



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

China

China – CHN37686 – Falun Gong –
Reliability of sources
19 November 2010

1. How reliable are reports on the Clearwisdom website?

Clearwisdom is a website run by Falun Gong practitioners that provides information about Falun Gong and reports on persecution against practitioners.¹ The banner of the Clearwisdom website states that it is the ‘English version of Minghui.org’, and articles posted on the website have links to Chinese language versions, which are located at Minghui.org.² In correspondence with Country Advice dated 17 November 2010, a volunteer from Clearwisdom stated:

Most of the articles published on Clearwisdom.net are translated from the Chinese article published on Minghui.org. There is also some English articles submitted to Clearwisdom.net directly, which will be reviewed by the Clearwisdom editors.³

No sources were found suggesting that Clearwisdom publishes articles on its website that distort the truth or are untruthful. However, most of the articles posted on the website are English translations of articles from Minghui.org, and Minghui has been reported to have published articles that are untruthful. These reports come from anti-Falun Gong sources, however, and this likely affects their objectivity.⁴ See the response to Question 2 for more information about Minghui.

2. How reliable are reports on the Ming Hui website?

Minghui is a Chinese language website run by Falun Gong practitioners. The website publishes information about Falun Gong, international issues relating to Falun Gong and articles about persecution of practitioners. Country Advice accessed Minghui.org using Google Translate.⁵ Minghui offers an English translation of its website, which links to

¹ ‘Welcome to Falun Dafa (Falun Gong) Clearwisdom.net’, undated, *Clearwisdom*, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/html/special/welcome.html> – Accessed 5 November – Attachment 1.

² ‘Welcome to Falun Dafa (Falun Gong) Clearwisdom.net’, undated, *Clearwisdom*, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/html/special/welcome.html> – Accessed 5 November – Attachment 1.

³ Email to RRT Research & Information ‘Re Request for information from the Refugee Review Tribunal’, 17 November 2010 – Attachment 2.

⁴ ‘Links/Additional Resources’, undated, *FalunDafa.org*, <http://www.falundafa.org/eng/links.html> – Accessed 10 November – Attachment 3.

⁵ Google translations can often be poor and can contain errors – as such, they give only a rough indication of the contents of a document. For any further reliance on this information, a professional translation should be obtained.

Clearwisdom.net.⁶ Similarly, a significant amount of Minghui articles contain links to English translations, which redirect the server to Clearwisdom.net.⁷

Minghui as a source of official Falun Gong information

Minghui appears to be a website that publishes official Falun Gong statements. An article posted on the 'Falun Dafa Bulletin Board' of the Falun Dafa Museum website in July 2000 quotes Master Li, the founder of Falun Dafa, as saying 'on important matters, practitioners must watch the position of Minghui Net'.⁸ The article also notes that since January 2000, Minghui has published all Master Li's new articles first. A paper was located on a Chinese 'anti-cult' website Facts.org.cn that claims that rather than being a source of official Falun Gong statements, Minghui editors refer to themselves as "servers" or "volunteers" that only functioned to maintain the web pages publishing materials volunteered by the disciples, and they are not vested with any authority'.⁹

Adherents of Falun Gong stress that the discipline of Falun Gong does not have any organisational hierarchy. Many articles published on Clearwisdom and Minghui have been submitted by practitioners, which supports the view articulated in *Research Response CHN37025* (20 July 2010) that all Falun Dafa adherents may disseminate information, although only Master Li is permitted to lecture authoritatively about Falun Gong.¹⁰

It has been reported that Minghui has assumed the central position of disseminating Falun Gong information. *The Two Tales of Falun Gong* notes that a North American Falun Gong website Buhou.org was merged with another Falun Gong website under direct control of Minghui in May 2000. Similarly, the report states that another Falun Gong website, Falunwitness.org, 'now only re-transmits Minghui.org'.¹¹

Reports of Minghui publishing untruthful articles

There are reports that some articles published on Minghui distort the truth or are untruthful. These reports, however, mostly come from anti-Falun Gong sources. The Chinese embassy in the United States, for example, has an article on their website entitled *Exposing the Lies of "Falun Gong" Cult*, which cites three instances where the website Minghui published untrue articles. The articles published on the Minghui website were

⁶ 'Minghui.org home page' 2010, *Minghui.org*, 9 November, <http://www.minghui.org> – Accessed 9 November 2010 – Attachment 4.

⁷ An example of a Minghui article with English translation can be seen at this reference: 'Falun Gong community has everything to gain no one harm' 2010, *Minghui.org*, 31 October, <http://www.minghui.org/mh/articles/2010/10/31/231742.html> – Accessed 9 November 2010 – Attachment 5.

⁸ 'On Important Matters, Practitioners Must Pay Attention to the Attitude of Minghui Net' 2000, *Falun Dafa Museum* website, 14 July, <http://english.falundafamuseum.org/b5/00/07/14/913.html> – Accessed 9 November 2010 – Attachment 6; Lum, T. 2006, 'CRS Report for Congress: China and Falun Gong', *Congressional Research Service – The Library of Congress*, 25 May, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/67820.pdf> – Accessed 9 November 2010 – Attachment 7.

