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China: Falun Gong

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Executive summary

Falun Gong is not considered a religion for the purposes of the refugee convention. It is a practice that uses meditation techniques and physical exercise for health and peace of mind. Those who practise Falun Gong do not necessarily see themselves as expressing a political opinion, but the Chinese state banned the movement in 1999, outlawing it as an 'evil cult' and they are viewed as a threat to the Communist Party. Where decision makers find that a Falun Gong practitioner is at risk of persecution on return to China, then the Convention ground will be 'political opinion'.

The reported current numbers of Falun Gong practitioners vary and are difficult to verify, with sources providing a range of between 7 million and 40 million out of a population of 1.4 billion. Falun Gong reportedly remains active throughout China.

Falun Gong practitioners face harassment, arrest and detention with members being sentenced to long prison terms. Detained practitioners are reportedly subjected to various methods of physical and psychological coercion, including torture in attempts to force them to renounce their beliefs and practice. Deaths in custody occur and forced organ harvesting (prior to or after execution) is reported on a significant scale, although denied by the state.

Falun Gong practitioners are subject to surveillance through facial recognition video cameras, more commonly in urban public places and through heavily monitored apps like WeChat, leading to their detection, identification, and detention.

The country guidance case of [LL \(Falun Gong, Convention Reason, Risk\) China CG \[2005\] UKAIT 00122](#) found that those who engage in activities that are likely to bring them to the attention of the authorities are likely to be at risk of persecution and/or serious harm. This includes: the public practise of Falun Gong exercises; recruitment of new members; dissemination of Falun Gong information; those who have previously come to the adverse attention of the authorities for their membership, or perceived membership of Falun Gong and has been detained/re-educated and warned against continuing Falun Gong activity, ignores that warning. (Para 37)

The country guidance case of [LL](#) also found that '...absent special factors, there will not normally be any risk sufficient to amount to "real risk" from the Chinese authorities for a person who practices Falun Gong in private and with discretion.' (Para 35)

In cases where it is found that a Falun Gong practitioner would only practice in private on return, the reasons for such 'discretion' must be considered. If a person conceals their beliefs due to fear of persecution, they should also be considered as a refugee.

In Hong Kong Falun Gong is not illegal and is practised openly. In general, a practitioner is unlikely to be at risk of treatment from state actors that amounts to persecution or serious harm.

Each case, however, must be considered on its facts with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they are likely to be at risk.

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Assessment

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is information in the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because they are a Falun Gong practitioner.
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a grant of asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave is likely, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of

exclusions than refugee status).

- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed political opinion.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.3 Falun Gong is regarded as a practice rather than a religion (see [Falun Gong](#)). Decision makers should not therefore treat Falun Gong as a religion within the meaning of the Refugee Convention.
- 2.1.4 In the country guidance case of [LL \(Falun Gong, Convention Reason, Risk\) China CG \[2005\] UKAIT 00122](#) (heard 29 July 2005 and promulgated 9 August 2005), the Upper Tribunal (UT) accepted that Falun Gong members do not constitute a PSG within the terms of the Refugee Convention for reasons described in the Court of Appeal (CoA) judgment in [L China v The Secretary Page 6 of 33 of State for the Home Department \[2004\] EWCA Civ 1441](#) (heard 21 September 2004 and promulgated 03 November 2004). The CoA found that Falun Gong members do not form a PSG because they ‘... possessed no immutable characteristics. Membership is a matter of choice, and a person can become a member and then cease to be a member at any time. The fact that members of the Falun Gong were persecuted could not itself qualify them for this purpose as members of "a particular social group", because it has been repeatedly stated that the particular social group must exist independently of the persecution’ (para 25).
- 2.1.5 Regarding political opinion, the UT in [LL](#) held that:
‘It may be that members of Falun Gong do not see themselves as expressing a political opinion, and would certainly reject the proposition that they were a violent cult. Many practitioners would ascribe a spiritual dimension to their activity... Nevertheless, it seems clear to us on the objective evidence that the Chinese government imputes political opinion to them because of concern for their ability to mobilise public opinion on a very substantial scale outside the established structure of the Communist party, and they see this as a threat to the Communist Party and hence the state’ (para 32).
- 2.1.6 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds see the Asylum

3. Risk

a. Risk from the state

- 3.1.1 Those who engage in Falun Gong activities that bring them to the attention of the authorities are likely to be at risk of persecution and/or serious harm. Activities that may attract adverse attention include:
- the public practice of Falun Gong exercises
 - recruitment of new members
 - dissemination of Falun Gong information
 - those who have previously come to the adverse attention of the authorities for their actual or perceived membership of Falun Gong.
- 3.1.2 Each case, however, must be considered on its facts with the onus on the person to demonstrate that are likely to be at risk.
- 3.1.3 Falun Gong uses meditation techniques and physical exercise to achieve good health and peace of mind. The number of those in China, currently believed to be practising Falun Gong ranges from 7 to 10 million although some sources suggest that the total number is between 20 to 40 million, out of a population of over 1.4 billion. Falun Gong reportedly remains active throughout China. (see [What is Falun Gong?](#), [History](#) and [Religious demography](#)).
- 3.1.4 The government outlawed the Falun Gong movement in 1999. Falun Gong is regarded as an 'evil cult' by the Chinese government and is on the list of banned groups published on the China Anti-Cult (xie jiao) website. Criminal law provides for prosecution for persons belonging to groups considered 'cult organisations', with punishment of up to life in prison (see [History](#) and [State treatment of Falun Gong practitioners](#)).
- 3.1.5 Falun Gong practitioners face harassment, arrest and detention with members being sentenced to long prison terms. Detained practitioners are reportedly subjected to various methods of physical and psychological coercion, including torture, sexual abuse and involuntary drug administration in attempts to force them to renounce their beliefs and practice. According to Freedom House, dozens of Falun Gong practitioners were reported to have died in custody, or shortly after their release, in recent years although information is lacking on the nature and cause of death, including whether they were due to treatment (or lack of action) by the state. The Falun Dafa Information Center (FDIC), the official press office of the Falun Gong movement, reported that 6,925 Falun Gong practitioners were arrested in 2020, 622 sentenced to prison and 83 deaths. It was further reported that in 2021, there were 5,152 arrests, 1,372 sentenced to prison and 180 deaths. Minghui, a website which reports on Falun Gong, reported 1,944 incidents of practitioners being arrested or harassed in January and April 2023. The actual number of these instances is believed to be much higher than the reported number due to risks and difficulties in confirming details of such cases (see [Arrests](#)).

- 3.1.6 In periods where scrutiny and criticism of the Chinese state is heightened, Falun Gong practitioners face increased interest in them and their activities, for example the Chinese authorities launched a "Zero Out" campaign in the spring of 2020 to escalate harassment of Falun Gong members, leading to a reported 6.7 fold increase over 2019 by the end of 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the National Security Law in Hong Kong was introduced and during high-profile occasions such as the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. During the period of January 2020 to 1 March 2022, the FDIC reported 34,000 arrests, incidents of harassment, or deaths of Falun Gong practitioners in China. Minghui reported a 116% increase in arrest and harassment cases in March and April 2023 compared to 624 total arrest and harassment incidents reported in January and February, due to The CCPs annual political meetings in March 2023 and the 24th anniversary of the demonstration that took place on April 25, 1999 (see [Arrests](#)).
- 3.1.7 Falun Gong practitioners have been imprisoned for accessing blocked websites, using illegal internet circumvention tools, and publishing messages about the spiritual movement on social media. Heavily monitored apps like WeChat, lead to the detection, identification, and detention of those suspected to be involved in Falun Gong practices, although the scale and extent is unclear due to a lack of disclosure from the Chinese state and the difficulty in investigating allegations from Falun Gong organisations (see [Surveillance](#) and [Arrests](#)).
- 3.1.8 Falun Gong practitioners are subject to surveillance through facial recognition video cameras, more commonly found in urban public places, including the transport system although they are said to be expanding nationwide (see [Surveillance](#)).
- 3.1.9 Falun Gong practitioners are long thought to have been subjected to forced organ harvesting whilst in detention (either prior to or after execution). An international expert Tribunal initiated by, but independent of, the International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China (ETAC), comprised of lawyers, academics, ethicists, medical professionals and human rights advocates, was formed in 2019 to investigate forced organ harvesting. The Tribunal found that forced organ harvesting had been committed for years on a significant scale and that Falun Gong practitioners were one, and probably the main source of organ supply (see [Organ harvesting](#)).
- 3.1.10 On 4 May 2022 the European Parliament expressed serious concern about the reports of persistent, systematic, inhumane, and state-sanctioned organ harvesting from Falun Gong prisoners. The Chinese government continues to deny claims that they involuntarily harvest the organs of prisoners of conscience, including members of Falun Gong (see [Organ harvesting](#)).
- 3.1.11 In recent years there have been protests, petitions and some successful campaigns to have Falun Gong supporters released, as well as examples of police officers declining to arrest suspects (see [Torture and detention](#)).
- 3.1.12 In the country guidance case of [LL](#) the Tribunal held that ‘... our first conclusion as to risk, from the objective evidence as a whole, is that, absent special factors, there will not normally be any risk sufficient to amount to “real risk” from the Chinese authorities for a person who practices Falun

Gong in private and with discretion. On any assessment the number of Falun Gong practitioners in China is very large indeed. The figures quoted range from 2 million to some 100 million. So far as can be gathered from the evidence before us, the number of people who have faced detention or re-education by the Chinese authorities as a consequence of Falun Gong activity, whilst large in absolute terms, is a relatively small proportion of the overall number of practitioners. This indicates that the large majority of those who practice Falun Gong in China in privacy and with discretion do not experience material problems with the authorities' (para 35).

