

The illegality of China's Falun Gong crackdown and its relevance to the recent political turmoil

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I would like to express my appreciation to the members of CECC, particularly Chairman Smith and Co-Chairman Brown, for holding this hearing for FLG

In recent years, the world has witnessed deteriorating human rights conditions and growing disregard for the rule of law in China, whether it is in cases involving activists, democracy advocates, or even high-ranking officials. But what are the underlying causes of the current situation? In essence, it began 13 years ago when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched its campaign to eliminate Falun Gong, a spiritual practice with followers numbering in the tens of millions.

In my remarks, I will explore three dimensions of the persecution:

1. How the party has systematically violated Chinese laws for the purposes of implementing the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners.
2. How Wang Lijun, a centerpiece of recent political turmoil in China, was involved in the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and organ transplant abuses.
3. The challenge facing the new leadership when it comes to the ongoing campaign against Falun Gong.

How the persecution operates without a legal basis

The Chinese government never legally banned Falun Gong and there is, in fact, no law on the books prohibiting this religious practice. In 2007, six prominent Chinese lawyers defended Falun Gong practitioner Wang Bo and her family. The defense statement was later posted online under the title “The Supremacy of the Constitution, and Freedom of Religion.” Some observers have called it a historic document. Following extensive analysis, the attorneys concluded: “it is clear that the punitive actions carried out at present against Falun Gong believers have no constitutional legal basis, and they should be suspended forthwith.”¹

Given that the persecution of Falun Gong has no legal basis and represents more of a political campaign rather than the rule of law, how has the regime managed to implement it? In 1999, when the campaign was first launched, China was quite different from in Mao’s era. On the surface, at least, China had established a functioning legal system and many laws had been passed. The regime therefore used several tactics to bypass the law and carry out the large-scale and violent political campaign.

1) **Creating a new chain of command outside the realm of the legal system.** On June 7, 1999, 43

¹ Teng Biao, Li Heping, et al., “The Supremacy of the Constitution, and Freedom of Religion,” *A Sword and a Shield: China’s Human Rights Lawyers*, ed. Stacy Mosher and Patrick Poon, Chinese Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group, 2009; pg 84.

days before the persecution was launched, Jiang Zemin announced in a meeting of Politburo members that a new leadership team would be established under the CCP's Central Committee to deal with the Falun Gong issue. Under this leadership team, an office was established to handle day-to-day duties and called, "the Office of the Leadership Team of the CCP Central Committee for Handling the Falun Gong Issue." That office is more commonly known as "the 6-10 Office," named for the date it was established: June 10, 1999. After that date, almost every Party branch, from the province to the county to the district level, established its own 6-10 Office. The power source of the 6-10 Office's ability to operate extralegally and with impunity is not drawn from the State. Neither the National People's Congress nor the State Council has authorized its actions. Rather, approval and support for its deeds comes from the Communist Party. Each 6-10 Office takes orders from the 6-10 Office one level above it, going up to the Central 6-10 Office. The local 6-10 Offices also take orders from the leadership team of the CCP Committee at its same organizational level. Today, thousands of 6-10 Office branches remain active throughout China.²

- 2) **Using the existing Party system to interfere with the implementation of the law.** In China, the judiciary is not independent but rather, faces significant interference from the Communist Party. The Political and legal Affairs Committee (PLAC, Chinese official translation is Political and Legislative Affairs Committee) is the CCP body most often used to influence law-related organs from behind the scenes. As stated by the Central PLAC: "The Central PLAC is a functional department for the CCP Central Committee to lead and administer political and law related work."³ At the central level, the state organs under the committee's influence include the Supreme Court, the Supreme Procuratorate, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of State Security, and the Ministry of Justice. The same set-up applies to all levels of governance in China, with the PLAC influencing the corresponding organs at each level. All 610 Offices are set up within the PLAC. This has made aspects of the 610 Office's work related to detentions and imprisonment more convenient and easy to implement.
- 3) **Twisting the laws, causing them to be used on Falun Gong by illegally interpreting the laws.** Since a law could not be passed targeting one specific group, the Supreme Court and the Supreme Procuratorate have issued "Interpretations" to close this gap. The "Interpretations from the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate Regarding the Application of the Law in Handling Cases Involving Heretic Organizations" Part 1 (dated October 8 and 9, 1999) and Part 2 (dated June 4, 2001) are examples of this phenomenon.⁴ However, these "Interpretations" are invalid from a legal standpoint, contradict article 36 of the Constitution, and overstep the jurisdiction of the bodies that issued them. Article 42 of the Legislative Law of the PRC states that clarifications regarding the appropriate execution of a given law can only be made by the Standing

² World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong (WOIPFG), "Investigative Report on the 610 Office," Created on September 8, 2003, Updated on February 1, 2011 <http://www.zhuichaguoji.org/en/node/197>

³ "Introduction of the Political and Judiciary Committee of CPC Central Committee," *People's Daily*, July 17, 2007, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64114/64135/5994757.html>.

