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Humankind at a Crossroads: Universal Human Rights versus Commercialized Forced Organ Harvesting from Living People

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Good afternoon to you all.

I first of all would like to thank you for inviting me on this World Summit on combating and preventing forced organ harvesting. It is an honour for me to be one of the panel speakers today.

As a member of the Committee of Foreign Affairs in the Belgian Parliament, my focus lies on human rights. In general, and more specifically, on the political situations in Asia, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, which are my main fields of interest.

I will speak to you about forced organ harvesting today from a political and ideological perspective as a member of the Belgian National Parliament. Thus far, forced organ harvesting hasn't gotten a lot of attention in the Belgian press, and subsequently from politics. That is, until recently, when ratification of the treaty against trading in human organs from the Council of Europe was on the table in our Committee of Foreign Affairs.

In my opinion, however, forced organ harvesting should get a lot more of attention from both the media and policymakers because it constitutes an unmistakable crime against humanity.

In my understanding, forced organ harvesting on living people has two main motivations: One is commercial, as we can see with gangs who earn a living by organ trade in Latin America, for example. The other is political and ideological, and however cruel and wrong commercial organ trading, maybe it is a second motivation that frightens us the most, and on which I will focus today.

The main perpetrator today when it comes to politically driven organ harvesting, is without any doubt, China. Beijing persecutes different groups on ideological and political grounds because their affiliation does not match the totalitarian communist state ideology that Xi Jinping wants to impose upon all citizens. The organ harvesting of Chinese minority groups also has a commercial side of course, because the organs get sold on the market. But most importantly, they are victimized because the government sees them as a threat to their ideology.

Groups like the Uyghurs from Xinjiang, a Turkish ethnic minority, and most of all, the spiritual movement of Falun Gong practitioners are today's victims of state organized organ harvesting in China. This organ harvesting is part of a broader persecution system that the Chinese government uses to erase the religious, cultural and philosophical identities of these different groups. Some would go as far as calling the Chinese persecution programs in which they use forced organ harvesting, genocidal.

Now, the methods the Chinese government has deployed to eradicate groups like the Falun Gong practitioners and Uyghurs, indeed have all the characteristics of a genocide. We as a political group have focused particularly on Falun Gong, because they are in numbers, the biggest victims today of forced organ harvesting in China. In their case, China has set up an entire bureaucracy with its centralized chain of command structure from the local policy level, up to the central government in Beijing. They operate with the sole purpose of erasing Falun Gong, and its practitioners. The practitioners get locked-up, are being brainwashed psychologically and physically tortured, executed, and their organs get forcefully harvested.

Media propaganda also plays an important role in the Chinese persecution program by turning public opinion against Falun Gong with false information about their practices and philosophy.

How is this possible? How can a country in today's developed world that accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, act so cruelly?

The answer is quite simple. Chinese decision makers have a different conception of human rights than we do in the West. More so they do not care about human rights at all, and have no regard for human life, if those lives don't further their internal communist agenda, and their ambitions to become a global superpower.

This way, a stance against China becomes a stance for human rights around the world. Because China doesn't mean to limit itself to what happens inside its own borders. It wants to exert influence all around the world, and advanced their totalitarian model.

Now, I will place the topic of forced organ harvesting into a Belgian political context.

In Belgium, this phenomenon has received too little attention, like I said earlier.

You could ask 100 different people about forced organ harvesting in China, and it's likely none of them have ever read or heard about it. I personally got acquainted with the problem by viewing the ruling of the China tribunal in the spring of 2020, through a letter of the organization and transplant abuse in China.

This ruling brought evidence of forced organ harvesting to light. I then started doing my own research and came into contact with representatives of Falun Gong, Falun Dafa in Belgium. They offered me a lot of insightful information about these shocking events surrounding organ harvesting in China. Later, I was present as a spectator and a guest at the World Summit in September 2021 and the conference in October 2001. And the various speeches from different perspectives further sharpens my knowledge about this topic.

When I gathered enough information, I immediately started to take action in our parliament to put the persecution and forced organ harvesting against Falun Gong on the political agenda.

This took on many forms. I did oral and written questions about the topic and the measures our government was taking on the subject. I wrote interpolations and gave recommendations about it to the government. I gave a public presentation of our views on China and the minority situation there. I highlighted the position of our own Belgian government on these matters, with regards to the EU investment agreement that is being negotiated, and the Belgian Chinese extradition treaty and rewrote eventually our own resolution.

The last resolution adopted by the European Parliament dates back to 2013, and really had little effect in practice. Our resolution has the intent of strongly condemning the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, and formulates a number of recommendations to the Belgian government. The text focuses on the case of Falun Gong as the biggest victim group of forced organ harvesting and persecution in China, but not

exclusively. It is a broad resolution, and it targets the repression of all prisoners of conscience by Beijing. The specific recommendations we make is our diplomatic condemnation of these crimes against humanity in the Belgium international relations. And we also ask that harsh actions be taken against the Chinese regime, because talk is cheap.

Of course, we demand from the Belgian government to take a whole different approach regarding China and rethink our bilateral relations.

In order not to become accomplices in the big crimes they commit, we must end investment agreements that only make Beijing rich and cost us a lot of money. Those one sided agreements have always led to broken Chinese promises about equal playing fields and liberating their markets in the past, while they fully penetrate our European economy with unfair trading tactics.

Our European money flows to Chinese state controlled companies and nothing comes back. And of course, that money is recouped by the government that uses it for their policies and military industrial complex to domestically suppress minority groups and exert dominance outside their borders.

My political party doesn't want any part of this and that is why we demand the Belgian government to put an end to the negotiations around the Belgian Chinese investment agreement.

We also demand from our government that they suspend the recently ratified extradition treaty with China. This treaty has been heavily criticized by human rights groups, and rightfully so. Beijing uses these types of extradition treaties to continue silencing and controlling opposition groups in other countries, because they fear being delivered to China, where they risk persecution, or worse. The extradition treaty between Belgium and China forms a danger for persecuted minorities, like Falun Gong practitioners, dissident activists, Uyghurs, etc. China can easily claim someone to be a criminal and Belgium has no means to verify that information. Belgium claims they have protection measures for persecuted groups in the treaty. But there is no way for our government to verify due process and human rights in China. In the Chinese operations, a foxhunt extradition of persecuted groups already happened in different countries.

We will also propose a hearing with experts on the subject in our committee of foreign affairs when our resolution will be handled. Recently, there was also a resolution exclusively focusing on the protection of the Uyghurs in China that passed through our parliament by the ruling majority. We tried to broaden into resolution towards all persecuted minority groups in China, also including Falun Gong, but this proposal or this amendment got voted away by the majority parties. That is why we want with our own resolution to be the first political group putting the persecution of Falun Gong on the agenda.

To end this presentation, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to my better understanding of the horrendous, but so very important phenomenon of forced organ harvesting. Especially I would like to thank Dr. Harold King for his insights and cooperation, and the Falun Gong representatives of Belgium as there are Mr. Nico Bijens and Mr. Philippe Petitjean, who offered us crucial knowledge in our efforts to take political action on this topic.

This ends my presentation for you today. I hope it was useful to you. And I would like to thank you once more for inviting me on your conference today. And I wish you all the best and a lot of success in combating forced organ harvesting.

Thank you so much.