- 3.1.13 The UT in [LL](#) held that 'risk of material ill-treatment escalates significantly when a practitioner does engage in activities that are reasonably likely to bring him to the notice of the authorities. Such activities include the public practice of Falun Gong exercises, recruitment of new members, and dissemination of Falun Gong information. The risk of escalating ill-treatment also increases when a person who has previously come to the adverse attention of the authorities and has been detained/re-educated and warned against continuing Falun Gong activity, ignores that warning' (para 37).
- 3.1.14 However, the UT went on to hold that 'absent special factors and credible motivation, a person displaying limited knowledge of Falun Gong or limited involvement with it, is unlikely to be committed to undertaking activities on return to China that would bring him to the adverse attention of the authorities and materially increase his risk' (para 38).
- 3.1.15 Decision makers must therefore consider whether the person – even if only practising Falun Gong in their own home – would on return be at risk of treatment amounting to persecution and/or serious harm in their particular circumstances.
- 3.1.16 In cases where it is found that a Falun Gong practitioner would only practise in private on return, the reasons for such 'discretion' must be considered. The Supreme Court in the case of [RT \(Zimbabwe\) & others v Secretary of State for the Home Department \[2012\] UKSC 38 \(25 July 2012\)](#) ruled that the rationale of the decision in [HJ \(Iran\)](#) applies to cases concerning imputed political opinion.
- 3.1.17 In [RT Zimbabwe](#) the Supreme Court held that 'the Convention affords no less protection to the right to express political opinion openly than it does to the right to live openly as a homosexual. The Convention reasons reflect characteristics or statuses which either the individual cannot change or cannot be expected to change because they are so closely linked to his identity or are an expression of fundamental rights.' (Para 25)
- 3.1.18 However, the UT in [LL](#) specifically found that Falun Gong meditation and exercises can be carried out alone or with a few friends in private, and that there does not appear to be any duty or pressure on a Falun Gong practitioner to proselytise, even though some do. The UT endorsed the earlier view expressed by the Court of Appeal in [L China](#) that 'We are not prepared to accept that authoritarian pressure to cease the practice of Falun Gong in public would involve the renunciation of core human rights entitlements' (Para 36).
- 3.1.19 Although [LL](#) considered country information ranging from 1999-2004 the

current available information does not indicate very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence to justify a departure from these findings.

- 3.1.20 It is therefore unlikely that a Falun Gong practitioner who conceals aspects of his or her activities on return would on that account alone be able to demonstrate a risk of persecution or serious harm. However, if a person conceals their beliefs due to fear of persecution, then they should also be considered as a refugee.
- 3.1.21 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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b. Hong Kong

- 3.1.22 In general, a Falun Gong practitioner is unlikely to be at risk of treatment from state actors in Hong Kong that amounts to persecution or serious harm.
- 3.1.23 Falun Gong is not illegal in Hong Kong and is practised openly. Practitioners have been able to peacefully protest and set-up information booths with materials about the practice and the human rights situation in China, although some booths have periodically faced violent assaults from pro-Beijing attackers. There have been examples of the state prosecuting and imprisoning those who have sabotaged Hong Kong Falun Gong websites.
- 3.1.24 A new National Security Law (NSL) was introduced on 30 June 2020, which is potentially wide ranging and could be used by the authorities to arrest anyone who challenges the state's authority. The Hong Kong government has so far declined to comment on how the new law would impact Falun Gong, but said the law preserves 'the basic rights and freedom lawfully enjoyed by law-abiding citizens.' The law makes no mention of religious or spiritual groups. In sources consulted there are no reported cases where the NSL has been used in relation to Hong Kong Falun Gong practitioners.
- 3.1.25 Following the enactment of Hong Kong's National Security Law, media and online freedom has been severely restricted, leading to the closure of numerous independent outlets. Practitioners of Falun Gong who are employed in the media or online news industry in the region have also been impacted by the crackdown and extra-legal physical attacks (See [Falun Gong in Hong Kong](#) and the Country Policy and Information Note, [China: Hong Kong National Security Law](#)).
- 3.1.26 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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4. Protection

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state they will not, in general, be able to obtain protection from the authorities.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

This contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content of this section follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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Section updated: 28 November 2023

7. Constitution

- 7.1.1 Article 35 of the Constitution states: ‘Citizens of the People’s Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration.’¹

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Section updated: 28 November 2023

8. Falun Gong

8.1 Legal context

- 8.1.1 Falun Gong was designated as a xie jiao (cult) in 1998 and formerly made illegal in 1999².
- 8.1.2 The Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, DFAT Country Information Report People’s Republic Of China, which draws on DFAT’s on-the-ground knowledge and discussions with a range of sources in China, published on 22 December 2021, noted: ‘The Criminal Law provides for prison sentences of up to seven years for individuals who use ‘superstitious sects, secret societies or evil religious organisations’ to undermine the state’s laws or administrative regulations.’³

- 8.1.3 The 2022 USSD IRF report noted that:

‘The government reportedly continued to assert control over religious groups and to restrict the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents it perceived as threatening state or CCP [Chinese Communist Party] interests, according to religious groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international media reports...

‘The law bans certain religious or spiritual groups. Criminal law defines banned groups as “cult [xie jiao] organizations” and provides for criminal prosecution of individuals belonging to such groups and punishment of up to life in prison. There are no published criteria for determining, or procedures for challenging, such a designation. Criminal law prohibits “organizing and

¹ Constitute, ‘[China \(People’s Republic of\)’s Constitution of 1982 with Amendments ...](#)’, 27 April 2022

² Bitter Winter, ‘[The List of the Xie Jiao, a Main Tool of Religious Persecution](#)’, 11 June 2018

³ DFAT, ‘[DFAT Country Information Report People’s ...](#)’ (Paragraph 3.53), 22 December 2021

using a sect, cult, or superstition to undermine implementation of the law.” Violations carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment... The CCP maintains an extralegal, party-run security apparatus to eliminate the Falun Gong movement and other banned organizations. The government considers Falun Gong an “illegal organization.””⁴

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8.2 What is Falun Gong?

- 8.2.1 A blog posted on the website of The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), dated 22 February 2023, noted: ‘Falun Gong, officially known as Falun Dafa, is a form of qigong, which roughly translates to “cultivation.” Qigong is similar to yoga or tai chi and focuses on the perfection and refinement of mind and body. Falun Gong takes this a step further and incorporates the cultivation of morality and virtue.’⁵
- 8.2.2 The Falun Dafa Information Center, the official press office of the Falun Gong movement, in an article published on 24 April 2019, noted that: ‘Falun Gong teaches the principles of truthfulness, compassion and forbearance. It emphasizes character-building and virtue—rather than supernormal powers—as the true path to health and spiritual elevation. ... Many people were initially drawn to Falun Gong because of its healing effects. However, a significant reason for Falun Gong’s popular appeal was also due to its simple and straightforward requirements for practitioners: Live your life according to truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance, let go of negative attachments, and be responsible to yourself and others.’⁶
- 8.2.3 The 2021 DFAT Report observed: ‘By performing exercises, following the moral teachings of the religion and reading and re-reading the sacred text Zhuan Falun, believers hope to ascend to a state of perfection or “cultivation”. Practitioners may not see Falun Gong as a religion, seeing it as a method for “cultivation” or science. Unlike other qigong practices, Falun Gong has moral teachings (for example teaching against gay sex and abortion) and supernatural aspects. DFAT understands from sources that these beliefs exist, but do not form a core part of Falun Gong belief or practice. The Chinese Government and some former members claim the religion encourages isolation from families or refusal of medical treatment. Falun Gong denies these claims.’⁷
- 8.2.4 For information about religious groups in China see the Country Policy and Information Notes:
- [China: Muslims \(including Uyghurs in Xinjiang\)](#)
 - [China: Non-Christian religious groups](#)
 - [China: Christians](#)

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⁴ USSD IRF, ‘[2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#)’ (section II), 15 May 2023

⁵ UAB, ‘[The Religious Persecution of Falun Gong Practitioners in China](#)’, 22 February 2023

⁶ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[The Rise and Resilience of Falun Gong](#)’, 24 April 2019

⁷ DFAT, ‘[DFAT Country Information Report People’s ...](#)’ (Paragraph 3.65), 22 December 2021

8.3 History

8.3.1 Encyclopaedia Britannica, in an article dated 26 May 2023, noted:

‘Falun Gong is an offshoot of [qigong](#) (Chinese: “discipline of the vital breath”), an amalgam of traditional medical and self-cultivation practices developed in the early 1950s by members of the Chinese medical establishment as part of an effort to promote [traditional Chinese medicine](#) (TCM) in modern socialist [China](#). ... Li Hongzhi in 1992 founded Falun Gong (“Discipline of the Dharma Wheel”), whose name referred to the revolving wheel that Li promised to install in his followers, purifying their bodies “in another dimension” and freeing them from bodily concerns. Li’s original message sought to dispel qigong’s associations with fraud and faith healing by emphasizing “higher-level cultivation.”

