

# **Chinese City With History of Committing Human Rights Abuses Becomes COVID-19 Hotspot**

*Commentary by Yuan Bin  
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At the start of the new year, a new wave of COVID-19 outbreak in China's northeastern Hebei Province unexpectedly made a little-known city the focal point of public opinion. Incidentally, this city has a very dark history, and this pandemic is an opportune time for reflection.

On Jan. 2, a case of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus, commonly known as the novel coronavirus and causes the COVID-19 disease, was confirmed in Xiaoguo Zhuang village, Gaocheng district, of Shijiazhuang city in Hebei.

In just a few days, the entire Gaocheng district was declared the number one high-risk area in the country. By Jan. 13, there were 463 confirmed cases in Hebei, with 195 asymptomatic infections still under observation, according to state-run media Xinhua. The vast majority of cases were

concentrated in Gaocheng. Suddenly, Gaocheng had jumped onto the world stage.

However, Gaocheng has a dark history that has gotten little public attention so far: it has been a major site where human rights abuses were committed against adherents of the spiritual practice Falun Gong.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is an ancient Chinese spiritual practice consisting of simple, slow-moving meditation exercises and teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. It grew in popularity during the 1990s, with 70 million to 100 million adherents in China by the end of the decade, according to official estimates at the time.

Feeling threatened by its popularity, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched a systematic elimination campaign in July 1999. Since then, millions have been detained inside prisons, labor camps, and other facilities, with hundreds of thousands tortured while incarcerated, according to the Falun Dafa Information Center.

Minghui.org, a U.S.-based website that tracks the persecution of Falun Gong in China, documented how authorities in Gaocheng followed orders from the highest level of the CCP leadership—former Party leader Jiang Zemin, who launched the persecution against Falun Gong.

On Feb. 1, 2005, Gaocheng's 610 Office issued a notice regarding the persecution of Falun Gong that was to be distributed to every town, district, and work unit in the city. The 610 Office is an extralegal agency created in 1999 with the sole purpose of persecuting Falun Gong. It has absolute power at each level of administration in the CCP and its influence trumps that of other political and judicial organizations.

The notice instructed all local authorities of the importance of reaching the following goals, called the “Three No’s: no going to Beijing to appeal; no local public gathering and protesting; no broadcasting by cable TV.”

“To Falun Gong practitioners, the ‘Three No’s’ mean the loss of freedom, harassment, fines, arrest and imprisonment, brainwashing, torture, being fired

from work, the loss of retirement salaries, the forced involvement of family members and the workplace, even death and the breaking apart of one's family," Minghui.org stated in a March 2005 report.

## **Victims of Abuse**

According to incomplete statistics, as many as 1,000 people practiced Falun Gong in Gaocheng around 1999, Minghui.org reported.

The following are some of the Falun Gong adherents who were persecuted by Chinese authorities in Gaocheng. The cases were documented by Minghui.org.

Li Chouren, a local farmer, and several other Falun Gong practitioners were abducted by police on Dec. 23, 2001 and taken to the Gaocheng Detention Center. In order to force Li to give up his faith, he was subjected to beatings, standing for long periods of time, sleep deprivation, being tied up in painful positions, forced to drink urine, and other painful and degrading mistreatment. Before releasing him, the detention center extorted over 1,500 yuan (about \$232) from his sister's family—a considerable

amount for the poor family. Li died of his torture inflicted injuries ten days later.

Wu Xiuqin practiced Falun Gong because it helped her regain her health. In 2001, authorities ransacked her home, kidnapped her, and sent her to a brainwashing center in Gaocheng where she was forced to give up her belief. Brainwashing generally consists of the victim being subjected to hours of slanderous propaganda, along with various kinds of torture. The goal is to have the person sign a statement that they will stop practicing Falun Gong. After her release, Wu continued to practice Falun Gong. However, she was kidnapped again on Nov. 3, 2003 for another round of brainwashing and abuse.

Lee Wensu was a teacher in Gaocheng and she started practicing Falun Gong because she had heard about the many health benefits people experienced. In 1999, the Gaocheng Bureau of Culture and Education ordered Lee's employer to fire her. Soon after, she was illegally detained four times, and the local security bureau extorted 6,000 yuan (about \$929). In addition, she was illegally detained at the

Shijiazhuang Labor Camp where she did forced labor for three years.

Lu Feng was also a teacher in Gaocheng. Local authorities ordered the school administrators to pressure him to give up his faith. Whenever a so-called “sensitive day” came around—such as July 20, which marked the beginning of the persecution of Falun Gong—the school would force him to write a “letter of guarantee” that he had given up the practice, or else he would lose his job.

Dong Cuifang was a 29-year-old graduate student who had attended Hebei Medical University. Since July 20, 1999, she was repeatedly harassed and threatened by local state security personnel because she had gone to Beijing to petition for Falun Gong. In early 2001, to evade being arrested, she decided to leave home and lived on the streets in the outskirts of Beijing. But in the spring of 2002, Dong was arrested while distributing pamphlets about Falun Gong. She was detained in Beijing Daxing Labor Camp where she was tortured to death on March 20, 2003. Her body showed numerous scars and a hole in her skull.

It's often said: "What goes around comes around," or "You reap what you sow." In China, people would say, "Good and evil have their consequences, retribution is sure to follow a crime, and if people don't do something about it, heaven will."

As of Feb. 21, Gaocheng and Shijiazhuang city remain under lockdown and many residents have been suffering and protested against the harsh lockdown measures.

While Gaocheng has been hit hard by the CCP virus and has been put under the national spotlight, perhaps it's time to expose the crimes committed against Falun Gong adherents in this city and for everyone to reflect upon the Chinese traditional belief that good and evil have their consequences.

*Yuan Bin is a freelance writer and independent scholar on contemporary China issues.*

*[https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinese-city-with-history-of-human-rights-abuses-becomes-covid-19-hotspot\\_3711054.html](https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinese-city-with-history-of-human-rights-abuses-becomes-covid-19-hotspot_3711054.html)*