

= Falun Gong outside mainland China =

Falun Gong , a qigong practice that combines meditation with the moral philosophy articulated by founder Li Hongzhi , first began spreading widely in China in 1992 . Li 's first lectures outside mainland China took place in Paris in 1995 . At the invitation of the Chinese ambassador to France , he lectured on his teachings and practice methods to the embassy staff and others . From that time on , Li gave lectures in other major cities in Europe , Asia , Oceania , and North America . He has resided permanently in the United States since 1998 . Falun Gong is now practiced in some 70 countries worldwide , and the teachings have been translated to over 40 languages . The international Falun Gong community is estimated to number in the hundreds of thousands , though participation estimates are imprecise on account of a lack of formal membership .

Since 1999 , the Chinese Communist Party has persecuted Falun Gong in mainland China . In response , Falun Gong practitioners around the world have conducted activities aimed at raising awareness about the related human rights issues . These include lobbying , passing out of flyers , participating in sit @-@ ins in front of Chinese embassies and consulates , and staging parades and demonstrations . They have established media outlets , have founded advocacy and research organizations to report information on the persecution in China , and launched lawsuits against the alleged architects and participants of the persecution campaign .

Several foreign governments , the United Nations , and human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have expressed their concerns over allegations of torture and ill @-@ treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in China . Nonetheless , some observers have noted that Falun Gong has failed to attract the level of sympathy and sustained international attention afforded to Tibetans , Chinese Christians or democracy activists . This has been attributed to the group 's unsophisticated PR skills , the impact of the Communist Party 's propaganda against the practice , or the foreign nature of its teachings , which identify with Buddhist and Daoist traditions .

= = History = =

From 1992 ? 1994 , Li Hongzhi traveled throughout China giving week @-@ long seminars on Falun Gong 's spiritual philosophy and exercises and meditation practices . In late 1994 , he declared that he had finished his work of teaching the practice in China , and the content of his lectures was compiled in the book Zhuan Falun , published in January 1995 . Later that year , Li left China and began teaching the practice overseas , beginning with a stop at the Chinese embassy in Paris in March 1995 , followed by lectures in Sweden in May 1995 . Between 1995 and 1999 , Li gave lectures in the United States , Canada , Australia , New Zealand , Germany , Switzerland , and Singapore . Falun Gong associations and clubs began appearing in Europe , North America and Australia , with activities centered mainly on university campuses .

As the practice began proliferating outside China , Li was the recipient of a measure of recognition in the United States and elsewhere in the western world . In August 1994 , the city of Houston named Li as an honorary citizen and goodwill ambassador for his " unselfish public service for the benefit and welfare of mankind . " In May 1999 , Li was welcomed to Toronto with greetings from the mayor and the provincial governor general , and in the two months that followed also received recognition from the cities of Chicago and San Jose .

Translations of Falun Gong teachings began appearing in the late 1990s . Although the practice was beginning to attract an overseas constituency , it remained relatively unknown in the Western world until the Spring of 1999 , when tensions between Falun Gong and Communist Party authorities became a subject of international media coverage . With the increased attention , the practice gained a greater following outside China . Following the launch of the Communist Party 's persecution of Falun Gong , the overseas presence became vital to the practice 's resistance in China and its continued survival .

= = Organization = =

Falun Gong embraces a minimal organizational structure , and does not have a rigid hierarchy , physical places of worship , fees , or formal membership . As a matter of doctrinal significance , Falun Gong is intended to be " formless , " having little to no material or formal organization . Practitioners of Falun Gong are forbidden to solicit donations or charge fees for the practice , and are similarly forbidden teach or interpret the teachings for others .

In the absence of membership or initiation rituals , a Falun Gong practitioner can be anyone who chooses to identify themselves as such . Students participate in the practice and follow its teachings as much or as little as they like , and practitioners do not instruct others on what to believe or how to behave .

Falun Gong can be said to be highly centralized in the sense that neither spiritual nor practical authority is dispersed . Li Hongzhi 's spiritual authority within the practice is absolute , yet the organization of Falun Gong works against totalistic control . Li does not intervene in the personal lives of practitioners , who have little to no contact with Li , except through the study of his teachings . Volunteer " assistants " or " contact persons " coordinate local activities , but they do not hold authority over other practitioners , regardless of how long they have practiced Falun Gong ; they cannot collect money , conduct healings , or teach or interpret doctrine for others .

Falun Gong 's nebulous structure and lack of membership makes it difficult to gauge the scope and size of Falun Gong communities outside China . Local groups post their practice site times on Falun Gong websites , but do not attempt to keep up with how many practitioners there are in certain areas . University of Montreal historian David Ownby notes that there are no " mid- or upper @-@ level tiers of the organization where one might go for such information . " He says that practitioners are not " members " of an " organization " , and do not fill out any forms at any point .