‘...Falun Gong grew rapidly in popularity ... between 1992 and 1995. Estimates of the number of Falun Gong’s adherents during this period vary greatly, ranging from about 2 million to 60 million.

‘However, the advent of Falun Gong did not end criticism of the qigong movement, whose revival turned out to be short-lived. In early 1995 Li decided to resettle in the United States in the apparent hope of avoiding political problems caused by the continuing denunciation of qigong in the Chinese media...

‘... despite Li’s absence and the generally falling fortunes of qigong and Falun Gong, most Falun Gong followers in China continued to believe that their practice was completely legal, as high-level debates on the subject within the government had been inconclusive. Accordingly, when faced with media criticism, Falun Gong followers reacted by peacefully demonstrating at the offices of newspapers and television stations. Finally, in a massive and unannounced gathering on April 25, 1999, some 20,000 Falun Gong adherents protested outside CCP headquarters in Beijing.

‘That demonstration, which took party leaders completely by surprise, marked the end of the qigong boom and largely sealed the fate of Falun Gong as a Chinese movement. The party soon declared Falun Gong to be the greatest danger to state security since the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square and banned the movement as a “heretical cult.”

‘However, because of the surprising strength of Falun Gong in the Chinese diaspora—particularly in the United States and Canada—China was not immediately successful in suppressing the movement. Falun Gong followers championed their cause in the Western media as an issue of freedom of religion, until a number of self-immolations by alleged Falun Gong adherents in Tiananmen Square in January 2001 convinced much of the Western media that the group was indeed a “cult” (Falun Gong followers insisted that the immolations were staged by the Chinese government). Falun Gong subsequently established its own media outlets—including the Epoch Times newspaper, the New Tang Dynasty television network, and the Sound of Hope radio network—and continued to resist what appeared to be an ongoing campaign of repression in China.’⁸

⁸ Ownby, D, Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘[Falun Gong](#)’, 23 June 2023

8.3.2 According to a 2017 Freedom House (FH) Special Report on religion in China: ‘Several points of information suggest that a reasonable estimate of the minimum number of people in China practicing Falun Gong today would fall in the range of 7 to 10 million, while overseas Falun Gong sources have estimated that the total is 20 to 40 million.’⁹ In sources consulted (see [bibliography](#)) no more recent figures could be found.

8.3.3 For further historical detail see:

- Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[The Rise and Resilience of Falun Gong](#)’, 24 April 2019
- Ownby, D, Encyclopaedia Britannica, [Falun Gong](#), 23 June 2023

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8.4 Practice and beliefs

8.4.1 The Falun Dafa Information Center noted:

‘First and foremost, Falun Gong can be thought of as a practice—as something that is done, that is put into action. The practice is designed to effect positive change, or reinforce what is already good, in body, mind, and self.

‘The body is attended to in Falun Gong most directly by the regular performance of four qigong exercises and a meditation. Qigong exercises ... resemble Tai-chi somewhat in form and work, similarly, on the body primarily on an energetic level. Some refer to qigong (pron. “chee-gung”) as “Chinese yoga.”

‘Falun Gong recalibrates the body on an energetic level while dredging out blockages and impurities that might compromise health and well-being. On deeper levels, the practice, in its own unique ways, deals with the more fundamental origins of illness and physical suffering (i.e., a nefarious material called karma). The meditation facilitates these changes and processes while reinforcing the subtler workings of the practice specific to the body and mind...

‘While the physical dimension of Falun Gong is important, it is the emphasis on the mind and one’s moral self that set this practice apart.

‘Falun Gong is Buddhist in nature, and contains in its teachings a higher aspiration, namely, spiritual perfection—or “enlightenment” as it’s called in Asia. In Asia spiritual disciplines of this sort are often referred to as ways of “inner cultivation,” or “self-cultivation,” and form an important part of traditional Chinese culture. Various Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian practices fit this rubric.

‘At the core of Falun Gong are the values of truth, compassion, and forbearance (or in Chinese, Zhen, Shan, Ren). The practice teaches that these are the most fundamental qualities of the universe itself, and it is these, as elaborated in the book Zhuan Falun, that serve as a guide for daily life and practice. Many study the book regularly in order to better understand and embody its teachings.

⁹ FH, ‘[Special Report: The Battle for China’s Spirit](#)’ (page 113), February 2017

‘Through consistent and dedicated practice, the student of Falun Gong aspires to achieve a state of selflessness, greater insight and awareness, inner purity, and balance—the inner workings of what might be called true health.

‘While Falun Gong aspires to inner transformation of the self, it nevertheless typically translates outwardly into positive change in the world, insofar as the practitioner becomes a more patient family member, a more conscientious employee, a more giving member of the community, and so on.’¹⁰

8.4.2 The Falun Dafa Information Center noted:

‘The practice became so popular that in public parks every morning, hundreds of people could be seen performing Falun Gong’s meditative exercises to peaceful music before heading off to work. While morning group qigong exercise is a common sight in China’s public squares, the sheer volume of attendees at Falun Gong practice sites was unusual. Volunteers provided the exercise instruction free of charge to anyone who wanted to learn. When one exercise site became too large, practitioners would volunteer to start new ones at other locations.

‘Many people were initially drawn to Falun Gong because of its healing effects. However, a significant reason for Falun Gong’s popular appeal was also due to its simple and straightforward requirements for practitioners: Live your life according to truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance, let go of negative attachments, and be responsible to yourself and others. Mr. Li discouraged the fanaticism that practitioners of other qigong schools so often dedicated to their masters, and instead encouraged Falun Gong practitioners to focus on what matters—becoming a better person.’¹¹

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8.5 Falun Gong in Hong Kong

8.5.1 Although Falun Gong was banned in mainland China in 1999, its members have been allowed to practice the discipline in Hong Kong freely¹². However, In June 2020, Beijing inserted national security legislation directly into Hong Kong’s mini-constitution criminalising ‘subversion, secession, collusion with foreign forces and terrorist acts’¹³. Reuters reported in an article dated 27 July 2020: ‘The Hong Kong government declined to comment on how the new law would impact Falun Gong, but said the law preserves “the basic rights and freedom lawfully enjoyed by law-abiding citizens.” The law makes no mention of religious or spiritual groups.’¹⁴

8.5.2 Reuters added:

‘On Falun Gong generally, the [Hong Kong] ministry said in a statement: “Falun Gong is a cult organization banned by the Chinese government in accordance with the law, which has also been spurned by the Chinese people for a long time. Banning this cult organization is an act of justice by

¹⁰ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[Falun Gong: The Practice](#)’, no date

¹¹ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[The Rise and Resilience of Falun Gong](#)’, 24 April 2019

¹² Reuters, ‘[Banned in China, some Falun Gong fear new Hong Kong national ...](#)’, 27 July 2020

¹³ HKFP, ‘[Hong Kong Falun Gong condemns fake Facebook ...](#)’, 12 August 2021

¹⁴ Reuters, ‘[Banned in China, some Falun Gong fear new Hong Kong national ...](#)’, 27 July 2020

the Chinese government, made in response to the people's demand and an effort to maintain social stability and to protect human rights. The alleged suppression is nonsense.”¹⁵

8.5.3 CNN reported in July 2020 that Falun Gong:

‘... continues to operate in Hong Kong... . For decades now, Falun Gong protests against the Chinese government have been a common sight on the city's streets, with practitioners setting up gory mock surgery scenes to raise awareness about allegations of organ harvesting, and handing out free copies of the Falun Gong-linked newspaper, Epoch Times. Protesters have also targeted Chinese politicians and offices in the city, and regularly take part in mass anti-government rallies and marches...

“The new National Security Law will act like a sharp knife hanging over the (association) and the heads of every Falun Gong practitioner in Hong Kong,” said Ingrid Wu, spokeswoman for the Hong Kong Falun Dafa Association. “We are very concerned.”

‘Hong Kong officials have claimed the new law is necessary and will only affect a handful of individuals. In early July, Chief Executive Carrie Lam pushed back against the suggestion the law would undermine people's freedoms...

‘Outside of the protest movement, Falun Gong is among the most vocal and visible opposition to the Communist Party, in both Hong Kong and elsewhere around the world. While the group is somewhat detached from the mainstream opposition in Hong Kong due to its conservative religious beliefs, this has not stopped its presence in the city being symbolic, and many followers take a sort of pride that even Falun Gong can operate in Hong Kong, given the huge antipathy Beijing has towards the group.’¹⁶ In sources consulted (see [bibliography](#)) there are no reported cases where the new National Security Law has had an effect on Hong Kong Falun Gong practitioners.

8.5.4 The International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) and its national branches which are ‘independent non-governmental human rights organisations (NGOs) which base their work on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948’¹⁷, reported in 2021:

‘On the morning of April 12th, 2021, “unidentified people” destroyed the printing company of the Falun Gong where their newspaper Epochtimes is produced, in Hong Kong. Also, Falun Gong information stands are being attacked and devastated more and more frequently. A political connection is “not seen” by the Hong Kong authorities, the perpetrators are allegedly regular criminals.

