

Chinese government accused of performing illegal transplants

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News Writer

Concerned with allegations of organ harvesting in China, David Matas and David Kilgour, along with three other speakers, brought evidence and first-person accounts to the University of Alberta's International Week.

David Kilgour is a former MP and was Canada's Secretary of State for the Asia Pacific region from January 2002 to December 2003. David Matas is a Winnipeg lawyer who specializes in immigration, refugee and international human rights.

In July 2006, the two men released an independent report on the allegations of organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners in China. Founded in 1992, Falun Gong is often referred to as Chinese yoga and is based on a philosophy founded on three values: truthfulness, compassion and forbearance. Kilgour and Matas were asked by The Coalition to Investigate the Persecution of the Falun Gong in China, a NGO registered in Washington, DC with a branch in Ottawa, to investigate accusations that state institutions of the People's Republic of China were involved in the harvesting of organs from live Falun Gong advocates, killing them in the process.

According to the report, former Chinese president Jiang Zemin sought to eradicate all Falun Gong practitioners due to their perceived threat against the political hegemony of Chinese national identity in the late 1990s.

"[Falun Gong followers] were too numerous and their values were too out of synch with the values of the people running China," Kilgour explained.

Findings showed that after banning Falun Gong in 1999, an anti-Falun Gong force left 830 000 Falun Gong practitioners incarcerated. This included sending thousands of Falun Gong adherents to prisons and labour camps.

The report includes transcripts of phone conversations conducted with Chinese surgeons admitting to the use of organ harvesting from living Falun Gong practitioners. The report also contains a shocking interview with the ex-wife of a Chinese surgeon who admitted removing corneas of Falun Gong practitioners, until he too was targeted for knowing too much.

The Chinese government has adamantly denied the validity of the report. And in July 2006, Zhang Weidong, a spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Ottawa, denounced it as "biased and groundless" at a press conference.

But Winston Lui, (a Calgarian who escaped China two years ago and was



JENNY FROGNER

TO THE HEART OF THE ISSUE Lecturers say organs shouldn't be for sale.

imprisoned four times since 1999 for his affiliation with Falun Gong), disagrees. Lui says that after being subjected to brainwashing, he was psychologically tortured into denouncing his belief of Falun Gong in 2003.

"In fear for my life, I signed a statement against my will denouncing my beliefs," he said, explaining that his wife is currently serving a twelve-year sentence in Beijing after searching for Falun Gong material on the highly censored Internet in China.

"This market in China for organs is an international market. The supply is Chinese, the demand is international."

**DAVID MATAS,
HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER**

Mr E Zhang, an ex-Chinese citizen in attendance at the seminar, suggested that since there's no free press in China, state propaganda dominates opinions of the populace. He said that in 2000, China spent over US \$8 million working with Yahoo, Nortel and Google to install firewall systems promoting stringent Internet censorship.

Working as volunteers since May 2006, Matas and Kilgour's report concluded that there has been, and continues to be, organ seizures from unwilling Falun Gong practitioners. It goes on to state that since 1999, Zemin and his agencies have put to death a large but unknown number of Falun Gong prisoners by involuntarily seizing their vital organs.

Allegations of organ harvesting from Falun Gong adherents surfaced after the source of 41 500 transplants in

China between 2000–2005 remained unexplained. The report states that the number of executed prisoners, from which the government admits to performing live organ transplants, together with the number of known willing donors came nowhere close to the number of transplants that were performed. In fact, in 1998, the Orient Organ Transplant Centre website conducted only nine liver transplants compared to 2248 in 2005. In Canada, the total number of all organ transplants in 2004 was 1773.

"When you are dealing with the harvesting of organs in an operating room and the body is cremated afterwards, that evidence is non-existent because there are no witnesses, no autopsies, the perpetrators are licensed offenders, and the records are not made available to the public," Matas said.

"This market in China for organs is an international market. The supply is Chinese, the demand is international," Matas explained.

He said that Canada should legislate for specific ethical standards among the medical professions so that our health-care system doesn't cover post-surgery costs for local recipients of harvested organs. Another one of his suggestions was limiting transplant tourism by eliminating pharmaceutical commerce with organ-transplant hospitals in China. Matas also stressed the importance of informing the travelling public of the deadly risks involved with organ harvesting in the region.

Kilgour and Matas spoke of both political dissidents of the regime and concerned human rights advocates vanishing out of thin air and never being seen again.

In China, legislation made the practice of harvesting non-consenting donor organs illegal, but, since its passing on 1 July, 2006 the law has yet to be enforced.

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Deadline for applications is **12 pm (Noon) Friday, February 9, 2007**

For further information phone **492-7724** or email karla.barron@su.ualberta.ca.



CUT RATE ORGANS

According to Kilgour and Matas, the practice of illegal transplants yields huge profits. Their report outlined the following claims and listed prices per organ in US dollars at:

Kidney: \$62 000
Liver: \$98 000-130 000
Liver/Kidney: \$160-180 000
Kidney/Pancreas: \$150 000
Lung: \$150 000-170 000
Heart: \$130 000-160 000
Cornea: \$30 000

• Corruption is a major problem across China. State institutions are often run for the benefit of those in charge of

them, rather than for the benefit of the people.

- In China, organ transplanting is a very profitable business, but it's impossible to trace the money line.
- Besides Falun Gong, other prime targets of human rights violations are Tibetans, Christians, Uighurs, democracy activists and human rights defenders.
- In 2006, patients in need of liver transplants had to wait an average of two weeks in China, but the median waiting time for a kidney in Canada was 32.5 months in 2003.
- Sources of transplants are considered a national secret in China.

