



DEBATE PACK

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Forced organ removal in China

Westminster Hall
Tuesday 11 October 2016
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Debate initiated by Jim Shannon

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1. Background

In 2006, two prominent Canadians – David Kilgour, a former MP, and David Matas, a human rights lawyer – published a report for the ‘Coalition to Investigate the Persecution of the Falun Gong in China’, in which they gave credibility to claims that the Chinese authorities were harvesting organs from executed members of the group. At around the same time, the Chinese authorities acknowledged that they had been taking organs from executed prisoners but insisted it was only with their consent.

In the years since then, the Chinese authorities have announced steps to bring the practice to an end. The deadline eventually set for doing so was 1 January 2015. However, there continue to be allegations that the practice has not ended.

In June 2016 a report called “[Bloody harvest/the slaughter: an update](#)” was published by Kilgour, Matas and Ethan Gutmann, which takes this view.

Amongst those concerned that the practice may be continuing is the Conservative Human Rights Commission. It published a report in July 2016 on human rights in China, [The darkest moment: The crackdown on human rights in China 2013-16](#), which looked at the organ harvesting allegations.

Successive UK governments have expressed concerns about claims of organ harvesting. They have often done so in the context of the ongoing ‘UK-China Human Rights Dialogue’ and ‘UK-China Strategic Dialogue’.

2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of press articles relevant to this debate.

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Epoch Times

[A Day to Remember Victims of Organ Harvesting in China](#)

Frank Fang

3 October 2016

LifeNews.com

[China is Kidnapping People and Harvesting Their Organs While They are Still Alive](#)

Micaiah Bilger

22 September 2016

The Conversation

[Here's what Australia can do to help end the Chinese organ trade](#)

Wendy Rogers

9 August 2016

Parliament Magazine

[Call for EU to act on reports of forced organ harvesting in China](#)

Martin banks

25 July 2016

The Independent

[China carrying out over 60,000 illegal organ transplants annually, report finds](#)

Gabriel Samuels

29 June 2016

The Diplomat

[Organ Harvesting in China](#)

Benedict Rogers

29 June 2016

The Guardian

[UK should rethink China friendship over human rights, Tory group urges](#)

Tom Phillips

27 June 2016

Mail online

[Thousands of religious prisoners in China had their livers, kidneys and corneas ripped out while they were ALIVE to sell to 'transplant tourists', claims new film](#)

Imogen Calderwood

3 October 2015

3. PQs

China: Prisoners

27 Sep 2016 | HL1838

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to ways to prohibit British citizens from travelling to China for the purpose of obtaining an organ transplant until the practice of forced organ harvesting ceases.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I refer the noble Lord to the answer the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Hon. Friend the Member for Reading West (Mr Sharma) gave on 14 September in response to Written Question 45143 from the Hon. Member for Strangford (Mr Jim Shannon), copied below for ease of reference:

"As My Rt Hon. Friend, the former Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Hugo Swire, stated to the house on the 12 July 2016, we have raised concerns about reports of organ harvesting, as well as about the torture and mistreatment of detainees, during the annual UK-China human rights dialogue. We will do so again at the next round. My officials also raised the issue with their Chinese counterparts on 1 September 2016. However, despite the fact that UK physicians always advise patients against, it is very difficult to prevent UK citizens travelling to less well-regulated countries to seek an organ transplant. Although numbers are not known, it is thought that very few patients in the UK choose to do so."

China: Prisoners

27 Sep 2016 | HL1837

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to work with other countries to seek the establishment of an international commission of inquiry to investigate allegations of forced organ harvesting in China.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have no plans to seek the establishment of an International Commission of inquiry to investigate allegations of forced organ harvesting in China.

China: Prisoners**26 Sep 2016 | HL1816****Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the evidence of the practice of forced organ harvesting in China set out in the report published in June by David Kilgour, David Matas and Ethan Gutmann, and in the film *The Bleeding Edge*.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

As the former Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire) stated to the House of Commons on the 12 July 2016, we have raised concerns about reports of organ harvesting, as well as about the torture and mistreatment of detainees, during the annual UK-China human rights dialogue. We will do so again at the next round which is scheduled to take place in October. My officials most recently raised the issue with the Chinese authorities on 1 September 2016.

The Kilgour/Matas/Gutmann report is an important source of information about China's organ transplant system, which we take seriously, but we are unable to substantiate all the evidence presented in the report. We have not assessed any evidence from 'the Bleeding Edge', as we understand it to be a semi-fictional feature film. We encourage the Chinese authorities to provide more information about the sources of organs for transplant, and about the implementation of existing Chinese regulations in this area.

