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### Extended Response to Information Request

CHN33255.EX

3 December 1999

**China:** Falun Dafa (*Falun Gong*, Falungong) update; update to CHN33180.EX of 26 November 1999; update to CHN33002.EX of 8 October 1999 regarding Falun Dafa in Fujian province; existence of any documentation associated with Falun Dafa practice

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

This Extended Response updates CHN33180.EX of 26 November 1999 regarding Falun Dafa (*Falun Gong*, Falungong) in China. It also updates information regarding Falun Dafa in Fujian province found in CHN33002.EX of 8 October 1999 and includes updated information regarding documentation associated with Falun Dafa practice.

#### General Information

The following information regarding the strategies adopted by the authorities in China to attempt to identify Falun Dafa leaders was provided by the Country Information Service (CIS) of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), Australia:

PRC authorities have questioned large numbers of Falungong practitioners in their efforts to identify leaders and organisers. In many cases, such questioning has involved periods of detention. Early release is offered for those who co-operate, including by identifying those who had "led them astray". We have seen reports from non-government sources based in Hong Kong and abroad citing instances of physical abuse in order to obtain information about Falungong leaders and activities (these claims were repeated by Falungong members in a press conference in Beijing with members of the foreign media on 28 October 1999). In some instances, inducements have been offered to selected adherents to act as informants within the organisation. According to informed sources, another common practice employed by security authorities is to approach family members of a known Falungong adherent and ask them to help the authorities to identify those responsible for leading astray their family member. It is made clear that early release of the family member is contingent upon the provision of such information. We do not have accurate data on the number of people currently remaining in custody. The Hong Kong-based "Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China" has reported arrests in various parts of China on charges relating to Falungong activities (offences include the publication of Falungong literature, the setting up of a Falungong Website, organising demonstrations, etc). Chinese authorities have released no details on trials to date. The main criterion for selecting individuals for prosecution while releasing others appears to be the degree to which an individual has played a leadership or organisational role in Falungong, this is especially the case for those suspected of organising demonstrations and other perceived acts of defiance after the banning of Falungong on 22 July. Detainees who express contrition for their actions, renounce their beliefs and publicly denounce Falungong teachings are likely to be released quickly after questioning. Others have been released with a warning (*ibid*).

On 22 November 1999, AFP reported that Gu Zhiyi, an alleged Falungong "leader," was tried in Chongqing, on charges of using "evil religion" to destroy laws and of disrupting stability by organizing crowds. She had organized protests against three newspapers that had published articles denouncing Falun Dafa and organized

"mass practice sessions." Gu Zhiyi had been arrested on 20 July 1999, two days before the ban announced by the Ministry of Civil Affairs took effect (*ibid.*). The AFP report, citing the Hong Kong-based Information Centre on Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China, stated that at least 1,000 practitioners had been sent to "labour camps" and that "many more" trials would be conducted in the coming months.

On 24 November 1999 the Ministry of Public Security issued "Regulations on Managing Mass Cultural and Sports Activities" (*Zhongguo Tongxun She* 3 Dec. 1999; BBC 24 Nov. 1999; Xinhua 24 Nov. 1999). The regulations stipulate that gatherings of more than 200 people in public places for sports, cultural and *qi gong* activities (a traditional martial arts form of which Falun Dafa is a variant), would require permission from public security bureau chiefs above the county level, and that events attracting over 3,000 participants would require permission at or above the prefecture level (*ibid.*). The regulations further prohibit nine categories of mass congregations, including those that propagate superstition and heresy and stipulate that mass congregations may not be held near government buildings above the county level, foreign embassies and consulates, television and radio stations, military installations and other "vital institutions" (*ibid.*). The Research Directorate was unable to obtain the complete text of the regulations within the time constraints of this publication.

On 30 November 1999, Reuters reported that a higher court had upheld the sentences of four Falun Dafa "leaders" in Hainan province who had been charged following the introduction of new legal measures on 30 October 1999 (see CHN33180.EX and attachments). The same report cites the Information Centre on Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China, which claims that over 35,000 people had been detained in the nationwide crackdown between 20 July and 30 October 1999, stating that it was not known how many remained in detention. On 3 December 1999, AFP reported that the trial of four alleged leaders of the "Falungong Beijing branch" was postponed after large numbers of Falungong practitioners gathered around the court building.

On 3 December 1999 *China Daily* reported that Wei Jianxing, a senior member of the Communist Party of China, identified the "fight against the *Falun Gong* cult and all other kinds of cults" as a priority for the coming year in a speech to senior judicial and public security officials. Xiao Yang, president of the Supreme People's Court also identified the Falun Dafa crackdown as a priority for the coming year (Xinhua 14 Dec. 1999). In December 1999, authorities took measures against another *qi gong*-based practice, the Zhong Gong movement in Shaanxi province, relocating practitioners to Xian and monitoring the movement's leader (AFP 5 Dec. 1999). On 9 December 1999, AFP, citing the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China, reported that 103 religious figures had been arrested in the preceding three weeks, including representatives of unregistered Christian groups, in what is described as an extension of the Falun Dafa crackdown.

A detailed chronology covering the history of Falun Dafa through 5 December 1999, prepared by the Resource Information Centre of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), is electronically attached to this Extended Response.

## Falun Dafa in Fujian

Detailed information concerning Falun Dafa in Fujian province, additional to that in CHN33002.EX of 8 October 1999, is scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. The above referenced report by the Australian CIS states that:

Anecdotal evidence, including reports from representatives of other foreign embassies, indicates that the treatment of Falungong activities by government authorities does vary by province and by region, but we are unable to offer specific guidance on this point. Generally, southern provinces seem to enjoy a less rigorous approach than areas where Falungong is more of an issue, such as in the Northeast. However, we are aware of exceptions to this rule. As a general rule, efforts by local authorities to implement central government instructions on any issue may vary considerably from locality to locality (5 Nov. 1999).

