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IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

China: China Democracy Party (CDP) [also called the Democracy Party of China], including membership, structure, and leadership; activities; treatment by Chinese authorities of party members and family members (2018–September 2020) [CHN200322.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Background

The website of the UK branch of the CDP indicates that the CDP was founded by a group of democracy activists in June 1998 (CDP, UK Branch n.d.a). The same source notes that the CDP was "suppressed" by Chinese authorities later the same year and that its members were imprisoned (CDP, UK Branch 20 June 2004). The source states that "[a]ll members in China have gone underground" (CDP, UK Branch 20 June 2004). According to sources, the CDP is banned (US 11 Mar. 2019, 60; AP 12 Jan. 2020).

According to the website of the UK headquarters of the CDP, "key members" of the CDP include the following: Xu Wenli, Qin Yongmin, Wang Youcai, Cha Jianguo, Zhu Zhengming, Zhu Yufu, Mao Qingxiang, Liu Xianfu, Gao Hongming, He Depu, Liu Shizun, Wu Yilong, Xu Guang, Yu Wanbao, Chen Shuqing, Wang Peijian, Cheng Fan, Sun Youping, Hu Mingjun, Wang Sen, Li Dawei, and Xu Wanping (CDP, UK Branch n.d.a).

The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019* states that the CDP "remained banned, and the government continued to monitor, detain, and imprison current and former CDP members" (US 11 Mar. 2019, 60).

2. Objectives of the CDP

The website of the headquarters of the CDP in the UK states that the CDP "believes in and champions a multi-party constitutional democracy, as well as a fair and democratic election process" (CDP, UK Branch n.d.a). According to the English translation of the 1998 Declaration on the Establishment of the China Democracy Party published on the website of the headquarters of the CDP in the US, "[t]he purpose of the CDP is to realize direct democratic elections and to establish a constitutional democratic political system ..." (CDP, US headquarters n.d.a). On the same website, the party's Code states that the principles of the CDP are to uphold justice and human rights, and to realize democracy in China (CDP, US headquarters 10 Feb. 2004). In a 2008 interview by the Choices Program, a program associated with the History Department at Brown University that develops educational material for secondary schools in the US (The Choices Program n.d.), in spoken remarks translated by an interpreter, Xu Wenli, one of the founders of the CDP, stated the following:

I think the mission of the China Democracy Party can be summarized in two parts: to end one party autocratic rule and to realize a constitutional democratic republic in China. This republic would be governed on the basis of constitutional law. Law will reign above all and society must no longer come under the subjective rule of individuals. This is the vision of democratic transition that we, the China Democracy Party, have for China. (The Choices Program 12 May 2008)

3. Structure**3.1 Membership**

The website of the CDP headquarters in the US indicates that prospective members in mainland China should send an email to the Chairman stating their interest in joining the party and repeating the party oath, which can be found on their website (CDP, US headquarters n.d.b). The same source indicates that the applicant should include their name, gender, age, educational level, and Chinese province (CDP, US headquarters n.d.b). The website of the CDP headquarters in the UK notes that any Chinese citizen who is 18 years of age or older and who recognizes the constitution of the party, submits their membership fee, participates in the CDP's activities, and accepts the leadership of the CDP, can become a member (CDP, UK Branch 20 June 2004).

The website of the CDP headquarters in the US notes that prospective overseas CDP members can apply to the CDP Members' Affairs Department by email, telephone, or fax (CDP, US headquarters n.d.b). The same source indicates that the requirements for overseas members to join the CDP are as follows:

- Applicants agree with the political principle of the CDP;
- Applicants agree to make contributions to social advancement and political reform in China;
- Applicants are to attend various political and social activities which are organized by the CDP;
- Applicants follow the organization's guidelines; and
- Applicants are aware that the CDP is considered a "hostile organization" and that there are "dangers" to joining the CDP and will "assume danger" for pushing the democratic course of China (CDP, US headquarters n.d.b).

In an interview with the Research Directorate, an associate professor at the University of Western Australia, who wrote a book on the overseas Chinese democracy movement, indicated that to become a member of the CDP you need an introduction from another member, and that you can join by making a call and paying a membership fee (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020).

3.2 Leadership

The Associate Professor indicated that in 2010, Juntao Wang, an intellectual who led the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy movement and was exiled to the US in 1994, established a branch of the CDP in Flushing, New York (Associate Professor 10 Sept. 2020). The same source noted that Xu Wenli, another founder of the CDP, established another branch of the CDP, also based in Flushing, New York (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020). A January 2020 Associate Press (AP) article indicates that Wang Min is the "leader of the U.S. branch of the outlawed China Democracy Party" (AP 12 Jan. 2020). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4. CDP Activities Abroad

The website of the UK headquarters of the CDP indicates that in November 2004 the first CDP overseas headquarters were established in Rhode Island (CDP, UK Branch n.d.a). The same source states that there are 12 overseas CDP divisions, including in England, France, Germany, Holland [the Netherlands], Australia, New Zealand, Korea, divisions on both the East and West coasts of the US, and Thailand (CDP UK Branch n.d.a). The Associate Professor indicated that there used to be eight overseas branches of the CDP, with similar names, all "claiming to be the torch-bearer of the suppressed Democracy Party in China" (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020). The same source stated that the US-based CDP headed by Juntao Wang is the only Democracy Party that he believes is still active in the US because the other branches in the US were either raided by the FBI or have collapsed (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020). According to the Associate Professor, the CDP in the US headed by Juntao Wang also has a Canadian branch and an Australian branch and is expanding (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020). For information on the Canadian Committee of the Democracy Party of China (CCDPC) [Canada Committee of the Democratic Party of China; Democratic Party of China, Canada Committee; Democratic Party of China in Canada; Democratic Party of China National Committee Canada Committee], see Response to Information CHN106343 of September 2019.