China: Human Rights**26 Sep 2016 | HL1811****Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the findings and recommendations in the report published in June by the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, *The Darkest Moment: The Crackdown on Human Rights in China 2013–2016*.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

My officials and I have read the report with interest. Although the Government was not asked to give evidence to it and the views stated within it do not reflect Government policy, there is much in the report with which we agree. We are already pursuing an approach consistent with many of the recommendations. For example my ministerial colleagues and I regularly raise concerns about the crackdown on human rights lawyers, repressive legislation, and challenges to freedom of religion or belief. Equally, there are parts of the report which require further investigation to substantiate the claims made, for instance about organ harvesting.

China: Organs

14 Sep 2016 | 45143

Asked by: Jim Shannon

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to the Chinese government on banning organ tourism to China.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

As My Rt Hon. Friend, the former Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Hugo Swire, stated to the house on the 12 July 2016, we have raised concerns about reports of organ harvesting, as well as about the torture and mistreatment of detainees, during the annual UK-China human rights dialogue. We will do so again at the next round. My officials also raised the issue with their Chinese counterparts on 1 September 2016.

However, despite the fact that UK physicians always advise patients against, it is very difficult to prevent UK citizens travelling to less well-regulated countries to seek an organ transplant. Although numbers are not known, it is thought that very few patients in the UK choose to do so.

China: Organs

26 Jul 2016 | 43036

Asked by: Jim Shannon

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to the UN on forced organ harvesting in China.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Government has no plans to make representations to the UN on organ harvesting in China. We pay close attention to the human rights situation in China, including allegations of organ harvesting and encourage China to implement its public commitment to stop the use of organs from prisoners. Our current assessment of the human rights situation in China can be found in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy.

China: Human Rights

25 Jul 2016 | 42896

Asked by: Steve McCabe

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2016 to Question 39875, when he plans to hold the next round of the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We continue to press the Chinese authorities for dates for the next round of the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue. We value the Dialogue

to raise the full range of our human rights concerns, but in its absence we raise individual cases of human rights abuse in other meetings. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my noble Friend, the Rt Hon. the Baroness of Anelay of St Johns raised the importance of the Dialogue and two individual cases of concern relating to religious freedoms and minority rights with Fu Ying, chair of China's National People's Congress' Foreign Affairs on 7 July.

China

13 Jul 2016 | 42087

Asked by: Jim Shannon

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if the Government will commission an international and independent review of organ harvesting in China.

Answering member: Hugo Swire | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We currently have no plans to commission a review of organ harvesting in China.

Human Rights: China

12 Jul 2016 | 613 cc150-1

Asked by: Mary Glindon

Can the Minister tell us exactly what action he is taking to question the Chinese Government about their brutal persecution of those who peacefully practise Falun Gong, particularly in relation to the live harvesting of organs?

Answered by: Hugo Swire | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have raised concerns about reports of organ harvesting, as well as about the torture and mistreatment of detainees, during the annual UK human rights dialogue. We will continue to do that at the next round. Equally, we pay close attention to the human rights situation in China and we remain extremely concerned about restrictions placed on freedom of religion or belief of any kind, including Falun Gong practitioners.

China: Prisoners

17 Jun 2016 | 39875

Asked by: Steve McCabe

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2016 to Question 29803, what representations his Department made to the government of China at the annual UK-China Human Rights Dialogue held in April on accusations of the harvesting of organs in that country.

Answering member: Hugo Swire | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK-China Human Rights Dialogue is an important forum for us to raise the full range of our human rights concerns, including organ

harvesting, with the Chinese authorities. We were not able to hold the Dialogue in April as initially scheduled, but we aim to hold it soon. In the meantime, we continue to discuss human rights issues with the Chinese, most recently when the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), met the President of the Chinese Supreme People's Court, Zhou Qiang, on 9 June.

China: Political Prisoners

14 Mar 2016 | 29803

Asked by: Steve McCabe

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 July 2015 to Question 6494, whether he has made any representations to the government of China on accusations of the harvesting of organs in that country; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of legislation to prevent UK nationals from going to China for transplants.

Answering member: Hugo Swire | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

As I said in my reply to Question 6494, I remain concerned by reports of organ harvesting. We continue to raise this issue, and the full range of our human rights concerns, with the Chinese authorities at the annual UK-China Human Rights Dialogue. The next round of the Dialogue is scheduled to be held in the UK in April.

The Department of Health is making constant efforts to ensure that any British citizen requiring replacement organs is able to benefit from organ transplants in the UK. It is however very difficult to prevent UK citizens travelling to less well-regulated countries to seek an organ transplant, although physicians always advise patients against this. Although numbers are not known, it is thought that very few patients in the UK choose to do so.