‘The latest attack against Falun Gong in Hong Kong is currently being carried out by the oldest Chinese-language [pro CPV] newspaper in China. ... In eight articles published so far, Falun Gong is accused of ignoring the law and order in Hong Kong, inciting hatred, promoting anti-communism,

¹⁵ Reuters, ‘[Banned in China, some Falun Gong fear new Hong Kong national ...](#)’, 27 July 2020

¹⁶ CNN, ‘[Can a religious group that wants to bring down China's Communist Party ...](#)’, 18 July 2020

¹⁷ ISHR, [About us](#), no date

infiltrating the community on all fronts and “poisoning” the people of Hong Kong. In one of the numerous articles, the Hong Kong government is explicitly asked to ban Falun Gong.’¹⁸

- 8.5.5 A Brief by the Falun Dafa Information Center - The Persecution of Falun Gong: Key Trends from 2022 and What to Watch for Ahead, published on 25 January 2023, stated:

‘Hong Kong is home to an active community of Falun Gong practitioners. Unlike their counterparts within Mainland China, these believers have long been able to practice their faith freely and publicly. They have also been able to set-up information booths with materials about the practice and the human rights situation in China, although the booths have periodically faced violent assaults from pro-Beijing attackers ... Indeed, some pro-Beijing officials have issued public calls to ban Falun Gong and in at least one incident in 2021, authorities fined practitioners for an exhibit.’¹⁹

- 8.5.6 Falun Dafa Information Center, in its Special Report - Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends and Analysis from the Suppression of Falun Gong in China and Beyond Jan. 1, 2020 – Mar. 1, 2022, noted:

‘Since adoption of the National Security Law in Hong Kong, restrictions on media and internet freedom have tightened considerably, forcing many independent outlets to disband. Falun Gong practitioners working in the territory’s media or online news sector have also been affected by the crackdown, as well as extralegal physical assaults. In March 2021, Hong Kong current affairs show host, Rachel Wong was threatened by Chinese police for discussing the forced organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners on one of her YouTube channels. Police officials reportedly told Wong’s relatives in China to pressure Wong into halting her broadcasts, otherwise she would face arrest under the draconian National Security Law and even possible removal to mainland China. On May 11, 2021, Sarah Liang, a long-time reporter for The Epoch Times, a news outlet founded by Falun Gong practitioners outside China, was assaulted by an unidentified man wielding an aluminum softball bat. She suffered multiple bruises on her legs, telling the media that the same man had attempted the assault on May 8, at the same location in front of her home.’²⁰

- 8.5.7 New Tang Dynasty (NTD), a New York based global television network founded by Falun Gong practitioners, reported on 24 April 2023:

‘Hong Kong pro-CCP [Chinese Communist Party] attackers Hu Aimin and Chow Wing-lam were charged with two counts of criminal sabotage on Falun Gong’s “truth-clarification” sites in 2021. Magistrate Frances Leung Nga-yan of the Kowloon City Magistrates’ Court ruled on April 21 [2023] that the two were found guilty. Hu Aimin was sentenced to 15 weeks imprisonment, and Chow Wing-lam, who pleaded guilty earlier, was sentenced to nine weeks in prison. Both must serve their imprisonment with immediate effect...

‘In the week before and after April 3, 2021, at least six Falun Gong “truth-clarifications” sites in Hong Kong were sabotaged more than ten times. The

¹⁸ ISHR, ‘[ISHR: Falun Gong movement now under persecution pressure in Hong ...](#)’, 5 May 2021

¹⁹ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[The Persecution of Falun Gong: ...](#)’ (page 23), 25 January 2023

²⁰ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends ...](#)’ (page 31), 2022

police arrested eight people later, four of whom pleaded guilty to the crime of “criminal damage” earlier and were sentenced to eight months in prison; one was not charged; the remaining three are the three defendants in this case.’²¹

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8.6 Proselytism

- 8.6.1 According to DFAT, in its 2021 Report Falun Gong members in China do not openly proselytise because adherents can face up to between three and seven years imprisonment²².

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Section updated: 28 November 2023

9. State treatment of Falun Gong practitioners

9.1 State attitude and treatment

- 9.1.1 The 2021 DFAT Report observed: ‘Falun Gong has been illegal since 1999 and the government actively searches for and prosecutes practitioners.’²³
- 9.1.2 A Freedom House (FH) news article dated 22 July 2019, stated: ‘... on July 20, 1999, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) banned the Falun Gong meditation and spiritual practice, unleashing a vicious campaign of persecution against tens of millions of innocent Chinese. Falun Gong practitioners across China have since been subjected to widespread surveillance, arbitrary detention, horrific torture, and extrajudicial killing—abuses which continue today.’²⁴
- 9.1.3 Bitter Winter, an online magazine on religious liberty and human rights in China, published by the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), reported in March 2021:
- ‘Bitter Winter has learned that the State Security structure ... is extremely concerned with the widespread success of the “nine true words” meditation throughout the country, and has set up a special task force to deal with it. It is also a good example of the extensive use of [Article 300](#) of the Chinese Criminal Code, punishing those who “use a [xie jiao](#),” i.e., a banned religious group, “to undermine the enforcement of law.” Practicing and teaching the “nine true words” meditation has been declared a case of “use of a [xie jiao](#) to undermine the enforcement of law.” Courts are issuing the first decisions based on this principle.’²⁵
- 9.1.4 Falun Dafa Information Center, in its Special Report - Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends and Analysis from the Suppression of Falun Gong in China and Beyond Jan. 1, 2020 – Mar. 1, 2022, noted:
- ‘In the spring of 2020, Chinese authorities launched a new security campaign focused on reducing the number of Falun Gong practitioners “to

²¹ NTD, ‘[Pro-CCP Attackers Sentenced to 9 and 15 Weeks in Prison for Sabotaging ...](#)’, 24 April 2023

²² DFAT, ‘[DFAT Country Information Report People’s ...](#)’ (Paragraph 3.66), 22 December 2021

²³ DFAT, ‘[DFAT Country Information Report People’s ...](#)’ (Paragraph 3.66), 22 December 2021

²⁴ FH, ‘[Falun Gong’s Secrets for Surviving in China](#)’, 22 July 2019

²⁵ Bitter Winter, ‘[Falun Gong: Police Cracks Down on “Nine True Words” Meditation](#)’, 24 March 2021

zero” in every corner of the country. Dubbed the “Zero-Out” Campaign, the goal was to escalate harassment operations targeting Falun Gong practitioners on the government’s blacklist. ...[by] pressuring employers, relatives, and community members to monitor and report on Falun Gong. After implementing Zero-Out, harassment cases began rising in March. By November and December 2020, confirmed cases had increased fivefold and 6.7 fold over 2019 reports. Local government websites throughout China are replete with references to the campaign and details of particular tactics deployed to implement it.’²⁶

9.1.5 The Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), an independent agency of the U.S. government which monitors human rights in China, noted in its Annual Report: 2022: ‘Falun Gong adherents faced brutal hardship, including custody-related deaths, lengthy prison sentences, and harassment, and a peer-reviewed study validated years of appalling anecdotal accounts of Falun Gong prisoners being executed by the harvesting of their organs.’²⁷ (See [Organ harvesting](#))

9.1.6 The same CCEC report added:

‘Chinese authorities continued to prosecute Falun Gong practitioners under Article 300 of the [People’s Republic of China] PRC Criminal Law, which criminalizes “organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law.” The Falun Gong-affiliated website Minghui reported the deaths of dozens of Falun Gong practitioners due to treatment while in custody and hundreds of cases of Falun Gong practitioners being sentenced by authorities, apparently for their connection with Falun Gong. The Commission observed the following reports of authorities targeting Falun Gong practitioners and seeking to impede or deter their legal counsel:

‘• In November 2021, the Xiangyang District Court in Jiamusi municipality, Heilongjiang province, sentenced Falun Gong practitioner and former teacher Liu Lijie to three years and six months in prison. Liu was detained in October 2020 in connection with a gathering she attended at the home of an elderly Falun Gong practitioner and released on bail. In 2021, she was tried and sentenced without her lawyer or legal advisors present and was reportedly taken into custody on January 12, 2022, after her appeal was denied.

‘• On January 16, 2022, authorities sentenced 11 Falun Gong practitioners detained in 2020 for sharing COVID-19-related materials with an overseas publication and in connection with Falun Gong religious materials confiscated at their residences. Beijing municipality authorities imposed a sentence of eight years on artist Xu Na, who was also fined 20,000 yuan (US\$3,000) [£2,000²⁸], in connection to having shared photos with the Falun Gong media outlet Epoch Times, which showed Beijing during the early days of the COVID-19 outbreak in China.

