

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Congressional Hearing: The Global Gender-Based Violence Threat

2:30 pm – 4:30 pm, Wednesday, November 20, 2013
2175 Rayburn HOB, US Congress

Testimony submitted by

Ms. Ma, Chunmei, a Victimized Falun Gong Practitioner in Northeast China

My name is Chunmei Ma. I am a Falun Gong practitioner from the northeast region of China. I used to suffer from bronchitis, a bone spur in my upper spine, and various injuries arising from a car accident. Soon after taking up the practice of Falun Gong in July 1997, all of these ailments faded away. It felt like a new life had been granted to me, and I tried to show my gratitude by being a good person and living up to the standard of Falun Gong: to be truthful, compassionate, and tolerant. I had never been so happy.

On July 20, 1999, however, a dark cloud of suppression came to steal away my happiness, along with that of the millions of other Falun Gong practitioners who had similarly found fulfillment through the practice. Since that fateful day when the Chinese Communist Party began persecuting my beliefs, I have been arrested four times, sentenced to forced labor camps twice, and have been repeatedly tortured within inches of death.

At first, I trusted that the government would honor my constitutional rights. I went to Beijing to appeal to the central government, but I was arrested on Tiananmen Square. On November 16, 1999, I was taken to Heizuizi Women Forced Labor Camp in Changchun City, Jilin Province.

My detention at the camp began with being thrown, alone, into a damp, dimly lit cell for more than 20 days. Guards beat me, cursed at me, and threatened me on a regular basis. They deprived me of sleep for three days and nights. Sometimes, they would send in other prisoners to beat me up, and occasionally, they would shock me with electric batons.

One of the beatings stands out vividly in my mind. A guard named Wang Xiaolan (female) led the session. I was knocked to the ground, and while my hand was out for support, Wang kicked off my right thumbnail. The co-opted prisoners involved stuffed a dirty rag in my mouth to prevent me from making any noise. They tied my two thumbs with thin rope, cutting off the circulation, and slapped my face repeatedly with a bamboo board. I do not know how long it lasted.

After being removed from my solitary cell, I joined the main camp population in performing

were slave labor for 18 to 19 hours per day. We made sculptures of birds and fish, assembled children's books, toothpicks, chopsticks and other things that were to be exported. Our hands all bled, and when we went to the bathroom we never had time to wash our hands. The chopsticks were incredibly unsanitary, and I've seen the same packaging and style of the ones I worked on at Chinese restaurants in America.

At one point, I went on hunger strike and refused to do the slave labor. Guards then used an electric baton to shock my head. They tied me, spread eagle, to a metal bed and inserted a rubber tube up through my nose and into my stomach to force-feed me. To teach me a lesson, they removed and re-inserted the rubber tube continuously, which caused terrible pain.

From May to June in 2000, the 610 Office, a communist party-controlled organization that oversees the persecution of Falun Gong, demanded an increase in brainwashing efforts. They called for a 100% "forced transformation" rate among detained practitioners, which led to cruel mental and physical torture in the interrogation room. During one of these "transformation sessions," the guards shocked my neck and face with two electric batons. Burned and disoriented, they threw me to the ground, stomped on me, pulled my hair, punched and kicked me. It was extremely painful and terrifying. I felt so dizzy and that I threw up and eventually lost consciousness. The beating must have continued while I was out because I remember waking up with pain in different parts of my body. When I tried to stand up, they beat me again. Third Warden Fu Yufen (female) said to me, "You will not tell anyone about this. No one saw us beat you."

I was deprived of visitation from my family members. I was not given any change of clothes nor many opportunities to wash myself or my clothes. Lice and scabies made my entire body itchy and inflamed. Co-opted prisoners kept me under constant monitoring. Every aspect of life in the camp was torture, so one day I stood up in the dining hall and exposed these crimes to the 700 or 800 people there. A group of guards tackled me, covered my mouth, and dragged me away. The pain and fear were too much, and I began banging my head against the wall in order to knock myself out. They drug me up two flights of stairs and hung me up by handcuffs. After I regained consciousness, the guards cuffed me onto a metal bedframe spread eagle for three full days. I was provided no food or water.

On one occasion, a doctor with the surname Li and a guard named Sun Jia (female) locked me in a medical room. They talked outside for a while, then came in and said, "We are going to inject some glucose into you." I suddenly lost feeling throughout my body and my stomach had a burning sensation. One of them said, "Why isn't her body reacting? It seems it hasn't worked." I knew then that they had injected me with some kind of drug, so I refused to cooperate when they came again the next day.

Ever since that strange injection, my legs were swollen, and I could not walk. My feet were in extreme pain. The bottoms of my feet shed a thick layer of skin. The symptoms lasted about one month, and I was left very weak from the experience. Two days later, the guards took me to Jilin Provincial hospital ostensibly to check my blood, but they refused to let me see the results. Guards Sun Jia (female) and Jin Lihua (female) threatened to take me to a mental hospital if I did not cooperate. My husband had been told about the hospital trip and was waiting all day to see me. I was in such terrible condition that it brought him to tears.

I had a good family. My husband used to tell others proudly, “My wife has become a better person after she started practicing Falun Gong.” He told everyone he would wait for me, even if I was held for ten years. But after years of threats, lies, and pressure, he filed for divorce in 2003 while I was imprisoned.

I personally know more than 10 Falun Gong practitioners who were tortured to death. More are still missing. I was extremely fortunate to escape China and come to America in October 2006, and I now use all my energy to call on all kindhearted people around the world to help stop this brutal persecution.

My sister Chunling Ma also practices Falun Gong. She used to have a serious blood disease, but after she began to practice Falun Gong in 1995, her disease was cured. She and I used to love reading, exercising, and discussing with each other before the persecution. It’s been so long since we’ve seen each other, and last year she was sentenced to two years in Masanjia Labor Camp. I know the torture she suffers first-hand. She is there right now, and I want to ask all the kind-hearted American people: Please help to rescue my sister Chunling Ma. Thank you.