Tibet

24 Nov 2015 | 602 c1174

Asked by: Tom Brake

The Minister will recall that in an exchange on 22 October he confirmed that China is ready to co-operate with the UK and other countries in the area of human rights.

Were matters such as Tibet and the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, the alleged forced harvesting of organs, and the harassment of Ai Weiwei discussed with the Chinese President when he visited the UK?

Answering member: Hugo Swire | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The right hon. Gentleman credits me with almost total recall, but our position has been consistent. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised the issues of Falun Gong and organ harvesting with State Councillor Yang Jiechi during the UK-China strategic dialogue in Beijing

in August. We have raised specific concerns about reports of organ harvesting on numerous occasions, including in response to a written question on 15 July.

China: Falun Gong

21 Jul 2015 | 7489

Asked by: Patrick Grady

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on (a) persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and (b) alleged harvesting of organs from Falun Gong prisoners in that country.

Answering member: Hugo Swire | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 15 July 2015 ([PQ 6494](#)).

China: Political Prisoners

15 Jul 2015 | 6494

Asked by: Sammy Wilson

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to the government of China on the alleged harvesting of organs from Falun Gong prisoners held in China.

Answering member: Hugo Swire | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I remain concerned by reports of organ harvesting, which we have raised on numerous occasions, including at the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue in April this year.

The Chinese government has repeatedly denied allegations that organs are forcibly removed from detainees. We are aware that organs removed from executed prisoners have been used for human transplantation purposes in China; Chinese law requires that prisoners give prior consent that their organs be used in this way.

We welcome steps taken by the Chinese government in recent years to improve the regulation of organ transplantation, for example the reports that suggest China would stop using organs harvested from executed prisoners from January of this year. Implementation of this policy is an important step.

4. Other Parliamentary material

4.1 Debates

China (Human Rights) [Extract]
22 October 2015 | Vol 600 cc1125-1134

[...]

Tom Brake: The Minister will have heard the Chinese President say:

“we have found a part of human rights development suited to China’s national conditions.”

Will the Minister explain what part of human rights development, if any, allows for the possible execution of Zhang Kai, the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, the alleged forced harvesting of organs and the harassment of Ai Weiwei? Why, at a time when the UK should be strengthening its commitment to human rights, does Sir Simon McDonald, the permanent secretary at the Foreign Office, say that human rights are no longer a priority for the UK Government?

Hugo Swire: Human rights are actually being brought into the mainstream work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, because we think they inform everything we do on a day-to-day basis. The right hon. Gentleman quoted part of what the President said and I shall just cite the last bit of it:

“China is ready to, on the basis of equality and mutual respect, increase exchanges and cooperation with the UK and other countries in the area of human rights.”

That seems to me to be very positive indeed.

4.2 Early Day Motions

China and organ harvesting
EDM 323 (session 2016-17)
13 July 2016
Jim Shannon

That this House expresses deep concern over forced organ harvesting being carried out in China; further expresses dismay at the ongoing persecution of Christians in China and that human rights are being denied in Tibet and Hong Kong; and calls on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to bring these matters to the attention of the Chinese government as soon as possible.

Organ harvesting in China
EDM 1167 (session 2015-16)
1 March 2016
Jim Shannon

That this House calls on the Chinese government to end organ harvesting from all prisoners as this practice contravenes world medical guidelines; calls on the Government to work on legislation so that UK individuals and organisations do not unknowingly consent to the crime of human harvesting; and calls for the release of all Falun Gong practitioners.

5. Further reading

Kilgour, Guttman and Matas, '[Bloody harvest/the slaughter: an update](#)', June 2016,

Allison et al, '[Historical development and current status of organ procurement from death-row prisoners in China](#)', *BMC Medical Ethics*, 3 December 2015

[The darkest moment: The crackdown on human rights in China 2013-16](#), *Conservative Party Human Rights Commission*, June 2016 (See pp46-50 for a useful overview of the organ harvesting allegations.

[New perspectives on China's transplant numbers: Unethical organ procurement from prisoners of conscience](#), *Doctors against Forced Organ Harvesting*, March 2016

[China - Country of Concern](#), *Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, 12 March 2015 (See 'death penalty' for reference to organ harvesting)

[2015 Concluding Observations on China](#) (paras 49-50), *UN Committee against Torture*, 3 February 2016

[The Bleeding Edge](#) (Film), Flying Cloud Productions, 2016

[Human Harvest](#) (Film), Flying Cloud Productions, 2014

[Stop Organ Harvesting in China](#) (Website)

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