‘• In December 2021, Beijing Justice Bureau officials disbarred Xu Na’s original lawyer, Liang Xiaojun, partly over his social media posts that

²⁶ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends ...](#)’ (page 22), 2022

²⁷ CECC, ‘[Annual Report: 2022](#)’ (page 6), 16 November 2022

²⁸ Xe.com, ‘[20,000 CNY to GBP - Convert Chinese Yuan Renminbi to British Pounds](#)’, 22 June 2023

defended the rights of Falun Gong practitioners.’²⁹

- 9.1.7 The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Annual Report 2023, noted: ‘The government continued its persecution of Falun Gong ..., often using “anti-cult” provisions under [Article 300](#) of China’s Criminal Law.’³⁰ (See [Arrests](#) and [Torture and detention](#))

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9.2 The 6-10 Office

9.2.1 The Falun Dafa Information Center noted:

‘The 6-10 Office—named after the date of its creation on June 10, 1999—is an extralegal police task force responsible for carrying out the mission of eliminating Falun Gong. Established by former Communist Party leader Jiang Zemin ... the organization has long existed outside China’s legal framework...

‘In addition to torture and sexual abuse, 6-10 Office agents also administratively sentence the Falun Gong to labor camps and abduct adherents straight from their homes to brainwashing classes...

‘Though Party officials have externally denied the 6-10 Office’s existence, a broad range of public statements, internal documents, and testimonies refute such claims. Instead, available evidence paints a disturbing picture of a shadowy yet powerful Communist Party security force that has operated for over two decades like the mafia; an excessively violent organization that permeates Chinese society, but is well-known only to those who control it or work for it as well as, of course, those who dread it...

‘As of mid-2020, the status of the 6-10 Office’s activities under that moniker have become somewhat unclear, although grassroots repression of Falun Gong practitioners continues apace throughout China. As part of the Communist Party’s infighting two high-ranking officials closely linked to the 6-10 Office—Zhou Yongkang, former Chinese security czar, and Li Dongsheng, who headed the 6-10 Office for four years—were purged in 2013-2015 and themselves sentenced to long prison terms on corruption charges...

‘In recent years, periodic reports have appeared of [the 6-10 Office being dismantled](#) due to ongoing Communist Party power struggles and internal restructuring rather than any human rights concerns. References to the agency on local government websites have decreased and it appears that its functions may have been absorbed by the party’s powerful Political and Legal Affairs Committee, which has long supervised it. Nevertheless, mentions do appear occasionally on government websites and Falun Gong victims of arbitrary detention and torture continue to refer to [the involvement of 6-10 Office](#) agents in ongoing abuses.’³¹

9.2.2 In 2021 The Falun Dafa Information Center released a short [video](#)

²⁹ CECC, ‘[Annual Report: 2022](#)’ (pages 104-105), 16 November 2022

³⁰ USCIRF, ‘[Annual Report 2023](#)’ (page 16), April 2023

³¹ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[The 6-10 Office](#)’, no date

documentary about the '610 Office'³².

- 9.2.3 Falun Dafa Information Center, in its Special Report - Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends and Analysis from the Suppression of Falun Gong in China and Beyond Jan. 1, 2020 – Mar. 1, 2022, noted:

'Since the 2018 consolidation, Bureau 4 has taken over the responsibilities and functions of the former Central 610 Office. References to the 610 Office continue to appear on some local websites and in victim accounts, but much less frequently than in the past.

'The [Chinese Communist Party] CCP leader at the time, Jiang Zemin, established, at the highest echelons of the Communist Party, the Leading Group for Handling the Falun Gong Issue. Li Lanqing—then a member of the Politburo Standing Committee—was assigned to head the group. When Li retired in 2002, the responsibility was transferred to Luo Gan, who was also head of [Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission] PLAC, which oversees China's legal and security apparatus. Since that time, the head of PLAC has simultaneously led the Falun Gong-focused Leading Group. CCP officials heading the Leading Group since Li's retirement have been Luo Gan, Zhou Yongkang, Meng Jianzhu, and Guo Shengkun (2017-present). All have been PLAC secretaries.

'The two central CCP officials currently leading ongoing security campaigns to monitor, arbitrarily detain, punish, and forcibly "transform" Falun Gong believers throughout China—including via torture and extrajudicial killing—are Zhao Leji and Guo Shengkun.'³³

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9.3 Arrests

- 9.3.1 Human Rights Watch (HRW) claimed in an article dated 14 December 2022: 'Falun Gong practitioners in China continue to face [severe repression](#). Many have been jailed in recent years for accessing banned websites, posting messages about the spiritual group on social media, and sharing prohibited internet circumvention tools.'³⁴

- 9.3.2 A Special Report by the Falun Dafa Information Center - Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends and Analysis from the Suppression of Falun Gong in China and Beyond Jan. 1, 2020 – Mar. 1, 2022, published in 2022, noted:

'Chinese authorities' persecution of Chinese citizens who practice Falun Gong has increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic, largely because the Falun Gong community remains one of the most prolific whistleblowers of CCP crimes and abuses across China. High-profile events like the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, and the implementation of the National Security Law in Hong Kong have also contributed to escalated persecution. The reporting period (1 January 2020 to 1 March 2022) found over 34,000 arrests, incidents of harassment, or deaths of Falun Gong practitioners in China. This figure does not include unreported cases or

³² Falun Dafa Information Center, '[Unmasking China's Gestapo](#)', 2021

³³ Falun Dafa Information Center, '[Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends ...](#)' (page 15), 2022

³⁴ HRW, '[Testimony to U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom ...](#)', 14 December 2022

belated reports received after March 1, 2022. ... The increase from 2019 to 2021 is especially apparent in the first half of each year (Q1 and Q2). ... However, due to the risks and difficulties in confirming the details of each case and sending that information overseas, it is widely believed that the actual number is much higher.’³⁵

- 9.3.3 The below chart shows the recorded number of arrests, incidents of harassment, sentences, and deaths, by year, of Falun Gong practitioners in China, as reported by the Falun Dafa Information Center³⁶. No details were given on the sentences passed, the nature of deaths, and whether they were caused by ill-treatment, who the perpetrators were, or if the deaths occurred due to natural causes.

Year	Harassment	Arrests	Sentences	Deaths
2019	3,582	6,109	775	98
2020	9,159	6,925	622	83
2021	9,332	5,152	1,372	180

- 9.3.4 Minghui, an all-volunteer organisation that operates Minghui.org, a Falun Gong-affiliated website website, noted in an article dated 10 January 2023: ‘According to data collected by Minghui.org, a total of 7,331 persecution cases were confirmed in 2022, including 3,488 arrests and 3,843 harassment cases.’³⁷

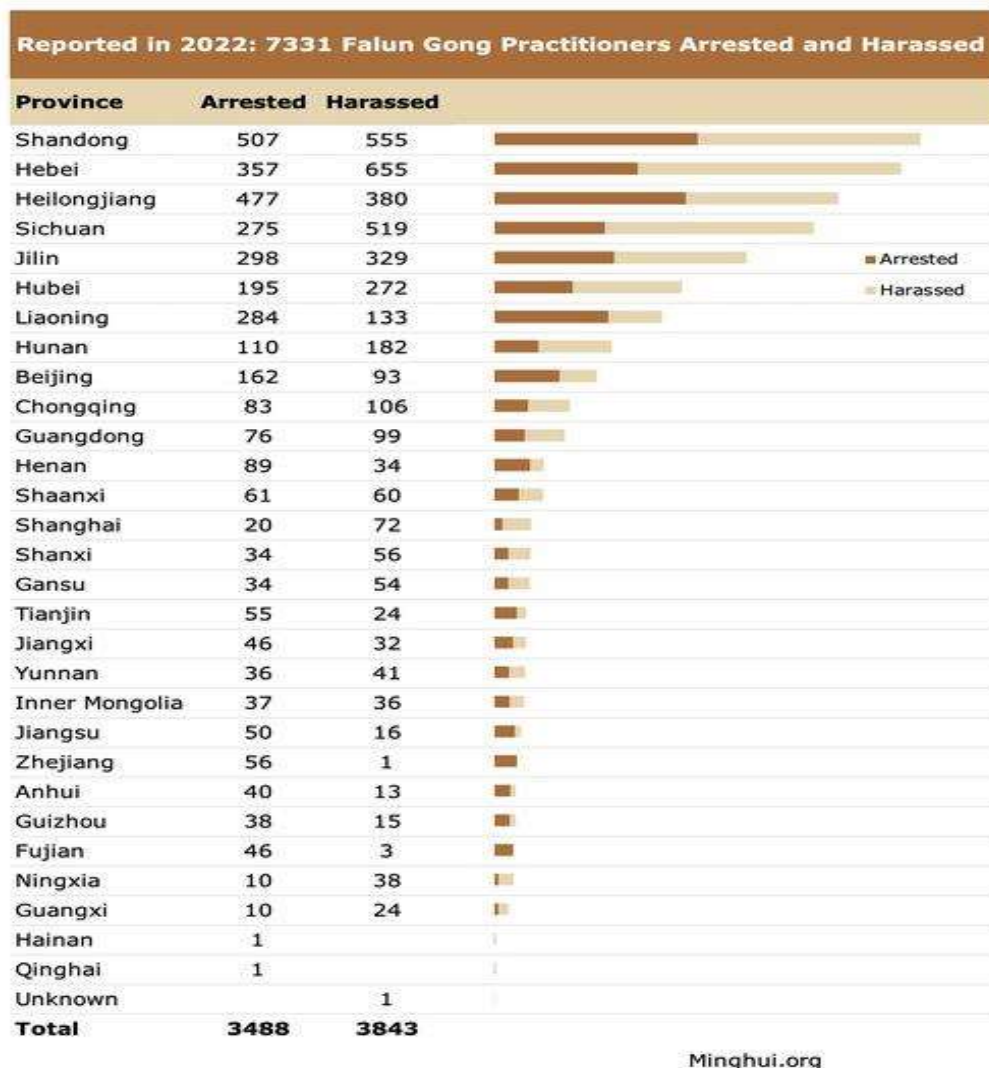
- 9.3.5 The below chart by Minghui.org shows Falun Gong practitioners arrested and harassed, by Province, reported in 2022³⁸:

