

WEEK 23, 2021

THE EPOCH TIMES

# CHINA INSIDER

## REMEMBERING JUNE 4

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## TECHNOLOGY

# News Break App Founded, Controlled, and Backed by Chinese Entities

HANNAH CAI &amp; JENNIFER ZENG

Connections between China and News Break, a top news aggregation app in the United States, have been exposed.

On May 23, the Boston-based The Wire China website published an in-depth investigation revealing News Break's deep ties with China.

News Break began in 2015, when Jeff Zheng founded Particle Media Inc. in Delaware.

Jeff Zheng is also the founder of Chinese news app Yidian Zixun.

Before the investigation was published, the Yidian's website listed the establishment of Particle Media as a milestone in the company's growth, with the following description:

"In April 2015, Yidian Zixun established Particle Media, an affiliate company in Silicon Valley, to launch its global strategic deployment, and the English version of Yidian Zixun, News Break, was recommended by the U.S. App store twice in a row and has become a popular news aggregation application in the United States."

**News Break is now 'The Nation's #1 Intelligent Local News App,' getting to the top spots on both Google Play and Apple Store, according to its website.**

However, the description was removed from Yidian's website after The Wire China published its investigation.

According to The Wire China, News Break said the statement on Yidian's website was inaccurate and that its legal department would send a letter asking that it be removed.

A search in Chinese for the description only led to "404" error messages, which means the articles have been removed.

However, articles on relatively smaller sites that mention Yidian Zixun establishing Particle Media in Silicon Valley can still be found. The Epoch Times investigated further into News Break's connection with the Chinese regime.

## News Break, Yidian Zixun, and Jeff Zheng

According to publicly available information, News Break is owned by Particle Media. It was established by Zheng in April 2015, and is the English version of Yidian Zixun, which was also founded by Jeff Zheng.

According to his LinkedIn page, Zheng obtained a doctorate degree in computer science at the University at Buffalo after he gained a master's in science degree at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. He gained his bachelor's of science degree from Tsinghua University in China.

He joined Yahoo in 2006 and became the founding head of Yahoo! Labs China in 2011.

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环球网



**45 MILLION**  
active users in  
**2020**

In 2013, he founded Yidian Zixun, which can be translated as "one byte of information," and served as company CEO.

### News Break and Phoenix TV

From October 2014 to December 2016, Phoenix New Media acquired a 44.2 percent stake in Particle Media, a portion with a fair value of \$135.3 million, reported one of China's major web portals, sina.com.

It later sold out part of its share, but still held 3.63 percent of Particle Media as of 2019.

Particle Media is also the parent company of Yidian Zixun, whose second-largest shareholder is Xiaomi, China's second-largest cell phone maker with military ties.

Phoenix New Media's parent company is Phoenix TV. Its CEO, Liu Shuang, was formerly the COO of Phoenix TV and a special assistant to Phoenix TV founder and former Chairman Liu Changle.

There is little information about Particle Media, especially on Chinese websites. However, The Epoch Times was able to locate a pdf file of Phoenix New Media's update on the sale of its shares in

Yidian Zixun.

According to this file, Particle Media was registered in the Cayman Islands on July 22, 2013, as an exempted company, and on July 30, 2013, one week after its registration, Particle (HK) Ltd. was registered in Hong Kong to complete the shareholding transaction between Particle Media and Phoenix New Media.

According to The Wire China, Zheng founded Particle Media Inc. in Delaware, with its company headquarters in Mountain View.

Zheng is also currently a shareholder of Yidian Zixun in Beijing.

News Break now denies having ties to Phoenix or Yidian Zixun, but acknowledges that its early backers were companies partially owned by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from at least 2015 to 2019.

Phoenix Satellite Television Holdings Limited was established on March 31, 1996, with headquarters in Hong Kong. It was initially a joint venture among Murdoch's News Group, Today's Asia Ltd. held by Liu Changle, and China Central TV (CCTV)'s subsidiary "China Wise International Limited."

At that time, News Group and Today's Asia both held 45 percent of Phoenix TV, while China Wise International held 10 percent. Liu Changle was appointed as the Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer.

Phoenix TV was the first overseas TV station to be legally allowed to broadcast in China. It was granted landing rights by the National Radio and Television Administration of China in 2003.

### Phoenix TV, Liu Changle, and the CCP

Phoenix TV has long since been known as a mouthpiece of the CCP. Its news reporting has always been consistent with the stance of the Party.

Liu once said, "CCTV is the big brother, we are the little brother."

