

Falun Gong: A decade of COURAGE

In 1999, Falun Gong was an immensely popular spiritual practice in China, though virtually unknown outside the country. Its rapid growth in popularity unnerved communist leaders, who banned Falun Gong on July 20, 1999. Over the last ten years, Falun Gong practitioners have been targets of unfathomable violence and a massive campaign of disinformation. This second part in a two-part series sheds light on those, inside and outside China, who practice Falun Gong.



Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) THE EPOCH TIMES



Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX) THE EPOCH TIMES

Congress members unite on Capitol Hill

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WASHINGTON D.C.—Members of Congress applauded Falun Gong practitioners for their courage in standing up to the Chinese Communist Party, saying they are heroes and champions of freedom.

The congressmen and women were speaking at a rally on Washington's Capitol Hill to mark ten years of persecution of Falun Gong by the Chinese regime. Representatives from human rights, religious freedom, and community organizations also spoke in support of Falun Gong practitioners' efforts to end a decade of repression.

"Can you imagine a crackdown on a spiritual movement?" said Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL). "Unbelievable."

In the past decade, there is no known instance of violence from a Falun Gong practitioner against the Chinese authorities.

Rep. Ros-Lehtinen recently introduced a House resolution supported by over 40 congressional co-sponsors, that recognizes the continued persecution of Falun Gong in China. Forty co-sponsors, however, is "not enough" she said calling on the crowds at the rally to inform more people about the extent of the persecution.

"Why is Falun Gong being persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party?" she asked, answering at once, "Falun Gong stands for the principle of truthfulness, for the principle of compassion, for the principle of tolerance, and these characteristics represent the very antithesis of what the Communist Party in China stands for—it stands for lies, it stands for brutality, it stands for intolerance."

Falun Gong is a spiritual meditation practice rooted in ancient Chinese culture. It has been persecuted in China since July 20, 1999, at the behest of then-president Jiang Zemin.

"The methods that they have used to eradicate Falun Gong have been particularly brutal," said

Rep. Ros-Lehtinen. "Falun Gong practitioners have been beaten, they have been tortured, and they have even been killed for seeking only to uphold freedom of conscience."

The Falun Dafa Information Center lists more than a dozen torture methods used against practitioners, including the use of high-voltage electric batons, forced-feeding, beatings, brainwashing, and sexual abuse. Fair trials are not granted, and a new directive from the regime bans a "not guilty" verdict to be given to Falun Gong practitioners, according to paperwork obtained by The Epoch Times.

Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ), pushed for more action from around the world. "Your presence here today reminds the White House that we can no longer have business as usual," he said. "We need to remind President Obama that human rights come first, and trade and economics come second."

Rep. Smith expressed concern over the Chinese regime's influence in Western societies. "If you look at the way the Chinese regime hunts down Falun Gong practitioners in the U.S., that is an abomination as well. You are free. We will fight very hard to ensure that someday the Falun Gong will be free in China as well."

Rep. Smith along with Democrat Congressman Rob Andrews (D-NJ), sponsored a letter asking President Obama to give "all possible public and private diplomatic support to Falun Gong practitioners in China". It was signed by 60 other members of Congress.

One such member is long-time supporter of

Falun Gong, Dana Rohrbacher (R-CA).

"It is our job to reach out to the rest of the people of the world and form an incredible coalition of people of moral human beings," he said. "We will stand together against this type of tyranny and we will build a better world. And the Falun Gong is in the forefront of this effort."

Rep. Rohrbacher said the years of persecution against Falun Gong will not be forgotten.

"You have remained courageous, you have gained the attention of good people throughout the world—that is what will change the world."

Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) said he is reminded of the principles of Falun Gong when he is in the House of Representatives—the word "tolerance", one of the three abiding principles of the practice, is inscribed in wood on the floor.

Rep. Diaz-Balart said the Chinese Communist Party is an embarrassment to humankind.

"They rule by brute force and when we see the brutality that the regime practices we are embarrassed for mankind," he said. "And when we see that mankind acts as though ... [it is] business as usual, with a regime of thugs, then it is an embarrassment for mankind. And when the world treats it as though it is a normal peaceful law-abiding regime, and the Olympics, a symbol of peace, are allowed to go to that regime, that is an embarrassment to mankind."

"I admire you—know you have friends here in the halls of this Congress," Rep. Diaz-Balart assured. Congressman Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD) of Mary-

land said he was impressed with the vibrancy of Falun Gong practitioners as they visited his office. "I would think that the Chinese government would want everyone to be as positive and upbeat and as happy as members of your group are," he said. "[But], I guess totalitarian government would see it as a threat ... please know that we in this country are with you 100 percent of the way."

"How tragic that we even have to come here today," said Texan Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX), stressing the bipartisan support for Falun Gong. "We stand here as righteous fighters and believers in your cause of truthfulness."

Congressman Lacy Clay (D-MO) said the rally is not about politics—it is a statement about conscience and community.

"The sense of the Congress of the United States, is simply this: detention must end, torture must end, and repression has no place in society," he said. "I applaud the courage and the non-violent nature of the practitioners of this ancient pathway to enlightenment. Your struggle for freedom is just and we will continue to support you."

Congressman Gus Bilirakus (R-FL) said tens of thousands of practitioners have been persecuted and tortured by communist authorities solely because of their religious belief. "Religious persecution is the weapon of tyrants," he said. "You have not surrendered to the tyranny, you have fought against it with the power of your hearts and minds and I commend you for it."

Rep. Bilirakus said he will ensure the Falun Gong voice is heard in the House of Foreign Affairs, of which he is a committee member. "I stand with you," he said.

Congressman Joseph Cao, (R-LA) reminded the audience of the hundreds of years that have been spent fighting for religious freedom. "Freedom, especially freedom of religion, is what brings this world together in tolerance and cooperation," he said. "I am a religious man and I understand the necessity of religious groups and leaders to speak out against religious persecution."

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—Dana Rohrbacher (R-CA)