⁹ Deng, Z. and Fang, S. 2000, 'The Two Tales of Falun Gong: Radicalism in a traditional form', *Xys.org*, 31 May <http://www.facts.org.cn/views/200709/t64547.htm> – Accessed 9 November 2010 – Attachment 8.

¹⁰ Lu, Y. 2005, 'Entrepreneurial Logics and the Evolution of Falun Gong', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 44, No. 2, pp.173-185, Accessed via Wiley Interscience 19 July 2010 – Attachment 9; RRT Research & Information 2010, *Research Response CHN37025*, 20 July – Attachment 10.

¹¹ Deng, Z. and Fang, S. 2000, 'The Two Tales of Falun Gong: Radicalism in a traditional form', *Xys.org*, 31 May, <http://www.facts.org.cn/views/200709/t64547.htm> – Accessed 9 November 2010 – Attachment 8.

about Falun Gong practitioners being mistreated by authorities while in custody, and the existence of a ‘concentration camp’ in Liaoning Province.¹²

Xinhua news agency, an official Chinese news source, reported in 2004 that Minghui published concocted stories and images of persecution on the website. The report asserted that Falun Gong members confessed to submitting false stories of persecution to the website, and that they did this because Minghui requested ‘simulated’ or forged photos depicting discrimination in China. In the same report, however, *Xinhua* states that Falun Gong faces a fate of ‘total extinction’ and that ‘we must be on guard at all times and take thoroughgoing action to get rid of the evil’.¹³

In 2006, *China Daily* reported that Minghui, along with the *Epoch Times*, published articles on a concentration camp in Liaoning Province that harvested organs from Falun Gong practitioners and incinerated their bodies. The article quoted officials from the hospital where the concentration camp was reportedly located, which said that the claims were ‘sheer lies’. *China Daily* is an official Chinese news source and the article refers to Falun Gong as an illegal cult, which indicates a bias against Falun Gong.¹⁴

It is difficult to judge the veracity of the material published on Falun Gong websites like Minghui because they are practitioner-run and have vested interests in highlighting the persecution practitioners face at the hands of the Chinese Government. On the other hand, the sources outlined above that contest the truthfulness of Minghui’s content stem from Chinese Government controlled sources that have a vested interest in discrediting stories of persecution. This dilemma was highlighted by Dr Benjamin Penny from the School of Culture, History and Language at the Australia National University, who gave a talk to the Refugee Review Tribunal in 2003 about Falun Gong in China. In his talk he stated that ‘neither the story told about Falun Gong by the Chinese Government, nor that told by the Falun Gong organization, can be regarded as reliable’. He also stated:

...neither Falun Gong nor the Chinese government are organizations that have a commitment to openness and transparency and, indeed, both have selectively removed certain historical records from public view.¹⁵

3. How do each of these websites source their articles? Is it possible for a person to post news about themselves on the website?

Both Clearwisdom and Minghui have dedicated pages on their websites for article submission by the general public.¹⁶ Clearwisdom editors also ‘author a small quantity of

¹² ‘Exposing the Lies of “Falun Gong” Cult’, undated, *Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America* website, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/ppflg/t263446.htm> – Accessed 5 November 2010 – Attachment 11.

¹³ ‘Chinese Falun Gong members “confess” concocting torture photos’, 2004, *BBC Monitoring Online*, 27 December, <http://www.bbcmonitoringonline.com> – Accessed 8 November – Attachment 12.

¹⁴ Le, T. 2006, ‘CHINA: Falun Gong lies slammed by hospital’, *China Daily*, 13 April, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-04/13/content_566554.htm – Accessed 9 November – Attachment 13.

¹⁵ Penny, B. 2003, *Falun Gong: What was it? and what is it now? A talk for the Refugee Review Tribunal National Members’ Conference*, 29 August – Attachment 14.

¹⁶ ‘Submissions Welcome’, undated, *Clearwisdom.net*, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/html/special/submission.html> – Accessed 5 November – Attachment 15; ‘Google translation of Minghui article submission page’, 2010, *Minghui.org*, 7 January, <http://translate.google.com/translate?js=n&prev=t&hl=en&ie=UTF-8&layout=2&eotf=1&sl=zh->

articles’, but it is unclear whether Minghui publish articles written by their editors.¹⁷ Both websites do, however, publish articles written by Master Li Hongzhi.

Minghui requests that a reply email address be submitted along with any article so they can verify facts and contact the author to confirm the source and accuracy of the information.¹⁸ It is unclear how articles are selected for publishing on the Minghui website or to what extent the articles have been edited or fact-checked before being published.