A commentator told the Chinese edition of The Epoch Times in 2005, on condition of anonymity, that when entertaining his guests at a banquet in Shenzhen in 1998, Liu Changle said that the CCP's Ministry of State Security had given him \$2 million to set up a television station.

Born in Shanghai on Nov. 5, 1951, Liu moved to Beijing in 1953 with his father Liu Xiangyi, who was a senior CCP official. In 1964, he moved to Lanzhou and worked at the Lanzhou Pharmaceutical Factory after graduating from high school in 1970.

Six months later, he joined the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of the CCP, and served as an officer in the political propaganda department of PLA's 40th Group Army in Liaoning Province.

In 1980, he graduated from the Beijing Broadcasting Institute, which later became the Communication University of China.

Liu joined the Central People's Broadcasting Station—later translated as China National Radio—in 1983 and worked as a reporter, editor, and news commentator before being promoted to the rank of senior management, and was sent overseas by the CCP in 1988.

In June 2006, China Mobile Communications took a 19.9 percent stake in Phoenix TV, and Liu's Today's Asia became Phoenix's largest shareholder with a 37.54 percent stake.

Known as the "King of China Telecom," Jiang Mianheng, the eldest son of former CCP leader Jiang Zemin, has been the de facto controller of China Mobile.

After China Mobile's investment in Phoenix TV, Liu obtained absolute control over Phoenix TV.

Phoenix New Media called this acquisition a major breakthrough, which finally ended the dual leadership of Phoenix TV.

In 2009, Hong Kong pro-democracy activist Szeto Wah publicly pointed out that "not only is Phoenix TV a CCP-funded and controlled media, but the main people in charge also have a national security background. Since no one believes what Beijing's CCTV says, they are using Phoenix to suppress dissidents."

### Jeff Zheng and Yidian Zixun Help the CCP Control Internet Information

During his tenure as CEO of Yidian Zixun, Zheng brought in Phoenix New Media as a shareholder and quickly turned it into an official voice of the CCP. According to Sina, on Sept. 7, 2016, the CCP's Internet Information Office, which is in charge of controlling information on China's internet, brought the internet information offices of 31 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions onto Yidian Zixun's platform.

The article says this would turn Yidian Zixun into "an all-around publishing platform of the Internet Information Office focused on spreading the spirit of Xi Jinping's speeches and strategic ideas."

Yidian Zixun established in-depth partnerships with many local governments, including 116 new official media outlets in Xinjiang.

In addition, many government and

A screenshot of a Chinese article describing the relationship among Yidian Zixun, Particle Media, and News Break.

military departments; the Belt and Road Initiative; and more than 8,000 self-publishing media personnel, industry elites, celebrities, opinion leaders, and entertainment stars all set up accounts on Yidian Zixun's platform, creating huge attention and rapid growth for Yidian Zixun.

In 2017, Yidian Zixun became one of the top three apps in the personalized news industry classification.

### News Break Is the English Version of Yidian Zixun

The Phoenix website published an article titled "Yidian Zixun Enters the US, Founder Goes to Supervise the Battle" on April 30, 2015.

The article stated, "Recently, Yidian Zixun announced the latest progress of its internationalization strategy: the founder will go to the United States to supervise the English market, and has recruited more than a dozen senior engineers and scientists in Silicon Valley, and will launch the English version [of Yidian Zixun] at the end of the second quarter."

"According to an official statement by Yidian Zixun, the establishment of its U.S. company is a key step in the globalization of Yidian Zixun, which will use the world's first 'interest-based engine' to enter the U.S. market and take advantage of the founding team's resources and contacts in the United States to replicate Yidian Zixun's successful model and become a truly innovative Chinese Internet company with global technological influence."

At the end of 2015, the CCP proposed to construct a "one plus six plus N" model of international propaganda work.

On Feb. 17, 2016, Xi Jinping first proposed building a "flagship international communication media with Chinese characteristics." With the establishment of China Global Television Network (CGTN) in December 2016, it then became clear that the role of "one" should be filled by CGTN, "six" referred to the CCP's six major mouthpieces of People's Daily, Xinhua News, CCTV, China Radio International, China Daily, and China News Service, and "N" is for other English-language websites, platforms, and institutions that have the potential to "perform international communication functions" for the CCP, according to an article published in the Global Media Journal of Tsinghua University.

If measured using this model, News Break should fall into the "N" category.

### News Break Uses 'Interest-Based Engine' to Push News to 45 Million Americans

In a 2017 interview with Chinese media, Zheng said that News Break uses "recommendation plus search plus subscription plus intelligent interaction" to achieve its goal.

Content is recommended according to the user's browsing preferences, so that everybody is given different content. News Break gathers information from users' searches, subscriptions, and online interactions to recommend relevant channels and content for users to subscribe to. Zheng called this an "interest-based engine."

