

Religious Freedom Violations Regarding Falun Gong in Ukraine

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The NGO, Falun Gong Followers' Foundation was established in 2002 but there was a strong unwillingness to allow us to establish this organization and we met with many obstacles. Ukrainian officials were afraid at that time that Falun Gong practitioners would go to the Chinese Embassy in Kiev and try to expose the truth about the persecution of Falun Gong by the Chinese regime, and that the Chinese Embassy would protest against this. We believe that some Ukrainian officials are still under the influence of the regime in China. These officials didn't want to hear about the issue of Falun Gong and interfered in our events, even detaining Falun Gong practitioners in 2001.

The application to legalize the Falun Gong Followers' Foundation was submitted in Kiev in 2002. Over 8 long months there was no reply or explanation from the Administration of Justice in Kiev. Officials were cold and even disrespectful towards members of the Foundation. We had no way of knowing about the status of our application because we didn't receive any verbal or written reply about it.

Consider Kiev Day in May, 2003. The city administration was preparing celebrations and planning a parade of NGO's on the central street of the capital of Ukraine. Falun Gong followers were invited as well, and were entered in the list of participants for the parade by the city administration. But we were very surprised and disappointed when the police broke up our participating contingent in the parade; our banners with the words that comprise of principles of our practice (Truthfulness - Compassion - Forbearance) were also confiscated.

One practitioner was arrested and detained for 7 hours. The police justified their actions by saying that the Falun Gong organization didn't have a registration document on hand in the parade. We discovered later that our organization had been legalized 6.5 months earlier, but at the time, this was unknown to us, as officials had kept that fact secret from the NGO members. Officials of the security service and the administration of domestic affairs in Kiev didn't want practitioners to participate in different events of the city, and the accusations were only a justification for their actions.

Soon the situation became clear: Chinese representatives were on the platform in front of the Kiev administration building during those celebrations. Officials from the city administration had come under pressure from Chinese diplomats, from the propaganda that China tries to spread throughout the world to demonize Falun Gong and deceive the international community.

Chinese officials have created extensive fabrications to justify persecution of Falun Gong, led in China by the Chinese Communist Party.

The documents for the registration of a new Falun Dafa Association were submitted twice

in 2006, but they were returned to us under different unsubstantiated reasons. Then the Administration of Justice in Kiev sent a letter refusing to register our organization. It should be explained that we want to rewrite of the status of our organization, to make it into a legal entity with the right to defend its interests in trial, and support refugee status issues of Chinese practitioners in Ukraine.

The attorney taking care of our NGO registration has been told by the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice that it is planning to close Falun Gong organizations in Ukraine, without any legal justification.

Some Communist Deputies of the Ukrainian Verhovna Rada have already demanded a hearing of "the case of the NGO of Falun Gong Followers" to cancel its registration. Why? Because Falun Gong practitioners speak openly about issues such as genocidal organ harvesting from Falun Gong practitioners in China, which embarrassing to the Chinese authorities. Thus our situation is difficult now, but we will continue to pursue all possible mean of communicating with our government and the general population.

Falun Gong Followers Foundation of Ukraine would like to make the following recommendations:

1. The Ukrainian government should officially state its position regarding the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China, in the same way many other OSCE member countries already done.
2. The Ukrainian government needs to dramatically increase its dialogue with NGO's in Ukraine; the current lack of dialogue is a fundamental cause of existing abuses of religious freedom, freedom of association, and assembly.
3. We apply to the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine to be led by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and defend the fundamental rights of their own citizens.