



On July 20, 2017, members of the public gathered on the West Lawn of the Capitol building to commemorate the 18th anniversary of the persecution of Falun Gong. Falun Gong is an ancient meditation exercise centered on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. In 1999, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) mobilized to eradicate the practitioners of Falun Gong.

The continuing violent crackdown on people of faith in China, along with the advocates of freedom and human rights, is the leading issue in China today.

*Friends of Falun Gong* Executive Director Alan Adler addressed the attendees, which included Congress members and dignitaries from various fields.

*His speech is posted below:*

We gather here today for the 18th annual rally commemorating the Chinese communist regime's widespread persecution campaign against practitioners of Falun Gong.

The progress toward ending the persecution seems to be gaining momentum. Since we last met on this lawn one year ago, state governments have taken real and concrete steps against forced organ harvesting and transplant tourism. Prisoners in forced labor systems in China have snuck out notes to inform the public about their horrid conditions. China's own leaders are running out of excuses for the persecution and organ harvesting.

Meanwhile, the regime that carries out the brutal persecution is crumbling. 279 million Chinese have voluntarily left the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliates, and more announce their resignations every day.

*Friends of Falun Gong* care about Falun Gong practitioners freedom of belief not only because they are innocent and productive members of society whose basic freedoms should be protected, but because Falun Gong practitioners represent a baseline of human rights in China, one of our largest trading partners and the country housing 1/5 of the world's population. It is too big to be ignored.

We know that human rights in China, already dire since the Chinese Communist Party seized power in 1949, have deteriorated since the persecution began in 1999. Not only for Falun Gong but for a number of groups, and the general population.

*The Congressional-Executive Commission On China* Political Prisoner Database lists hundreds of names of Uighurs, Tibetans, democracy activists, and legal activists. We have seen reports of Uighurs and Tibetans becoming victims of organ harvesting. Nigerians worry for their expats in China because they too have fallen prey to the same. The CCP has sharpened its weapons of oppression upon the backs of Falun Gong and are ruthlessly applying them on groups that either don't share its ideology, or could be easily exploited.

### **Not legitimate government**

Only if the CCP is forced by the international community to reckon with its crimes, can we make real strides. This requires American politicians and the international community to dispense with any notions that the CCP is a legitimate government.

Thanks to the increased pressure on China by the administration, it is no longer a faraway dream to see the end of this tyranny in our lifetimes.

While we fight this war of good versus evil across the ocean, let us not forget the dangers upon our own shores. Next weekend, thousands of Los Angeles residents could have been hearing the message of musicians, advocating for Chinese human rights. But the concert, called *Blacklisted*, was forced by a local community representative aligned with the Chinese consulate to move to an alternate venue. Because of this it was ultimately canceled.

This story has played out repeatedly across the country: American citizens trying to raise awareness and speak for the less fortunate are blocked by the Chinese regime and its affiliates. Even on American soil, many find that they are not free to champion liberty.

In San Francisco and other cities, Falun Gong practitioners are barred from participating in public holiday parades based on their faith. In Flushing, New York, Falun Gong practitioners were beaten on public streets for raising awareness to the Chinese community, and yet the local councilman denied the fact of foreign influence at work.

We must work to protect our institutions so that we may better defend American principles and freedoms.

## Communist Regime Must be Held to Account for Crimes

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On behalf of all of the *Friends of Falun Gong* nationwide, I would like to end with a sincere thank you to all those who speak out against this egregious persecution. Together, we can end these injustices at home and abroad in a way that Americans can be proud of.