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Chinese organ harvesting victim woke up chained to bed with parts of liver and lung missing

Cheng Pei Ming tells of escape from hospital and how he fled from China's 'unbearable' torture

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The first known survivor of China’s forced organ harvesting campaign against religious prisoners said he was now ready to speak out and expose the “evil” of the Chinese Communist Party.

Cheng Pei Ming, 58, who will talk publicly for the first time in Washington on Friday, described how he still feels “extreme pain” 20 years after parts of his lung and liver were forcibly removed.



“I believed they would kill me. I’m not sure they thought I could survive, but I did,” Mr Cheng told The Telegraph as he took off his shirt to expose a scar that wraps around his chest all the way to his back.

Mr Cheng says he was detained and tortured for years by the Chinese state for practising Falun Gong, a spiritual movement founded in the early 1990s.

The movement swept across the country, but was outlawed in 1999 and then brutally suppressed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), who branded it an “evil cult” and a threat to the state.



Mr Cheng at a parade in New York on May 13 2022

Beijing has long viewed religious groups as a threat to social order and the party's ideological grip on power.

In the decades after the Falun Gong was banned and its followers persecuted, China's organ transplantation industry exploded. Vital organs became readily

available within a matter of days in state-run hospitals – a timeframe no national transplantation system elsewhere in the world has ever been able to achieve.

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In 2019, an independent tribunal in London ruled that the Chinese government continued to commit crimes against humanity by targeting minorities, including the Falun Gong movement, for organ harvesting.

The CCP has denied accusations of organ harvesting and repeatedly denied that Falun Gong practitioners have been killed for their organs.

But in 2021, UN human rights experts reported that along with Falung Gong practitioners, other minorities had been targeted, including Uyghurs, Tibetans, Muslims and Christians in detention in China.

Mr Cheng said he could not understand why they would crack down on a religion that promoted peace.

“Falun Gong teaches people to be good and to have compassion and empathy for all people. We mean no harm to society, the persecution against us should have never happened,” he said.



3D reconstruction of the CT scan depicting Mr Cheng's lungs

After 14 years of evading Chinese authorities, including five years in Thailand where he was granted UN refugee status, Mr Cheng reached the US in July 2020.

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Mr Cheng was first arrested in September 1999. He said he was tortured and told to give up his faith and that when he refused he was expelled along with his family from his home in the eastern province of Shandong.

In the years that followed, he was “kidnapped by the CCP” five times, each time suffering “unbearable” torture, he said.

“I remembered asking: ‘Why don’t you kill me instead?’ And they said: ‘It is too easy, we get great pleasure in torturing you,’” Mr Cheng said.

In 2002, he was sentenced to eight years in jail. He recalled seeing other Falun Gong inmates disappear. Some were sent to so-called ‘re-education’ labour camps; others were tortured to death.

In July 2004, Mr Cheng said he was dragged into a hospital where agents from the CCP’s infamous 610 office – dubbed “China’s gestapo” – tried to make him sign consent forms. When he refused, they knocked him down and put him to sleep.

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His family was told that he was undergoing surgery and had a 20 per cent chance of survival.



Mr Cheng was shackled to a bed in hospital

Mr Cheng woke up three days later, terrified, shackled to a bed, and with a 35cm incision across his chest. Transplant experts have since confirmed that scans show sections of Mr Cheng's liver and left lung were surgically removed.

Two years later, prison guards took him back to hospital. "There was no reason for them to operate, so I understood I would be killed. My family were told I had swallowed knives and wasn't likely to survive."

But an unexpected opportunity presented itself for escape. His guard had fallen asleep, so Mr Cheng made a run for it.

