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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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Letter from WOIPFG's Attorney to Secretary of State Colin Powell on Charles Li's Case

February 6, 2003

Via Fax at 202-647-6820
Secretary of State Colin Powell
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Re: Wrongful Detention of Dr. Charles Li

Dear Secretary Powell:

I am counsel to the World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong ("WOIPFG", WOIPFG is dedicated to protecting the human rights of Falun Gong practitioners around the world, to investigate and expose violations of those rights, and to restore and uphold justice in society. As has been widely reported, Dr. Charles Li, a U.S. citizen and Falun Gong practitioner, was arrested in the People's Republic of China on January 22, 2003, allegedly for sabotaging telecommunications systems on behalf of the banned spiritual movement. As more fully detailed below, WOIPFG is asking for your assistance in securing the immediate and unconditional release of Dr. Li. By way of background, Falun Gong is a spiritual practice based on the universal principles of "Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance." Having been made public in China in 1992 by Mr. Li Hongzhi, who was nominated for the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize, the practice quickly spread by word of mouth throughout China, and is now practiced in more than 50 countries. The adherents of Falun Gong, who refer to themselves as "practitioners," pursue their beliefs through a combination of exercise, meditation, and scholarship. Concerned that the peaceful practice was making significant inroads however, the government of China outlawed Falun Gong in July 1999. Since then, as documented by the U.S. Department of State in its annual Country Reports on Human Rights, and even more extensively in its annual report on International Religious Persecution, as well as by similar monitoring reports issued by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, China has systematically attempted to eradicate the practice and those who follow it by reeducation through forced labor, torture, psychiatric incarceration reminiscent of the discredited practices of the former Soviet Union, and murder.

Sensitive to how their actions may be viewed overseas, Chinese officials attempt to hide their infamous actions by falsely labeling deaths as from suicide or natural causes then speedily cremating the bodies preventing autopsies by the relatives of the victims. Even U.S. citizens have been subjected to unwarranted detention, imprisonment, and torture in China or have found themselves on the Falun Gong List which the regime uses to coerce foreign airlines to bar access to international flights. Many U.S. citizens who practice Falun Gong basically within the walls of their own homes or by exercising in parks appeared on the List as well suggesting that China has an extensive network of spies and paid informants living and working in America!

On July 24, 2002, a milestone was reached in the campaign to end the reign of terror against practitioners both domestically and in China when the U.S. House of Representatives passed Resolution 188 by a vote of 420-0. The Resolution, which describes the peaceful nature of Falun Gong and the atrocities committed against practitioners, requested China to "cease its persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and their harassment of citizens of the U.S. who practice it." Despite this, China still feels unrestrained in the physical abuse and psychological warfare perpetrated against Falun Gong practitioners for practicing their creed. Which brings us to the case of Dr. Charles Li. Dr. Li immigrated to the United States in the early 1990s and was employed at Harvard University as a medical researcher before going into the business of importing and exporting Chinese traditional medicine. He was arrested on January 22, 2003, at the Guangzhou airport in China when he went to visit his parents for the Chinese New Year. Dr. Li was then transferred approximately 1,000 miles away to the Yangzhou Detention Center in Jiangsu Province. Two days later, Chinese authorities officially notified the U.S. consulate in Shanghai that Dr. Li will be charged with sabotaging telecommunications equipment. Dr. Li has denied the charges. If

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found guilty, Dr. Li faces imprisonment up to fifteen years. Considering the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners as described above, the incarceration will prove most brutal.

No matter what hyperbole will be offered by the government of China in response to inquiries made concerning Dr. Li, the simple fact is that he was arrested, detained, and now faces the prospect of spending the next fifteen years in prison simply because of his beliefs. The treatment threatened to be imposed upon Dr. Li certainly runs afoul of both the letter and the spirit of international law as embodied in various charters such as:

- a. the right to freedom of movement and travel, as set out in Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 12(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- b. the right to be free of discrimination, as set out in Article 7 of the Universal Declaration and Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- c. the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and to manifest these beliefs through practice, worship and observance, as set out in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration, and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- d. the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as set out in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and,
- e. the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association as set out in Article 20 of the Universal Declaration, and Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The best way to send a clear signal to the government of China that such flagrant violations of basic human rights will not be tolerated in the world community is to demand and secure the immediate and unconditional release of Charles Li.

Thank you for your attention to this most important matter and I hope that very soon we will be sending you a thank you card informing you of Charles' safe return.

Very truly yours,
Stewart L. Weisman
Stewart L. Weisman, Esq.
SLW/sw
cc: Attached distribution list

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