1. Are persons practising Falun Gong exercises in their home likely to be detained by the police?

Reports from Falun Gong and an independent source indicate that people who practice Falun Gong in the privacy of their homes are at risk of arrest and detention. In 2002, Human Rights Watch noted that “[a]lthough followers presumably could continue with solitary practice at home, even private practice proved dangerous when it was brought to the attention of the police or to Party officials”.1 This statement was supported by a 2008 annual report by the Falun Dafa Information Centre that was cited in the 2009 UK Home Office Country Information Report for China. The report claimed that “most” of the “thousands of adherents” who were detained in 2008 were “arrested on the basis of their being known to the authorities as Falun Gong adherents, even if this identity consisted of studying Falun Gong tenets and practicing its meditation exercises in the privacy of their homes”.2 Reportedly, many of these practitioners were arrested after door-to-door searches by security agents revealed Falun Gong materials in their homes.3

The question, then, is how members who practice in private become known to authorities. Many are likely to be known to police already as a result of being detained on previous occasions: in reports of arrests on Falun Gong websites, those arrested are often reported as having been detained before.4 In a high-profile example from 2009 that was included in the US Human Rights Report, a retired professor who was arrested in his home and sentenced to seven years in prison for possession of Falun Gong literature had been held in administrative detention from 2001-2004.5 As noted in Research Response CHN36203 of March 2010, practitioners who are released from prison or detention may continue to be monitored by police.6

It is also possible to come to the attention of authorities through informers. A Falun Gong spokesperson contacted by the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board commented that

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1 Human Rights Watch 2002, Dangerous Meditation: China’s Campaign Against Falungong, January, p 40 – Attachment 1.
2 UK Home Office 2009, China Country Assessment, 1 October, p 91 – Attachment 2.
3 UK Home Office 2009, China Country Assessment, 1 October, p 91 – Attachment 2. Further Falun Gong sources on the possibility of practicing in private are cited in this report.
6 RRT Research & Information 2010, Research Response CHN36203, 5 March – Attachment 8. Please see question 2, section ‘Treatment following release’.
“concealing one’s beliefs and daily practice from relatives or neighbours is difficult”;\(^7\) and other reports indicate there may be incentives for reporting Falun Gong members. The 2009 Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom stated that “[p]rovincial officials reportedly offer sizable rewards to anyone who provides information leading to the arrest of a Falun Gong practitioner”.\(^8\) Similar claims were made by Falun Gong websites: for example, a Clearwisdom.net entry reported that public notices had been posted offering 5,000-10,000 Yuan (approximately 810-1619 AUD) for each practitioner exposed.\(^9\)

2. What are the processes followed for arresting a person involved in Falun Gong? What are they charged with and under what regulations are they required to make a court appearance?

Arrests

The processes followed for arresting a person involved in Falun Gong are the same as those for other persons suspected of committing a crime and are set out in Articles 59-79 of the Criminal Procedure Law of the People’s Republic of China (the Criminal Procedure Law).\(^10\) It is worth noting at the outset that public security officials do not always adhere to the timeframes set out in the Criminal Procedure Law.\(^11\) In addition, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has advised that:

As a general point, we would note that China is still far from complying with rule of law standards. Chinese local authorities sometimes detain people or otherwise subject them to punitive measures in a way which is not in accordance with Chinese laws.\(^12\)

Under the Criminal Procedure Law, police may “initially detain” a suspect under the following conditions:

(1) if he is preparing to commit a crime, is in the process of committing a crime or is discovered immediately after committing a crime;
(2) if he is identified as having committed a crime by a victim or an eyewitness;
(3) if criminal evidence is found on his body or at his residence;
(4) if he attempts to commit suicide or escape after committing a crime, or he is a fugitive;
(5) if there is likelihood of his destroying or falsifying evidence or tallying confessions;
(6) if he does not tell his true name and address and his identity is unknown; and
(7) if he is strongly suspected of committing crimes from one place to another, repeatedly, or in a gang.\(^13\)

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\(^12\) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, *DFAT Report 612*, 16 March – Attachment 13.

The law requires police to produce a detention warrant when the suspect is detained and to notify a person’s family “within 24 hours” of the detention (Article 64). The law also stipulates that the suspect should be interrogated within 24 hours of being detained, and, if it is found that a person should not have been detained, s/he should be released (Article 65). However, police can hold persons for up to 37 days before releasing them or placing them under formal arrest (Article 69).

