



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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11 July 2007

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China: Treatment of family members of Falun Gong practitioners by the Chinese authorities; situation of persons who unwittingly or knowingly assist Falun Gong practitioners (e.g., by allowing use or rental of property, offices, office equipment, vehicles, etc.); the treatment of such persons if they deny knowledge of having assisted Falun Gong practitioners, agree to cease such assistance, or denounce Falun Gong Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

### Treatment of family members

In 8 June 2007 correspondence, a representative of the Falun Dafa Association of Canada stated that

[the Chinese] authorities use ... family members as "hostages" to force [Falun Gong] practitioners to give up the practice. If practitioners do not cooperate with the authorities, their family members are subject to punishment as well. ... The punishment includes harassment by the police (random visit by police to the home), arbitrary interrogation, losing [a] job, losing [the] chance of promotion, losing [a] pension/state housing, etc.

The Representative further noted that there have been cases of arrests of family members of Falun Gong practitioners (Falun Dafa Association of Canada 8 June 2007).

The United States (US)-based Falun Gong Human Rights Working Group (FGHRWG), an organization that publicizes "human rights violations against Falun Gong practitioners" (FGHRWG n.d.a), similarly notes that the Chinese government "torments" family members of Falun Gong practitioners to pressure them to renounce the practice (ibid. n.d.b). On its Web site, the FGHRWG states that "brothers and sisters are fired from their jobs, elders are stripped of their retirement benefits, and children are expelled from school" (n.d.b).

In a submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee of Australia, the Falun Dafa Association of New South Wales indicates that, besides "common" Falun Gong practitioners, Chinese authorities have also targeted "family, friends and workplaces of practitioners, overseas practitioners, as well as ... non-practitioners" (8 July 2005, 3).

Corroborating information from non-Falun Gong sources could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

### Treatment of persons who are associated with or assist Falun Gong practitioners

According to the 2006 annual report of the United States (US) Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), the Chinese authorities "harass and punish Chinese rights defenders and lawyers who defend Falun Gong practitioners against government persecution" (20 Sept. 2006, 96).

In August 2006, Chinese authorities arrested civil rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng (US May 2007, 122; HRIC 31 Oct. 2006). Gao has been recognized as a defender of groups "targeted" by the Chinese government,

including Falun Gong (ibid.; see also BBC 13 Dec. 2006; *The New York Times* 10 Apr. 2007), and had written an open letter to China's President Hu Jintao criticizing the government's "abuses" of Falun Gong practitioners (US 15 Sept. 2006; HRIC 30 Nov. 2005). In December 2006, the lawyer was reportedly convicted of subversion and sentenced to three years in prison; however, the conviction was later suspended and Gao was placed on probation for five years (US May 2007, 122). In a public statement, reported in April 2007 news articles, Gao claimed that he received a lighter sentence due to his confession, which was obtained after authorities had subjected him to torture and had threatened to punish his family (*IHT* 11 Apr. 2007; see also *The New York Times* 10 Apr. 2007).

The Representative of the Falun Dafa Association of Canada noted in her correspondence that there have been reports that persons who assist Falun Gong practitioners could face fines, threats and "harassment," even though they themselves are non-practitioners (8 June 2007). The Representative provided an example of a woman who was arrested for renting living space to Falun Gong practitioners (Falun Dafa Association of Canada 8 June 2007). Further or corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A 25 November 2006 article of the Hong-Kong-based *South China Morning Post* indicates that a member of the China Democratic Party, a dissident political group (*PHW* 2007 Oct. 2006, 246), was arrested in Hangzhou [Zhejiang province, south-eastern China] for being in possession of Falun Gong materials (*South China Morning Post* 25 Nov. 2006). The man was reportedly a non-practitioner of Falun Gong and the materials belonged to a friend (ibid.). Information on charges brought against the man could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. Many lawyers in China reportedly declined to defend the man due to the "sensitivity" of his case (ibid.).

In 31 August 2005 correspondence from the New York-based Human Rights in China (HRIC), a representative indicated that the organization has heard of cases in which non-practitioners have been detained by police after Falun Gong adherents slipped pamphlets on the movement under their door and a "neighbour with a grudge" proceeded to alert authorities. The Representative noted that such episodes are more common in the northeastern and central regions of China and that a "certain percentage" of Public Security Bureau (PSB) officials "just want to make arrests and look like they're doing their jobs, especially if they're part of a 'stability bureau' entrusted with keeping a lid on troublesome elements like [Falun Gong]" (HRIC 31 Aug. 2005).

*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006* similarly indicates that the Chinese authorities have established quotas for Falun Gong arrests (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 2.c). In order to meet these quotas, in 2006, Chinese authorities arrested former Falun Gong adherents and placed them in "reeducation camps" (ibid.). Implemented in 1957, the reeducation through labour camp system, or Laojiao, allows the police to detain criminal suspects for up to four years (BBC 1 Mar. 2007; AP 28 Feb. 2007). The system reportedly provides the police with the flexibility to detain and punish large groups of people without trial (ibid.). A 28 February 2007 Associated Press (AP) article notes that, according to critics, the system has been "misused to detain political and religious activists, and violates suspects' rights."

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Human Rights in China (HRIC) did not provide additional information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), China Aid Association (CAA), China Information Center, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Laogai Research Foundation, United Kingdom Home Office, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

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