



**Australian Government**  
**Refugee Review Tribunal**

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# Country Advice

## Hong Kong

Hong Kong – HKG35917 – Falun Gong  
03 February 2010

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**1. Please provide an update on Response CHN31727. In particular, are practitioners in Hong Kong still free to practise without persecution?**

There appears to have been little change in the situation of Falun Gong in Hong Kong since May 2007 *Research Response CHN31727*. Recent reports confirm that Falun Gong is still legal in Hong Kong. In July 2009 Freedom House reported that “Falun Gong followers remain free to practice in the territory despite facing repression on the mainland.”<sup>1</sup> In the *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*, the US State Department stated:

Members of Falun Gong are generally free to practice, organize, conduct nonviolent public demonstrations, and hold parades and distribute pamphlets. During the reporting period, Falun Gong maintained 12 regular information displays in high-traffic areas and regularly conducted public protests against the repression of fellow practitioners.<sup>2</sup>

Corroborating these reports are recent local and overseas news stories on Falun Gong protests and public demonstrations of belief in Hong Kong. For example:

- On 31 January 2010 *Agence France-Presse* reported that several hundred Falun Gong practitioners had marched through central Hong Kong to protest city immigration officials’ decision to deny visas to members of a Falun Gong-linked dance troupe from the US.<sup>3</sup>
- On 17 July 2009 *Radio TV Hong Kong Radio 3* reported that Falun Gong members had marched to government headquarters in Hong Kong and delivered a petition urging the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to end the persecution of Falun Gong.<sup>4</sup>
- On 1 July 2009 a *USA Today* article said Falun Gong protests were “routine” in Hong Kong. Journalist Paul Wiseman wrote: “Members of Falun Gong, whose activities are banned in China, are left alone by authorities here.”<sup>5</sup>
- On 25 April 2009 the *Associated Press* and *Reuters* reported that Falun Gong practitioners had demonstrated in Hong Kong to mark the tenth anniversary of the Falun Gong march on Beijing.<sup>6</sup> Reuters underlined the visibility of the protest: “Hundreds of yellow-shirted practitioners congregated in a downtown Hong Kong park, where they carried out group qigong, or breathing exercises”

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom House 2009, *Freedom in the World Country Report – Hong Kong 2009*, 17 July – Attachment 1.

<sup>2</sup> US Department of State 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 – China*, 26 October, Section “Hong Kong Report” – Attachment 2.

<sup>3</sup> “Falungong activists march through Hong Kong” 2010, *Agence France-Presse*, 31 January – Attachment 3.

<sup>4</sup> “Hong Kong Falun Gong protests 10 years of mainland ban” 2009, *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, source: *RTHK Radio 3 Hong Kong*, 17 July 2009 – Attachment 4.

<sup>5</sup> Wiseman, P 2009, “Hong Kong worlds apart from China”, *USA Today*, 1 July – Attachment 5.

<sup>6</sup> “Falun Gong in HK marks 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of protest” 2009, *Associated Press Newswires*, 25 April – Attachment 6; “Falun Gong stages anniversary protest in Hong Kong” 2009, *Reuters*, 25 April – Attachment 7.

before they “marched with drums and banners to demand that Beijing’s communist leaders end the crackdown against practitioners.”<sup>7</sup>

- On 22 April 2009 *Reuters* commented on Falun Gong activists “chant[ing] in front of graphic displays of human rights abuses at the Star Ferry pier in Hong Kong, as mainland Chinese tourists descend from buses” and stated that “Falun Gong members are largely tolerated” in Hong Kong.<sup>8</sup>

None of these stories reported that protesters were detained or harassed by authorities. In addition, no other independent reports were found to suggest that this occurred during the period May 2007 to the present.

Falun Gong sources (e.g., the *Epoch Times*, *Clearharmony.net*, *Clearwisdom.net*) also reported on the group’s Hong Kong activities in this timeframe. Examples from 2009 include:

- On 1 October 2009 Falun Gong-owned newspaper the *Epoch Times* reported that on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CCP Falun Gong practitioners undertook a protest march from Hong Kong’s Eastern District to the liaison office of the Chinese government in West District.<sup>9</sup>
- A 16 July 2009 *Clearharmony.net* entry reported on a Hong Kong Falun Gong rally and parade with the theme “Only with the Disintegration of the CCP can the Persecution be Stopped.” The entry said some 800 people participated in the parade, which included a large marching band.<sup>10</sup>
- A 30 May 2009 entry on *Clearwisdom.net* suggested that Hong Kong tourist sites were ideal for “clarifying the truth” of Falun Gong to visitors from the mainland. The author said that “History has left Hong Kong, which has a different political system from the rest of China, as a window for people from Mainland China to know the truth.”<sup>11</sup>

Even in the Falun Gong sources, no reports were found of serious mistreatment of practitioners in Hong Kong. Overall, the sources consulted suggest that Hong Kong members of Falun Gong practice and protest regularly and openly in Hong Kong without the threat of serious harm or mistreatment by authorities.

