

“TRUMPET TO CONSCIENCE: A CALL TO END CHINA'S SUPPRESSION OF SPIRITUAL BELIEF”



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Trumpet to Conscience:

A Call to End China's Suppression of Spiritual Belief

“All men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.”

Declaration of Independence

“The Americans’ ... regard for themselves constantly prompts them to assist one another and inclines them willingly to sacrifice ... for the welfare of others.”

Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America

“One of the first things we notice in the [American] dream is an amazing Universalism. It does not say some men, but it says all men.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, The American Dream

“America needs a foreign policy that is not only consistent with what is best about the American character, but which is far more than the ad hoc policy decisions in recent years.”

President Barack Obama, The Audacity of Hope.

Hope and Fear in Today's China

In China today, the Chinese Communist Party wages systematic and well-orchestrated campaigns against religious groups – especially members of the cultivation path/religion of Falun Gong, which the Party has designated Enemy Number One since if not earlier than 2001. Members of the Falun Gong religion have been tortured brutally not only to force them to publicly denounce their religious beliefs but also to help the Communist Party spread lies about the religion. They are pressured into these actions in the attempt to avoid being subjected to even more brutal forms of torture and other practices that include organ harvesting and other types of extra-judicial killing and murder.

In Western democracies, we measure our freedom in terms of division: The division between Church and State, between public and private, between social action and the expression of ideas. In China under Communist rule, the tendency has long been toward ever further violation of these divisions, the expansion of the Party to encompass every public and private aspect of human existence. The emergence of the Falun Gong religion in China in 1992, its massive popularity among people of all professions, ranks and age and gender has been seen by many as a sign of the readiness of the Chinese people to reclaim some of the territory within themselves that had been ceded over sixty years of revolution, their readiness to return to the spiritual and moral bases of traditional Chinese society and culture, and above all, to signify that they are not only capable of believing in something other than the Party, but that the atheism of the Party has lost its appeal.

In a way that has hardly otherwise been seen in China's repressive communist social climate, Falun Gong has come to represent the right to spiritual belief for a large segment of the Chinese populace. That is to say, it has offered to its practitioners an identity as believers, a general philosophy and way of life that includes a spiritual component – and this is something that has been increasingly absent from Chinese society since the communist takeover in 1949. No one could have predicted the sudden emergence of a new spirituality in vast segments of Chinese society, no one could have predicted the ferocity of the crackdown aimed at eliminating it – and likewise, today, we cannot estimate the negative repercussions that this persecutory campaign will have had on Chinese society, on the freedom of belief within that country, and on the state of freedom for us all.

MAO-ERA TACTICS

Every Ten Years

Since its inception, the Communist Party in China has initiated systematic and widespread attacks against targeted civilian populations to secure and maintain its exercise of financial and social control over the Chinese people. In 1957, Mao started a campaign to persecute Chinese intellectuals, legal professionals and scholars who expressed political opinions dissenting from his own. In 1964, Mao started the “Four-Cleaning” political campaign, and in 1966, initiated the Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution, the persecution was so intense that many members of the targeted groups committed suicide to avoid the humiliation, torture, and execution they would otherwise have faced.

In June of 1989, the Party and its extra-judicial security forces opened fire on the streets of Beijing, killing hundreds of pro-democracy students and activists, while others were rounded up later and sent to labor camps and prisons where they were subjected to forced labor, torture, and in some cases, execution. In 1999, the Chinese Communist Party initiated the persecutory campaign against members of the religion of Falun Gong.

In all of these campaigns, the tactics deployed by the Communist Party in China are virtually identical to those used in Germany during the Nazi era, and in Rwanda during the ethnic cleansing of the Tutsi tribe by the Hutu: In all of these violent assaults and massacres, the targets are demonized as violent threats to humankind, the goal is the elimination of the group, and the mechanisms are widespread attacks against civilian populations through their arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, and execution. The justification is social order. The phrase used in China to describe the process is the Chinese term *douzheng* [斗争].

MAO ERA TACTICS

The Crime of Douzheng

“Tragedy is the ripping of grace into pieces.”

A Chinese writer

The Chinese term “douzheng” [斗争] is a Mao-era term that implies:

Isolation, humiliation, torture – all the way to murder, to annihilate a group by destroying its identity or through the death of its members.

