



June 3, 2017

Re: Open letter: Live organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience in China and the leadership role of nurses at the UPMC US-Sino Forum, 2017

As nurses in the free world our voices may speak for the victims, for oppressed nurses in China who may lack self determination and for the goodness in humanity. Our actions may inspire moral courage.

Dear Nursing Colleague,

Knowing your commitment to upholding nursing values, ethics and human rights I am writing to you today as a nurse advocate and representative of the Washington D.C. NGO, Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting, DAFOH, with an urgent concern: the human rights crisis in transplant medicine of state sanctioned, forced live organ harvesting from non-consenting prisoners, and prisoners of conscience in China. Nurses have a central role to play in seeing an end to this evil crime that is unprecedented in history.

The level of this concern is now elevated by the upcoming UPMC US-Sino Forum as the goal of this event is to open a platform for cross-collaboration with China for evidence based treatment modalities. Of particular concern is that many countries have unrestricted, and lucrative, collaborative agreements with transplant hospitals in mainland China suggesting the likelihood of unwitting collusion with human rights atrocities. This UPMC forum may serve as an opportunity for nursing leaders to ethically position themselves and to raise awareness about this issue.

Although China announced an end to the unethical practice of taking prisoners organs, the transplant numbers there are increasing and second only to the U.S. Despite an inadequate public organ donation system, Chinese authorities are widely promoting transplant tourism and have boasted increasing their 169 transplant centers to over 300, and are seeking acceptance into the global transplant community. The regime continues to defensively evade transparency and refuses unbiased investigation to substantiate claims of reform. A mass of evidence of grave human rights atrocities and reports of live organ harvesting against the severely persecuted spiritual Falun Gong, in particular, has brought worldwide attention to this urgent problem.

Human Rights Watch recently reported that across China police are collecting blood samples for DNA from individual citizens and those convicted or suspected of "crimes" for a national database without oversight, transparency, or privacy protections suggesting that vulnerable groups already targeted for increased government surveillance, including migrant workers, dissidents, and minority Muslim Uyghurs will be increasingly vulnerable to abuse. Religious groups including Falun Gong, Tibetans, House Christians and Catholics are reportedly victims of organ harvesting and forced medical testing in detention where they are tortured and subjected to harsh conditions making such medical concern implausible.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/05/15/china-police-dna-database-threatens-privacy>

Organ harvesting was also recently reported by Nigerians who called on President Muhammadu Buhari to investigate urgent claims by Nigerian workers jailed in China of mysterious deaths and organ trafficking in Chinese prisons. <https://face2faceafrica.com/article/nigeria-in-china-prison>

BACKGROUND

Forced organ harvesting refers to unethical surgical solid organ procurement without consent. International ethical guidelines prohibit taking organs from prisoners under any conditions. Although organ harvesting has been reported in several regions, it is only in China that it is widely practiced and state sanctioned.

In contrast to organ trafficking, China is the only country in the world where forced organ harvesting is subsidized by courts, police and the military, making it a second lane occult transplant business, worth billions annually, that runs in parallel to a recent officially announced small voluntary public organ donation system. Due to secrecy and the lack of transparency behind the iron curtain, specific data is impossible. Authorities claim that prisoners organs will be added to the new public system, making the white-washing of unethical and illegal procurement a likely possibility. China also declines access to any form of organ tracking system in its transplant centers and only provides unverified total national transplant numbers that make transparency and scrutiny impossible. The number of transplants performed in China far surpasses what could be supplied by death row convicts and organ donation remains taboo in Chinese culture.

A CALL TO ACTION

The nursing community has a responsibility and moral obligation to be knowledgeable about this crisis, have access to ethical and legal guidelines, support nurses as whistleblowers, and be prepared to offer information for informed consent to unwitting patients and families considering transplant tourism.

Although little is known about the conditions and experiences of nurses working in transplantation in mainland China, survivors and family members reporting into New York based Chinese news portal, Minghui.org, state that nurses and doctors within the military prison and hospital system in China have played key roles in persecutions, torture, forced medical testing, medical experimentation and forced live organ procurement of prisoners of conscience. Hundreds of reports by nurses who were persecuted for their beliefs at the hands of the regime have also been published.

To not act while knowing about it equates to being somewhat complicit with this atrocity. This calls to mind the Nazi Holocaust, when the people of the world stood by and waited silently for leadership to act. Live forced organ harvesting is, for some, too horrible to believe. As nurses we must not become bystanders.

LANDMARK ACTIONS

-U.S. House of Representatives' unanimous passage of House Resolution 343 concerning forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience in China
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-resolution/343/text>

-Amnesty International Special Report 2017: China's Deadly Secrets
<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1758492017ENGLISH.PDF>

-Pennsylvania passed Legislation in 2017 against forced organ harvesting in China
<http://www.palegis.us/bills/?q=2017/0/N/HR27>

-Press Release: Washington, Feb. 27, 2017: Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting: China attempts to dodge scrutiny on organ trade with falsehoods about US transplant practices -

<http://www.dafoh.org/immediate-release-doctors-forced-organ-harvesting-china-attempts-dodge-scrutiny-organ-trade-falsehoods-us-transplant-practices/>

-Italy passed protective transplant law in 2016 that confronts forced organ harvesting.

http://www.camera.it/_dati/leg17/lavori/stampati/pdf/17PDL0028980.pdf

<http://www.dafoh.org/italian-senate-passes-bill-to-confront-organ-harvesting-in-march-2015/>

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/23/asia/china-organ-harvesting/index.html>

-International Society of Nephrology Joins Vatican Call Against Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism

<http://www.theisn.org/news/item/3122-isn-joins-vatican-call-against-organ-trafficking-and-transplant-tourism>

-Statement of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences Summit on Organ Trafficking 2016

http://www.pas.va/content/accademia/en/events/2017/organ_trafficking/statement.html

-European Parliament's adoption of Written Declaration 48. <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/2125771-europe-takes-another-step-to-censure-organ-harvesting-in-china/>

-Investigative report by independent investigators David Kilgour, Ethan Gutmann and David Matas Bloody Harvest/The Slaughter—An Update. <http://www.david-kilgour.com/>

-U.S. Congressional hearing by the Foreign Affairs Committee, Organ Harvesting: An Examination of a Brutal Practice. <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/joint-subcommittee-hearing-organ-harvesting-examination-brutal-practice/>

With endorsements from ANA and NLN, DAFOH, a 501(c)(3) NGO has a large international, fully voluntary staff and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 2016. We have been active internationally with press releases, forums, conference booths and petitions at the grass roots level. We have raised awareness and served as a resource with the nurses and doctors of Congress in Washington, members of parliaments internationally, ambassadors to the United Nations and lawmakers on both national and local levels.

<http://atruechineserenaisance.blogspot.com/2015/05/nurse-calls-attention-to-issue-of.html>

<http://www.dafoh.org/voice-of-nursing-in-transplant-ethics-moral-courage/>

[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(15\)60485-8/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)60485-8/fulltext)

<https://m.facebook.com/DAFOH/> @DAFOH_org on Twitter

To learn more about how you might contribute to this important effort and for additional resources, information, and educational materials please contact me with any questions you may have. DAFOH nurses and doctors also offer free on site presentations internationally.

Sincerely,

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