To the extent that organization is achieved in Falun Gong , it is accomplished partly through a global , networked , and often virtual community . In particular , electronic communications , email lists and a collection of websites are the primary means of coordinating activities and disseminating Li Hongzhi 's teachings . In addition to disseminating teachings , the internet serves to forge and maintain community , and is used as a medium for raising awareness of the persecution in China . Practitioners maintain hundreds of websites around the world . Most contain content in both Chinese and English , while others include German , French , Russian , Portuguese , Spanish , Japanese , and other languages .

Falun Gong 's reliance on the internet as a means of organizing has led to the group 's characterization by some observers as " a virtual religious community , " though other scholars are wary about overstating the significance of the internet . Scott Lowe , for instance , believes that the Internet is not a significant factor in attracting people to the practice ; instead , the influence of family and friends , as well as the prospect of better health , seem far more important in establishing initial interest .

Although the spiritual practice of Falun Gong has little clear organization , practitioners of Falun Gong have organized considerably among themselves since 1999 , establishing their own research and advocacy organizations , media groups , and arts companies .

= = Group exercise and study = =

Outside mainland China , a network of volunteer " contact persons , " regional Falun Dafa Associations and university clubs exists in approximately 70 countries . In most mid- to large @-@ sized cities , Falun Gong practitioners organize regular group meditation or study sessions in which they practice Falun Gong exercises and read (or re @-@ read) Li Hongzhi 's writings . The exercise and meditation sessions are described as informal groups of practitioners who gather in public parks ? usually in the morning ? for one to two hours . Group study sessions typically take place in the evenings in private residences or university or high school classrooms , and are described by David Ownby as " the closest thing to a regular ' congregational experience ' " that Falun Gong offers . Individuals who are too busy , isolated , or who simply prefer solitude may elect to practice privately .

Large Falun Gong " experience @-@ sharing " conferences are also held every several months in major metropolitan areas , in which Falun Gong students read prepared testimonials detailing their experiences in the practice . These conferences , which can attract audiences of thousands , also provide a venue for Li Hongzhi to address practitioners .

= = Evangelism = =

Practitioners of Falun Gong are encouraged to engage in Hong Fa activities , meaning " making known the way . " The Chinese term " Hong Fa " may be interpreted to refer to proselytizing , yet because Falun Gong espouses a belief that individuals are either predestined or not to obtain the practice , practitioners of Falun Gong do not actively attempt to convert people . Hong Fa activities include handing out flyers in the subway or at the mall , leaving Falun Gong literature in stores , libraries , etc . , and participating in activities such as marches , parades , and Chinese cultural events .

= = Demographics = =

Ownby confirms estimates that Falun Gong is practiced by hundreds of thousands of people outside China , with the largest communities found in Taiwan and in North American cities with large Chinese populations , such as New York and Toronto . Demographic surveys by sociologist Susan Palmer and David Ownby in North American communities found that 90 % of practitioners were ethnic Chinese (in Europe , there are proportionally more Caucasians) . The average age was approximately 42 . Among survey respondents , 56 % were female and 44 % male ; 80 % were married . The surveys found the respondents to be highly educated : 9 % held PhDs , 34 % had master 's degrees , and 24 % had a bachelor 's degree .

Most of the Falun Gong practitioners in North America were among the Chinese students who emigrated in the 1980s and 1990s . In Craig Burgdoff 's ethnographic research of Ohio practitioners , he found that 85 ? 90 % were Chinese graduate students or their family members . Similar results for North American practitioners were borne out by Scott Lowe , a professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Wisconsin @-@ Eau Claire . In a 2003 Internet survey , Lowe found that the Chinese respondents living in Western nations were " uniformly well educated , clearly representing the expatriate elite " , with all respondents holding a master 's degree or higher . Respondents from Singapore and Malaysia had a more mixed educational profile , with a minority holding university degrees .

The preponderance of North American practitioners learned Falun Gong after leaving China . Ownby suggests that Falun Gong appealed to a broad spectrum of social groups , " including university professors and students , high party and government officials , well @-@ educated cadres and members of the comfortable middle class , and [...] the old , the infirm , the unemployed , and the desperate . " In contrast to the typical mainland Chinese practitioner , who is likely to be a female retiree , Ownby 's survey at practitioners ' conferences in Montreal , Toronto , and Boston between 1999 and 2002 found the average Chinese practitioner in North America to be " young , urban , dynamic " . Non @-@ Chinese Falun Gong practitioners tend to fit the profile of non @-@ conformists and " spiritual seekers " ? people who had tried a variety of qigong , yoga , or religious practices before finding Falun Gong . This stands in contrast to the standard profile of Chinese , whom Ownby described as " the straightest of straight arrows " .