On 23 July 1999 articles appeared in the state-owned *Fujian Ribao* expressing the support of numerous bodies for the 22 July 1999 measures against Falun Dafa. One article states that:

What we are waging with the Falun Gong organization is a grave political struggle that involves the very principles of good and evil. In the course of this struggle, the leadership of every democratic political party, every association of industry and commerce, every organization with a role in this issue and every religious group must maintain a high level of political responsibility and political alertness and assist the Chinese Communist Party and the people's government in its work of maintaining stability (23 July 1999).

On 28 July 1999, the *Fuzhou Ribao* published an article entitled "Five Suggestions from the Provincial Party Committee on Implementing the 'Circular from the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Forbidding the Involvement of Party Members in the Practice of the Falun Dafa'." It stated that, according to the *Fujian Ribao*, the Fujian Provincial Party Committee had recently asked the Party organizations throughout Fujian to:

Fully understand the importance and urgency of dealing with and resolving the Falun Gong problem and bring their thinking and actions in line with the spirit of the Central Committee of the Party;

Resolutely implement the Central Committee's measures and organize an intensive study and education program within the Party around the Falun Gong question;

Closely integrate the aforementioned study and education program with each stage of education work in the "Three Values";

Rigorously observe the restrictions set out in policy and do substantive and meticulous work in thought transformation;

Earnestly strengthen the leadership of the organization to ensure that this study and educational program is clearly successful (ibid).

On 5 August 1999, the *Renmin Ribao* published a list of Falun Dafa "sieges," protests at media outlets and government offices, which included references to the *Fuzhou Ribao* and *Xiamen Ribao* in Fujian province. However, no details or dates are given for the Fujian protests. A 1 November 1999 article in the *Renmin Ribao* purported to expose the structure of Falun Dafa in all regions of China, claiming that "*Falun Gong* organizations in places like Shandong and Fujian" had developed a second and third echelon in anticipation of the arrest of their leadership during the crackdown.

One of the participants at a clandestine press conference of Falun Dafa practitioners in Beijing in October 1999 was Jiang Chaohui, reportedly a manager in a joint venture in Fujian (*New York Times* 29 Oct. 1999). No subsequent information regarding the participants in the press conference could be found within the time constraints of this publication.

Following the characterization of Falun Dafa as a cult in October 1999 (see CHN33180.EX and attachments), the *Fuzhou Wanbao* on 29 October 1999 published approving comments from several people, including the head of Fuzhou's Religious Affairs Bureau, a cadre in Fuzhou's Federation of Trade Unions, a cadre at the Overseas Chinese Plastics Factory and an assistant professor at the Workers Part-Time University (29 Oct. 1999).

Several days later, the *Fujian Ribao* published an article describing anti-Falun Dafa efforts in the city of Zhangzhou, Fujian, quoting "former followers" and describing re-education efforts in Zhao'an County (2 Nov. 1999).

A 12 November 1999 *Fujian Ribao* article states that five Falun Dafa practitioners in Xiamen, Fujian had been punished, with two of the practitioners receiving a 15-day public security detention for keeping illegal materials and holding illegal meetings "despite repeated warnings" (12 Nov. 1999). The other two practitioners received "public security warnings" (ibid.).

Further information regarding Falun Dafa practice in Fujian province could not be found within the time constraints of this publication. There are no reports specific to Fujian listed on the updated 8 December 1999 list of "Chinese Government's Severe Violations of *Falun Gong* Practitioners' Human Rights" on a Website purportedly representing Falun Dafa in North America (Minghui Net 8 Dec. 1999).

## Falun Dafa Documentation

Information concerning Falun Dafa (*Falun Gong*, Falungong) documentation is scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. Several practitioners contacted by the Research Directorate stated that there were no membership lists or membership cards for Falun Dafa practitioners. These sources included two practitioners currently in New York, Gail Rachlin (9 Nov. 1999) and Zhang Erping (24 Nov. 1999) who have acted as media spokespersons regarding Falun Dafa practice and the situation in China, and Jillian Ye, a Toronto-based practitioner, originally from China, who began her practice in Beijing (30 Nov. 1999). James Seymour, a senior research scholar at Columbia University's East Asian Institute and a board member of Human Rights in China, who has written an article regarding the crackdown on Falun Dafa in *China Rights Forum*, similarly stated that he was unaware of any documentation associated with Falun Dafa that could serve as proof that a person was a

practitioner (1 Dec. 1999).

However, according to Jillian Ye, during the early years following the introduction of Falun Dafa until sometime in 1994, when Falun Dafa founder Master Li Hongzhi was teaching in person, those who completed their nine day training received a certificate (30 Nov. 1999). Ms. Ye declined to provide details regarding the appearance of the certificates other than to state that there was a high likelihood that variations existed and that she doubted that any such documents were issued after 1994 (ibid.).

According to an article by Zheng Yan published on a Falun Dafa Website on 23 November 1999, inauthentic Falun Dafa courses are currently being advertised in China, which last 10 days and are offered for a fee, and culminate in the presentation of a diploma. The author states: "Allegedly, a person can immigrate directly to the United States armed with this diploma." Information corroborating this article could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within time constraints.

This Extended Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Extended Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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#### Attachment

United States. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), Resource Information Centre. 5 December 1999. *Chronological List of Events for the Falun Gong Movement*.

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