

## **Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting In China: Witness Testimony**

Dear committee members of the Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting from Prisoners of Conscience in China,

My name is Matthew Robertson. I am currently Research Fellow in China Studies with the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. In January 2019 I will commence studies at the Australian National University pursuing a Ph.D. in political science on the topic of China's organ transplantation system. I am professionally proficient in written and spoken Mandarin Chinese.

I have been asked to submit testimony to the Tribunal as to my research on the issue, with a focus on the primary evidence I have examined and witnesses spoken to, etc. The following notes address this.

1. I have studied China's organ transplantation system since around 2013, when I was a journalist covering Chinese politics and domestic security issues;
2. Since 2016 I have further pursued the topic as a research fellow and scholar;
3. I have interviewed, interpreted for, or spoken to about half a dozen eyewitnesses, in person and on the telephone, about their experiences in Chinese prisons or detention centers being examined for what appeared to be the health of their organs, or being subjected to what they felt were suspicious blood tests or physical examinations in custody. Such cases included the close probing of abdominal organs by unidentified nursing staff using an ultrasound wand, or a case in which only the Falun Gong captives in a detention center in northeast China were called into a bus, which had pulled into the courtyard with doctors and nurses, and subjected to blood tests and abdominal examinations;
4. I have read hundreds of Chinese medical papers about organ transplantation, including on topics such as: the advancement of clinical techniques for organ extraction; internal debates about the ethics surrounding brain death; case reports of organ extraction and transplantation surgeries; post-operative studies; cohort studies; the development and consumption of immunosuppressants, etc. I possess a collection of dozens of Chinese textbooks and nursing and clinical handbooks on organ transplantation. I have collated and read reports by securities firms analyzing Chinese domestic pharmaceutical companies who manufacture immunosuppressant drugs, etc.;
5. My research is focused on primary Chinese-language sources, and where possible, is data-driven. I am in the process of collating and analyzing a number of databases on China's organ transplantation system, including: roughly 120,000 medical papers on organ transplantation scraped from Chinese academic databases; thousands of biographies of physicians involved in organ transplantation in China scraped from public data; thousands of Chinese patents related to organ transplantation; data from hundreds of Chinese hospital websites offering organ transplantation services, and more;
6. I am the lead author, with a statistician and transplant surgeon, of a study awaiting peer and legal review, which conducts a forensic statistical analysis of China's voluntary organ transplant data. The paper (when it is finally published) will be the first peer reviewed report to scrutinize and raise questions about the official data on China's voluntary organ

transplantation system. It uses data on voluntary donations myself and colleagues collected from the Red Cross offices of every province in China, as well as central data on voluntary donors in China, and submits them to analysis for statistical integrity. I am the second author of a scoping review, also awaiting publication after peer review, which examines the record of Western medical journals in publishing research from China that uses data obtained from unethically sourced organs;

7. I have read or am acquainted with a large portion of the secondary English-language academic literature on the death penalty in China, the anti-Falun Gong campaign, China's domestic security apparatus, medical ethics in China, the use of physicians in the abuses of human rights (as seen in psychiatric abuses perpetrated against political prisoners, for instance, or China's birth control policies), and practically all literature on China's organ transplantation system including the allegations of organ harvesting;
8. My Ph.D. and scholarly research is aimed at bringing the tools of mixed-method social science enquiry to bear on the complex question of China's organ transplantation system and the source of organs that have fueled its growth over the last two decades. The quantitative data I am using is in the form of the aforementioned databases, while qualitative data includes the forensic analysis of clinical papers, interviews with eyewitnesses and Chinese surgeons, the study of Chinese media reports, and so on. In the jargon of social science research design, my Ph.D. will consist of a case study using the tools of process tracing and data science to answer empirical questions about the dimensions and growth of China's organ transplantation system, and to evaluate the arguments about the source of organs China has used.

Some general findings I have observed from my research include:

1. China's organ transplantation industry embarked on a period of rapid development post-2000, including in the opening of new transplant wards, buildings, and research laboratories; many hospitals performed their first liver, heart, and lung transplants; thousands of new surgeons and nurses were trained and began publishing research; the state began subsidizing immunosuppressant research and manufacturing, and placed domestic immunosuppressants on health insurance subsidy lists; many new organ transplantation-related patents were registered and published; many more transplant-related medical papers were published;
2. I have observed from official Chinese organ registry documents and clinical papers that after the year 2000 there were numerous cases of transplants available on demand; coincident with this, I have observed that hospitals regularly reported being able to perform transplants within weeks; I have read transcripts, listened to audio recordings, and witnessed investigators calling Chinese hospitals eliciting such waiting times from doctors and nurses spoken to;
3. I have observed that the official explanation for organ sourcing in China has changed on several occasions. Prior to 2006 the official stance was that organs came from volunteers. In 2006 this shifted to all organs coming from death row prisoners. In 2015 it was claimed that only volunteers were used;

4. I have observed that human rights research organizations and scholars are of the view that the number of death penalty executions declined almost every year from 2000 onwards, a view also found in Chinese-language judicial sources;
5. I have observed that there was a widely observed and richly documented series of reforms to the review of death penalty cases in China, in which the Supreme People's Court recentralized review authority and beginning in January 1, 2007, subjected each death sentence to a process of review and approval. This led, according to Chinese and foreign academic sources, to a significant decline in death penalty executions;
6. I have observed that the growth trajectory of the transplantation system did not slow following this shift in death penalty volume and procedure — a change that one would expect to observe if the two were as tightly linked as claimed;
7. I have observed that the Chinese government has provided no adequate explanation for the source of organs through most of this period (2000-present) given these opposite trajectories in transplant system growth and availability of the primary source of organs claimed to supply it;
8. Generally, I have read widely in the Chinese transplant literature and am happy to answer questions on all of the above and related lines of enquiry.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Regards,

Matthew Robertson  
October 21, 2018

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