= = Reasons for practicing Falun Gong = =

In surveys of the Falun Gong practitioners in North America , the most commonly reported reasons for being attracted to the practice were the teachings , cultivation exercises , and health benefits . In a study conducted by David Ownby , close to 30 % of practitioners said they were attracted to Falun Dafa for its " intellectual content " , 27 % for " spiritual enlightenment " , 20 % for " health benefits " , 15 % the exercises , 7 % for Li Hongzhi himself , and 2 % for the community . The " intellectual

content " , according to Ownby , refers to the value of Falun Dafa doctrine in describing the " functioning of the moral and physical universe . "

Scott Lowe 's survey found that Falun Gong 's spiritual teachings and promise of good health were the most common reasons for people to have taken up the practice . In Lowe 's survey , 22 respondents gave " Master Li 's philosophy and his answers to life 's most difficult questions " as their primary attraction to the practice , while another twenty were attracted for health benefits . Nine were drawn by the moral principles , twelve by the books , ten by the exercises , and small numbers of others by a variety of other factors . Several respondents apparently realized that other forms of qigong were " shallow , exoteric , and superficial , " while they came to believe that Falun Gong is the " most complete , efficacious , and comprehensive system of spiritual cultivation on the planet . "

In Lowe 's survey , The practitioners were asked if their attraction to and focus on Falun Gong practice had changed over time . Ten claimed that they had no change , since they started Falun Gong with the intention of gaining enlightenment , which is the goal of practice . Others , over time , put less emphasis on the health improvements they experienced , which they came to see " as a relatively trivial result of cultivation . " Twenty @-@ six respondents said they felt a newfound sense of moral certitude and spiritual growth , while ten " discovered a firm determination to carry their cultivation through to the end goal of enlightenment or consummation , no matter what obstacles might appear in their path . "

= = Overseas responses to persecution in China = =

In July 1999 , the Communist Party initiated a campaign to persecute Falun Gong , including through the use of extralegal imprisonment , torture and other coercive measures , and propaganda . Falun Gong communities inside and outside China have adopted a variety of approaches to resist and mitigate the persecution in China . These tactics range from engagement with the media , lobbying of governments and NGOs , public protests and demonstrations , and attempts to seek legal redress . As the persecution in China progressed , overseas Falun Gong efforts increasingly tied their pleas for relief to Western human rights discourse , emphasizing the implications for freedom of speech , assembly , and conscience .

= = = Legal initiatives = = =

Lawyers acting on behalf of Falun Gong practitioners have filed dozens of largely symbolic lawsuits around the world against Jiang Zemin , Luo Gan , and other Chinese officials alleging genocide and crimes against humanity . According to International Advocates for Justice , Falun Gong has filed the largest number of human rights lawsuits in the 21st century and the charges are among the most severe international crimes defined by international criminal laws . As of 2006 , 54 civil and criminal lawsuits were under way in 33 countries .

In some instances , courts have refused to adjudicate Falun Gong cases against Chinese officials on the grounds of sovereign immunity . In November 2009 , however , Jiang Zemin and Luo Gan were indicted by a Spanish court on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity for their involvement in the persecution of Falun Gong . One month later , an Argentine judge concluded that Jiang and Luo had adopted a " genocidal strategy " in pursuing the eradication of Falun Gong , and asked Interpol to seek their arrest .

In May 2011 , a lawsuit was filed on behalf of Falun Gong practitioners against technology giant Cisco . The suit alleges , based mainly on internal Cisco documents , that the technology company " designed and implemented a surveillance system for the Chinese Communist Party , knowing it would be used to root out members of the Falun Gong religion and subject them to detention , forced labor and torture . " Cisco denies customizing its products to facilitate censorship or repression .

In addition to high @-@ profile lawsuits against Chinese officials and corporations , Falun Gong practitioners have filed a number of complaints and civil suits alleging discrimination outside China ,

most of them centered within the Chinese diaspora community . Several complaints have been made after Falun Gong groups were barred from participating in parades or events , with mixed results . In Canada and in New York , Falun Gong practitioners won judgments against Chinese businesses or community organizations for discriminating against them on the basis of their religious creed .