Recently, this term has gained currency as the phrase of choice of the communist ruling elite to describe the persecutory campaign they are now waging against members of the religion of Falun Gong. Moreover, as many third-party observers have noted, “douzheng” describes well the persecutory measures applied against members of the religion based solely on their practice or promotion of the belief.

Since the onset of these campaigns, millions upon millions of people have been subjected to torture, forcible ideological conversion, and murder based on their political opinions or their religious beliefs.

MAO-ERA TACTICS

The persecution of Women

According to several sources, many of the women subjected to these Mao-era tactics have been stripped naked and forced into male prison cells where they were then gang raped. Police have inserted live electrical batons and other implements, such as bundled toothbrushes, into their genitalia and pierced these sensitive areas of their bodies with iron implements.

See, Mission to China: Report of Special Rapporteur Manfred Novak, available at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/ UNDOC/ GEN/ G06/ 117/50 /PDF/G0611750.pdf?OpenElement>.

Gao Zhisheng, a civil rights attorney who is also known to many as the “conscience of China,” took it upon himself to investigate the persecution of Falun Gong believers in China. After months of conducting personal interviews with such prisoners, he had this to say about the persecution of the women who practice the religion of Falun Gong in China:

‘These are [i]mmoral acts that shocked my soul; the most [being] ... the lewd yet routine practice of attacking women’s genitals by 610 Office staff and the police. Almost every woman’s genitals and breasts or every man’s genitals have been sexually assaulted during the persecution in a most vulgar fashion. Almost all who have been persecuted, be they male or female, were first stripped naked before any torture.... [and virtually all who have been arrested] are said to have suffered torture or ill treatment.’”

See, THE EPOCH TIMES, Why One of China’s Top Attorneys Broke with the Communist Party, available at <http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/5-12-16/35876.html>.

CRIMES AGAINST CONSCIENCE

The Persecution of Infants and Children.



Picture of Wang Lixuan, mother, 27. Meng Hao, son, 8 months. They were arrested on the morning of November 7, 2000 at Tiananmen Square and were killed in a detention center by the police that afternoon. (Printed by permission, “Crimes Against Conscience,” the Falun Gong Human Rights Working Group Newsletter. April 2005.)

In November 2005, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child published a report in which it noted its concern “at reports that children of families practicing their religion, notably the Falun Gong, are subject to harassment, threats, and other negative actions, including re-education through labor. (UN 24 Nov. 2005, Paragraph 44).

A January 15, 2005 article by Friends of Falun Gong USA, a “US-based non-profit human rights organization founded in 2002 by Americans Concerned about the persecution of Falun Gong similarly indicates that Children of practitioners have been “persecuted” at school, as well as “incarcerated,” “tortured,” and killed by the authorities.” (FoFG, USA, Feb. 20, 2007.)

CRIMES AGAINST CONSCIENCE

“Never Again”



“The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated ... that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored because it cannot survive their being repeated.”

Robert H. Jackson’s 1945, “Opening Statement before the International Military Tribunal.”

In their December 20, 2008 New York Times Op Ed piece, former U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense Madeleine Albright and William Cohen noted the lack of the necessary institutions, policies and strategies to deal with “systematic campaigns of massacres, forced displacements and mass rapes” that continue in spite of the concern of the American people and our leaders.

It is easy to mistake humanitarian concerns as the idealistic concerns of the naïve. However, now more than ever, when the boundaries that once defined the nation state are giving way to alliances based on the global needs and concerns of all nations and the fate of democracy is at issue, it is not only our standing in the world that is eroded by turning a blind eye. At issue is the future of human kind. Will the people of the world forsake democracy because we as a nation forsake them?

The Sounding of the Trumpet

In the Declaration of Independence, the Founders state that “all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.” This can surely be taken as their vision of a democracy that they hoped to construct for future generations. Yet at a more fundamental level this sentence is a statement of fact – the recognition of an essential aspect of our shared humanity, and that any state or political system cannot persist in defiance of this basic axiom. As heirs to the liberty given to us by the Founding Fathers, we cannot extinguish the torch that has been passed down to us, and we cannot ignore our duty as enfranchised citizens of the world’s premier state to safeguard the human rights and freedom of all peoples.

Looking back at US history through the prism of this nation’s advancement of personal liberty, it is eminently clear that the key moments of our history were times when our leaders and citizens invoked a vision of the United States that was based upon what John F. Kennedy referred to in his inaugural address as the need to “do what is right”; what he described in his book “Profiles in Courage,” as “the courage to do what is right in spite of temptations to do otherwise,” and what Martin Luther King referred to as the call to conscience in his book, “The Trumpet to Conscience.”