### **Allegations of obstruction and denial of entry of overseas practitioners**

However, Falun Gong has claimed that Hong Kong authorities have “obstructed” the group’s activities. In an article dated 22 April 2009, for example, *Reuters* quoted Falun Gong spokeswoman Sharon Xu commenting on the difficulty of finding conference venues.<sup>12</sup> A 11 July 2008 story in the *Epoch Times* reported allegations of local police interference with Falun Gong demonstrations conducted during a visit by China’s Vice President Xi Jinping.<sup>13</sup> Police reportedly deviated protesters from their course and

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<sup>7</sup> “Falun Gong stages anniversary protest in Hong Kong” 2009, *Reuters*, 25 April – Attachment 7.

<sup>8</sup> Hornby, L 2009, “Falun Gong fights on 10 years after Chinese ban”, *Reuters*, 22 April – Attachment 8.

<sup>9</sup> Yi, L 2009, “Hong Kong Parade Delivers a Different Message on Oct. 1”, *The Epoch Times*, 1 October Attachment 9.

<sup>10</sup> “Hong Kong: Rally Calls for Disintegration of CCP to Stop the Persecution” 2009, *Clearharmony.net*, 16 July – Attachment 10.

<sup>11</sup> “Step Forward from the Easy and Comfortable Environment and Go to Hong Kong to Clarify the Truth” 2009, *Clearwisdom.net*, 30 May – Attachment 11.

<sup>12</sup> Hornby, L 2009, “Falun Gong fights on 10 years after Chinese ban”, *Reuters*, 22 April – Attachment 8.

<sup>13</sup> Xu, Wei & Wu, Xue”er 2008, “Hong Kong Obstructs Falun Gong’s Protest”, *The Epoch Times*, 11 July – Attachment 12.

making them lower signs.<sup>14</sup> Other Falun Gong sources suggested that the situation for the movement in Hong had improved in recent years. For instance, a July 2009 *Clearwisdom.net* article quoted a Hong Kong member as saying that “Hong Kong practitioners were under comparatively greater pressure in the first few years since the persecution started... Now the situation is getting better and better.”<sup>15</sup> These remarks were echoed a day later by another spokesperson on ABC National Radio.<sup>16</sup>

No independent reports were found of interference by Hong Kong authorities in Falun Gong activities during the relevant period, with the exception of comments by China expert Willy Lam in an April 2009 BBC News story. Lam was reported as noting that “[e]ven in Hong Kong, where [Falun Gong] is legal, there have been several occasions when Falun Gong tried to hold meetings in public places but was stopped by the local government.”<sup>17</sup> The article continued:

But [Lam] says, unlike in mainland China, Falun Gong has never been able to come into mainstream Hong Kong society and is therefore “not a threat” to central government.

“In fact, the organisation has weakened and its numbers have gone down,” Mr Lam says.<sup>18</sup>

Falun Gong also accused the Hong Kong government of caving to CCP pressure in denying entry to external Falun Gong members on occasion. In 2009 Amnesty International reported that external Falun Gong members were barred from Hong Kong before the Olympic torch relay in May 2008 and before and during the Olympics.<sup>19</sup> Overseas practitioners were also prevented from entering Hong Kong in the lead-up to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its return to Chinese sovereignty in July 2007.<sup>20</sup> More recently, Hong Kong immigration denied visas for production members of a Falun Gong dance troupe from New York, prompting the group to cancel its late January 2010 performance tour.<sup>21</sup> *Clearwisdom.net* reported that Falun Gong members held a rally in front of the immigration department to protest the decision.<sup>22</sup>

## List of Attachments

1. Freedom House 2009, *Freedom in the World Country Report – Hong Kong 2009*, 17 July.
2. US Department of State 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 – China*, 26 October, Hong Kong Section.
3. “Falungong activists march through Hong Kong” 2010, *Agence France-Presse*, 31 January.

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<sup>14</sup> Xu, Wei & Wu, Xue'er 2008, “Hong Kong Obstructs Falun Gong’s Protest”, *The Epoch Times*, 11 July – Attachment 12.