Practitioners of Falun Gong have been involved in a number of defamation cases against Chinese @-@ language media outlets or agents of the Chinese government . In 2004 , a Canadian Falun Gong practitioner Joel Chipkar won a libel case against Pan Xinchun , an officer at the Chinese consulate in Toronto , who had called Chipkar a member of a " sinister cult " in a newspaper article . Pan was ordered to pay \$ 10 @,@ 000 in damages to Chipkar , but left the country before paying . In 2008 , the Appeals Court of Quebec , Canada , ruled that a Chinese language newspaper " Les Presses Chinoises " had defamed Falun Gong when it depicted the practice as dangerous and perverse . The court did not award damages , however , on the basis that the defamation targeted the group , rather than the individual plaintiffs

= = = Media organizations = = =

In the early 2000s , Falun Gong practitioners in the United States began establishing their own Chinese @-@ language media organizations to gain wider exposure for their cause and challenge the narratives of the dominant Chinese state @-@ run media . These include The Epoch Times newspaper , New Tang Dynasty Television , and Sound of Hope radio station . In addition to carrying content related to Falun Gong , they became vocal critics of Communist Party policies more generally , carrying reports on other human rights issues in China , on corruption , environment and public health issues , and other topics . According to communications professor Yuezhi Zhao , these media organizations are an example of how Falun Gong entered into a " de facto media alliance " with China 's democracy movements in exile , as demonstrated by its frequent printing of articles by prominent overseas Chinese critics of the mainland Chinese government .

Although initially created to address the needs of the Chinese @-@ language media market , the media organizations have expanded into dozens of additional languages ; The Epoch Times newspaper is distributed across over 30 countries in 17 languages , and NTD Television has a satellite or cable presence in North America , Europe , and Asia , and produces programs in 18 languages . The organizations maintain that they are not formally affiliated with Falun Gong , which lacks both a centralized organization and funds . However , most of their staff are Falun Gong practitioners , and many contribute on a volunteer basis .

= = = Demonstrations and sit @-@ ins = = =

After the launch of the persecution campaign in 1999 , practitioners outside China began holding frequent protests , rallies , and appeals . These include large @-@ scale marches , demonstrations , and vigils to coincide with notable anniversaries , such as April 25 , 1999 , and July 20 , 1999 . Marches typically involve participants holding signs and banners , devoting different sections of the parade to different aspects of the persecution . There is usually a section involving participants wearing only white (symbolizing mourning) and holding photos of those killed in China .

Practitioners also stage sit @-@ ins and demonstrations outside Chinese embassies and consulates . Falun Gong practitioners in Vancouver , Canada continue to stage the world 's longest , continuous protest against the persecution . It which runs twenty @-@ four hours a day at the entrance to the PRC consulate on Granville Street . In June 2006 , it was announced by the mayor of Vancouver that the protest signs and structures must be taken down in accordance with a by @-@ law against building permanent structures on public property . In 2010 , the B.C. Court of Appeal ruled that the city 's order to remove the protest structures was unconstitutional , and the structure was restored .

Anniversaries of significant dates in the persecution are marked with protests by Falun Gong communities around the world , . In Washington DC , for instance , the anniversary of 20 July 1999

is marked by a rally at the U.S. capitol attended by several thousand practitioners . Diplomatic visits by high @-@ ranking Chinese officials are also met with demonstrations by Falun Gong practitioners .

= = = Parades = = =

In contrast to marches , which focus on bringing attention to the persecution in China , celebratory Falun Gong parades usually incorporate traditional @-@ style Chinese dances , costumes , song , exercise demonstrations , drumming , floats , and banners . Practitioners regularly hold parades or public exhibitions of Chinese cultural performances to coincide with May 13 , the anniversary of the practice 's first public teaching in China . Practitioners also utilize various parade venues around the world to publicize their group and its message .

= = = Arts and culture = = =

A number of Falun Gong practitioners and organizations outside China are engaged in the promotion of classical visual and performing arts . Practitioners frame Falun Gong as being part of the wider cultural tradition that gave rise to Chinese arts , which they describe as having been persecuted and attacked under Communist Party rule .

Falun Gong devotees trained in the visual arts have held exhibitions of their works as a means of representing their beliefs and practice , and raising awareness of the persecution in China . These include Zhang Cuiying , an Australian painter who was imprisoned in China for practicing Falun Gong , and Zhang Kunlun , a Canadian citizen and former professor who was also imprisoned in China . Zhang Kunlun is part of a collective of twelve Falun Gong visual artists whose exhibit " The Art of Zhen Shan Ren " travels internationally .