The website of the UK headquarters of the CDP states that its primary objectives are to promote the CDP's broad and specific policies, to recruit new members, and to cultivate cadres and activists (CDP, UK Branch n.d.b). The Associate Professor indicated that the US-based CDP headed by Juntao Wang is active, and its activities include "party classes" every Saturday, demonstrations in Time Square on Saturday evenings, protests, and party congresses (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020).

5. CDP Activities in China

The Associate Professor indicated that according to correspondence they have had with party members in New York, the party is still active in China and they claim to have an extensive network in different regions of China (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

6. Treatment of CDP Members by Chinese Authorities

The website of the UK headquarters of the CDP indicates that in December 1998 Xu Wenli, Qin Yongmin, and Wang Youcai were sentenced to 13, 12, and 11 years imprisonment, respectively (CDP, UK Branch n.d.a). According to the same source, Xu Wenli and Wang Youcai later sought political asylum in the US; with Xu Wenli was granted asylum in December 2002 and Wang Youcai was granted asylum in March 2004 (CDP, UK Branch n.d.a). The source also indicates that since March 2004 a "number of" CDP members have been detained, arrested, and sentenced to imprisonment (CDP, UK Branch n.d.a).

A 2018 article by the *New Yorker*, a weekly American news and culture magazine (*The New Yorker* n.d.), on the monitoring and treatment of political activists in China, reports that since the release of Zha Jianguo in 2008, a founding member of the Democracy Party of China who was given a nine year prison sentence in 1999, he has been under continual surveillance by police (*The New Yorker* 17 Dec. 2018). The same source notes that "[t]he authorities monitor his phone, block some of his messages, and bar him from certain gatherings" (*The New Yorker* 17 Dec. 2018).

The *New Yorker* article also notes that other former members of the Democracy Party have been sent back to prison and have been given "heavy" prison sentences, including Qin Yongmin, the founder of the CDP's Hubei branch, who is currently serving a 13 year sentence, his fourth prison sentence; he has spent a total of 26 years imprisoned (*The New Yorker* 17 Dec. 2018). A 2018 BBC article notes that Qin Yongmin was sentenced to 12 years in prison in 1998 when he attempted to officially register the party (BBC 11 July 2018). Sources report that in 2018, Qin Yongmin was sentenced to 13 years in prison for "subversion" of state power (BBC 11 July 2018; *The Guardian* 11 July 2018; US 11 Mar. 2019, 60). A February 2018 article by Radio Free Asia (RFA), a private nonprofit agency broadcasting news and information to Asian countries (RFA n.d.), reports that in January 2015, Qin Yongmin's wife Zhao Suli was detained along with Qin, and that in February 2018 after being held in an unknown location for three years, she was allowed to meet with her family members in Wuhan (RFA 6 Feb. 2018). Similarly, according to the 2019 annual report by the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), Qin's wife Zhao Suli was also detained in 2015; in February 2018, following more than three years of "enforced disappearance," she returned to her home in Wuhan (US 18 Nov. 2019, 24). The same source indicates that "[a]uthorities continued to restrict Zhao's activities after her release" (US 18 Nov. 2019, 24). US *Country Reports 2019* states that when Qin's brother and wife were allowed to visit him following her release, they "noted prison authorities denied him reading and writing materials and that Qin's physical and mental health were deteriorating due to his forced hard labor" (US 11 Mar. 2019, 60).

A September 2018 RFA article reports that in September 2018, authorities in Zhejiang, a province in Eastern China, detained Zhu Yufu, a well-known member of the Democracy Party, "on suspicion of 'subversion'" (RFA 17 Sept. 2018). The same source notes that Zhu Yufu had been released in March after serving his second prison term (RFA 17 Sept. 2018). The RFA article also states that "CDP activists who remain in China and who have continued their activism have faced repeated jail terms" including Qin Yongmin, Lu Gengsong, who was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment in June 2016 on charges of "incitement to subvert state power," and Chen Shuqing, who was sentenced to 10 years and six months on charges of "incitement to subvert state power" (RFA 17 Sept. 2018).

The Associate Professor stated that members of the CDP abroad do not return to China because they are afraid (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020). The same source reported that individuals who are engaged in the party's activities would be in danger if they returned to China (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020). He added that CDP members in the US have received threatening messages from Chinese authorities on WeChat [a Chinese messaging and payments application (BBC 20 Sept. 2020)] (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Associate Professor noted that there have been instances of family members being warned because of a relative's activities in the CDP, but he is unaware of family members being harassed because of a relative's CDP activities (Associate Professor 4 Sept. 2020). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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