



INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY WEBINAR

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

Erping Zhang

United States

Thank you for inviting me to this conference.

Two years ago, the world was shocked by drone footage showing blindfolded Uighur detainees confined in a labor camp in Xinjiang. It awakened the world to the true nature of the Chinese Communist Party or CCP, its disregard for basic human dignity, and the threat it poses to the rest of the world. Tragically, this form of suppression, and more, have been used against practitioners of Falun Gong all across China.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a traditional spiritual practice of the Buddha school. It consists of five sets of gentle meditation exercises and a moral philosophy centered on the tenets of truth, compassion, and tolerance. After its introduction to the public in 1992, government officials actually praised Falun Gong for saving a great amount of insurance costs for the government, owing to its health benefits, and for stabilizing a Chinese society seeing increasing social disparity through its moral-centered teachings.

However, then-CCP leader Jiang Zemin feared the practice would become an ideological competition to the Party on account of its popularity, independence, and traditional spiritual content. In July 1999, the CCP launched a persecution campaign to eradicate Falun Gong, which continues to this day.

With 70 to 100 million practitioners in 1999, Falun Gong is the largest group that the CCP has been trying to eliminate. Even today, after 2 decades of brutal persecution, Freedom House estimates between 7 to 20 million people in China still practice Falun Gong underground. Our own estimate is between 20-40 million people. Eliminating Falun Gong has been a top priority of the CCP for more than two decades. The methods that the party state employs to force Falun Gong practitioners to stop practicing are beyond horrifying.

The United Nations special rapporteur on torture estimated in 2006 that 66% of reported torture cases in Chinese detention facilities involved Falun Gong practitioners. The confirmed death toll due to torture and abuse in custody is over 4,700 now, though the actual number is believed to be many times higher. What's even more horrifying is the state-sanctioned practice of forced organ harvesting from Falun Gong practitioners.

In response to the persecution, Falun Gong practitioners have launched the largest peaceful resistance movement in modern Chinese history. From the basements and backrooms of homes across China, Falun Gong practitioners produce and distribute pamphlets and DVDs to expose the CCP's lies and crimes. They also distribute free copies of internet freedom software that have helped millions in China to bypass the Great Firewall to see beyond the blinds of authoritarian censorship.

These efforts have had a profound impact on Chinese society and encouraged over 300 million Chinese people to withdraw from the CCP or its affiliated organizations.

The implication of the CCP's human rights abuses extends beyond the borders of China. Other than the commonly-known issue of slave labor, the ethics of organ transplantation should concern the free world. Many recipients of organs forcibly harvested from Falun Gong practitioners are actually not from China, and with countries subsidizing their healthcare fees for post-transplant recovery, they might be unknowingly acting as accomplices to the CCP's crime against humanity.

In other words, China's human rights abuses and the international community's inaction have material consequences to the West – morally, and socially. The free world ought to pay attention to societal needs and recognize the benefits gained from a humanitarian approach.

We recommend Western governments make a conscious effort to separate the Chinese Communist Party from the Chinese people in public statements, as they often represent opposite interests. In this way, when Western countries criticize the CCP's human rights records, the CCP cannot hide behind Chinese people and accuse critics of being "anti-China" or "offending the Chinese people."

We also recommend that the EU and the US provide additional financial support to software tools circumventing China's internet blockade. This will help encourage information freedom and allow the Chinese people to see beyond the Great Firewall.

In every historical era, there is a defining moment that calls for basic human conscience and dignity in making this world a better place. Former U.S. ambassador to Hungary and cofounder of the National Endowment for Democracy Mark Palmer said: "Falun Gong ... is, in my judgment, the greatest single spiritual movement in Asia today. There is nothing that begins to compare with it in courage and importance." Despite the plight of Falun Gong practitioners in China, as Aristotle said, "It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light." With history on our side and with the support from so many kind-hearted people like the ones on this panel, we are very hopeful that the day will soon arrive when the biggest communist tyranny ends.

Thank you.