⁴ people.com.cn 高法高检关于办理组织和利用邪教组织犯罪案件具体应用法律若干问题的解释 <gao fa gao jian guan yu ban li zu zhi he li yong xie jiao zu zhi fan zui an jian ju ti ying yong fa lv ruo gan wen ti de jie shi> "Interpretations from the Supreme Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate Regarding the Application of the Law in Handling Cases Involving Heretic Organizations" October 8 and 9, 1999. <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shehui/46/20010321/421657.html>; people.com.cn 最高人民法院最高人民检察院关于办理组织和利用邪教组织犯罪案件具体应用法律若干问题的解释（二）<zui gao ren min fa yuan zui gao ren min jian cha yuan guan yu ban li zu zhi he li yong xie jiao zu zhi fan zui an jian ju ti ying yong fa lv ruo gan wen ti de jie shi (er)> "Interpretations from the Supreme Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate Regarding the Application of the Law in Handling Cases Involving Heretic Organizations (2)" June 4, 2001. <http://air.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/16/20010611/486116.html>

Committee of the National People's Congress. The Supreme Court and the Supreme Procuratorate thus had no jurisdiction to interpret the law as they did. In addition, neither of these Interpretations mentioned Falun Gong by name. Instead, both the Supreme Court and the Supreme Procuratorate issued separate administrative and extralegal notices to detail how to apply the NPC "Decision" and the two above-mentioned "Interpretations" to Falun Gong.⁵

- 4) **Issue internal memos, documents, and circulars to direct the persecution.** The persecution is mostly carried out by internal documents marked as "classified" or even "top secret." Such documents can be issued at any level, but from the various ones leaked online or via informants in the government it appears that almost all are modified copies of orders that originated from the CCP's Central Committee or its 610 Office. For example, a letter from April 25th, a memo from May 8th, and a speech from June 7th in 1999, all by Jiang Zemin, were distributed by the Office of CCP Central Committee as formal CCP internal documents to direct the persecution even before the it had formally started.⁶ Relevant CCP members and bodies are typically instructed to study such speeches and carry out their aims. More recently, an internal document issued by the 610 Office of the CCP Central Committee in 2010 initiated a three-year campaign to reinvigorate the brainwashing and "transformation" of Falun Gong practitioners.⁷ Analysis by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China found that versions of the orders and plans for their implementation appeared on websites across China at various levels of the party apparatus.

According to the Legislation Law of the PRC, higher-level laws carry more authority than lower-level laws.⁸ But, in order to persecute Falun Gong, the CCP has reversed this rule in practice. The internal CCP documents override laws and regulations, the "Notices" override the "Interpretations" of the Supreme Court and Procuratorate, the "Interpretations" override the "Decision" of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and the "Decision" overrides the Constitution.

- 5) **Article 300 of the Chinese Criminal Code is the most commonly used way to charge Falun Gong practitioners with a crime and sending them to prison for up to 18 years.** Over the past 13 years, thousands of innocent practitioners have been subjected to such punishments. Article 300

⁵ pkulaw.cn (Peking University Law Net)

最高人民法院于贯彻全国人大常委会《关于取缔邪教组织、防范和惩治邪教活动的决定》和“两院”司法解释的通知（法发（1999）29号）<zui gao ren min fa yuan guan yu guan che quan guo ren da chang wei hui guan yu qu di xie jiao zu zhi fang fan he cheng zhi xie jiao huo dong de jue ding he liang yuan si fa jie shi de tong zhi (fa fa 1999-29 hao)> "Notice of the Supreme People's Court on Implementation of the 'Decision to Ban, Safeguard Against, and Punish Cult Activities' of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and the 'Interpretations' of Supreme Court and Supreme Procuratorate" (Supreme Court Issue #29, 1999) November 5, 1999

http://www.pkulaw.cn/fulltext_form.aspx?Gid=26459&Db=chl ; pkulaw.cn (Peking University Law Net)

