

# US Hits Second Communist Party Official With Sanctions Over Persecution of Falun Gong

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May 13, 2021



Secretary of State Antony Blinken attends his confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Capitol Hill January 19, 2021 in Washington, D.C. Blinken's State Department followed in Mike Pompeo's footsteps by openly sanctioning a Chinese Communist Party official for their role in the brutal, nearly 22-year-long persecution of Falun Gong. (Image: Graeme Jennings-Pool/Getty Images)

The U.S. State Department saddled a mid-level Chinese Communist Party (CCP) member in charge of persecuting spiritual groups with sanctions on May 12, barring the official and his family from entering the United States.

The announcement is noteworthy because the Party member is being openly punished by the Biden administration for his involvement in the notorious persecution of Falun Gong.

In a press statement released by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Yu Hui, former Office Director of a branch of the CCP organ tasked with persecuting Falun Gong the “Central Leading Group on Preventing and Dealing with Heretical Religions” in Chengdu, Sichuan Province was specifically targeted “for his involvement in gross violations of human rights, namely the arbitrary detention of Falun Gong practitioners for their spiritual beliefs.”

The Central Leading Group is a subsection of the notorious 610 Office established specifically to persecute the practice.

The persecution of Falun Gong is a substantially more sensitive topic for the CCP than either Taiwan independence or Hong Kong democracy, and can be considered the regime’s Achilles’ heel.

## **22 years of repression**

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Falun Gong, otherwise known as Falun Dafa, is a traditional qigong meditation practice based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance, which places a unique focus on introspection and improvement of character during daily living and social interaction.

The practice, first taught on May 13, 1992 by founder Li Hongzhi, garnered enormous popularity during the tail end of a qigong and meditation craze that was unique to China. The teaching’s principle values and its covenant that it always be free to learn brought 100 million members of the world’s largest population to count themselves among Falun Gong’s ranks by 1999, according to Chinese government surveys. However, at-the-time General Secretary of the CCP, Jiang Zemin, regarded Falun Gong’s popularity as a threat to his personal legacy and power, leading the Party boss to break ranks from fellow Politburo Standing Committee members who were otherwise unanimous in opposition to launching the campaign.

On July 20, 1999 Jiang used his power within the Party to mobilize China’s entire public security and propaganda apparatus to launch a nationwide campaign of brutality and slander against Falun Gong and its numerous followers, which has persisted to this day. Analysts believe Jiang has lurked in the shadows as a “Party Elder” since stepping down in 2003, controlling and manipulating those in the CCP loyal and betrothed to him in order to keep the persecution going and prevent his own arrest.

Neither of Jiang's successors, Hu Jintao or Xi Jinping, have been in favor of escalating or continuing the persecution.

The subject of the campaign against Falun Gong is, however, considered the foremost off limits area for any individual, corporation, or government who seeks to either conduct business in mainland China or have warm relations with the CCP because the persecution, involving live organ harvesting of practitioners for sale on the international black market, has been severe enough it would drive fervent international and domestic backlash that would lead to an immediate collapse of both Jiang and Xi's tenuous grips on power.

Sanctions against Communist Party officials specifically for the persecution of Falun Gong by the U.S. State Department has only happened one other time in the almost-22-years of the oppression. The previous was on Dec. 10, 2020 by the outgoing Trump administration when then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo placed sanctions on police official Huang Yuanxiong and his wife for their involvement in the crimes against humanity.

Yuan worked in the Wucun Village Public Security department of Xiamen City and was targeted for being "associated with particularly severe violations of religious freedom of Falun Gong practitioners, namely his involvement in the detention and interrogation of Falun Gong practitioners for practicing their beliefs," read the State Department's Press Release.

## **Pressure mounts in Hong Kong**

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The new round of sanctions come on the back of a vicious baseball bat attack against the President of the Hong Kong Falun Dafa Association and Epoch Times reporter Sarah Liang on May 11. Liang was ambushed outside her apartment by a man wielding a baseball bat, who struck her in the legs several times, leading to hospitalization for severe swelling and bruising.

Between April 20 and April 29, Ta Kung Pao, a propaganda newspaper which answers to Party officials in the mainland and distributes in Hong Kong published a series of articles both slandering Falun Gong and calling for it to be suppressed in the formerly-democratic city in the same way that it was in 1999 under Jiang.

During the period Ta Kung Pao published its attacks, Liang was twice publicly harassed by men suspected to be affiliated with Beijing, and once more on May 8 when an attempted assault was thwarted because the assailant dropped his weapon.

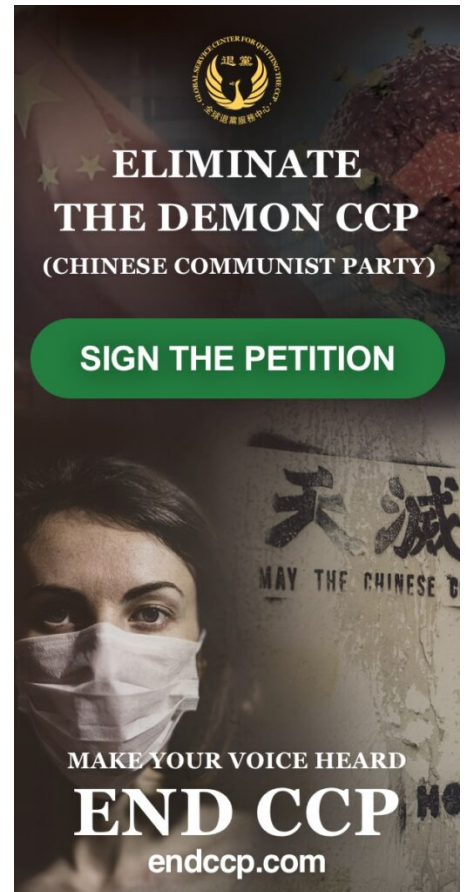
On May 11, a spokesperson for the State Department told the New York branch of The Epoch Times that the U.S. fully condemned the assault on its journalist, adding “attacks against journalists are unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. We urge the authorities to complete a full investigation of this incident as well as the recent attack on the Epoch Times’ Hong Kong printing facilities.”

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