

# organ transplants in China

what is the truth?

For a number of years, reports have flooded the news about China harvesting organs of Falun Gong prisoners. Many countries, including England, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, have had media coverage relating to these allegations. There have been statements from Falun Gong practitioners recounting their sufferings while imprisoned by the Chinese Government. John Russell, a Philosophy instructor at Langara College, states, "These allegations are not new; suspicions of such activities have been around for at least 15 years."

The Chinese Embassy in Canada issued a statement in July 2006, "Falun Gong has been spreading the rumour that more than 6,000 Falun Gong practitioners were cremated after their organs had been illegally transplanted at a 'concentration camp' in [the] Sujiatun Hospital, Shenyang,

Liaoning Province, China." The Chinese Embassy in Canada states that China has a responsibility to the principles of the World Health Organization, and that they have followed these guidelines in all instances.

According to a statement issued by the Chinese Embassy in Canada, China's Communist Government banned Falun Gong in 1999 and deemed it an "anti-science, anti-humanity, and anti-society evil cult."

Li Hongzhi started Falun Dafa, also known as Falun Gong, as principles to "cultivate, or improve, their mind, body, and spirit." According to the Canadian Falun Dafa website, it is "based on the universal principle of 'Truthfulness-Compassion-Forgiveness,'" as well as "performing Falun Dafa's five sets of gentle exercise," which includes meditation, sometimes enjoyed as a group activity.

The investigation relating to the rumours of organ transplants began in July 2006 by former Liberal MP David Kilgour and immigration lawyer David Matas. In a January 2007 story from *Canadian Press*, they asked the Foreign Affairs Department to "issue an advisory warning Canadians off of travelling to China for organ transplants."

Kilgour and Matas have collected countless reports and statements since last year that, according to *Canadian Press*, "doubled the evidence they had that unconscionable practices are taking place." The pair documented cases where "Canadians from Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver [travelled] to China for transplants."

Russell stresses how difficult it is to verify these allegations with a closed society such as China, but believes it is appropriate that Foreign Affairs issue a warning. He feels "where suspicions about the origin of the transplanted organs exist, the burden of proof lies with the provider" who needs to be able to prove that the organs were obtained legally. Russell also stresses caution in trusting information provided by sources as it could be fabricated.

Kilgour said in a CBS 11 News story from February 2007, "Since the persecution of Falun Gong five-years ago, the number of transplants has gone through the roof. In a five-year period, there have been about 41,500 organ transplants."

The Canadian Federal Government and other international organizations may put pressure on China for additional information regarding written donor consent, but it is very difficult to create change in another country without violating individual rights. If the Canadian Federal Government feels this is not enough to guarantee medical safety, it is within its power to spread awareness about the situation and to allow Canadians to make informed choices about travelling to China for transplants. **PPRM**

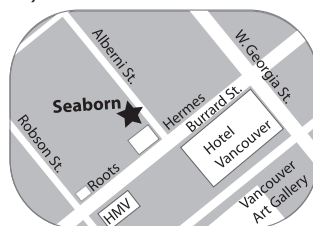
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