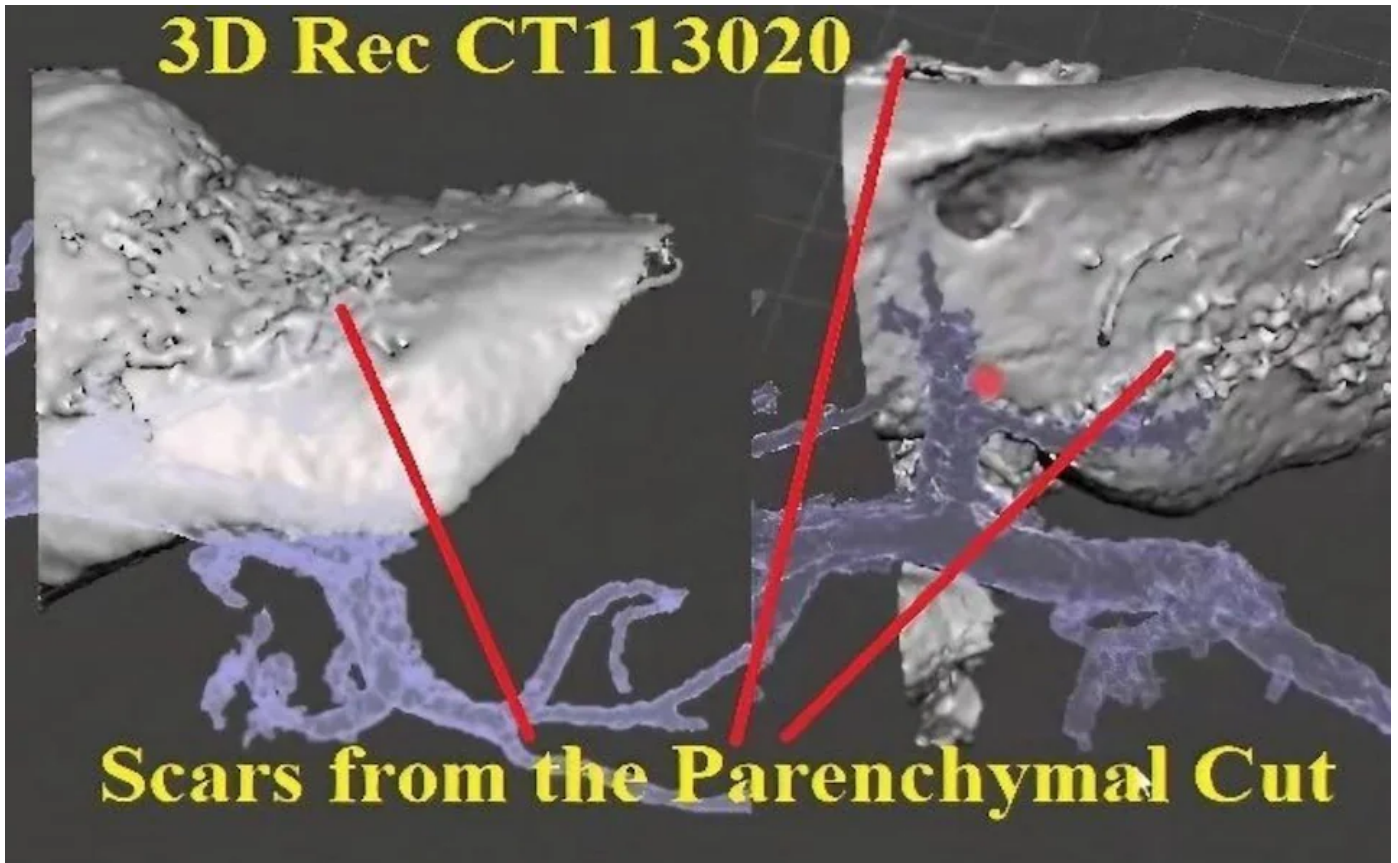
For nine years "I lived a life of escape and hiding under false names," he said, adding that the CCP "wanted to find men and kill me to cover up what they had done".

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He eventually escaped to Thailand where “I felt I could have been killed anytime,” Mr Cheng said. He only felt safe once he reached US soil in 2020.