³⁵ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends ...](#)’ (page 19), 2022

³⁶ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends ...](#)’ (page 19), 2022

³⁷ Minghui.org, ‘[Reported in 2022: 7,331 Falun Gong Practitioners Arrested or ...](#)’, 10 January 2023

³⁸ Minghui.org, ‘[Reported in 2022: 7,331 Falun Gong Practitioners Arrested or ...](#)’, 10 January 2023



9.3.6 The Minghui article dated 10 January 2023, noted:

'While the police raided the practitioners' homes, they didn't only confiscate their Falun Gong books and informational materials, but also seized their other personal belongings, including cash they kept at home... Following the arbitrary arrests, the practitioners faced sexual assault, torture and involuntary drug administration while in detention, resulting in mental trauma, physical injuries, and/or memory loss. Even after some practitioners had already become incapacitated due to the persecution, the police still harassed them on a regular basis in an attempt to force them to renounce Falun Gong...

'A woman in Qingdao City, Shandong Province, was detained for 38 days for refusing to give up her faith in Falun Gong before being released on bail. During her detention, she was frequently interrogated and held at several quarantine centers, including a former German prison still open to visitors. When the visitors asked about the people detained there, the guards said they were actors.'³⁹

9.3.7 The Minghui article also reported:

³⁹ Minghui.org, '[Reported in 2022: 7,331 Falun Gong Practitioners Arrested or ...](#)', 10 January 2023

‘Several group arrests took place in Heilongjiang Province throughout the year, especially in the city of Daqing, after Song Hongyuan became chief of the Daqing City Police Department in March 2022...

‘In one group arrest on [April 20](#), at least 25 Falun Gong practitioners were taken away from their homes between the early morning and afternoon. Some police officers were wearing protective gear during the arrests, and they deceived the practitioners into opening their doors by claiming they were there to investigate if the homeowners had close contact with people who had tested positive for COVID-19.

‘On July 12, eight days before the 23rd anniversary of the persecution, [over 100 practitioners](#) were arrested. According to a police officer, the authorities had begun to follow and videotape the practitioners as early as nine months before the operation. The arrest date was not announced until a week prior. The officers did not give out their names, precincts, or their contact information while making the arrests, claiming that such information was a state secret.’⁴⁰

9.3.8 Minghui reported in an article dated 23 May 2023:

‘A total of 1,320 incidents of Falun Gong practitioners being arrested or harassed for their faith were reported in March and April 2023. Among the 689 arrest cases, 4 took place between 2021 and 2022, and 685 happened in 2023, including 7 in January, 158 in February, 362 in March, and 158 in April. For the 631 harassment cases, 25 were in 2022, and 606 in 2023, including 8 in January, 112 in February, 372 in March, and 114 in April. Due to strict information censorship in China, persecution cases can’t always be reported in a timely manner, nor is all information readily available...

‘The targeted practitioners came from all walks of life and included a college professor, a government employee, a former music teacher, and an artist. Two hundred and seventeen of the practitioners were 60 or older when they were arrested or harassed, including 55 practitioners in their 60s, 112 practitioners in their 70s, 41 practitioners in their 80s, and 9 practitioners in their 90s.

‘Compared to 624 total arrest and harassment incidents reported in January and February 2023, the 1,320 cases newly reported in March and April represented a 116% increase. The intensified persecution was triggered by two events deemed sensitive by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) – its annual political meetings in March and the 24th anniversary of a [peaceful demonstration by 10,000 practitioners](#) that took place on April 25, 1999...

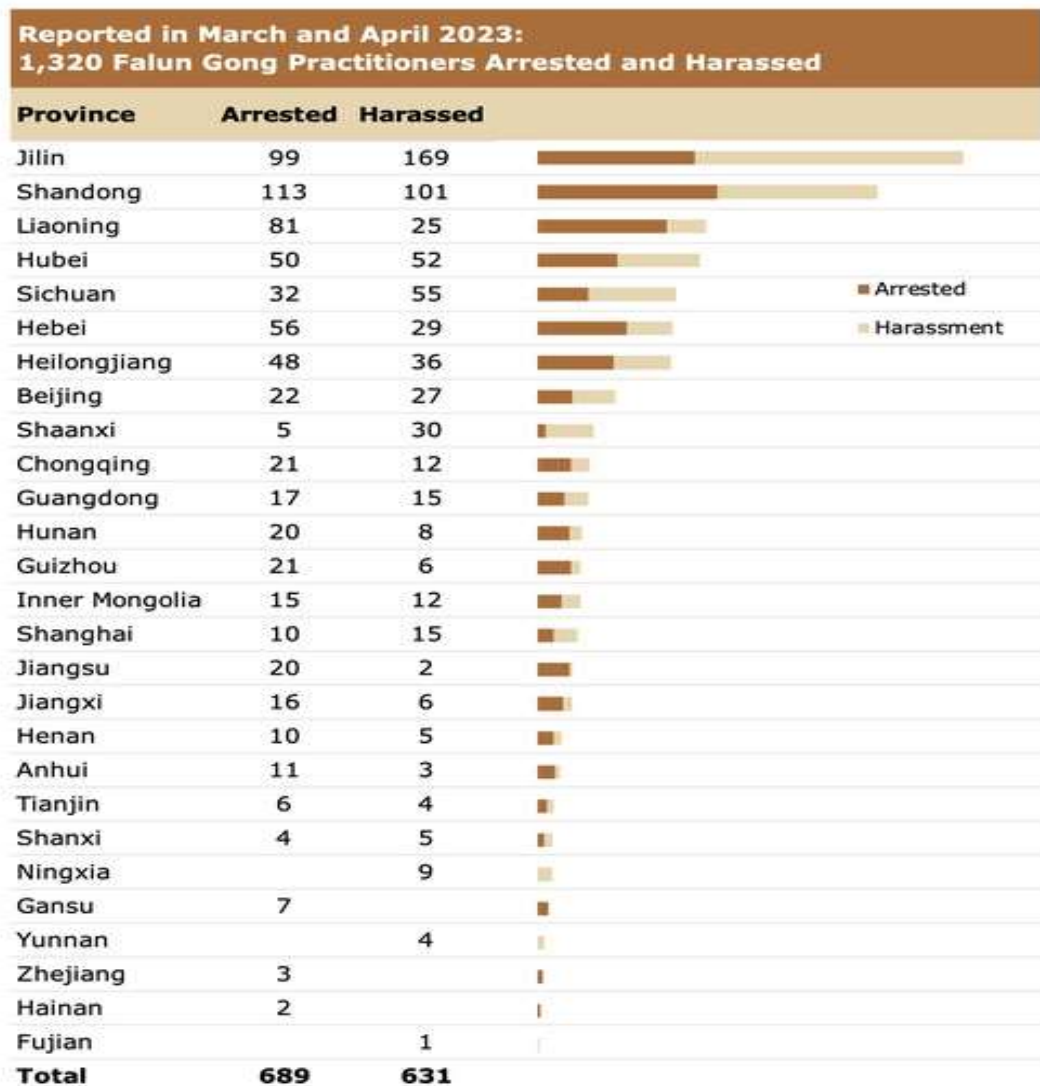
‘Ms. Meng Zhaoyu, a 94-year-old Beijing resident, was arrested on April 2, 2023, after being reported for talking to people about Falun Gong. She was interrogated in the police station from 8 a.m. until 3 a.m. the next day.

‘Another practitioner, Ms. Xiang Deyu, a 90-year-old Suining City, Sichuan Province resident, was reported for talking to people about Falun Gong at a bus station and arrested in early March 2023. The residential committee staff members led the police to her home for a raid. Her Falun Gong books were confiscated. When taking her back home in the late afternoon, a residential

⁴⁰ Minghui.org, ‘[Reported in 2022: 7,331 Falun Gong Practitioners Arrested or ...](#)’, 10 January 2023

committee staff member showed Ms. Xiang's photo on his cellphone to the neighborhood security personnel. He said, "We know everything about what she did and when she did it." Only then did Ms. Xiang realize that she had been under long-term surveillance. The police and residential committee staff members harassed Ms. Xiang again on April 18, 2023. They attempted to take her photos, but she didn't let them.⁴¹

9.3.9 The below chart showed Falun Gong practitioners arrested and harassed, by Province, reported in March and April 2023⁴²:



Minghui.org

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9.4 Torture and detention

9.4.1 The China Tribunal, initiated by, but independent of, the International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China (ETAC) and consisting of international barrister/lawyers, a professor of surgery, historians and others,

⁴¹ Minghui.org, '[Reported in March and April 2023: 1,320 Falun Gong Practitioners ...](#)', 23 May 2023

⁴² Minghui.org, '[Reported in March and April 2023: 1,320 Falun Gong Practitioners ...](#)', 23 May 2023

formed to investigate forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience in China, noted in their 'Final Judgement and Summary- 2019' published on 17 June 2019 that:

'Acts of torture have been inflicted by the PRC authorities on persons detained for their practice of, support for and defence of Falun Gong and for no other reason. Such acts of torture have taken place at many different sites in The PRC over a long period of time. Acts of torture, generally, reveal an overall consistent attitude and approach of the Chinese state towards practitioners of Falun Gong which is systematic in nature and designed to punish, ostracise, humiliate, dehumanise, demean and demonise practitioners of Falun Gong into renouncing and abandoning their practice of it. ...The PRC and its leaders actively incited the persecution, the imprisonment, murder, torture and the humiliation of Falun Gong practitioners with the sole purpose of eliminating the practice of, and belief in, the value of Falun Gong.'

