

Falun Gong tour aims to shed light on persecution by Chinese government

ALI RAZA

aliraza@yrmg.com

Emily Huang says she was beaten and tortured in a detention camp in Hangzhou, China in 2001, for one reason: she was a Falun Gong practitioner.

Falun Gong is a Chinese spiritual practice that uses meditation and traditional Qigong exercises stemming from Buddhist and Taoist traditions. It was founded in 1992 by Li Hongzhi, and though difficult to confirm, its practitioners claim it has a membership of 100 million.

Since 1999 however, practitioners have been persecuted by the Chinese government, initiated by former president Jiang Zemin.

The Sun-Tribune met Emily Huang and other volunteers outside of Whitchurch-Stouffville town hall on Wednesday, Sept. 28 as part of their Falun Gong car tour across Canada to raise awareness of the continued persecution of Falun Gong practitioners.

"I was a victim; I was arrested four times, and three times put in the detention centre," Huang said. "I was forced to do hard labour. They made us work 15 to 16 hours a day. If we couldn't finish the tasks, we received severe punishment."

Huang explained that she did not want to give up her Falun Gong belief, despite persecution. She said she was beaten, tortured, had her arm broken and was handcuffed for eight days and eight nights.

Though she managed to flee and arrive in Canada in 2008, two of her friends were "tortured to death", one in 2008 and another in 2009, she said.

"They tortured him for almost nine years and he died in the labour camp, it's terrible," she said about one of her friends.

Another volunteer, Diana Ding, gave more details about the car tour, taking place across Canada with one group in Atlantic Canada, three in Ontario, one in the prairies and one in British Columbia.

"We have visited more than 300 cities and towns," Ding said. "Covered more than 300,000 kilometres since we started in July this year."

Ding says in addition to arbitrary arrests, torture and imprisonment, Falun Gong practitioners are having their organs harvested by the government. She cites a report from June 2016 authored by international human rights lawyer David Mates, former Canadian Secretary of State David Kilgour and investigative



Steve Somerville/Metroland

Diana Ding (left) and Emily Huang (right) explain the details of their car tour and their experiences to the Sun-Tribune outside of Whitchurch-Stouffville town hall Sept. 28.

journalist Ethan Gutmann.

Key findings in the report detail a rise of organ transplants concurrent with Falun Gong arrests since 2000.

When asked why she thinks the Chinese government is persecuting Falun Gong practitioners, Ding suggested the spiritual practice poses a threat to the Chinese Communist Party.

"I think (they don't like it) because the popularity of Falun Gong is so great," she said. "So they are scared and the numbers of the Communist Party members will be less than Falun Gong practitioners."

The Chinese Communist Party has approximately 89 million members, if Falun Gong numbers are accurate; they closely match the party's membership.

"The aim of this car tour is to raise awareness for this new report on organ harvesting," Ding said. "Not many people know the truth. We hope first to let everybody know what happened and continues to happen in China, it's been 17 years."

Ding says according to investigators 60,000 to 100,000 people are killed each year so their organs can be sold for profit. Many of those killed are Falun Gong practitioners.

Huang said while in detention, she received physical tests determining the health of her organs.

When asked how demonstrating outside of Whitchurch-Stouffville town hall would yield the results they wish, Ding replied that the first step in their campaign is to raise awareness.

"The second step is to gather support and help from the governments, the media, MPs, to give China pressure to stop the persecution of Falun Gong," she explained. "Finally, we hope to bring Jiang Zemin to justice in an international court."

Ding is optimistic that the car tour will yield some progress. She cites resolution 343 passed by the U.S. House of Representatives condemning organ harvesting. In 2013, the European Parliament passed a similar resolution, and the Canadian government passed a sub-resolution also condemning organ harvesting.

The car tour had its last stop in Newmarket on Thursday, Sept. 29. The tour was active from July to September, self-funded by volunteers. Huang says over 110 media organizations across Canada have interviewed Falun Gong tour members.

Paul J. Crowe, Barrister & Solicitor



See Paul J. Crowe for Friendly, Experienced Legal Services

- Real Estate • Wills
- Powers of Attorney
- Estates

86 Ringwood Drive Unit 28,
Stouffville, ON L4A 1C3
Phone: 905-640-8100
paul@pauljcrowe.com
www.pauljcrowe.com

Water Depot
WATER AT ITS BEST

Proud Members of
CWQA

We beat the competition every time!

- Water U-Fill Centre
- Water Softeners
- Iron & Sulphur Filters
- UV Disinfection
- Reverse Osmosis
- Traeger Wood Pellet Grills
- Fresh Air Purifiers

18L FILL for \$0.99
U-FILL WATER
with this ad

Expires October 31st, 2016

We service all makes & models of Water treatment equipment

Water Depot Stouffville - (905) 640-7337
5946 Main Street • Stouffville • waterdepotstouffville.com

**Insuring You Against
the Unexpected**

WWW.MOLLERINSURANCE.COM

HOME ♦ AUTO ♦ BUSINESS ♦ LIFE



**MOLLER
INSURANCE
LTD.**

Or call us for a quote today!
905-642-2745 | www.mollerinsurance.com