



**Statement of U.S. Representative Christopher Smith,
Chairman of the Congressional-Executive
Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “Falun Gong in China: Review
and Update”**

December 18, 2012, Washington, DC

In the early 1990s, the Chinese government and the Communist Party welcomed the contributions of the Falun Gong spiritual movement. Its qigong exercises and meditation had health benefits. Its core teachings of "truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance" promoted morality in a society increasingly aware of a spiritual vacuum.

All that changed in 1999, however, when several thousand Falun Gong practitioners peaceably assembled at the Zhongnanhai leadership compound in Beijing. China's leaders were astonished that Falun Gong had grown so large and prominent outside of Party control -- so large that Falun Gong practitioners might outnumber the Communist Party's 60 million members.

Immediately afterwards, the Chinese government and Communist Party began the campaign of persecution against Falun Gong that has now lasted for more than thirteen years. The persecution has been amply documented by the Department of State, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, and many other human rights groups.

The campaign has been severe, brutal, ugly, and vicious. Many tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners were detained and arrested. No one can count those sent to prison for long terms, and too many remain there. More were sentenced to reeducation through labor. Others just "disappeared."

Those released have told of long and brutal interrogations, beatings, sleep deprivation, and torture. Their captors demanded statements and confessions. They demanded that those in custody name other practitioners, better to roll up the movement. Rights groups have documented more than three thousand deaths of practitioners from torture and mistreatment, and doubtless there have been many more who have died in custody, their stories yet untold.

Parallel to the treatment of practitioners was a comprehensive propaganda campaign to demonize the movement. From their radios and televisions, Chinese learned Falun Gong was a "heretical cult organization." The schools taught the same dictated talking points to the young and impressionable.

On September 12, Representative Dana Rohrabacher of California and I co-chaired a joint hearing of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittees on Oversight and Investigations and Africa, Global Health and Human Rights. We heard horrific testimony on the issue of organ harvesting in China.

The witnesses touched on many issues – transplants in Chinese medicine, “transplant tourism,” organ donors, reliance on death row prisoners, and disturbing testimony that Falun Gong practitioners and other prisoners of conscience may have been involuntary victims. For those interested in reviewing the evidence in full, I recommend the transcript of the hearing. One of our witnesses today will review this issue.

In addition to arrests of practitioners, imprisonment, and sentences to reeducation-through-labor (RTL), and deaths, the Chinese government and Communist Party have pressured Falun Gong practitioners to renounce their belief and practice. This “transformation” campaign has been documented by the CECC in its Annual Reports and by other human rights organizations. Amnesty International described the campaign as “a process through which individuals were pressured, often through mental and physical torture, to renounce their belief.”

An extralegal, Party-run security apparatus created in June 1999 to eliminate the Falun Gong movement – the 6-10 Offices -- spearheaded the campaign. The CECC observed this past year official Web sites providing education and training materials for local officials who continue to support this effort to suppress Falun Gong.

The Chinese government and Communist Party have also continued to harass and detain persons who attempted to assist Falun Gong practitioners, including human rights lawyers such as Wei Liangyue, Wang Yonghang, and Gao Zhisheng.

In the campaign against the Falun Gong, we see in high relief so many features of governance in China. The Chinese people’s hopes are the ordinary hopes of mankind – to be free to work, to speak, pray, to move, to enjoy healthy lives, to be free of poisonous pollution, to organize for better workplaces and better pay, and to find justice.

What do they get? It’s repression, unchecked police powers, prisons and labor camps, arbitrary courts, pressures against defense attorneys, punishment of family members as well as individuals, control of the media, blindness to the human costs of the Party’s policies, indifference to life, and demonization of those who dare to disagree or speak out.

We see this in the repression of believers, be they Tibetan Buddhists, members of house churches, or Falun Gong practitioners. We see this in the rough and brutal resort to forced abortions and involuntary sterilizations of Chinese women who dare to hope they could enjoy the same rights as the world’s other women – to decide, on their own, how many children to have.

In this year’s 2012 Annual Report, the Commission urged the Chinese government to:

- permit Falun Gong practitioners to freely practice inside China;

- to freely allow Chinese lawyers to represent citizens who challenge the legality of laws, regulations, rulings, or actions by officials, police, prosecutors, and courts that relate to religion;
- to eliminate criminal and administrative penalties that target religions and spiritual movements and have been used to punish Chinese citizens for exercising their right to freedom of religion.

In the Annual Report, the Commission also called for the elimination of certain articles of law.

- Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law criminalizes using a "cult" to undermine implementation of state laws.
- Article 27 of the PRC Public Security Administration Punishment Law stipulates detention or fines for organizing or inciting others to engage in "cult" activities and for using "cults" or the "guise of religion" to disturb social order or to harm others' health.

Today we repeat those recommendations.

The purpose of this hearing is to allow our panel of experts on China and Falun Gong to review the persecution of Falun Gong by the Chinese government and the Communist Party -- and to update members of the Commission and the general public on recent developments. I think our witnesses for taking time from their schedules to appear today, and I thank them for their courage in doing so.