

Slander and Persecution of Falun Gong in China and in the United States

LOSING THE RIGHT TO APPEAL

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Under China's constitution, there is an appeals process. Yet Falun Gong practitioners who appealed peacefully by quietly meditating or displaying a banner were detained, beaten and even sentenced to long prison terms. Some were tortured and killed despite the fact that every single appeal Falun Gong practitioners made was peaceful and legal.

Practitioners outside of China took their appeals to the free world. While they received significant support from the international community, the Chinese government has made it more difficult to appeal, even in the free world. To achieve this, they used slander, the creation of a blacklist, threats to family members of practitioners, intimidation of local officials who support Falun Gong, and harassment of practitioners abroad.²

While every single demonstration that Falun Gong does is peaceful and practitioners follow principles of "truthfulness-compassion-tolerance," Chinese authorities use slander to convince foreign governments that these innocent people may pose a threat. For example, in an effort to ruin the reputation of Falun Gong, the Chinese government staged a self-immolation incident on Tiananmen Square in January of 2001. While none of the participants in the self-immolation were practitioners, the Chinese government used the self-immolation incident as the centerpiece of its campaign to discredit Falun Gong.³ The International Education Development Bureau reported to the United Nations in August of 2001 evidence that the Chinese government staged the self-immolation.⁴ Nevertheless, fabricated lies of this nature are used by the state-controlled media in China and are also shown by Chinese channels in foreign countries, including the United States.

There is also pressure on overseas practitioners not to appeal on behalf of Falun Gong. When practitioners in the United States tell people the facts about the persecution, their families in China are threatened. In America, practitioners' apartments have been broken into⁵, people have been beaten up, a car filled with Falun Gong literature was firebombed, and phones are wire tapped. Even U. S. officials are pressured by the Chinese government to rescind proclamations given to Falun Gong.⁶ On February 21, 2002, the Wall Street Journal reported "The Chinese government, not content to persecute the Falun Gong in China, has [urged] local U. S. officials to shun or even persecute them right here in America. The approach. . . tends to combine gross disinformation with scare tactics and, in some cases, slyly implied diplomatic and commercial pressure."

In another effort to silence Falun Gong practitioners, the Chinese government pressures foreign countries to deny them entry. For example, many practitioners, including U. S. citizens, were denied entry into Iceland during Jiang Zemin's visit. Once the general public learned of this affront to civil liberties, three thousand Icelandic citizens demonstrated on behalf of Falun Gong and wrote apologies in their major newspapers. Unfortunately, citizens in other countries may not even know when their government cooperates with the communist regime. Last April, German media reported that Falun Gong practitioners were abruptly forced to clear their hotel rooms. The Chinese government's pressure is not limited to pressure on governments alone. For example, when Jiang Zemin visited the United States in October, Falun Gong practitioners lost their reservation of a ballroom at a hotel in Houston. Practitioners were

planning a conference one day prior to the arrival of Jiang. The ballroom was canceled 45 minutes before their conference was to begin despite the fact that the practitioner making the arrangement had a signed contract in hand, which had been paid in full two weeks prior to the event.

Practitioners and supporters in America hope that the United States will take the lead in ensuring that the peaceful Falun Gong practitioners, who are unjustly persecuted by the Chinese government, have the opportunity to appeal in the free world.

I recommend that the Congressional-Executive Commission on China do the following: Urge the U. S. government to investigate and take legal action against illegal activities by Chinese diplomats concerning harassment of U. S. citizens and residents who practice Falun Gong; Urge the U. S. Senate to hold a hearing on House Resolution 188 once it is reintroduced in the 108th Congress; and make Falun Gong the focal point of the Commission's work and future reports.

Thank you for accepting my written statement for the record.

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² For background information and media reports on the PRC's harassment of practitioners in America visit <http://www.faluninfo.net/specialreports/freedomunderattack>.

³ *Torture is Breaking Falun Gong: China Systematically Eradicating Group*. Washington Post, August 5, 2001.

⁴ International Education Development Bureau Statement before the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Fifty -third session, Agenda item 6, August 2001. The regime points to a supposed self-immolation incident in Tiananmen Square on January 23, 2001 as "proof" that Falun Gong is an "evil cult" However, an analysis of the PRC's Government's newscast footage of the incident shows that the event was staged by the government.

⁵ *Beijing's Long Arms: How China is Suppressing Falun Gong in America*, <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com> , December 2002.

⁶ *Will Chinese Repression Play in Peoria*. The Wall Street Journal, Thursday, February 21, 2002