Clearwisdom states that all submitted articles are ‘thoroughly reviewed’ by its editing team, who ‘reserve the right to modify’ them as necessary.¹⁹ In correspondence with Country Advice, a Clearwisdom volunteer stated:

Most of the articles published on Clearwisdom.net are translated from the Chinese article published on Minghui.org. There is also some English articles submitted to Clearwisdom.net directly, which will be reviewed by the Clearwisdom editors.²⁰

Clearwisdom articles are selected ‘by the Clearwisdom editors’, but it is unclear whether the editors check articles for accuracy before they are published.²¹

Minghui was also contacted to provide information on how they source their articles and administer their websites. To date, Country Advice has not received a response from Minghui.²²

Attachments

1. ‘Welcome to Falun Dafa (Falun Gong) Clearwisdom.net’, undated, *Clearwisdom*, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/html/special/welcome.html> – Accessed 5 November.
2. Email to RRT Research & Information ‘Re Request for information from the Refugee Review Tribunal’, 17 November 2010.
3. ‘Links/Additional Resources’, undated, *FalunDafa.org*, <http://www.falundafa.org/eng/links.html> – Accessed 10 November.

[CN&tl=en&u=http%3A%2F%2Fsubmit.minghui.org%2Fmh%2Femail-editor.asp](http://www.clearwisdom.net/html/special/welcome.html) – Accessed 5 November – Attachment 16.

¹⁷ Email to RRT Research & Information ‘Re Request for information from the Refugee Review Tribunal’, 17 November 2010 – Attachment 2.

¹⁸ ‘Google translation of Minghui article submission page’, 2010, *Minghui.org*, 7 January, <http://translate.google.com/translate?js=n&prev=t&hl=en&ie=UTF-8&layout=2&eotf=1&sl=zh-CN&tl=en&u=http%3A%2F%2Fsubmit.minghui.org%2Fmh%2Femail-editor.asp> – Accessed 5 November – Attachment 16.

¹⁹ ‘Submissions Welcome’, undated, *Clearwisdom.net*, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/html/special/submission.html> – Accessed 5 November – Attachment 15.

²⁰ Email to RRT Research & Information ‘Re Request for information from the Refugee Review Tribunal’, 17 November 2010 – Attachment 2.

²¹ Email to RRT Research & Information ‘Re Request for information from the Refugee Review Tribunal’, 17 November 2010 – Attachment 2.

²² RRT Research & Information 2010, Email to The Editor of Clearwisdom.net ‘Refugee Review Tribunal request for information’, 9 November – Attachment 17; RRT Research & Information 2010, Email to The Editor of Minghui.org ‘Refugee Review Tribunal request for information’, 9 November – Attachment 18; Email to RRT Research & Information ‘Re Request for information from the Refugee Review Tribunal’, 17 November 2010 – Attachment 2.

4. 'Minghui.org home page' 2010, *Minghui.org*, 9 November, <http://www.minghui.org> – Accessed 9 November 2010.
5. 'Falun Gong community has everything to gain no one harm' 2010, *Minghui.org*, 31 October, <http://www.minghui.org/mh/articles/2010/10/31/231742.html> – Accessed 9 November 2010.
6. 'On Important Matters, Practitioners Must Pay Attention to the Attitude of Minghui Net' 2000, *Falun Dafa Museum* website, 14 July, <http://english.falundafamuseum.org/b5/00/07/14/913.html> – Accessed 9 November 2010.
7. Lum, T. 2006, 'CRS Report for Congress: China and Falun Gong', *Congressional Research Service – The Library of Congress*, 25 May, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/67820.pdf> – Accessed 9 November 2010.
8. Deng, Z. and Fang, S. 2000, 'The Two Tales of Falun Gong: Radicalism in a traditional form', *Xys.org*, 31 May, <http://www.facts.org.cn/views/200709/t64547.htm> – Accessed 9 November 2010.
9. Lu, Y. 2005, 'Entrepreneurial Logics and the Evolution of Falun Gong', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 44, No. 2, pp.173-185, Accessed via Wiley Interscience 19 July 2010.
10. RRT Research & Information 2010, Research Response CHN37025, 20 July.
11. 'Exposing the Lies of "Falun Gong" Cult', undated, *Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America* website, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/ppflg/t263446.htm> – Accessed 5 November 2010.
12. 'Chinese Falun Gong members "confess" concocting torture photos', 2004, *BBC Monitoring Online*, 27 December, <http://www.bbcmonitoringonline.com> – Accessed 8 November. (CISNET China CX118820)
13. Le, T. 2006, 'CHINA: Falun Gong lies slammed by hospital', *China Daily*, 13 April, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-04/13/content_566554.htm – Accessed 9 November. (CISNET Chin CX151316)
14. Penny, Benjamin 2003, Falun Gong: What was it? and what is it now? *A talk for the Refugee Review Tribunal National Members' Conference*, 29 August.
15. 'Submissions Welcome', undated, *Clearwisdom.net*, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/html/special/submission.html> – Accessed 5 November.
16. 'Google translation of Minghui article submission page', 2010, *Minghui.org*, 7 January, <http://translate.google.com/translate?js=n&prev=t&hl=en&ie=UTF-8&layout=2&eotf=1&sl=zh-CN&tl=en&u=http%3A%2F%2Fsubmit.minghui.org%2Fmh%2Femail-editor.asp> – Accessed 5 November.
17. RRT Research & Information 2010, Email to The Editor of Clearwisdom.net 'Refugee Review Tribunal request for information', 9 November.
18. RRT Research & Information 2010, Email to The Editor of Minghui.org 'Refugee Review Tribunal request for information', 9 November.