9.4.2 The CECC in its Annual Report 2020, noted:

'As in previous years, authorities continued to detain Falun Gong practitioners and subject them to harsh treatment. ... The Falun Gong-affiliated website Clear Wisdom reported that Chinese officials were responsible for the deaths of 96 Falun Gong practitioners in 2019, and that 774 practitioners were sentenced in 2019, with the largest numbers in the northern provinces of Shandong, Heilongjiang, Liaoning, and Jilin. The site also documented violations of religious freedom against practitioners including detention and arrest, beatings, sleep deprivation, and other forms of torture. Clear Wisdom reported that between January and April 2020, 6 practitioners died as a result of being tortured while in custody, and 11 more died after being released or as the result of mistreatment by security officials.'

9.4.3 A Freedom House (FH) news article dated 22 July 2019, stated: 'On a daily basis, large numbers of judges, prosecutors, and police play an active role in the arrest, imprisonment, and torture of Chinese citizens who persist in their devotion to Falun Gong.'

9.4.4 An article from the Journal of Political Risk, a peer-reviewed journal covering political risk, dated 20 July 2022, reported:

'Within labour camps, prisons, and reeducation centers, violence is used to "transform" the minds of Falun Gong believers. Transformation is described by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China as "a process of ideological reprogramming whereby practitioners are subjected to various methods of physical and psychological coercion until they recant their belief in Falun Gong" - in other words, forced religious conversion. Labour camps and prison officials receive compensation for every Falun Gong practitioner who is transformed, and are punished or denied promotions if they fail to meet transformation quotas.

'Individuals are considered to have been successfully transformed when they

⁴³ China Tribunal, '[Independent Tribunal Into Forced Organ ...](#)' (paragraph 167), 17 June 2019

⁴⁴ CECC, '[Annual Report: 2020](#)' (page 118), 12 January 2021

⁴⁵ FH, '[Falun Gong's Secrets for Surviving in China](#)', 22 July 2019

sign statements promising to stop practicing Falun Gong, sever all connections with the group, condemn the doctrine and teachings of the practice, engage in self-criticism, and agree to cooperate with authorities. They may also be required to make videotaped statements denouncing Falun Gong, or to participate in the transformation of their former coreligionists, including by physically abusing them. Such methods are apparently seen as effective ways to test the sincerity of the newly converted. Former Falun Gong detainees describe the process of forced conversion as a source of extreme anguish...

‘For Falun Gong practitioners who do not willingly submit to the transformation process, authorities employ increasingly severe physical torture against them. Common forms of torture include beatings, shocks with electric truncheons, crude or violent forced-feedings, simulated drowning, sexual humiliation and rape with foreign objects, injections with unknown pharmacological or psychotropic substances, and suspension by the limbs or being forced into stress positions, sometimes for days or weeks at a time. In addition, detainees encounter sleep deprivation, lack of access to sanitation, insufficient food, and denial of medical treatment. As of 2008, Falun Gong sources had compiled over 63,000 individual reports of torture in custody, many of them specifying the precise circumstances of the torture and the names of the alleged perpetrators... The combination of psychological pressure and physical torture causes severe and lasting harm in its victims, a portion of whom suffer long-term physical disabilities, mental collapse, or death following their release from custody.’⁴⁶

9.4.5 The Minghui article of 10 January 2023, reported: ‘Due to police brutality and torture, some practitioners died hours or days after their arrests. One woman died [two hours](#) after her arrest and another 14 hours later. A third woman died three days after being arrested and another one eight days. Several more practitioners were traumatized by the latest harassment and [passed away](#) shortly after. (A summary report of the persecution death cases reported in 2022 can be read [here](#).)’⁴⁷

9.4.6 FH, in their report - Freedom in the World 2023, 10 March 2023, noted: ‘The government continued to operate mobile “transformation” units, which subject members of “illegal” religious groups to severe psychological and physical torture intended to force them to “transform” by renouncing their religious beliefs. Thousands of members of such illegal groups are also sentenced to long prison terms and illegal forms of detention, in which torture and ill-treatment are routine... Dozens of Falun Gong practitioners were reported to have died in custody, or shortly after their release, in recent years.’⁴⁸

9.4.7 Minghui.org reported in an article dated 17 June 2023:

‘The Jiazhou Prison in Leshan City, Sichuan Province, was established after the merger of Wumaping Forced Labor Camp and Shawan Prison. Known to the outside as the “Chenma Group Co., Ltd,” it’s in fact a place that has been

⁴⁶ Ford, C, JPR, ‘[Genocide in The People’s Republic of China](#)’, 20 July 2022

⁴⁷ Minghui.org, ‘[Reported in 2022: 7,331 Falun Gong Practitioners Arrested or ...](#)’, 10 January 2023

⁴⁸ FH, ‘[Freedom in the World 2023 – China](#)’ (D2), 10 March 2023

used to incarcerate male Falun Gong practitioners from various parts of the province since 2006...

'While in the prison, Falun Gong practitioners are subjected various torture methods, including long hours of standing, electric shocks, beating, being forced to finish a meal within seconds, and unpaid labor. They are not allowed to talk with one another and are ordered to write thought reports and guarantee statements to renounce their faith. Those who refused are placed under strict management, sprayed with pepper water, or tortured by other inmates. Inmates involved in persecuting Falun Gong practitioners are rewarded with term reductions.

'According to Minghui reports, at least 23 practitioners and one family member of a practitioner have died as a result of the torture in prison. Some died in the prison, while some passed away after they were released on the brink of death.'⁴⁹ The [article](#) provides details of people who have reportedly died due to torture in Jiazhou Prison⁵⁰.

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9.5 Surveillance

9.5.1 The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), reported in an article dated September 2020: 'Chinese public security officials monitor both registered and unregistered religious groups to prevent activities that "disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the State," as stipulated by the Chinese constitution. In practice, however, monitoring and crackdowns often target peaceful activities that are protected under international law, say human rights watchdogs.'⁵¹

9.5.2 The Diplomat, reporting on 30 April 2021, noted:

'China is the quintessential surveillance state: cameras perch on every street corner and bots monitor every corner of the internet. Chinese officials believe these measures will enable them to anticipate and pre-empt threats to the regime...

'China's surveillance network is expansive and pervasive. Chongqing, for example, holds the dubious distinction of being the "most surveilled city in the world," with roughly one camera for every six of its 30 million residents. Facial recognition systems identify those captured on camera, instantly recording their ethnicity and party membership. The state wastes no opportunity to gather biometric data, weaponizing it against ...[those] suspected of disloyalty. And on WeChat – the Chinese equivalent of Facebook, WhatsApp, and Apple Pay combined – government monitors are ever-present. At the cutting edge, Chinese officials are testing artificial intelligence-powered analytics, which purport to predict unrest before it occurs.'⁵²

9.5.3 The Washington Post reported on 2 February 2022:

'The full extent of China's domestic security state has been unclear since

⁴⁹ Minghui.org, '[23 Falun Gong Practitioners and One Family Member Have Died ...](#)', 17 June 2023

⁵⁰ Minghui.org, '[23 Falun Gong Practitioners and One Family Member Have Died ...](#)', 17 June 2023

⁵¹ CFR, '[Religion in China](#)', 25 September 2020

⁵² The Diplomat, '[China's Paper Tiger Surveillance State: The CCP's pervasive ...](#)', 30 April 2021

2013, when the Finance Ministry stopped disclosing it after years of greater spending on internal security than on defense.

‘What is known is that extensive upgrades to state surveillance have been pursued across China in recent years. This surveillance state 2.0 has been built by police budgets, creating a vast market for leading Chinese companies that bring emerging technologies to bear on catching and preventing perceived sources of social instability...

‘There are many overlapping parts of China’s security state. There are media censorship and monitoring of online discussion. There are surveillance and control of dissident figures. There are new methods of voice and image analysis developed by technology firms. And there is a massive network of low-level volunteer informants on the lookout for suspicious activity.

‘At the center of the national security state is President Xi Jinping and the upper echelons of the Communist Party. In practice, this means that the capital, Beijing, is the heart of a system of coercion and control designed to apprehend troublemakers.’⁵³

9.5.4 The Falun Dafa Information Center, in its Special Report of 2022, noted:

‘Falun Gong practitioners are closely monitored and remain key targets of the Chinese security apparatus. The technological advances made in surveillance in recent years—including facial recognition video cameras in public places—and the proliferation of heavily monitored apps like WeChat have facilitated the detection, identification, and detention of Chinese citizens who practice Falun Gong. Many have been arrested and sentenced to long prison terms for simple actions like, speaking to others about Falun Gong in public parks, handing out flyers at neighbors’ homes, or sharing a link with a friend about the practice, or the rights abuses suffered by practitioners...

