

Abuses of Freedom of Belief of Falun Gong Practitioners in Poland and Europe

Polish Falun Dafa Association
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Thank you Mr. Chairman. Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to bring to your attention problems faced by Falun Gong practitioners in Europe, who face defamation, incitement to hatred, depersonalization, etc. from Chinese consulates and embassies in OSCE member countries.

Chinese diplomats regularly contact European media and politicians to spread the same venomous propaganda against Falun Gong that is spread in China. Propaganda the regime uses to justify its nine-year persecution of Falun Gong.

Falun Gong is traditional ancient Chinese self-improvement practice with elements similar to Buddhism and Taoism. In essence, it teaches methods of meditation through exercises intended to improve physical and spiritual health and fitness, its followers seek to promote truth, compassion and tolerance across racial, national and cultural boundaries. Violence is deeply disapproved of.

David Ownby, Director of the Centre of East Asian studies at the University of Montreal and a specialist in modern Chinese history, wrote about the Falun Gong in a paper prepared for the Canadian Institute of International Affairs. In his paper, he countered the common Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda line against Falun Gong which labels the practice "an evil cult." Ownby stated that entirely unlike cults, Falun Gong has no mandatory financial obligations, it does not isolate its practitioners in communes or withdraw them from the world. He says:

"Falun Gong members remain within society. In a vast majority, they live within normal families. They go to work; they send their kids to school."

David Kilgour, former Canadian Secretary of State for Asia Pacific, also discredits the CCP's propaganda in his report on the forced organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners in China. Kilgour says: "There is no penalty for leaving the Falun Gong, since there is nothing to leave. Practitioners are free to practice Falun Gong as little or as much as they see fit. They can start and stop at any time. They can engage in their exercises in groups or singly. Li Hongzhi, the author of the books which inspired Falun Gong practitioners, is not worshipped by practitioners. Nor does he receive funds from practitioners. He is a private person who meets rarely with practitioners. His advice to practitioners is publicly available information - conference lectures and published books. The Chinese government labelling of the Falun Gong as an evil cult is a component of the repression of the Falun Gong, a pretext for that repression as well as a defamation, incitement to hatred, depersonalization, marginalization and dehumanization of the Falun Gong." End of quote.

This same propaganda machine has also worked to spread its lies in Europe and the rest of the world, thus violating rights to freedom of belief in OSCE member countries.

Krzysztof Łoziński, Polish expert on China says in his book *The Hell of The Red Dynasty – China and Human Rights, Ten Years Later*: “When the Chinese government started persecuting Falun Gong, it started to call it a sect, or cult. That was very clever. Chinese security service knew, that people in the West are afraid of cults. So they were thinking, if they start to put Falun Gong followers in labour camps and murder them in the name of fighting against a cult, there will be no strong reaction from the West, whose finances are necessary for communist China’s development.”

According to Amnesty International, the Chinese Government adopted three strategies to crush Falun Gong: violence against practitioners; "brainwashing" them to abandon Falun Gong and renounce it, and a media campaign to turn public opinion against Falun Gong.

This incitement to hatred is most acute in China. But it exists worldwide as Chinese officials, wherever they are posted, engage in this incitement as part and parcel of their official duties.

Let me give you a few concrete examples from Poland:

1. After persecution started of Falun Gong started in China in 1999, a lot of international media mimicked the Chinese communist propaganda. In Poland, *The Everyday Weekly* published an article making groundless suggestions that Falun Gong might be connected to a group in Japan that committed murder.
2. In 2005, Mrs. Zhang Cuiying, an artist and Falun Gong practitioner who was tortured for months in China and then freed thanks to the Australian government, came to Poland with her exhibition and to expose the crimes against Falun Gong in China. One TV reporter who came to the event, was the son of a former Polish Ambassador to China from communist times in Poland and someone who is often invited to the Chinese embassy in Warsaw for dinners. His TV report naturally repeated the Chinese regime’s hate propaganda defaming Falun Gong.
3. In May of this year, a woman who works for the Chinese embassy in Warsaw, Mrs. Wu Xia, physically attacked and issued a death threat against a Falun Gong practitioner who was distributing a newspaper known to be supportive of Falun Gong and be critical of the Chinese regime’s human rights abuses in general. Mrs. Wu was at the time, herself handing out propaganda CDs defaming Tibetans in China.

The Polish Falun Dafa Association hopes that OSCE member states will not accept the CCP’s efforts to manipulate their internal political and public opinion against Falun Gong.

Thank you for your attention.