



# China 'killing Falun Gong members for organs'

by Ann Cahill  
Europe  
Correspondent

A DAMNING report has accused China of an horrific trade in organs taken from Falun Gong prisoners but human rights and press freedom are not on the agenda for today's EU-China summit in Helsinki.

The last five years have seen a huge increase in organ transplants in China and their sale at high prices, sometimes to foreigners who face long waits for voluntary donations in their home countries.

There were 10,000 kidney transplants alone in 2005, compared with 135 in the years before 1998, and 500 liver transplants in the first four months of this year.

Nobody is certain where the freely available and openly advertised body parts come from. China last year admitted it takes organs from the 2,000 or so prisoners it sentences to death each year.

But a human rights lawyer and a former Canadian member of parliament and prosecutor who investigated say they are convinced Falun Gong members are systematically murdered for their organs.

The issue was raised in the European Parliament by Fine Gael MEP Simon Coveney this week when a motion was passed calling on the EU to pursue closer trade ties with Beijing which "should also result in human rights reforms".

But when the Prime Minister Wen Jiabao meets the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and the leaders of the 24 other EU countries in Helsinki, it will not be on their agenda.

Falun Gong, a semi-spiritual group whose members can be seen in parks around the world practising their physical exercises, was banned in China in 1999

when the Communist party feared their 70 million members could pose a threat to their supremacy.

Followers protested, were rounded up and sent to prison. By April 2001 an estimated 830,000 had been arrested. President Jiang Zemin spoke of the need to eradicate them and their persecution became official state policy.

The UN Special Report on Torture estimates that two thirds of the victims of torture and ill treatment in China are members of this group that the state insists is an evil cult.

Many who came from all over the country to protest in Beijing in 2001 were arrested and refused to identify themselves for fear their families would be victimised. They have been moved around prison and labour camps. This could be the population providing an ever-increasing harvest of fresh organs, David Matas and David Kilgour say in their report.

They gleaned their evidence mainly from the few prisoners who escaped from China, from reports by the wife of a surgeon who removed corneas from living prisoners and from phone calls made to 30 hospitals and transplant centres in China where a number admitted to using Falun Gong prisoners.

One, believing he was speaking to a prospective customer, said he selected healthy Falun Gong prisoners in their 30s for organs. With their regime of physical exercise, Falun Gong member have a reputation of being healthy.

The chief physician in one assured the caller he had "more than ten beating hearts". Asked if these were still live bodies, he replied, "Yes, it is so" according to the transcript.

The internet provided

further proof of the ready availability of organs. The China International Transplantation Assistant Centre website said: "It may take

only one week to find the suitable kidney donor, the maximum time being one month. If there is something wrong with the donor's organ, the patient will be offered another in another week".

The Oriental Organ Transplant Centre in April 2006 said the average waiting time for a suitable liver is two weeks. In Canada, waiting time is an average of 32 months and it is much longer elsewhere.

A kidney must be used within 24 to 48 hours while a liver has a shelf life of just 12 hours. "The astonishingly short waiting times advertised for perfectly matched organs suggest the existence of both a computer matching system for transplants and a large bank of live prospective 'donors,'" the report says.

Released and escaped prisoners have testified that only Falun Gong members are taken to hospital for blood, x-ray and eye tests.

The wife of a Chinese surgeon, in evidence, said her husband told her of removing corneas from 2,000 anaesthetised Falun Gong prisoners in the north east in 2002 and 2003. He told her none survived because other surgeons removed other vital organs and all the bodies were burned.

The two lawyers, who are not members of Falun Gong and were not paid for their report, admit the allegations are difficult to prove or disprove.

They can offer no cast-iron proof or disproof but say "the combination of so many factors make the allegations believable".

**Price of life: cost of transplants**

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**Kidney**

\$62,000 (€49,000)

**Liver**

\$98,000-\$130,000  
(€77,000-€102,000)

**Liver and kidney**

\$160,000-\$180,000  
(€126,000-€142,000)

**Kidney and pancreas**

\$150,000 (€118,000)

**Lung**

\$150,000-\$170,000  
(€118,000-€134,000)

**Heart**

\$130,000-\$160,000  
(€102,000-126,000)

**Cornea**

\$30,000 (€23,600)

From the China International Transplantation Network Assistance Centre website, April 2006.



**Members of the spiritual movement Falun Gong, which is banned on the Chinese mainland, march through the streets of Hong Kong**

Mike Clarke/AFP/Getty Images