In 2006 , Falun Gong practitioners with backgrounds in classical Chinese dance and music established Shen Yun Performing Arts in New York state . Shen Yun comprises three separate companies of dancers and musicians that tour internationally . Its stated mission is " reviving 5 @,@ 000 years of divinely inspired Chinese culture . " Shen Yun 's performance programs consists of classical Chinese dance , ethnic folk dance , solo musicians , and narrative dances that portray Falun Gong . Local productions of Shen Yun are often presented by the host city 's Falun Dafa Association .

New Tang Dynasty , the television station founded by Chinese @-@ American practitioners of Falun Gong , organizes a variety of cultural outreach programs as part of its mission to promote " appreciation and awareness of traditional Chinese culture . " In 2008 , the station began organizing a series of annual competitions open to ethnic Chinese participants in fields of classical Chinese dance , martial arts , traditional clothing design , painting , music , photography , and Chinese cooking .

= = = Research and advocacy organizations = = =

Supporters and practitioners of Falun Gong have established a number of research and advocacy organizations involved in reporting on human rights abuses in China and presenting this information to Western governments , NGOs , and multilateral organizations . These include the Falun Dafa Information Center , a volunteer @-@ run organization which presents itself as the " official source on Falun Gong and the human rights crisis in China , " and functions largely as a press office , publishing press releases and annual reports . The Falun Gong Human Rights Working Group conducts similar research and issues reports on the persecution in China , often presenting these findings to the United Nations . The World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong (WOIPFG) is as a research organization dedicated to investigating " the criminal conduct of all institutions , organizations , and individuals involved in the persecution of Falun Gong . " Falun Gong supporters and sympathizers have also founded groups such as Friends of Falun Gong and the Committee to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong (CIPFG) .

= = = Circumvention tools = = =

Roughly coinciding with the launch of the persecution in 1999 , Chinese authorities began establishing and fortifying a system of internet censorship and surveillance , sometimes referred to as the " golden shield . " Since that time , information relating to Falun Gong has consistently been among the primary targets of censorship and monitoring on the internet , with several Falun Gong practitioners reportedly being captured and sent to prison or labor camps for downloading or distributing information online .

In 2000 , North American Falun Gong computer scientists began developing circumvention and anonymizing tools to enable those in mainland China to access information on Falun Gong . Their software tools , such as Freerate and GPass , have since become a popular means of evading government controls of the internet in several other countries .

= = = Other initiatives and campaigns = = =

Practitioners of Falun Gong have launched a number of other campaigns to bring attention to the treatment of Falun Gong in China . Notable examples include the Human Rights Torch Relay , which toured to over 35 countries in 2007 and 2008 ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympics . The relay was intended to draw attention to a range of human rights issues in China in connection with the Olympics , especially those related to Falun Gong and Tibet , and received support from hundreds of elected officials , past Olympic medallists , human rights groups and other concerned organizations .

Some practitioners of Falun Gong both inside and outside China are also involved in the promotion of the Tuidang movement , a dissident phenomenon catalyzed by an editorial series in The Epoch Times in late 2004 . The movement encourages Chinese citizens to renounce their affiliations to the Chinese Communist Party , including ex post facto renunciations of the Communist Youth League and Young Pioneers . Practitioners of Falun Gong outside China make phone calls or faxes to mainland China to inform citizens of the movement and solicit renunciation statements .

= = Attempts at persecution overseas by the Communist Party = =

The Communist Party 's campaign against Falun Gong has extended to diaspora communities , including through the use of media , espionage and monitoring of Falun Gong practitioners , harassment and violence against practitioners , diplomatic pressure applied to foreign governments , and hacking of overseas websites . According to a defector from the Chinese consulate in Sydney , Australia , " The war against Falun Gong is one of the main tasks of the Chinese mission overseas . "

In 2004 the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution condemning the attacks on Falun Gong practitioners in the United States by agents of the Communist Party . The resolution reported that party affiliates have " pressured local elected officials in the United States to refuse or withdraw support for the Falun Gong spiritual group , " that Falun Gong spokespeople have had their houses have been broken into , and individuals engaged in peaceful protest actions outside embassies have been physically assaulted .

The overseas campaign against Falun Gong is described in documents issued by China 's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO) . In a report from a 2007 meeting of OCAO directors at the national , provincial , and municipal level , the office stated that it " coordinates the launching of anti- ' Falun Gong ' struggles overseas . " OCAO exhorts overseas Chinese citizens to participate in " resolutely implementing and executing the Party line , the Party 's guiding principles , and the Party 's policies , " and to " aggressively expand the struggle " against Falun Gong , ethnic separatists , and Taiwanese independent activists abroad . Other party and state organs believed to be involved in the overseas campaign include the Ministry of State Security (MSS) , 6 @-@ 10 Office , and People 's Liberation Army , among others .