最高人民检察院关于认真贯彻执行《关于取缔邪教组织、防范和惩治邪教活动的决定》和有关司法解释的通知（高检发研字（1999）22号）<zui gao ren min jian cha yuan guan yu ren zhen guan che zhi xin guan yu qu di xie jiao zu zhi fang fan he cheng zhi xie jiao huo dong de jue ding he you guan si fa jie shi de tong zhi (gao jian fa yan zi 1999 -22 hao)> "Notice of the Supreme People's Procuratorate on Implementation of the 'Decision to Ban, Safeguard Against, and Punish Cult Activities' and the relevant 'Interpretations'" (Supreme Procuratorate Issue #22, 1999) October 31, 1999. http://www.pkulaw.cn/fulltext_form.aspx?db=chl&gid=23700

⁶ "The documents of the CCP Central Committee on Falun Gong," *Beijing Spring*, Volume 97, June, 2001, <http://beijingspring.com/bj2/2001/60/2003727210907.htm>.

⁷ Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), "Communist Party Calls for Increased Efforts To 'Transform' Falun Gong Practitioners as Part of Three-Year Campaign," March 22, 2011, <http://www.cecc.gov/pages/virtualAcad/index.phpd?showsingle=154369>

⁸ "The Legislation Law of the People's Republic of China," Chapter V, Articles 78 to 80, http://www.gov.cn/english/laws/2005-08/20/content_29724.htm

establishes “using heretical religious organizations to disrupt the implementation of law” as a crime, which, besides once again contradicts Article 36 of the Constitution, cannot be legitimately applied to Falun Gong for various reasons. As raised by Chinese lawyer Wang Yonghang in a 2008 open letter to the Supreme Procuratorate, it does not meet minimal international legal standards of clarity and specificity.⁹ In practice, the legal organs that have tried to charge Falun Gong practitioners at the behest of the 610 Office have never been able to legitimately demonstrate that the practitioners had committed an actual crime. It has never been established in court which law's implementation is disrupted by Falun Gong adherents peacefully practicing their faith, doing their exercises, or disseminating information on human rights abuses.

- 6) **Using the existing extrajudicial system of Reeducation-through-Labor, as well as mental hospitals and newly established brainwashing centers to jail and torture Falun Gong practitioners.** Since the fake trial still needs to go through the legal process, it's not convenient for the perpetrators, more extralegal measures have been widely used to avoid “trouble”. **Reeducation-through-Labor (RTL)** is an administrative punishment that was first introduced by the Ministry of Public Security in 1957 to persecute “counter-revolutionaries” and “Rightists”. The most recent update is that the State Council approved the Ministry of Public Security report on their status in 1982. Since both MPS and the State Council have no legislative power, this is not a legally sanctioned system. Any Chinese citizen can be sent to a labor camp for as long as three years without any legal process and can have this extended by an additional year for “bad behavior.” The RTL system quickly became the CCP’s most convenient tool for persecuting Falun Gong. The CCP found it to be a quick, efficient way for punishing adherents, torturing them, and locking them away until they renounced their faith. Although there had previously been scattered reports of **mental hospitals** being used to jail dissenters, this was not a common phenomenon until the campaign against Falun Gong began. But since 1999, mental hospitals have been widely used to detain practitioners not only because no legal process is needed but also because this tactic can further isolate and demonize Falun Gong practitioners in the eyes of the Chinese public. **Brainwashing centers** is another system established for persecuting Falun Gong. This network involves makeshift detention centers in schools, hotels, senior citizens homes, and so-called “legal education centers,” where adherents are taken and subjected to severe psychological pressure and physical abuse aimed at forcing them to renounce their faith and pledge allegiance to the CCP. People are typically held for several weeks, but can be detained for months or even years. Over the past thirteen years, such centers have been established at different administrative levels, from the provincial to the neighborhood level, from local 610 Offices to state-run enterprises.¹⁰
- 7) **The systematic, illegal use of torture.** In their public statements, Chinese officials often state that torture is prohibited. China has also signed international treaties prohibiting torture and Chinese criminal law includes provisions for perpetrators to be punished. In practice, though, when the regime was faced with a group the size of Falun Gong and was trying to accomplish an impossible task—to force tens of millions of people to give up their beliefs—CCP leaders decided to resort to systematic torture. It is difficult to find the direct orders, especially written documents, of specific instructions to use torture on Falun Gong. However, there is widespread evidence that physical violence is used deliberately and systematically. In August 2001, *Washington Post*

⁹ epochtimes.com 王永航: 昔日铸大错, 如今宜速清遗祸 <wang yong hang: xi ri zhu da cuo, ru jin yi su qing yi huo> “Wang Yonghang: Big mistakes have been made, which should be corrected as soon as possible” July 17, 2008.

