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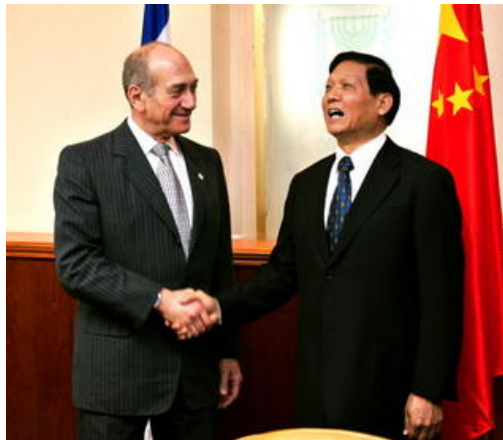
## Region

### Israel welcomes Chinese criminal against humanity

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TEL AVIV, Israel -- **On Monday, 61 years to the day when the first of the Nuremburg trials commenced to bring Nazi leaders to justice for crimes against humanity, a high-profile criminal against humanity, this time convicted in a US district court, entered Israel - and at the Israeli government's invitation.**

Liu Qi, former mayor of Beijing, member of the Chinese Communist Party's politburo, and chairman of the organizing committee of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, arrived in Israel on a four-day delegation visit, to meet with dignitaries including Ron Huldai, mayor of Tel Aviv, and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.



MEETING: Israeli PM Ehud Olmert (L) shakes hands with Chinese communist party politburo member and Beijing Olympics organising committee representative Liu Qi during their meeting in Jerusalem November 22. (REUTERS)

Convicted of torture and crimes against humanity by a northern Californian district court in December 2004, Liu Qi is said to have played a key role in the persecution, torture, and unfair imprisonment of up to tens of thousands of Chinese practitioners of the Falun Gong movement.

According to documents obtained by a number of Falun Gong groups worldwide, Liu Qi not only practiced, but openly boasted, a harsh policy of "zero tolerance" against China's numerous Falun Gong practitioners during his tenure as mayor of Beijing, a position he held until 2003.

Now, however, members of the Israeli Falun Dafa Association are taking advantage of Liu Qi's visit to Israel, by filing a criminal complaint in a bid to once again bring him to international justice.

During his sojourn in the state, they will thus be attempting to emulate the actions of the US Center for Justice and Accountability, whose complaint under the US Alien Tort Claims Act brought about the US court's original judgment against Liu Qi.

It is, however, questionable whether Israeli law will accommodate an attempt of this kind.

"This law," says Roy Bar Ilan, who is instrumental in the current bid to indict Liu Qi, "was enacted, for example, against Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi war criminal, who was tried in Israel. But this would be the first time international charges of crimes against humanity are charged in Israel against a non-Nazi."

The complaint, he added, was submitted to Israeli police on the afternoon of November 21, after which he expected Liu Qi to be presented with a subpoena. "My belief, though," admitted Bar Ilan, "is that he's going to flee. He has diplomatic immunity, so it would be impossible to keep him in the country."

The rise of Falun Gong in China, prompting the government to label the movement a "heretical organization," began in the early 1990s, and, though exact figures are hard to ascertain, adherents are thought to number in the hundreds of thousands. A system of belief and meditation, Bar Ilan explains that it is governed by what practitioners believe are the guiding principles of the universe: truth, compassion, and tolerance.

According to Amnesty International, the state-sanctioned Chinese newspaper *People's Daily*, in its 2000 New Year editorial, marked the "serious handling" of the "heretical organization Falun Gong" as one of the government's major achievements of the year before.

A testimony by Xiong Wei, Falun Gong practitioner and sister of an Israeli citizen, interned in a forced labor camp for two years, recounts seeing a fellow practitioner "hung up on a basketball frame," while police "used an electric cattle prod to shock her for an hour-and-a-half." Such testimonies are not rare, many detailing extensive abuse by police and labor camp authorities.

Several human rights organizations, however, along with a number of international Falun Gong centers, assert that torture, administrative detention without trial, and forced labor in camps are not the only crimes of which the Chinese administration is guilty. It is alleged that as many as 44,000 illegal organ transplants have been performed, using imprisoned Falun Gong as live donors.

"They are held alive," says Bar Ilan, "and used to find the right match for people needing transplants. One Chinese hospital advertises that it can find a match for you in less than a week. Then they take a Falun Gong and they kill him or her for you, for body parts."

According to Amnesty International, 2006 saw a revival in the crackdown on the Falun Gong; reports continue to surface of increasingly barbaric treatment, and of imprisoned practitioners simply disappearing completely.

In Israel, the arrival of Liu Qi is also being marked by Falun Gong devotees - who learned of the intended visit just days before the delegation's arrival - by a series of protests in Tel Aviv and outside the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem. They hope that their highlighting of the case will first serve to expose the Israeli government's decision to receive Liu Qi.

"For starters," says Bar Ilan, "I feel pretty awful that the prime minister and members of the Knesset are going to meet this man. All the members of the Israeli Knesset are fully aware of his conviction, but we have received no official word on the visit. Some local companies, though," he adds, "once they found out about his crimes, canceled their meetings with him."

Second, Bar Ilan hopes that the attempt to bring Liu Qi to justice in Israel will apply pressure on China's Communist Party, acting as a warning that crimes against humanity will not be ignored by the international community.

Many believe, however, that Liu Qi is not the only figure currently in Israel who should be held accountable for his actions under international law. Various worldwide bodies are seeking to indict Israeli public figures for their role in what they deem to be illegal persecution of the Palestinian population.

Most recently, in September 2005, former Israeli Defense Forces commander Doron Almog was forced to abandon a visit to the United Kingdom, when it came to light that he had been served with a subpoena by an English court for alleged Palestinian house demolitions in 2002.

In a country where, according to some commentators, human rights violations occur on a daily basis and pass unsanctioned, it would come as a bitter irony if a figure allegedly in breach of human rights overseas were brought to justice in Israel.