= = = Surveillance and espionage = = =

In 2005 , Chen Yonglin , a political consul from the Chinese consulate in Sydney , and Jennifer Zeng , a Falun Gong victim of torture from China , both sought asylum in Australia while making claims that Chinese agents were engaged in large @-@ scale operations to monitor , intimidate , and undermine support for Falun Gong outside China . Chen alleged that his primary function at the consulate involved efforts to monitor and harass Falun Gong and to minimize support for the practice from Australian media and elected officials . Zeng stated that " espionage and intimidation against [Falun Gong] practitioners overseas is so common that many of us have become accustomed to it . "

Hao Fengjun , another defector to Australia , had worked for the 610 Office of Tianjin city and claims that his job involved the collection and analysis of intelligence reports on Falun Gong from Europe , Australia , and North America . The implication was that local 610 offices are involved in the espionage efforts abroad . Another defector from China 's Ministry of State Security ? which conducts both domestic and international intelligence ? claimed that the repression and monitoring of underground Christians and Falun Gong practitioners is a major focus of the ministry .

In 2005 , a Ministry of State Security (MSS) agent working with the Chinese embassy in Berlin recruited a German Falun Gong practitioner Dr. Dan Sun to act as an informant . The MSS agent reportedly arranged a meeting for Sun with two men who purported to be scholars of Chinese medicine interested in researching Falun Gong , and Sun agreed to pass information to them , ostensibly hoping to further their understanding of the practice . The men were in fact high @-@ ranking agents of the 610 Office in Shanghai . Sun maintained that he had no knowledge the men he was corresponding with were Chinese intelligence agents , but was he nonetheless convicted of espionage in 2011 . According to Der Spiegel , the case demonstrated " how important fighting [Falun Gong] is to the [Chinese] government , " and " points to the extremely offensive approach that is sometimes being taken by the Chinese intelligence agencies . "

= = = Blacklisting = = =

Chinese authorities reportedly maintain lists of high @-@ profile overseas Falun Gong practitioners , and they use these blacklists to impose travel and visa restrictions on practitioners . Chen Yonglin , the defector from the Chinese consulate in Sydney , said in 2005 that approximately 800 Australian Falun Gong practitioners had been blacklisted (Chen claimed he sought to remove most of these names) .

In order to prevent potential protests during the 2008 Beijing Olympics , authorities imposed a blacklist on overseas Falun Gong practitioners , preventing them from traveling to China . 42 other categories of individuals , including Tibetans and " counter @-@ revolutionary figures , " were also blacklisted . Chinese authorities tolerated Bibles and other religious items at the Olympics , with the exception of Falun Gong materials . Ahead of the Olympic Games , Chinese public security bodies reportedly requested lists of Japanese Falun Gong practitioners from the government of Japan . The request was denied .

In June 2002 , when Jiang Zemin visited Iceland , Icelandic authorities complied with requests from the Chinese government to deny entry to Falun Gong practitioners who sought to enter the country to protest . Using a blacklist provided by China , hundreds of Falun Gong practitioners were turned away by the national airline or detained if they managed to make it to the country . The blacklisting ignited protests by Icelandic citizens and members of parliament . In 2011 , Iceland 's foreign minister Össur Skarphéðinsson issued an apology for violating Falun Gong practitioners ' freedom of expression and movement .

In August 2010 , an airline hostess from the Australian airline , Qantas , was demoted to short haul flights after being threatened by Chinese officials in Beijing , in spite of having flown there several times before .

Although Falun Gong is practiced freely within Hong Kong , Falun Gong practitioners from abroad

have also reported being blacklisted from entering the territory . In 2001 , Hong Kong officials admitted that they had used a blacklist to deny entry to approximately 100 Falun Gong practitioners during a visit by then @-@ Communist Party chief Jiang Zemin . In 2004 , a Canadian Falun Gong practitioner on a book tour was denied entry to the territory , and in 2008 , two Falun Gong practitioners from the United States and Switzerland were separately denied entry while on professional and research trips .

In 2003 , 80 Taiwanese practitioners were blocked from entering Hong Kong , and again in 2007 , hundreds more Taiwanese were blocked from entering Hong Kong or detained at the airport , These events set off a six @-@ year human rights case that tested the integrity of the one country , two systems arrangement . In 2009 , Falun Gong 's case against the Hong Kong immigration department was dismissed . Months later , Hong Kong immigration officials denied visas to several members of the Falun Gong @-@ affiliated Shen Yun dance company , which was scheduled to perform in the territory in January 2010 . Democratic Party chairman Albert Ho said the denial of the visas was a worrying new erosion of Hong Kong 's freedoms , and damaged the reputation of Hong Kong as a liberal and open society . A court ruling in March 2010 overturned the Immigration Department 's decision .

