

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MS M MAN: My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, my name is Mary Man and I live in Kirkstall. The other members of the reputation are Shen Jingmin, Li Qiong, Alex Rostron and Chris Sugden.

On 31<sup>st</sup> May this year Amnesty International released an urgent call for action for China to release the two Falun Gong practitioners who are at risk of torture. What is Falun Gong and why have they been tortured?

Started in China in 1992, Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese meditation exercise based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. The number of Falun Gong practitioners in China was estimated to be between 70 to 100 million and because it became the largest and fastest growing group in China, in 1999 the persecution started. Ten years later separate courts in Spain and Argentina indicted Jiang Zemin, the then head of China, and several other Communist Party officials on the charge of torture and genocide for persecuting Falun Gong.

According to the US State Department report in 2008, Falun Gong practitioners constitute at least half of the inmates in China's vast labour camp system.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Detention stated in 2006 that 66% of the victim reports of torture and ill-treatment from China were Falun Gong practitioners.

A number of sources have reported that since 1999 the Chinese Communist regime has been illegally harvesting and selling organs from Falun Gong practitioners for profit.

Mr Edward McMillan-Scott, the Yorkshire and Humber MEP, said in an open letter in 2009, "One particular concern is that only Falun Gong – who neither smoke nor drink – are routinely blood tested and blood-pressure tested in prison; this is not for their wellbeing. They become the prime source for the People's Liberation Army's lucrative live organ transplant trade. More than 40,000 additional unexplained transplants have been recorded recently in China since 2001."

The persecution is nationwide. The Minghui website, which has first hand information from China, has published several cases which have connections with our twin city, Hangzhou.

(a) It is reported that as Mr Yu Shaoqi changed trains in Hangzhou railway station he was arrested because he was searched and found to have Falun Gong materials.

(b) It is reported in Hangzhou city that Mrs Wang Yizhi was locked by the guards in solitary confinement. After seven years of torture and mistreatment, she passed away.

(c) As we know, Hangzhou is famous for silky umbrellas. It is reported that Ms Huang Zhijiao was forced to be an unpaid slave labourer in Hangzhou detention centre. She said the toxic chemicals from the umbrella made her hand skin become very thin, painful and extremely itchy when touched. She worked 15 hours per day without a break. On average she had to make an umbrella in 18 minutes. This is an example of one of the umbrellas made in Hangzhou. It is exactly same brand, Paradise. It refers to biggest umbrella factory in China. (*Demonstrated*)

With the tight control on information in China, what we know about the persecution in Hangzhou is only the tip of the iceberg.

Chinese Falun Gong practitioners now living in Leeds were dismissed from their jobs in China and their relatives were sentenced to forced labour camps. They cannot go back to China now because of the danger of being persecuted and their families cannot come here either because they were refused a passport by the Chinese government.

Not only Chinese British, native Leeds citizen was violently treated and deported when he tried to peacefully protest in China.

The Council has a responsibility to uphold civil liberties and human rights. Thirteen years of persecution and it is still going on today. We hope you can make a proclamation to call to stop the persecution and follow other cities' example in naming a "Falun Dafa Day" in recognition of the courage and sacrifices of practitioners in China and abroad.

Please make the right choice.

By the way, it is not easy to explain Falun Gong in five minutes. We have other information on outside desk, so help yourself during the break. We also have a Truthfulness, Compassion, Tolerance art exhibition at the Corn Exchange.

THE LORD MAYOR: Would you make your final point now, please? The red light has come on.

MS M MAN: Thanks for listening. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you. I move that the matter be referred to the General Purposes Committee for consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) CARRIED. Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon.