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An Open letter to the People of Romania

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As has been widely reported throughout the world, an exhibition of the works of traditional Chinese artist Cuiying Zhang that was to open in the capital last week was abruptly cancelled because of pressure placed upon the gallery by the People's Republic of China Embassy in Bucharest. In a letter published in the "Free Romania" newspaper, the embassy denigrated Cuiying Zhang, whose works can be viewed online at <http://zhangcuiying.org/>, solely because of her affiliation with Falun Gong and for no other legitimate reason. It is a shame that the citizens of Bucharest were denied the joyful experience of viewing, firsthand, Ms. Cuiying's gentle yet compelling portraits, landscapes, depictions of flora and fauna, and Buddhas because of the barbaric practices of a totalitarian regime.

Falun Gong is a spiritual practice based on the universal principles of "Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance." Today, Falun Gong is practiced in more than 50 countries by practitioners who pursue their beliefs through a combination of exercise, meditation, and scholarship.

Since Jiang Zemin outlawed Falun Gong in July 1999, China has systematically persecuted practitioners by re-education through forced labor, torture, psychiatric incarceration, and murder much akin to the oppressive rule of former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. The carnage committed against practitioners by the infamous 610 Office, an extrajudicial organization similar to the Gestapo in Hitler's time, and other agencies of the state, reminiscent of the atrocities against the Romanian people by the Securitate police, are well-documented in monitoring reports issued by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch (<http://hrw.org/reports/2002/china/>).

Ms. Cuiying has travelled to more than 30 countries and 100 cities throughout Europe, Asia, and North America holding art exhibitions to bring the world's attention to the injustice of the persecution and the severe human rights violations that continue to take place. Indeed, Ms. Cuiying had withstood eight months of brutal incarceration much like that once carried out at Aiud prison and even went on a fifty-day hunger strike. But as with any prisoner of conscience, the artist endured her ordeal with grace and nobility. Her tormentors now seek to indulge their invidious forms of discrimination and abuse overseas through their embassies and consulates.

The World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong ("WOIPFG") has taken an active interest in this matter. WOIPFG is dedicated to protecting the human rights of Falun Gong practitioners, to investigate and expose violations of those rights, and to restore and uphold justice in society. WOIPFG respectfully requests that Cuiying Zhang be invited to return to Bucharest to exhibit her work so that the Romanian people can see for themselves the beautiful works of art while showing solidarity with those who are persecuted for their spiritual beliefs - for the world remembers all too well the excesses of regimes that undertake to ban literature and art and deny people the right to experience the outpouring of creative expression from those of different cultures and viewpoints. It is unfortunate that the rulers of China have yet to learn from the Nuremberg Tribunal and the Bosnia War Crimes Trial that crimes, which violate the letter and spirit of international law, will not be tolerated by civilized nations.