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World Organization to  
Investigate the Persecution  
of Falun Gong  
追查迫害法轮功国际组织

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## An Open Letter to the World Health Organization and the International Medical Community

August 23, 2004

We are writing this letter because of the ongoing psychiatric abuse of Falun Gong practitioners as well as of political dissidents in China. China Mental Health Watch is calling on international communities to help stop the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, which has included physicians and other health care workers.

This persecution, orchestrated by the former Chinese president Jiang since July 1999, has affected one hundred million Falun Gong practitioners and their families and has caused a huge public health problem in China. The loss of lives due to torture is likely in the thousands. The number of psychiatric casualties is unknown but we know that over one thousand have been involuntarily admitted to psychiatric hospitals to be further tortured. In addition, thousands have suffered physically and mentally in detention centers and labor camps. The detained practitioners and their families have emotionally suffered beyond measure, creating even more health casualties.

According to recent reports, China, which has the largest population in the world, has a large shortage of health care workers. The persecution is affecting this shortage because many medical professionals have been detained and tortured with at least 15 known physicians and health care workers being tortured to death in labor camps (See Appendix I, II, III). In addition, substantial finances have been misused for the purpose of persecution, which may also be contributing to the inadequate health care system becoming one of the biggest social problems. Equally alarming is the fact that an already significant shortage of psychiatric beds is further exacerbated by mentally healthy practitioners being committed to be tortured.

In 1992, Mr. Li Hongzhi introduced to the public Falun Gong, an ancient cultivation method. Because Falun Gong is based on the principle of "Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance", many practitioners gave up drug and alcohol addictions, improved their behaviors, and upgraded their moral reasoning. Dr. Yuhui Hu, an assistant professor of the Department of Economy at Taiwan University, has been studying medical economy for many years. According to a research report by Dr. Hu, practicing Falun Gong can significantly extinguish unhealthy habits. 81% of smokers who started practicing stopped smoking; 77% achieved abstinence from alcohol, and 85% gave up gambling.

In 1998 a group of diverse medical professionals in China conducted a similar study. They conducted a survey of 12,731 Falun Gong practitioners who lived in five districts in Beijing. The statistical analyses indicated that 99.1% of practitioners showed health improvements, 58.5% were completely cured of their previous illnesses, 80.3% had significantly improved their physical health, and 95.5% had significantly improved their mental health. This study indicated that Falun Gong has significant health care benefits, which contributed to its increasing popularity and, in just a few years after its introduction, over 100 million people began the practice.

However, in July of 1999, the former Chinese president Jiang Zemin banned the practice and initiated the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners seemingly out of his jealousy of its popularity and fear of losing control of people. Since the persecution of practitioners began on July 20, 1999, the media and human rights organizations around the world have continuously reported on the Chinese government's cruelty

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against Falun Gong practitioners including psychiatric abuse. According to incomplete data, about 1,000 healthy Falun Gong practitioners have been forcibly sent to mental institutions including psychiatric hospitals and drug rehabilitation centers. Many were forcibly injected with psychotropic drugs, received forced electro-shock, and some were tied up and force-fed for long periods of time. At least 10 practitioners died from this type of maltreatment. Many of these practitioners were held in hospitals for as long as two and half years. Over 100 mental institutions in China participate in this particular form of the persecution. The abuse of psychiatry is aimed to break the practitioners' will by destroying the capacity to think clearly thus disenabling them to exercise the basic human rights of freedom of thought and choice. Psychiatric associations around the world have expressed great concern about this abuse. In 2002, the World Psychiatric Association (consisting of 120 countries) unanimously passed a resolution in Yokohama, Japan, to send delegates to China to independently investigate. To date the Chinese government has refused to give permission. Meanwhile, new cases of psychiatric abuse continue to occur.

During the past four years, thousands of practitioners have suffered mental abuse, harassment, discrimination, loss of employment, and sometimes being forced into homelessness. Many have been expelled from universities or even high schools. Their families have been forced to pay large amounts of penalties driving them into financial bankruptcy. Female practitioners have been gang raped, beaten and killed. Families have been broken up and many family members have suffered the unending anguish of not knowing the fate of their loved ones. Others face going to the morgue to identify the bodies of their children, siblings or parents murdered by torture because the practitioners would not renounce their beliefs. There is no age discrimination as children have also suffered by being detained with their mothers in detention centers and there is at least one account of a baby being tortured to death. Aging parents of practitioners have died from the pain when finding out about the death of their children or from living in fear of their own persecution.

“Brainwashing”, or re-education classes are another very cruel method of mental torture. Under order of the 610 Office (a Gestapo-like unconstitutional office in charge of carrying out the persecution), brainwashing classes have been established throughout the country in provinces, cities, counties and work units. Agents forcibly detain and kidnap large numbers of Falun Gong practitioners and use physical torture, threats, sleep deprivation, and forcing them to watch anti-Falun Gong programs that distort the truth or are fabricated to deceive and manipulate their minds. A myriad of abusive physical and mental techniques are used to impair people's thinking and judgment to force them to give up the practice and sign statements accordingly. When they regain clear thinking, they deeply regret giving up their faith, causing great anguish and mental pain. As a consequence of this systematic persecution, many have become insane.

According to mental health experts' evaluation of Falun Gong practitioners who have been detained and tortured or those people who have lost their spouses, children, and relatives, the persecution has resulted in tremendous mental trauma and some have exhibited psychiatric symptoms of disorders such as Major Depression or Psychosis. Even after they have lived in democratic and free societies for a time, they continue to exhibit symptoms including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder with flashbacks, recurrent memories of the trauma, nightmares, disturbed sleep, and avoidance of possible triggers that would bring about emotional pain. This causes significant mental health problems and impairs normal living. According to studies of Jewish survivors of concentration camps this kind of mental trauma can cause life-long harm. This kind of abuse makes those who have been trained in the medical field and also practice Falun Gong reluctant to return to China for fear of similar persecution and the risk of losing their lives. For example, Dr. Charles Lee, a Chinese doctor and US citizen has been detained, tortured, and subjected to brainwashing classes because he practices Falun Gong (See Appendix IV).

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We sincerely appreciate the WHO contribution to the improvement of the world's health and prosperity. We hope the WHO can help stop this on-going large-scale persecution that attacks fundamental human nature and human rights and break through this information isolation in order to protect international medical ethics. We believe the WHO and the international medical community could have a very unique influence in raising human treatment standards in the situation outlined above.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
China Mental Health Watch