<http://www.epochtimes.com/gb/8/7/20/n2198340.htm>

¹⁰ WOIPFG, “The Destruction of Mind and Body Through Brainwashing,” April 28, 2004, <http://www.zhuichaguoji.org/en/node/60>.

reporters John Pomfret and Philip Pan authored an article titled: “Torture Is Breaking Falun Gong; China Systematically Eradicating Group.” This was the first time that a Western media outlet obtained a quote directly from a high ranking official acknowledging that violence used against Falun Gong practitioners is part of a well-designed strategy. Numerous testimonies and eyewitness accounts by Falun Gong practitioners, human rights lawyers, and former detainees imprisoned with practitioners confirm the widespread and routine use of brutal torture tactics on Falun Gong adherents. These include shocks with electric batons, torture devices like the Tiger Bench, severe beatings, injections with drugs, and long-term deprivation of food and sleep. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, Amnesty International, and other human rights bodies have also reported on the prevalent use of such torture methods against Falun Gong. Moreover, instances of perpetrators being punished for such acts as required by Chinese law are few and far between. More common is for individual officials and detention facilities known for obtaining high transformation rates through torture to be rewarded in various ways, including through promotions and monetary bonuses.

The whole set-up ensures that no legal protections apply to Falun Gong practitioners. The result has been that judges only take internal documents, secret memos or even phone calls from CCP officials as guidance for sentencing Falun Gong practitioners to prison. Even worse, many cases have been decided in internal meetings with CCP PLAC officials before a trial has even taken place and the judge had yet to see the defendant. In other cases, no legal proceedings are held at all for those sent to labor camps and other extralegal facilities.

How those who involved in this year’s political turmoil relate to the persecution of Falun Gong

The lawlessness and impunity create the conditions for extreme abuses. In February 2012, then-police chief of Chongqing Wang Lijun fled to the U.S. consulate in Chengdu, setting off one of the biggest political scandals in China in recent memory. Some aspects of Wang’s previous involvement in human rights abuses have been widely reported in the media, such as the notoriety he gained for his role in Chongqing’s “hitting the black” campaign against organized crime. But for those following organ transplant abuses or the persecution of Falun Gong in China, Wang’s role in human rights abuses dates back far before his arrival in Chongqing.

Specifically, Wang set up and directed a research facility in Jinzhou to study and refine the harvesting of organs from prisoners. The facility was called the “On-Site Psychological Research Center of Jinzhou Public Security Bureau.” It was established in late 2003 or early 2004 and was located within the Public Security Bureau building in Jinzhou. Among other research conducted at the facility, official documents and state media reports indicate that one of its areas of expertise was organ transplantation from prisoners killed via lethal injection. In 2006, Wang Lijun received the “Guanghua Innovation Special Contribution Award” for his “Research on Organ Transplantation from Donors Who Have Been Subjected to Drug Injection.”

A closer look at the activities of the center and Wang’s involvement point to several disconcerting elements:

1. **Wang had no medical training but was present at organ removal operations:** According to Wang’s official resume, he had no medical training. Rather, as is now well known, his career was in the security services. At the time of the center’s establishment, he was serving as CCP secretary of the Public Security Bureau in Jinzhou and the city’s deputy mayor. Yet, he became director of this center and was present at execution and organ removal operations. In an

interview with China Central Television in 2004, he was quoted as saying “For a veteran policeman, to see someone executed and within minutes to see the transformation in which this person's life was extended in the bodies of several other people, it was soul-stirring.”¹¹

