



***July 20 marks the 13th anniversary of the continuing genocide against Falun Gong practitioners in China.***

On May 29, Mr. Yu Xuezhong left home to go to his friend's house. Little did he know it would be his last time.

That evening, police burst in, abducting the two men in a sweep that pulled in at least 20 others who practice Falun Gong in Northeast China's Jilin City. They were taken to a nearby police station, handcuffed, and beaten.

The next day, Mr. Yu's family received a phone call. The 53-year-old was dead.

After thirteen years of Communist Party persecution, stories like this are still all-too-common across China.

Behind the façade of Starbucks and Apple stores lurks another "modern" China, consisting of makeshift detention centers, labor camps, and solitary confinement cells filled with hundreds of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners.

They have been abducted and imprisoned on a massive scale simply for seeking to practice Falun Gong—a system of meditation, qigong exercises, and traditional Chinese spirituality that teaches one to embody the qualities of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Forbearance.

Today, Falun Gong practitioners comprise the largest group of prisoners of conscience in China, and perhaps the world.

Guards beat and torment them with methods more reminiscent of medieval torture chambers than what many would expect from the 21st century's second largest economy. Torn out fingernails, stretching racks, sodomy, and electric baton shocks are among the tactics used.

Thousands of children have been orphaned. Countless wives and husbands widowed. Evidence that Falun Gong detainees have been killed and their organs forcibly removed for transplant operations has given rise to international investigations, and even a ban on China-based organ transplant surgeries by some countries.

The doctors performing such operations are only a small part of the Chinese population forced to betray their conscience and professional ethics. Subjected to penalties if they don't comply and offered rewards if they do, teachers, factory managers, and policemen have been coerced into spreading lies, firing good workers, and torturing innocent people. Thus, counted among the persecution's victims are not only the tens of millions of people practicing Falun Gong, but all of China's citizens, who have been deceived, instilled with hatred, and duped into persecuting their fellow citizens.

### **Staggering human toll**

The human toll, financial cost, and moral tragedy of the persecution against Falun Gong that Communist Party chief Jiang Zemin launched on July 20, 1999 is staggering.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

For thirteen years, Falun Gong practitioners have used creative, courageous, and peaceful ways to counter the Communist Party's propaganda against them and explain to fellow Chinese the reality of the persecution.

Now this is bearing fruit.

Defying the danger of being detained (or worse), a growing number of people across China are signing their real names to petitions calling on the government to release a Falun Gong neighbor, friend, or colleague.

As these Chinese people step forward, we in the West have our own choice to make. Do we curry favor with the Communist Party powers that kill innocent people so we can protect short-term interests and a superficial appearance of stability?

Or do we resist the Party's efforts to buy our silence and do our utmost to stop one of the worst atrocities of our time and preserve a force for good that offers hope, stability, and prosperity for China and the world?

At this critical moment, Chinese people in growing numbers are peacefully speaking out to defy the Party's persecutory policies and assert that the values of Truthfulness, Compassion, and

Forbearance are worth defending.

If they have the heart and courage to do this inside China—where they risk a fate like Mr. Yu and his friend—certainly we, amidst the comfort and freedom of the West, can ensure they do not stand alone.

*Falun Dafa Information Center statement on 13th anniversary of the persecution.*