Importantly, the essence of the American dream that is expressed in the Jeffersonian doctrine of inalienable rights is its universality. Thus as Dr. King notes in his speech, The American Dream, the freedoms and rights enshrined in one of our most important founding documents belong to all people regardless of their race, religion, creed, gender, age or nationality. Like the abolitionists, the Freedom Riders and rights advocates who precede us, we too have been born during one of the most significant defining moments in our nations history. Like their challenge – to expand the Jeffersonian vision to include people of all races – we are now challenged to look beyond differences of nationality and culture to the basic question of the worth of human life itself.

The Sounding of the Trumpet

The suppression of individual liberties in China reflects something deeper than a mere political structure that is alien to our own way of thinking. Rather, it reflects a form of political organization, a distribution of power that comprehensively denies independence and agency to the people who live in its shadow. From birth to death, Chinese citizens are required to constantly reiterate and demonstrate their total allegiance to the one-party state, and to renounce any and all forms of individual thought or belief that would replace the ideological underpinnings of Communist rule. The result is that spiritual belief – that most private, personal branch of philosophy concerned with assigning meaning to one's own existence – is effectively totally subjugated to Party rule.

Recent events in China have reached a state of crisis. Several of the sons and daughters of the Chinese party elite have begun to advocate for the rights and freedoms of the Chinese people, and especially the right of the Chinese people to return to the spiritual and moral bases of traditional Chinese society and culture. In spite of their stature and esteem in China, they are being subjected to arrest and persecution for this exercise of conscience. Some of them are journalists; others are lawyers. The persecution of the lawyers has become especially severe. The licenses of all who have entered a plea of not guilty in a Falun Gong case have been revoked. Some now face much worse - disbarment, arrest, imprisonment, torture, and death. In such a situation, with a legal culture made prostrate before the extra-judicial, extra-Constitutional powers assumed by the Party, there is simply no recourse within Chinese society to address or ameliorate the situation of grave human rights abuse against citizens seeking to exercise their most essential human characteristic, the individual human conscience.

The Sounding of the Trumpet

Why should we, whose fundamental rights are protected in our own societies and whose economic interests are currently at risk, speak out about the rights of the citizens of other nations to be free from the deprivation of personal liberties and freedoms including the right to religion, conscience and belief?

The reason is simple and fundamental. Spirituality, belief and conscience inhabit a unique geography in the human mind and spirit as the continents of experience common to all mankind. Whenever this innermost territory of the human spirit is claimed, conquered by external political authority in any part of the world, it insults the dignity of the human spirit everywhere.

This is all the more true for those of us now living in this global age, where national boundaries are more fluid and our common lives more interrelated. Yes, our economic wellbeing is important. Yes, the wellbeing of our environment is important.

But so too is the health of our spirit, which requires the right to exercise moral choice and determine one's own character; it is the foundation upon which our own and every other free society is built, and we are endangered by its suppression anywhere, as we are impoverished by our failure to defend it.

THE DREAM

It was the dream itself enchanted me:
Character isolated by a deed
To engross the present and dominate memory.

-W.B. Yeats

President John F. Kennedy has expressed well in his work *Profiles in Courage* the challenge of rising to the challenge of courageous ethical decisions at defining moments in history or in their own lives. As he said at the close of his book:

“In whatever arena of life one may meet the challenge of courage, whatever may be the sacrifices he faces if he follows his conscience – the loss of his friends, his fortune, his contentment, even the esteem of his fellow men – each man must decide for himself the course he will follow. The stories of past courage can define that ingredient – they can teach, they can offer hope, they can provide inspiration. But they cannot supply courage itself. For this, each man must look into his own soul.”

The election of President Obama was a resounding call for a return to conscience, not least in the sphere of US foreign policy and the degree to which it reflects our core values, our highest aspirations.

We at the Human Rights Law Foundation call upon our nation to pledge its support for a peaceful transition to a new paradigm in US-China relations, centered on the principles of human rights and the most essential freedoms of thought, belief and personal character. We look forward to the day when all individuals in China can lift their heads to hear the trumpet of conscience sound its call for personal moral freedom and responsibility, declaring the possibility to regain a human dignity so long deprived them by Chinese Communist Party in China.

A TESTAMENT OF HOPE

Rising out of mud yet holy and pure



Courtesy of Minghui.org

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