2. **One of the research objectives was refining organ removal from executed prisoners:** From official statements, it is evident that a focus of the center’s research was to refine the methods for executing prisoners via lethal injection and then removing their organs such that the patient does not reject the organ because it was contaminated from the injection. In a speech at the 2006 award ceremony for the Guanghai Innovation Special Contribution Award, Ren Jinyang, the secretary general of the foundation giving the award explicitly said that: “Professor Wang Lijun and the Research Center conducted basic research and clinic trials to study how to resolve the challenging issue, which is, the organ transplant recipients are generally not very receptive to organs injected with drugs.”¹² He continued that Wang and his colleagues had developed a “brand new protective fluid” that enabled the recipient’s body to receive the organ. An article in the state-run *Liaoshen Evening News* from the previous year similarly noted this dimension of the center’s research.¹³
3. **Center received cooperation from Chinese and international medical and academic institutions:** Despite the questionable ethical foundation of the center’s research, it apparently collaborated with a wide array of institutions, though in many cases these were on project unrelated to organ transplants. During the award ceremony, Wang Lijun claimed that the “secretary-general of China Guanghai Science and Technology Foundation Jinyang and his staff were right there at the transplant scene, the very spot of anatomization, the very spot of organ transplantation into the organ recipient.” According to the website of China's Ministry of Commerce, the center received technological support from over ten universities in China, including the China Criminal Police College, the Beijing Institute of Technology, and China Medical University. The website also noted collaboration and scholar exchange programs with foreign universities, including ones in the United States.¹⁴
4. **Numerically impossible that those killed were only executed criminals:** Perhaps the most disconcerting aspect of the center’s work is the question of who the organ “donors” were. During the award ceremony, Wang explained that “the so-called 'on-site research' is the result of several thousand intensive on-site cases.” This immediately raises the question – where did these thousands of organs come from? The center claimed that they were from prisoners facing execution who were lethally injected. The fact is, however, that such a large number of executions were not carried out in Jinzhou during that period. No accurate data is available from Jinzhou from that time, but it is possible to estimate the number of executions based on other information. The website China Against Death Penalty, run by prominent human rights lawyer

¹¹ CCTV's International Channel, Oct. 21, 2004: The Development and Future of Skull Body Source Authenticating <http://www.cctv.com/program/xwyh/20041021/101709.shtml>

¹² Guanghai Dragon Design Foundation website, Sept. 19, 2006: Secretary-General Ren Jinyang's Speech at the Award Ceremony for "Guanghai Innovation Special Contribution Award" <http://www.ddfchina.org/71/109-2008-07-07-03-11-47.html>

¹³ Police Department of Fuzhou's Public Service Site, article source: Liaoshen Evening News, June 13, 2005: On the Scene Witness: A Killer Peacefully Executed by Injection Method, by Chang Qin, reporter stationed in Jinzhou http://218.66.46.104/frame_a/ReadNews.aspx?webnum=100&rec_id=11185

¹⁴ China's Ministry of Commerce website: The On-Site Psychology Research Center of Police Department of Jinzhou http://csn.mofcom.gov.cn/fwhy/display.php?e_id=50894

Teng Biao, estimates that in Henan province, the annual total of executed prisoners is about 500 in most years and about 800 in the years that witnessed a “strike hard” anti-crime campaign.¹⁵ Liaoning’s population is less than half of Henan’s and during the years 2003 to 2008 when Wang was police chief in Jinzhou, there were no “strike hard” campaigns, so the annual total of criminal executions should be about 250 in Liaoning. Jinzhou is only one of 14 prefecture-level cities in Liaoning, so the number of executions should have been between 20 and 30 at most. In the three years between when Wang took up his position in May 2003 and when the award ceremony took place in 2006, the total number of executions should not have exceeded 100. This is far from thousands of cases.

Then who were these thousands of prisoners? This is where Falun Gong comes in. Because Falun Gong was especially popular in Northeast China before 1999, provinces like Liaoning have been the focus of intense persecution. Indeed, according to Falun Gong sources, it is one of the places where the largest number of Falun Gong practitioners are documented to have been tortured to death.¹⁶ In a recent article in the *World Affairs Journal*, Ethan Gutmann further states, “refugees from the Laogai System have consistently pointed to Liaoning Province, including locations such as Yida, Sujiatun, and in particular Dalian, as the epicenter of Falun Gong [organ] harvesting.”¹⁷ It was during this time that Wang was police chief in Tieling and then Jinzhou, and led implementation of the persecution of Falun Gong, beginning from as early as 2002.¹⁸ As such, there is strong reason to believe that a large proportion of those thousands of cases were Falun Gong prisoners of conscience.

