

ETAC QUESTION:

What proof is there that the Chinese authorities/Jiang Zemin etc consider Falun Gong as a 'religious' group - the subjective perception - evidence that shows that the perpetrators themselves view Falun Gong as a religious group?

We are aware that the word China uses for FG can be translated in a number of ways 'heretical religion' is one 'evil religion' is another then there is 'cult' etc. What is the authoritative translation?

Dr David Matas response:

This is the way Amnesty International deals with the question:

“The word “cult” has been frequently used in English to translate the label recently put by the Chinese government on the Falun Gong and other similar groups. However, this translation is misleading. The expression used in China for this purpose, “xiejiao zuzhi”, refers to a large variety of groups and has a far broader meaning than “cult”. “Xiejiao zuzhi” is the expression used in Chinese legislation, official statements and by the state media to refer to a wide range of sectarian and millenarian groups, or unorthodox religious or spiritual organizations, and other groups which do not meet official approval. Xiejiao zuzhi can be translated as “heretical organization”, or “evil”, “heterodox” or “weird religious organization”. The translation “weird religious organization”, for example, is used in one official translation of legislation published in the PRC. In this report we use the translation “heretical organization” to convey the meaning of the Chinese expression, though the word “cult” appears occasionally in the text when it is part of a quotation from a text or report available to us in English. It is worth noting that there is no precise legal definition for “heretical organization” in China. Furthermore, the government’s current crackdown on these groups raises the question of who is entitled to determine which group is “heretical”.”

See <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b83b6e00.html>

Clive Ansley (China Law Expert) response:

The CCP from the outset, in various commentaries, essentially seemed to consider FLG to be religious.

I also agree in the main with the AI explanation, but would refine it a bit.

You have also asked for comments on the proper translation of the actual Chinese term used in Article 300 of the Criminal Law. The objective meaning of the term is quite straight forward, and should cause little controversy. It’s probably easiest to break down the four syllables in “xiejiao zuzhi”. “zuzhi” simply means “organization”, so the key is to be found in “xiejiao”. “Xie” is the term variously interpreted as “unorthodox” or “heretical”. “jiao” in its basic meaning translates as “teach” or “teaching”. But it is used as part of the name for virtually all religions. Hence “Fojiao” for “Buddhism”, “Jidujiao” for Protestantism, “Tianjiao” for Catholicism, etc.

So I would argue that the correct translation for the entire four syllable expression is “unorthodox religious organization”.