= = = Disruption , monitoring of electronic communications = = =

Since 1999 , Falun Gong practitioners outside China have reported having their telephone lines tapped and electronic correspondence monitored . Falun Gong websites based outside China were the earliest targets of Chinese denial of service attacks , according to Chinese internet expert Ethan Gutmann . In 2011 , dated stock footage aired on China Central Television of People 's Liberation Army staff carrying out attacks on U.S.-based Falun Gong websites .

= = = Violence = = =

In isolated instances , violence against practitioners of Falun Gong has reportedly been committed by agents of the Chinese government abroad , though the connection to Chinese authorities is sometimes tenuous or difficult to verify .

In September 2001 , five Falun Gong practitioners were assaulted while demonstrating outside the Chinese consulate in Chicago . The assailants , who were later convicted of battery , were members of a Chinese @-@ American association with connections to the Chinese consulate . In 2002 , 25 @-@ year @-@ old Ottawa practitioner Leon Wang reported being kicked , dragged , and beaten inside the Chinese embassy after he was caught taking pictures of an anti @-@ Falun Gong exhibit being held there . The embassy responded that Wang had " sneaked in . . . and disrupted its normal functioning " of the event .

In June 2004 , Australian Falun Gong practitioner David Liang was injured in a drive @-@ by shooting while in South Africa . The purpose of his visit was to protest outside the South Africa @-@ China Binational Commission (BNC) meetings and to launch a lawsuit against high @-@ ranking Chinese officials for their involvement in the persecution of Falun Gong . Practitioners allege that the drive @-@ by shooting was an assassination attempt , and noted that the assailants made no attempt to rob them . Chinese Embassy officials denied involvement . In December 2005 , Argentine Falun Gong practitioners filed a lawsuit against former 610 Office chief and Politburo member Luo Gan while he visited the country . During Luo 's visit , practitioners were beaten by Chinese assailants in Buenos Aires 's Congress Square . Police were reportedly ordered not to intervene . Amnesty International 's Argentina director suggested the assaults may have been " connected to officials of the Chinese government . "

In the spring and summer of 2008 , practitioners of Falun Gong in New York became the targets of sustained violence within the largely ethnic Chinese neighborhood of Flushing , Queens . Groups of Chinese reportedly punched , assaulted , and threw rocks at Falun Gong practitioners , leading to multiple arrests . The Chinese consul general in New York , Peng Keyu , was reportedly involved in inciting the violence against Falun Gong and providing " guidance " to the assailants .

= = = Diplomatic and commercial pressure = = =

Representatives of the party @-@ state , typically acting through China 's overseas diplomatic mission , have applied diplomatic and commercial pressure on foreign governments , media organizations , and private enterprises with regards to Falun Gong .

In North America , Chinese agents have reportedly visited newspaper offices to " extol the virtues of Communist China and the evils of Falun Gong . " There have also been instances where international media organizations have cancelled programing or print articles about Falun Gong in response to requests from the Chinese government . In 2008 , for instance , the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation succumb to pressure from the Chinese embassy in Ottawa to pull a documentary on Falun Gong hours before it was set to air . In 2009 @-@ 2010 , the Washington Post commissioned a feature article on Falun Gong . The article was killed " immediately after the Chinese embassy became aware of it , " according to the journalist .

Chinese diplomats also exhort politicians not to support or recognize Falun Gong , and threaten that expressions of support for Falun Gong will jeopardize trade relations with China . In 2002 , the Wall Street Journal reported that hundreds of American municipalities had received letters from Chinese diplomatic missions urging them to shun or persecute Falun Gong , using approaches that " combine gross disinformation with scare tactics and , in some cases , slyly implied diplomatic and commercial pressure . "

According to Perry Link , pressure on Western institutions also takes more subtle forms , including academic self @-@ censorship , whereby research on Falun Gong is avoided because it could result in a denial of visas for fieldwork in China . Ethan Gutmann also noted that media organizations and human rights groups also self @-@ censor on the topic , given the PRC government 's attitude toward the practice , and the potential repercussions that may follow for making overt representations on Falun Gong 's behalf .

Governments and private enterprises have also come under pressure from China to censor media organizations operated by Falun Gong practitioners . In 2008 , for instance , French satellite provider Eutelsat suspended its Asian broadcasts of New Tang Dynasty Television in response to pressure from China 's State Administration of Radio , Film and Television . The move was viewed as a quid pro quo attempt to secure access to the Chinese market .