But the most incriminating piece of evidence emerged in late 2009 during conversations that an investigator had with a former member of the armed police. Over the course of two interviews, the fellow relayed a chilling but credible and detailed account of how he had witnessed a living female Falun Gong practitioner be killed and her organs removed. At the end of the interview, the officer mentions that he had taken orders from Wang Lijun who had said to “eradicate them all,” referring to Falun Gong practitioners. Taking the entire interview into account, investigators concluded that although the organ harvesting incident the police officer relayed had occurred in Shenyang, the victim was likely from Tieling or Jinzhou where Wang was police chief and that her detention and prior torture had occurred there.¹⁹

Taken together, these findings point to the egregiousness of the violations Wang Lijun was involved in and provide insight into the workings of the abusive organ transplant industry in China. The results of these investigations were published right after Wang Lijun sought protection at the US Consulate in Chengdu.²⁰ One of the unique elements of Wang Lijun’s case is that this is the only instance of a Chinese official without medical background admitting to Chinese media that he had been involved in organ harvesting experiments.

¹⁵ 中国死刑观察报告, 北京兴善研究所 2012. China Death Penalty Report, China Against Death Penalty 2012. <http://www.gzwqlawyer.com/gzwqlawyer/20120801/209.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.faluninfo.net/article/956/> <http://www.faluninfo.net/article/1124/>

¹⁷ <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/bitter-harvest-china%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%99organ-donation%E2%80%99-nightmare>

¹⁸ Falun Dafa Minghui.org . Details on How Wang Lijun Persecuted Falun Gong Practitioners. <http://en.minghui.org/html/articles/2012/2/25/131744p.html>

¹⁹ WOIPFG Case Report: Witness to a Killing during Live Organ Harvesting of Falun Gong Practitioner. December 12, 2009. <http://www.zhuichaguoji.org/en/node/192>

²⁰ WOIPFG: Investigative Report: China’s Public Security Bureau’s On-site Psychology Research Center Implicated in Live Organ Harvesting and Human Experimentation on Falun Gong Practitioners. February 15, 2012. <http://www.zhuichaguoji.org/en/node/214>

The New Leadership

The CCP lacks self-correction mechanisms. Misguided policies create huge interest groups based on benefits accrued from the problematic policy or collective guilt for having engaged in criminal behavior. Any effort to change such a policy would face huge resistance. For example, Deng Xiaoping refused to vindicate the Anti-Rightists campaign in the early 1980s, partly because he was deeply involved in the persecution of Rightists and of course, didn't wish to incriminate himself.

As a result, with the exception of the Cultural Revolution—when many victims were themselves top party leaders—none of the political campaigns targeted at ordinary Chinese people has been fully redressed, though some were partially vindicated alongside negation of the Cultural Revolution.

The persecution against Falun Gong, however, is the longest lasting and widest reaching such campaign, affecting even people outside China. Thus, the number of officials involved in the persecution is particularly significant. Some of the newly promoted Party officials, including members and the Politburo Standing Committee, are known to have been involved in the persecution of Falun Gong during the last 13 years. For example, Liu Yunshan, one of the seven new Standing Committee members, has been in charge of anti-Falun Gong propaganda since July 1999. Thus, although the new leadership might have been unlikely to initiate the persecution if faced with the decision in 1999, now that the campaign is underway, it is very unlikely they will put a stop to it. In China, it is much harder to end a wrong policy than to initiate one.

Nevertheless, they cannot avoid the Falun Gong issue. Hong Kong's *Trend Magazine* published an article²¹ in October listing three main challenges the new leadership would face. One of them was how to handle the anti-Falun Gong campaign. The author stated that Hu's strategy was not to mention it openly but to also turn a blind eye to the ongoing efforts by other officials and security agencies—led by Zhou Yongkang in particular. With the PLAC portfolio demoted from the Standing Committee, the new leadership won't have that excuse at their disposal and as the campaign continues, they will have to take full responsibility. During the period before and after the 18th Party's Congress, the persecution of Falun Gong has become more severe along with harassment of other religious groups. Thus, judging from the current Party line and the policy towards religion, I am not optimistic that Xi and his colleagues will end the campaign and redress Falun Gong.

²¹ 动向杂志 The Trend Magazine, 2012, October, Vol 326,
作者姬胡：习李政治三大焦点——第五代面临宗教问题大考。 Tree main points of Politics of Xi and Li: The Big Test Facing the Fifth Generation – Religions <http://www.chengmingmag.com/t326/t326toc/t326toc.html>