‘... Facial recognition technology enables cameras to quickly identify citizens. Falun Gong practitioners known to police have long been considered targets of detailed surveillance. Their biometrics and other data has been collected and stored in “key individual” databases for over a decade. This facilitates cross-referencing and identification. On July 15, 2020 (prior to Party leader Xi Jinping’s scheduled visit to the region on July 23), police arrested a female Falun Gong practitioner, Gao Xiaoqi in her home in Jilin Province. She had been identified as a practitioner with Skynet’s facial recognition technology and because she had previously met with other Falun Gong practitioners in the area, was sentenced to nine years in prison.’⁵⁴

9.5.5 Freedom House, in their Freedom in the World report, covering events in 2022, stated:

‘The government’s vast ability to monitor citizens’ lives and communications inhibits online and offline conversations. Administrators of social media applications like WeChat closely monitor user discussions to ensure conformity with government content restrictions. Surveillance cameras, now

⁵³ The Washington Post, ‘[China’s finely crafted web of digital surveillance for the ...](#)’, 2 February 2022

⁵⁴ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback](#)’ (pages 7 and 35), 2022

frequently augmented with facial-recognition software, cover many urban areas and public transportation, and these networks are expanding into rural regions. Devices used by police to quickly extract and scan data from smartphones, initially deployed in Xinjiang, have spread nationwide.

'Police have access to the personal details of broad categories of individuals. China's Cybersecurity Law obliges companies to store Chinese users' data within the country and submit to often intrusive security reviews.

Telecommunications companies are required to obtain facial scans of new internet or mobile phone users as part of the real-name registration process, which is combined with mass surveillance tools to closely monitor all residents. Electronic surveillance is supplemented with offline monitoring by neighborhood party committees and "public security volunteers" who are visible during large events.'⁵⁵

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9.6 Organ harvesting

9.6.1 A panel of independent lawyers and experts set up by a campaign group to examine whether China was harvesting organs, determined that Falun Gong members have been subjected to having their organs harvested for transplant, which Beijing has repeatedly denied. In a June 2019 article by Reuters, it was noted: 'The seven-member panel found it was "beyond doubt" that forced organ harvesting from prisoners has taken place "on a substantial scale by state-supported or approved organizations and individuals" in an interim judgement released in December. The panel said its findings were "indicative" of genocide but it had not been clear enough to make a positive ruling, particularly since some Falun Gong prisoners had been released and profit was also a likely motive.'⁵⁶

9.6.2 The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), reported in June 2021:

'UN human rights experts* said today they were extremely alarmed by reports of alleged 'organ harvesting' targeting minorities, including Falun Gong practitioners... in detention in China. The experts said they have received credible information that detainees from ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities may be forcibly subjected to blood tests and organ examinations such as ultrasound and x-rays, without their informed consent; while other prisoners are not required to undergo such examinations. The results of the examinations are reportedly registered in a database of living organ sources that facilitates organ allocation.

"Forced organ harvesting in China appears to be targeting specific ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities held in detention, often without being explained the reasons for arrest or given arrest warrants, at different locations," they said. "We are deeply concerned by reports of discriminatory treatment of the prisoners or detainees based on their ethnicity and religion or belief.'⁵⁷

⁵⁵ FH, '[Freedom in the World 2023 – China](#)' (D4), 10 March 2023

⁵⁶ Reuters, '[China is harvesting organs from Falun Gong members, finds expert panel](#)', 17 June 2019

⁵⁷ OHCHR, '[China: UN human rights experts alarmed by 'organ harvesting' allegations](#)' 14 June 2021

- 9.6.3 The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, which promotes international human rights, with membership open to members of the U.S. House of Representatives, reported on their website in May 2022:
- ‘The [People’s Republic of China] PRC is widely alleged to be a major harvester and trafficker of forcibly acquired organs. Available information indicates that Falun Gong practitioners have been the primary victims of this cruel practice... Since 2015, Chinese authorities have claimed to only source organs from voluntary donors, but there are doubts as to the veracity of the claim. Data suggests that Chinese hospitals have performed many times more transplants than the highest estimates of ethically available donors can account for.’⁵⁸
- 9.6.4 FH, in their Freedom in the World 2023 report -, 10 March 2023, noted:
- ‘Despite the government’s claim that it has ended the transplantation of organs from executed prisoners, the scale and speed of the transplantation industry far exceed what is feasible via the country’s nascent voluntary donation system. In June 2021, a group of UN human rights experts expressed alarm over ongoing reports of organs being procured from “minorities, including Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs, Tibetans, Muslims, and Christians, in detention in China.”’⁵⁹
- 9.6.5 The Falun Dafa Information Center, in its Special Report of 2022, noted:
- ‘In the past few years, several reports by reputable institutions and publications have also confirmed the credibility of the allegations – large numbers of Falun Gong practitioners have been, and still are, killed for their organs in China. Recent cases of Falun Gong practitioners forcefully having their blood drawn by police suggest that the atrocities continue today. Unfortunately, most victims of forced organ harvesting are not reported due to the CCP’s routine cremation of bodies, often without the permission of their families.’⁶⁰
- 9.6.6 The 2022 USSD IRF stated:
- ‘On May 4, the European Parliament adopted a resolution finding that “whereas the organ transplant system in China does not comply with the... [World Health Organisation’s] requirements for transparency and traceability in organ procurement pathways, and whereas the Chinese government has resisted independent scrutiny of the system,” the European Parliament expressed “serious concerns about the reports of persistent, systematic, inhumane, and state-sanctioned organ harvesting from prisoners in the People’s Republic of China, and, more specifically, from Falun Gong practitioners.” The resolution stated that this practice “may amount to crimes against humanity, as defined in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.”...
- ‘On August 21, a spokesperson for the PRC [People’s Republic of China] embassy in Belgium responded to a journalist’s inquiry regarding forced organ harvesting by saying that such allegations were “seriously misleading

⁵⁸ Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, ‘[Forced Organ Harvesting in China: ...](#)’, 12 May 2022

⁵⁹ FH, ‘[Freedom in the World 2023 – China](#)’ (F3), 10 March 2023

⁶⁰ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends ...](#)’ (page 46), 2022

and deceiving for the public,” that they were “purely fabricated out of thin air and have no factual basis,” and that they were “preposterous falsehoods spread by the Falun Gong cult and some anti-China forces to smear China, hoodwink the international community, and cover up the nature of the cult.” The spokesperson said, “The selling of human organs and illegal transplant are strictly prohibited by China’s laws,” and that the law stipulated “the donation of human organs shall be made under the principle of free will and free of charge.”⁶¹

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9.7 Freedom of movement

9.7.1 The law provides for freedom of internal movement and foreign travel but the government restricted these rights, particularly for individuals deemed ‘politically sensitive’⁶². The US State Department, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China, 20 March 2023, added: ‘The law neither provides for a citizen’s right to repatriate nor addresses exile. The government continued to refuse re-entry to numerous citizens considered dissidents, Falun Gong activists, or “troublemakers.” Although in previous years authorities allowed some dissidents living abroad to return, dissidents released on medical parole and allowed to leave the country often were effectively exiled.’⁶³

9.7.2 For more information on freedom of movement see Country information note: Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation (on request)

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9.8 Falun Gong diaspora

9.8.1 The Falun Dafa Information Center, in its Special Report of 2022, noted: ‘Practitioners abroad are targeted by the long arm of the 610 Office [See [The 6-10 Office](#)]. The CCP and its agents will monitor, harass, and even physically assault exiled Falun Gong adherents or local non-Chinese citizens who practice Falun Gong. These transnational repression cases are well-documented by human rights organizations and Falun Gong communities in the United States, the Czech Republic, Taiwan, Brazil, Argentina, and more. In some instances, local authorities are recruited by the CCP to do their bidding, and aid in the detention, prosecution, or extradition of Falun Gong practitioners, including ones who are not Chinese citizens.’⁶⁴

(See [Surveillance](#))

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⁶¹ USSD IRF, ‘[2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#)’ (section II), 15 May 2023

⁶² USSD, ‘[2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China](#)’ (section 2d), 20 March 2023

⁶³ USSD, ‘[2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China](#)’ (section 2d), 20 March 2023

⁶⁴ Falun Dafa Information Center, ‘[Pandemic, Persecution and Pushback Trends ...](#)’ (page 50), 2022

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

All the COI included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s). Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared and contrasted to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The Home Office uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- **Legal context**
 - Constitution
- **Falun Gong**
 - Legal context
 - What is Falun Gong?
 - History
 - Practice and beliefs
 - Falun Gong in Hong Kong
 - Proselytism
- **State treatment of Falun Gong practitioners**
 - State attitude and treatment
 - The 6-10 Office
 - Arrests
 - Torture and detention
 - Surveillance
 - Organ harvesting
 - Freedom of movement
 - Falun Gong diaspora

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **3.0**
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Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

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Changes from last version of this note

Updated country information and assessment.

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