A formal arrest is only required if a Falun Gong practitioner’s case is to be processed under criminal regulations; the majority of Falun Gong members detained by police are punished administratively (discussed in the next section). If police proceed with a formal arrest, they are required to produce an arrest warrant (Article 71). Once again, the law states that the suspect’s family should be notified regarding the reason for the arrest and the “place of custody” within 24 hours of its occurrence, and the suspect should also be interrogated within 24 hours (Articles 71 and 72). The law allows for persons who have been formally arrested to be detained for extended periods, as noted by the US State Department:

After a suspect is arrested, the law allows police and prosecutors to detain a person for up to seven months while public security organs further investigate the case. Another 45 days of detention are allowed where public security organs refer a case to the procuratorate to decide whether to file charges. If charges are filed, authorities can detain a suspect for an additional 45 day period between filing and trial.

Charges are discussed in the section following “Administrative Punishment” (below), and would only apply if a Falun Gong practitioner were to have his or her case processed through the criminal court system.

**Administrative punishment**

As noted, most Falun Gong practitioners are punished administratively, with judicial sentencing typically reserved for core leaders and organisers and “largescale publishers and distributors”. A person practicing Falun Gong quietly at home who was only being detained for the first time would be more likely to be dealt with under extra-judicial administrative regulations: in this case, the *Law of the People’s Republic of China on...*
Penalties for Administration of Public Security Law (Administration of Public Security Law), which is administered by departments of public security (police).21

Article 2 of the Administration of Public Security Law clarifies that criminal acts that are “not serious enough for criminal punishment” shall incur an administrative penalty, of which there are four types (Article 10):

(1) warning;
(2) fine;
(3) administrative detention; and
(4) revocation of licenses issued by public security organs.22

Under the law, the severity of the penalty should reflect the “nature and circumstances of the act committed and the extent of harm done to the society” (Article 5).23 Many Falun Gong practitioners are sentenced to administrative detention (including re-education through labour (RTL) camps),24 but Falun Gong sources have also reported that members have been let off with warnings or fines.25 In the case of administrative detention, “non-judicial panels” can “sentence persons without trial” to up to three years in detention;26 Dr Benjamin Penny, a Falun Gong expert at the Australian National University, has said that Falun Gong practitioners sentenced to this punishment might spend “a period in a local police lock-up or equivalent” before going “almost certainly, to a re-education through labour camp.”27 Research Response CHN35436 of September 2009 provides general information on administrative detention.28

Charges

Falun Gong practitioners who are sentenced through the criminal court system may be charged with a range of offences under the Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China (the Criminal Law). According to Human Rights Watch, Falun Gong members “have been prosecuted under Criminal Law provisions relating to public order, health, fraud, assembly, organizing and utilizing cults, and ‘fabricating and disseminating superstitious fallacies to hoodwink people’”.29 In 2009 the US State Department reported that while some followers “were sentenced to prison for the crime of ‘endangering state security’”, the “great majority of Falun Gong members convicted by the courts since 1999 were sentenced to prison for ‘organizing or using a sect to undermine the implementation of the law,’ a less serious offence”.30 While practitioners may be prosecuted under various

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sections of the criminal code. Article 300, regarding “cult groups”, is the primary legal instrument against Falun Gong.\\(^{31}\)

Article 300 sets out penalties for “whoever organizes and utilizes superstitious sects, secret societies, and evil religious organizations or sabotages the implementation of the state’s laws and executive regulations by utilizing superstition”.\\(^{32}\) It also references Articles 236 and 266, which concern rape and fraud, respectively.\\(^{33}\) While Article 300 pre-dated the Chinese government’s ban on Falun Gong in 1999, its relevance was quickly established by the government through the provision of official guidance on applying the criminal law to “sects”.\\(^{34}\) This guidance included the October 1999 “Explanations…on Applying Specific Laws to Handle Cases of Organizing and Utilizing Heretical Sects to Commit Crimes” and a June 2001 document titled “Interpretation ‘II’…on Applying Specific Laws to Handle Cases of Organizing and Utilizing Heretical Sects to Commit Crimes”.\\(^{35}\) According to Human Rights Watch, the latter document in particular “attempted to make certain…that no Falungong activity…could escape punishment”.\\(^{36}\)

In addition to listing activities punishable under Article 300, Interpretation II sets out other articles in the criminal law that may apply to “sects” and says that:

if small assemblies of a banned sect’s members make trouble, Article 300 of the Criminal Law is applicable; if the assembly is violent, Article 277 is germane; when state secrets are breached, Articles 111, 282, and 398 are to be invoked.\\(^{37}\)

Article 277 sets out punishments for “[w]hoever uses violence or threat to obstruct state personnel from discharging their duties”.\\(^{38}\) Article 111 deals with “state secrets or intelligence”; Article 284 with illegal use of “special monitoring or photographing equipment” that “causes grave consequences”; and Article 398 concerns the disclosure of state secrets by government officials.\\(^{39}\)

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32 Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1 October 1997, [http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=topic&amp;docid=3ae6b5cd2&amp;skip=0&amp;tocid=4565c2252&amp;oid=4565c2f11&amp;querysi=China&amp;searchin=title&amp;display=50&amp;sort=date](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=topic&amp;docid=3ae6b5cd2&amp;skip=0&amp;tocid=4565c2252&amp;oid=4565c2f11&amp;querysi=China&amp;searchin=title&amp;display=50&amp;sort=date) – Accessed 22 February 2010 – Attachment 21.

