

**Alan Adler, Executive Director of Friends of Falun Gong USA**  
**Statement to Congressional-Executive Commission on China**  
**December 9, 2002, Open Forum**

**Introduction**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Alan Adler, and I am the Executive Director of Friends of Falun Gong USA. Friends of Falun Gong USA is a nonprofit human rights organization established by concerned Americans who support the freedom of belief of people who practice Falun Gong.

With the abolition of the annual review of China's most favored nation status and with China's accession to the WTO, we would expect this esteemed Commission to aggressively advocate for basic freedom of belief in China. Unfortunately, however, reading this Commission's 2002 annual report, one gets another impression, at least in terms of the Falun Gong. Falun Gong was only mentioned in passing in various sections of the report, when it should have instead been a focal point. Why does Falun Gong deserve more attention and advocacy? The sheer numbers of people affected make the persecution of Falun Gong the number one religious freedom violation in China today, and perhaps the world. According to reports from major media and the Chinese government's own statistics,<sup>1</sup> prior to the ban, there were seventy to one hundred million people practicing Falun Gong in China. That is a group larger than most nations. And when you consider that their family members, friends, and coworkers are also victimized-some are fined, some are jailed, and others are forced to turn in their loved ones-the numbers are absolutely staggering. The group of people affected becomes comparable to the population of the United States.

This brutal suppression has targeted everyone from schoolchildren who do the practice, to grandparents who rely on it to maintain their health, from military commanders, to doctors, to professors, and even judges. Some reports state that roughly half of all prisoners held in China's forced labor camps are Falun Gong adherents.<sup>2</sup> Based on one estimate, this would put the number of Falun Gong in the camps at 2-3 million.<sup>3</sup> Chinese police and guards routinely brutalize Falun Gong prisoners, raping women, binding people in torture devices for weeks on end, stripping them and leaving them outside in below-freezing temperatures, holding them in cages too small for their bodies, and so on. In recent months, we have received reports of people being tortured to death almost daily. Chinese authorities have confiscated and shredded or burned millions of Falun Gong books, and there are even accounts of children in schools being forced to memorize poems denouncing Falun Gong, people being made to trample the photograph of the Falun Gong founder in order to enter train stations, and China's cutthroat college entrance exams now contain questions criticizing the practice. Officials have been given bonuses and promoted as a result of their efforts to persecute Falun Gong.<sup>4</sup> This suppression has permeated every level and every facet of China's society.

It is well known that Falun Gong is currently number one on the Chinese government's hit list. When one considers the gravity of this situation, the amount of media attention Falun Gong has received, and the extensive support of local and state governments, it becomes clear that this Commission and the federal government more broadly need to do more. You have a responsibility to put Falun Gong at the forefront when it comes to human rights and rule of law issues in China.

**Recommendations**

I would like to make the following recommendations:

- **That the Commission make Falun Gong a focal point in its work and future reports.** Falun Gong speakers should be invited to a greater number of events and hearings, and a section of next year's report should be dedicated to Falun Gong, if the situation remains as is or continues to worsen.
- **That the Commission advise our President to speak out.** He has met with Chinese President Jiang Zemin three times this year but has yet to make a public statement in defense of the largest persecuted group in China. Some believe that quiet, behind-the-scenes diplomacy is most effective. I feel that behind-the-scenes diplomacy plays into the hands of China's closed, paranoid regime. The world must hear about this issue and know that others care. The words of the president are needed. His Congress has condemned this persecution and asked that he do so as well.<sup>5</sup> We are still waiting.
- **That the Commission recommend a Senate hearing on this topic.** The House has held a number of hearings and has recently lent unanimous support in the form of House Resolution 188, yet the Senate has been curiously passive.

I'd like to leave you with a few comments. From what I have seen, the Chinese government does not admit that they have a human rights problem, much less that they need to change. It is extremely difficult to engage in fruitful dialogue, to educate, or to reason with a government that flatly denies and routinely whitewashes the grave violations that are occurring. Bold, public, international pressure may be the only truly effective means of change.

Additionally, one of this Commission's recommendations in its annual report was that corporations work to bring about change by giving recommendations to relevant Chinese government entities.<sup>6</sup> On a personal note, I have done business in China for over thirty years and have employed tens of thousands of people there. I have improved workers' rights to the best of my ability. However, I know that even one semi-public statement, such as posting in a factory my company's human rights policy in Chinese, would bring that factory to the immediate attention of the Public Security Bureau and the repercussions would be disastrous. If I were held responsible for the posting, would I be allowed back into China? Would the translator of the document be spared? This is just a simple illustration of the pressure that corporations are under to comply with the repressive environment; one small move brings great risk. I feel that the idea of "developing a long-term collaborative relationship between government and business" is not a realistic approach. Corporations can do little to change the situation without strong support and advocacy on the part of our government.

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<sup>1</sup>Seth Faison, "In Beijing: A Roar of Silent Protestors" (The New York Times, April 27, 1999). Joseph Kahn, "Notoriety Now for Movement's Leader" (The New York Times, April 27, 1999). Renee Schoof, "Growing Group Poses a Dilemma for China" (The Associated Press, April 26, 1999). Bay Fang, "An Opiate of the Masses?" (U.S. News & World Report, February 22, 1999).

<sup>2</sup>Australian Broadcasting Corporation, "Calls for End to China's Falun Gong Re-Education Camps" (July 4, 2001).

<sup>3</sup>The Laogai Research Foundation estimates that currently there are between four and six million prisoners held in China's forced labor camps (laogai). <http://www.laogai.org/chinese/aboutus.html>

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Tamora Vidaillet, "Shandong Boss Dark Horse for China Leadership" (Reuters, November 5, 2002); Ian Johnson, "Death Trap: How One Chinese City Resorted to Atrocities to Control Falun Dafa" (Wall Street Journal, December 26, 2000).

<sup>5</sup>This is in reference to H.Con.Res. 217, H.Res. 188, and numerous Dear Colleague letters.

<sup>6</sup>Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 2002 Annual Report, Page 7, bullet 3.