<sup>15</sup> “Falun Gong Practitioners from Europe and Asia Participate in Grand March in Washington DC” 2009, *Clearwisdom.net*, 19 July – Attachment 13.

<sup>16</sup> “Falun gong marks a decade of repression” 2009, *ABC Radio Australia*, 20 July – Attachment 14.

<sup>17</sup> Pham, N 2009, “Falun Gong finds followers in Vietnam”, *BBC News*, 7 April – Attachment 15. Please note, Willy Lam is a senior fellow at Washington DC based think tank the Jamestown Foundation and has provided expert advice to CNN and other media providers. Willy Lam’s Jamestown profile is [here](#).

<sup>18</sup> Pham, N 2009, “Falun Gong finds followers in Vietnam”, *BBC News*, 7 April – Attachment 15.

<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report 2009 – China* – Attachment 16.

<sup>20</sup> Amnesty International 2008, *Amnesty International Annual Report 2008 – China* – Attachment 17.

<sup>21</sup> “Falungong says China blocked Hong Kong dance shows” 2010, *Agence France-Presse* 29 January – Attachment 18.

<sup>22</sup> Huirong, L 2010 “Hong Kong: Citizens Rally to Protest the CCP’s Interference with Shen Yun Performing Arts”, *Clearwisdom.net*, 28 January – Attachment 19.

- <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h72Tt7ksqZq9C19XvWNFDMH0KVA> - Accessed 1 February 2010.
4. “Hong Kong Falun Gong protests 10 years of mainland ban” 2009, *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, source: *RTHK Radio 3 Hong Kong*, 17 July 2009. (Factiva)
  5. Wiseman, P 2009, “Hong Kong worlds apart from China”, *USA Today*, 1 July. [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2009-06-30-hongkong\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2009-06-30-hongkong_N.htm) - Accessed 28 January 2010.
  6. “Falun Gong in HK marks 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of protest” 2009, *Associated Press Newswires*, 25 April. (Factiva)
  7. “Falun Gong stages anniversary protest in Hong Kong” 2009, *Reuters*, 25 April. <http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-39245320090425> - Accessed 28 January 2010.
  8. Hornby, L 2009, “Falun Gong fights on 10 years after Chinese ban”, *Reuters*, 22 April. <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE53M0HJ20090423> - Accessed 1 February 2010.
  9. Yi, L 2009, “Hong Kong Parade Delivers a Different Message on Oct. 1”, *The Epoch Times*, 1 October. <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/23292/> - Accessed 1 February 2010.
  10. “Hong Kong: Rally Calls for Disintegration of CCP to Stop the Persecution” 2009, *Clearharmony.net*, 16 July. <http://clearwisdom.net/html/articles/2009/7/16/109208.html> - Accessed 1 February 2010.
  11. “Step Forward from the Easy and Comfortable Environment and Go to Hong Kong to Clarify the Truth” 2009, *Clearwisdom.net*, 30 May. <http://clearwisdom.net/html/articles/2009/5/30/107852.html> - Accessed 1 February 2010.
  12. Xu Wei and Wu Xue'er 2008, “Hong Kong Obstructs Falun Gong's Protest”, *The Epoch Times*, 11 July. <http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/8-7-11/73283.html> - Accessed 28 January 2010.
  13. “Falun Gong Practitioners from Europe and Asia Participate in Grand March in Washington DC” 2009, *Clearwisdom.net*, 19 July. <http://clearwisdom.net/html/articles/2009/7/19/109303.html> - Accessed 1 February 2010.
  14. “Falun gong marks a decade of repression” 2009, *ABC Radio Australia*, 20 July. <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/connectasia/stories/200907/s2630615.htm> - Accessed 2 February 2010.
  15. Pham, N 2009, “Falun Gong finds followers in Vietnam”, *BBC News*, 7 April. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7987230.stm> - Accessed 29 January 2010.
  16. Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report 2009 – China*.
  17. Amnesty International 2008, *Amnesty International Annual Report 2008 – China*.

18. "Falungong says China blocked Hong Kong dance shows" 2010, *Agence France-Presse* 29 January.  
<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gdOG13x-7PFix3vvnvG32ndSwsI3Q> - Accessed 2 February 2010.
19. Huirong, L 2010, "Hong Kong: Citizens Rally to Protest the CCP's Interference with Shen Yun Performing Arts", *Clearwisdom.net*, 28 January.  
<http://clearwisdom.net/html/articles/2010/1/28/114199.html> - Accessed 1 February 2010.