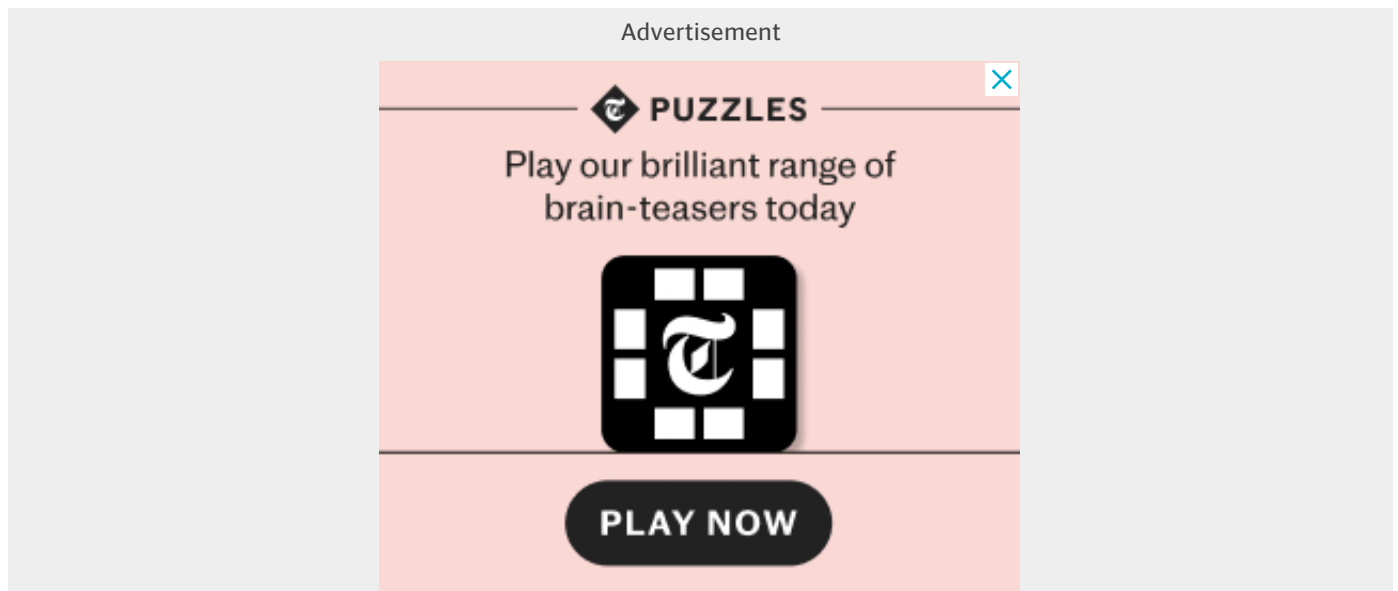


Scan of Mr Pei Ming's liver shows irregularities on both sides of the liver's left section

In June, the US House passed The Falun Gong Protection Act, which aims to force an end to the persecution of Falun Gong by the CCP as well as forced organ harvesting from apprehended practitioners of the faith.

Mr Cheng, whose family largely remains in China, still can't feel parts of his chest, and he struggles on a daily basis with shocks of pain that ripple through his body.

But he is now ready to tell his story. "I want the world to know how evil the CCP is. It does not only seek to harm people in China, but the world. I have to expose what has happened to the Falun Gong."



Dr Charles Lee, a leading advocate for the Falun Gong movement, who himself was arrested and tortured for his beliefs by the CCP in 2003, told The Telegraph that the importance of Mr Cheng's testimony cannot be overstated.

"We heard reports for decades about the extremely inhuman treatment Falun Gong faced, those that were tortured to death, their bodies cut open and organs missing. But now we have the first live witness."

He added: "This should be an alarm to people and governments around the world that the CCP does not care for human lives."

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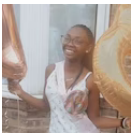
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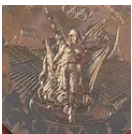
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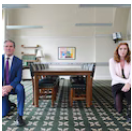
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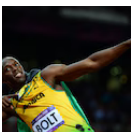
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