worked so hard for over the past 17 years. Despite the tremendous pressure, stress, and uncertainty, my father told me that we must not blame them and we

must carry ourselves like practitioners. I am still humbled by my father's steadfast belief and genuine embodiment of the principles of Falun Dafa.

Ultimately, we were forced again by the communist regime to separate. This time I had to let my father go off alone into the uncertain and terrifying world of persecution. As his daughter who had come to rescue him from nearly two decades of living under such terror, misinformation, and hate, I had to leave him over a thousand miles from his home to walk his path without support. Tears rained down as I watched him disappear into that dark, cruel hallway. As I looked for him out the window, I wondered in agony why in such a huge country there isn't one small space for my father to live. Why is there no room for him to breathe? After all that he has suffered, why can't they just let him go?

Although my father had served fifteen years in prison that he never should have had to, that wasn't enough for the regime. As a so-called "supplementary punishment," he was denied political rights for four years lasting until 2018. While this does not bar him from travel, the regime uses the ambiguity of the concept to do whatever it wants with former prisoners. Now that my father has returned home to Beijing, there are agents literally camping outside his front door 24 hours a day. While he may not be in prison, he is monitored and followed as if he was. This is entirely an extension of persecution against him as a Falun Dafa practitioner.

This will be the fourth presidential administration I have come to ask for help. I believe the help we have received from the U.S. government has gotten us to this point, but we need a final push to bring my father to the U.S. where he can live in true freedom for the first time in his life.

But this story is not only about my father as there are approximately 100 million Falun Dafa practitioners in China suffering this inhumane persecution. In addition, the monstrous, state-run organ harvesting operation continues its coldblooded victimization of practitioners. This is evil that the world has not come to terms with yet, but every moment wasted costs more lives and destroys more families. Given how many lives have been lost through the persecution and the clear documentation of organ harvesting, there is not a minute to lose in condemning the CCP and its actions until it stops. History has proven that an improved economy has not improved the human rights situation in China. Only constant attention, pressure, and exposure will bring about better human rights for the people of China.

Not everyone in the CCP believes the persecution against Falun Dafa is correct, nor did the standing members of the Politburo agree with it before it began. Even today, it is Jiang Zemin's faction that struggles to maintain control of the CCP and keep the persecution in motion. We believe it was Jiang's right hand, Zeng Qinghong, and his group that are concentrated around Guangzhou that interfered with my father traveling abroad. We hope that the good people in China against the persecution will continue to step forward and work towards ending this crime against humanity.

In terms of concrete actions that are possible for the U.S. government and incoming administration, I would suggest

1. the new president to meet with a group of activists and torture survivors from China, including Falun Gong, even before the inauguration. The diverse and inclusive list of witnesses of this hearing could be a good starting place.
2. the U.S. Government bar entry to any official who could reasonably be considered to have been involved in the decision to deny Zhiwen Wang's exit from China – especially Zeng Qinghong and his cohorts.
3. members of congress who go to China or meet with Chinese officials to check the CECC political prisoner database and be ready with the name of at least one Falun Gong prisoner from the official's province or city to raise with the official.
4. the President, State Department and relevant departments to use all means to bring my father to the U.S. safely as he is already an approved U.S. immigrant and only needs to arrive here to finalize paperwork.
5. to continue escalating the investigation into the persecution and organ harvesting until all facts have surfaced and criminals are brought to justice.

There is no doubt that human rights continues to be an extremely severe issue that must be constantly addressed with the Chinese regime in an open and public way. When the regime manages to take the conversation from public view, it then spins it into a notion that the U.S. has no problem with China's human rights record and therefore everything is ok. My father, husband, and I can all testify that the persecution against Falun Dafa practitioners is very real and is ongoing.

I hope that this issue will continue to escalate and pressure will mount until the regime relents and redresses Falun Dafa and practitioners after all the damage it has done not only to them, but also to the entire society. Falun Dafa practitioners will continue to expose this crime against humanity within China and around the world, but a chorus of voices from governments around the world starting with the United States as a human rights champion will accelerate the end of the persecution. I truly hope the U.S. government can play a stronger and stronger role in the time ahead so that not only my family will be made whole again, but so will all practitioners with families shattered by this terrible injustice.

Thank you.