In 2011 , under pressure from Chinese authorities , the Vietnamese government tried two Falun Gong practitioners who had been operating a shortwave radio station and broadcasting information into China . The pair was charged with unlicensed broadcasting , and sentenced to 2 and 3 years in prison . Earlier in the same year , another radio station operated by Falun Gong practitioners in Indonesia , Radio Erabaru , was shuttered under diplomatic pressure from China .

= = International reception and response = =

Western governments and human rights organizations have expressed condemnation of the suppression in China and sympathized with Falun Gong 's plight . Since 1999 , members of the United States Congress have made public pronouncements and introduced several resolutions in support of Falun Gong . In 2010 , House Resolution 605 described Falun Gong as a set of " spiritual , religious , and moral teachings for daily life , meditation , and exercise , based upon the principles of truthfulness , compassion , and tolerance , " called for " an immediate end to the campaign to persecute , intimidate , imprison , and torture Falun Gong practitioners , " condemned the Chinese authorities ' efforts to distribute " false propaganda " about the practice worldwide , and expressed sympathy to persecuted Falun Gong practitioners and their families .

United Nations Special Rapporteurs on Torture , Extrajudicial executions , Violence against Women and Freedom of Religion or Belief have issued numerous reports condemning the persecution of Falun Gong in China , and relayed hundreds of cases of concern to Chinese authorities . In 2003 , for instance , The Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings wrote that reports from China " describe harrowing scenes in which detainees , many of whom are followers of the Falun Gong

movement , die as a result of severe ill @-@ treatment , neglect or medical attention . The cruelty and brutality of these alleged acts of torture defy description . " In 2010 , the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief condemned the defamation against minority religious groups , singling out the governments of Iran and China for their treatment of the Bahá 'í Faith and Falun Gong , respectively . " Small communities , such as Jehovah 's Witnesses , Baha 'is , Ahmadis , Falun Gong and others are sometimes stigmatized as " cults " and frequently meet with societal prejudices which may escalate into fully fledged conspiracy theories , " said the rapporteur at the UN general assembly .

Although the persecution of Falun Gong has drawn considerable condemnation outside China , some observers note that Falun Gong has failed to attract the level of sympathy and sustained attention afforded to other Chinese dissident groups . Katrina Lantos Swett , vice chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom , notes that most Americans are aware of the persecution of " Tibetan Buddhists and unregistered Christian groups or pro @-@ democracy and free speech advocates such as Liu Xiaobo and Ai Weiwei , " and yet " know little to nothing about China 's assault on the Falun Gong . "

From 1999 ? 2001 , Western media reports on Falun Gong ? and in particular , the mistreatment of practitioners ? were frequent , if mixed . By the latter half of 2001 , however , the volume of media reports declined precipitously , and by 2002 , coverage of Falun Gong by major news organizations like the New York Times and Washington Post had almost completely ceased , particularly from within China . In a study of media discourse on Falun Gong , researcher Leeshai Lemish found that Western news organizations also became less balanced , and more likely to uncritically present the narratives of the Communist Party , rather than those of Falun Gong or human rights groups .

Adam Frank writes that foreign media adopted a variety of frames in reporting on Falun Gong , including linking Falun Gong to historical antecedents in China , reporting on human rights violations against the group , and practice @-@ based reporting on the experience of Falun Gong . Ultimately , Frank writes that in reporting on the Falun Gong , the Western tradition of casting the Chinese as " exotic " took dominance , and that " the facts were generally correct , but the normalcy that millions of Chinese practitioners associated with the practice had all but disappeared . " David Ownby observes that sympathy for Falun Gong is further undermined by the impact of the " cult " label applied to the practice by the Chinese authorities , which never entirely went away in the minds of some Westerners , and the stigma of which still plays a role in public perceptions of Falun Gong .

Ethan Gutmann , a journalist reporting on China since the early 1990s , has attempted to explain the apparent dearth of public sympathy for Falun Gong as stemming , in part , from the group 's shortcomings in public relations . Unlike the democracy activists or Tibetans , who have found a comfortable place in Western perceptions , " Falun Gong marched to a distinctly Chinese drum , " according to Gutmann . This , coupled with western skepticism of persecuted refugees , has resulted in a perception that Falun Gong practitioners tended to exaggerate , or " spout slogans rather than facts . " Gutmann also observes that Falun Gong also lacks robust backing from the American constituencies that usually support religious freedom : liberals are wary of Falun Gong 's conservative morality , Christian conservatives don 't accord the practice the same space as persecuted Christians , and the political center is wary of disrupting commercial and political relations with the Chinese government . Thus , Falun Gong practitioners have largely had to rely on their own resources in responding to the persecution .