33 Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1 October 1997, [http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=topic&amp;docid=3ae6b5cd2&amp;skip=0&amp;tocid=4565c2252&amp;oid=4565c2f11&amp;querysi=China&amp;searchin=title&amp;display=50&amp;sort=date](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=topic&amp;docid=3ae6b5cd2&amp;skip=0&amp;tocid=4565c2252&amp;oid=4565c2f11&amp;querysi=China&amp;searchin=title&amp;display=50&amp;sort=date) – Accessed 22 February 2010 – Attachment 21.


36 Human Rights Watch 2002, Dangerous Meditation: China’s Campaign Against Falungong, January, p 112 – Attachment 15


38 Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1 October 1997, [http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=topic&amp;docid=3ae6b5cd2&amp;skip=0&amp;tocid=4565c2252&amp;oid=4565c2f11&amp;querysi=China&amp;searchin=title&amp;display=50&amp;sort=date](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=topic&amp;docid=3ae6b5cd2&amp;skip=0&amp;tocid=4565c2252&amp;oid=4565c2f11&amp;querysi=China&amp;searchin=title&amp;display=50&amp;sort=date) – Accessed 22 February 2010 – Attachment 21.

39 Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1 October 1997, [http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=topic&amp;docid=3ae6b5cd2&amp;skip=0&amp;tocid=4565c2252&amp;oid=4565c2f11&amp;querysi=China&amp;searchin=title&amp;display=50&amp;sort=date](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=topic&amp;docid=3ae6b5cd2&amp;skip=0&amp;tocid=4565c2252&amp;oid=4565c2f11&amp;querysi=China&amp;searchin=title&amp;display=50&amp;sort=date) – Accessed 22 February 2010 – Attachment 21.
According to Human Rights Watch, other articles in the Criminal Law that may be used against Falun Gong members include 232 (murder), 234 (intentional injury of another), 290 (disturbance of public order), 293 (“provocative and disturbing behaviour”), 296 (holding an assembly without permission), 103 (undermining national unity), and 105 (subversion). The crime of “endangering state security” – noted as a charge brought against some Falun Gong members by the US State Department – is addressed under Article 56 of the criminal code. If a Falun Gong case were to proceed to trial, the defendant would appear in court in accordance with China’s Criminal Procedure Law.

3. Is it possible for a bribe to take place for the release of a Falun Gong practitioner and for charges to not be recorded?

While no independent reports were found of bribes being paid for the successful release and non-recording of charges against Falun Gong practitioners, on the basis of Falun Gong reports and wider information about corruption in China it is judged that this could occur, especially in the instance of a minor, first-time offender who was held for a short time.

The only reports found on Falun Gong practitioners released from detention after payment of a bribe were from Falun Gong sources. Two entries on the website Clearharmony.net said that practitioners were released following the payment of bribes or “fees” by family members. The individuals concerned were returned to detention after re-engaging in Falun Gong activity. An entry on Clearwisdom.net reported that several practitioners arrested by police were released after three to four days of detention once their families had paid money demanded by officials. These stories indicate that it may be possible for a Falun Gong member to be released from detention after payment of a bribe.

Information on corruption in China more broadly is also relevant. For example, there are reports that bribes have been paid for the release of prisoners in China. A human rights NGO report cited by the UK Home Office states “many prisoners are able to negotiate a reduction in their prison time by bribing the authorities”; the UK Home Office also quotes a Chinese newspaper article as saying that “jail keepers [have] illegally reduced prisoners penalties”. In addition, DFAT has also advised that “[c]orruption is endemic in

43 For a previous research report regarding Falun Gong members using bribery to obtain release, see question four of RRT Research & Information 2007, Research Response CHN32196, 29 August – Attachment 22.
the Chinese bureaucracy, in particular at lower levels such as provincial Public Security Bureaus”.

It would more than likely be easier to bribe a public security official for the release of a person who had been detained for a brief period than for the release of a prisoner. Falun Gong practitioners are often released from detention within two or three days and without being formally arrested, and even practitioners sentenced to administrative detention are not formally charged. DFAT advice is that persons who are “arrested and detained for a period but not subsequently prosecuted” would not be considered to have committed a criminal offence, and persons who have been in administrative detention – even for a long period – would also not have a criminal record. They would be likely to have a record of their detention placed on their personal file, however.

Attachments


2. UK Home Office 2009, China Country Assessment, 1 October.


8. RRT Research & Information 2010, Research Response CHN36203, 5 March.


22. RRT Research & Information 2007, Research Response CHN32196, 29 August.


