

Call for EU to act on reports of forced organ harvesting in China

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News

Killing of vast numbers of prisoners of conscience for their organs is a 'crime against humanity', argue senior MEPs.



China accused of harvesting organs of prisoners of conscience | *Photo credit: Press Association*

The latest call comes in the wake of a damning new report by respected academics that claim China is continuing to illegally harvest organs from millions of its innocent prisoners despite saying it ended the practice two years ago.

Experts estimate that up to 100,000 organs are transplanted annually, and the majority of the hearts, livers and other organs are obtained by executing prisoners of conscience.

In all, approximately 1.5 million transplants have taken place at 712 liver and kidney transplant centres across China since 2000, with over 300,000 of those taking place at unregulated centres.

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At a recent hearing in the European Parliament on organ harvesting of prisoners of conscience, Canadian human rights attorney David Matas, US investigative journalist Ethan Gutmann and former Canadian Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific David Kilgour, presented the results of an updated new report on forced organ harvesting in China.

The 700-page report entitled, "Bloody Harvest/The Slaughter — An Update," is the result of meticulous examination of official Chinese sources such as the transplant programmes of hundreds of hospitals in China, websites, hospital newsletters, medical papers, doctor profiles, and more.

The number of transplants performed in China - estimated to be between 60,000 - 100,000 per year since 2000 - are far higher than can be explained by the Chinese authorities.

Speaking at the recent launch of the report at Brussels press club, Gutmann said that up to 1.5 million transplants have been carried out in China over the last 16 years.

Gutmann added that their investigation concluded that large numbers of prisoners of conscience, primarily practitioners of Falun Gong, a heavily persecuted spiritual practice, as well as Uighurs, Tibetans and Christians, have been used as a living organ bank.

Falun Gong supporters demonstrated outside parliament recently as part of its campaign urging the EU to press the Chinese to call a halt to the practice.

The report alleges that many surgeons had simply "lost count" of the quantity of transplants they had been asked to perform on a daily basis, with some having undertaken as many as six liver removals in one day. Organs are available on demand within weeks, days, or even hours.

The updated report follows the unanimous adoption by the United States Congress of a resolution expressing concern over persistent and credible reports of systematic, state-sanctioned organ harvesting from non-consenting prisoners of conscience in the People's Republic of China, including from large numbers of Falun Gong practitioners and members of other religious and ethnic minority groups.

Meanwhile, Twelve MEPs from five political groups and nine countries launched a written declaration earlier this year in April calling on the European Parliament to launch an independent investigation into the "persistent and credible" reports of "systematic, state-sanctioned" organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience in China. So far, more than 200 MEP colleagues have signed that declaration, including Michel, father of the current Belgian Prime Minister.

Michel, an ALDE member and former EU commissioner, says that due to the "severity" of the alleged abuse there is a "clear need" to organise an international investigation "without delay."

In 2014, China announced that it would end the harvesting of organs from executed prisoners and move to a voluntary donation-based system.

A spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry said, "I want to say that such stories about forced organ harvesting in China are imaginary and baseless — they don't have any factual foundation."

However, Michel and fellow MEPs Tunne Kelam and Tomáš Zdechovský told the Parliament Magazine that, "the evidence is compelling, and Europe must act."

The trio added, "The first task is to actually understand the scope of what has been taking place in China, something we can now begin to grapple with given the vast array of new evidence unearthed by the investigators.

"We, in the European Parliament need to organise further investigations, and push the current leaders in China, who have inherited this abusive system, to investigate the matter.

"The killing of vast numbers of prisoners of conscience so their organs can be sold is a crime against humanity.

"Europe needs to put this issue at the centre of our relationship with China and see that this crime is stopped and the perpetrators brought to justice before we can have a normal relationship with the country."

About the author

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