



# CHINA - SPIRITUAL & RELIGIOUS REPRESSION

## Repression of Spiritual and Religious Groups in China

Religious observance outside official channels in China remains tightly circumscribed. In March 2005, the Chinese authorities promulgated a new 'Regulation on Religious Affairs' aimed at strengthening official controls on religious activities

- Criminal charges such as "illegal assembly" and "spreading rumours and incitement to disturb social order" have been used against Christian congregations meeting in unofficial churches.
- In the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and Tibet, "religious extremism" is regarded by authorities as one of "three evil forces" along with "separatism" and "terrorism"
- Unregistered **Catholics and Protestants** associated with unofficial house churches were harassed, arbitrarily detained and imprisoned.
- Freedom of religion continues to be severely restricted in Tibet and other Tibetan Areas of China, including the arrests and torture of many **Buddhist monks and nuns**.
- The authorities continue to use the global 'war on terror' to justify harsh repression of the mainly **Muslim Uighur community** in the XUAR. Repression resulted in the closure of 'unofficial' mosques and arrests of imams.
- The **Falun Gong** spiritual movement was first banned in July 1999 with a crackdown renewed in April 2005. A large but unknown number of Falun Gong practitioners remain in detention, where they are at high risk of torture.

### Christians in China

In the lead up to Christmas of 2004 the Chinese Government announced measures that claimed to be a step forward in religious freedoms. However they made little change in Chinese policy. They have merely defined the supervisory role over religious affairs for various governmental departments. There is nothing that would curtail the ongoing patterns of arbitrary detentions, arrests, sentencing and demolition of churches and buildings.



Protestantism and Catholicism are officially recognised, but are only allowed to organise under the control and scrutiny of the authorities - for example Catholicism exists in the form of 'Patriotic Catholic Church of China' which is not united with Rome, and its Bishops are chosen by Beijing and not by the Pope. So members of the Roman Catholic Church are heavily persecuted.

**Zhang Rongliang** — leader of the China for Christ Church, one of the largest 'house church' networks in China and leader of the Protestant Fangcheng Mother Church — was detained for communicating with people overseas (a ground for imprisonment in China). The police searched every household in his village and confiscated Christian DVDs, other materials and photos revealing Zhang's connections with foreigners. He has already been imprisoned five times for his beliefs and for a total of 12 years, during which he was severely tortured.

### Personal Cost



**Pastor Zhang Rongliang**, an underground church leader who had been repeatedly detained and imprisoned since 1976, was sentenced in June 2006 to seven and a half years' imprisonment on charges of illegally crossing the border and fraudulently obtaining a passport.

In August 2004, three Christian underground church leaders were sentenced to prison terms ranging from one to three years on charges of "supplying state secrets to foreign entities" having documented the demolition of churches in Jiangsu and Hebei Province, and the detention of around 300 members of the churches' congregations.

The US-based Cardinal Kung Foundation estimates there are around 50 members of the unofficial Catholic clergy who are either in prison, labour camps, or whose whereabouts are unknown following detention by the authorities. Many are elderly. These bishops and priests were all sentenced or detained as a direct result of exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of religion, or defending the right to religious freedom for members of their congregations.

## Persecution of Falun Gong

- When the Falun Gong spiritual movement was first banned in July 1999, police rounded up thousands of practitioners in a Beijing stadium.
- A Beijing official clarified that since the group had been banned as a “heretical organisation”, any activities linked to Falun Gong were illegal.
- Amnesty International has raised concerns that the official campaign of public vilification of Falun Gong in the official Chinese press has created a climate of hatred against Falun Gong practitioners in China which may be encouraging acts of violence against them.
- More than 250,000 people in China are being detained in camps known as ‘Re-education through Labour’, on vaguely defined charges having never seen a lawyer, never been to a court, and with no form of judicial supervision. It is unknown how many Falun Gong members are detained in these camps.

## Torture of Falun Gong detainees

Falun Gong members are at a high risk of torture while detained.

Torture and ill-treatment is endemic and widespread in a wide variety of state institutions. It is frequently used as a punishment against those deemed to be “subversive” or “resisting reform”.

Common methods of torture include kicking, beating, electric shocks, suspension by the arms, shackling in painful positions, and sleep and food deprivation. Gender-specific forms of torture, including rape and sexual abuse, have also been reported.

## Report on alleged live organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners

A report published by independent researchers David Matas and David Kilgour on 6th July 2006, concludes that large numbers of Falun Gong practitioners are victims of ‘systematic’ organ harvesting, whilst still alive, throughout China.

Amnesty International is investigating the Falun Gong organ harvesting allegations. Our investigations are being hampered by the difficulty of collecting reliable evidence in China, including official restrictions on access for international human rights organisations.

There is, however, a widely documented practice of the buying and selling of organs of death penalty prisoners in China. The lack of transparency surrounding such practices makes it impossible to determine whether written consent was obtained.

It is unknown how many Falun Gong practitioners are being executed by the Chinese authorities. While Chinese authorities conceal national statistics on the death penalty as a “state secret”, various sources indicate China may be executing between 10,000 -15,000 people a year.

### BEIJING OLYMPICS

Falun Gong practitioners are being targeted in a ‘clean up’ leading to the Olympics.

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## Individual Costs



*Bu Dongwei*

**Bu Dongwei** is a Falun Gong practitioner who is currently being held in a Reeducation through Labour (RTL) facility in Beijing after being assigned to two-and-a-half years’ RTL on 19 June 2006 for “resisting the implementation of national law and disturbing social order” after police discovered Falun Gong literature at his home.

He is reportedly being forced to work six days a week gluing together paper bags and other packing materials and to undergo ‘study classes’ in the evenings. His family are allowed to visit him once a month, but the facility is located far from their home and they can only go every 2-3 months.

Bu appears to have lost weight and his eyesight has deteriorated during his time in detention.

**Deng Shiying** reportedly died on 19 July 2003, the day after her release from Jilin Women’s Prison in Changchun City, Jilin Province, where she was serving a seven-year prison sentence in connection with producing and distributing information describing human rights violations against *Falun Gong* practitioners in China. According to *Falun Gong* sources, she was beaten by other inmates, apparently prompted by prison officials, shortly before her release.

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