In Zheng's eyes, content demand can be divided into time-sensitive and non-time-sensitive categories. Non-time-sensitive content can be further subdivided into three categories based on three kinds of user reactions: click and share, click without sharing, or bookmarking, and click without sharing but bookmarking.

"The last category of content that users like to read and are willing to bookmark, but are unwilling to share, or are not appropriate for sharing, is closely related to personal long tail needs and has greater personal value," he said. "For News Break, the last category of content is its main focus."

Optimizing the "long tail" news has also been a strength of Yidian Zixun.

A 2016 report of the CCP's State Council's science webpage described how Yidian Zixun used "long tail" personalized technology to help the CCP's propaganda and information control efforts in Xinjiang by "enabling the localized and accurate delivery of government information and full coverage of information in Xinjiang," and "telling the Xinjiang story well."

"In the year and a half since its launch, News Break has achieved very high retention rates of 55 percent ... making it the number one product of its kind in the U.S. market," Zheng said during the interview.

Five years after its launch, News Break is now "The Nation's #1 Intelligent Local News App," getting to the top spots on both Google Play and Apple Store, according to its website.

It claims to have 45 million monthly active users and 24 million installs through the App Store and Google Play in 2020.

News Break didn't respond to questions from The Epoch Times regarding its relationship with Yidian Zixun and Phoenix TV.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES

## DEMOCRACY

# Remembering June 4, 1989: Poland's Partly-Free Election Led to Peaceful Disintegration of Communism

June 4, 1989 in China: Chinese Communist Party's Brutal Crackdown on Peaceful Protest Led to Tiananmen Square Massacre

ELLA KIETLINSKA

June 4 marks two 32nd anniversaries: the first one commemorates the defeat of the ruling Polish communist party in the partly-free election, the second one commemorates the bloody crackdown by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on a peaceful student protest at Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

On June 4, 1989, the ruling Polish communist party, called 'The Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) was defeated in the hybrid election in communist Poland.

The election format was agreed upon during the negotiations held earlier in 1989 between the Polish communist government camp and so-called "Solidarity" camp, said Prof. Jacek Reginia-Zacharski, Ph.D., political scientist and historian at the University of Lodz in Poland.

The negotiations, known as Polish Round Table Talks did not include all anti-communist opposition groups and movements; not all of them were represented in the talks or participated in it on an equal footing, Prof. Reginia-Zacharski told The Epoch Times in an interview.

The Polish "Solidarity" movement emerged in 1980 out of Polish workers protesting against deteriorating living conditions in communist Poland. Solidarity became the first free trade union in the Eastern (communist) Bloc that was independent of the regime and quickly grew as an anti-communist opposition group demanding economic and political reforms in the country.

By early 1981 Solidarity's membership reached 10 million and included 80 percent of the Polish workforce. In response, the communist government declared martial law to crack down on the movement.

After martial law was lifted in 1983, the Solidarity movement started emerging again even though the regime's repression against its members continued. In 1988, when a big wave of strikes spread throughout the country, the Polish communist government expressed its willingness to negotiate with Solidarity.

About 6 months later, the round table talks started between the Solidarity-led opposition and the coalition led by the ruling communist party, officially called PUWP.

"The communists did not want to relinquish power unconditionally," Reginia-Zacharski said. The negotiating parties agreed to create the upper chamber of the parliament-Senate—which had not existed before and to make the election to the Senate free, he explained.

However, the communists wanted to assure that they would hold a majority in the lower chamber of the parliament, which was the main one, and reserved for them-

selves 65 percent of the seats, the scientist explained, adding that only candidates approved by the coalition could run for these seats.

The remaining 35 percent of the seats were available to opposition and independent candidates in freely contested races.

Therefore the election in 1989 could not be considered partially free, it was rather a hybrid election, Reginia-Zacharski said, adding that it was not considered free by the Council of Europe.

On June 4, 1989, Solidarity candidates won 160 seats out of 161 available to them while the communist candidates won only 5 seats out of 299 reserved for them, with 62 percent voter turnout. In addition, 92 out of 100 Senate seats went to Solidarity and the communists won none.

"It was indeed a shock to the communists. It was a disaster from their point of view," Reginia-Zacharski said. He believed that the results of the first round of the election were a surprise to all.

A sense of trepidation was felt on both sides of the political fence, Reginia-Zacharski continued, because a considerable number of Solidarity activists and probably a big portion of the Polish society feared that the communists, facing such a disaster, could resort to the use of force as they did in 1981 when they imposed martial law on the country.

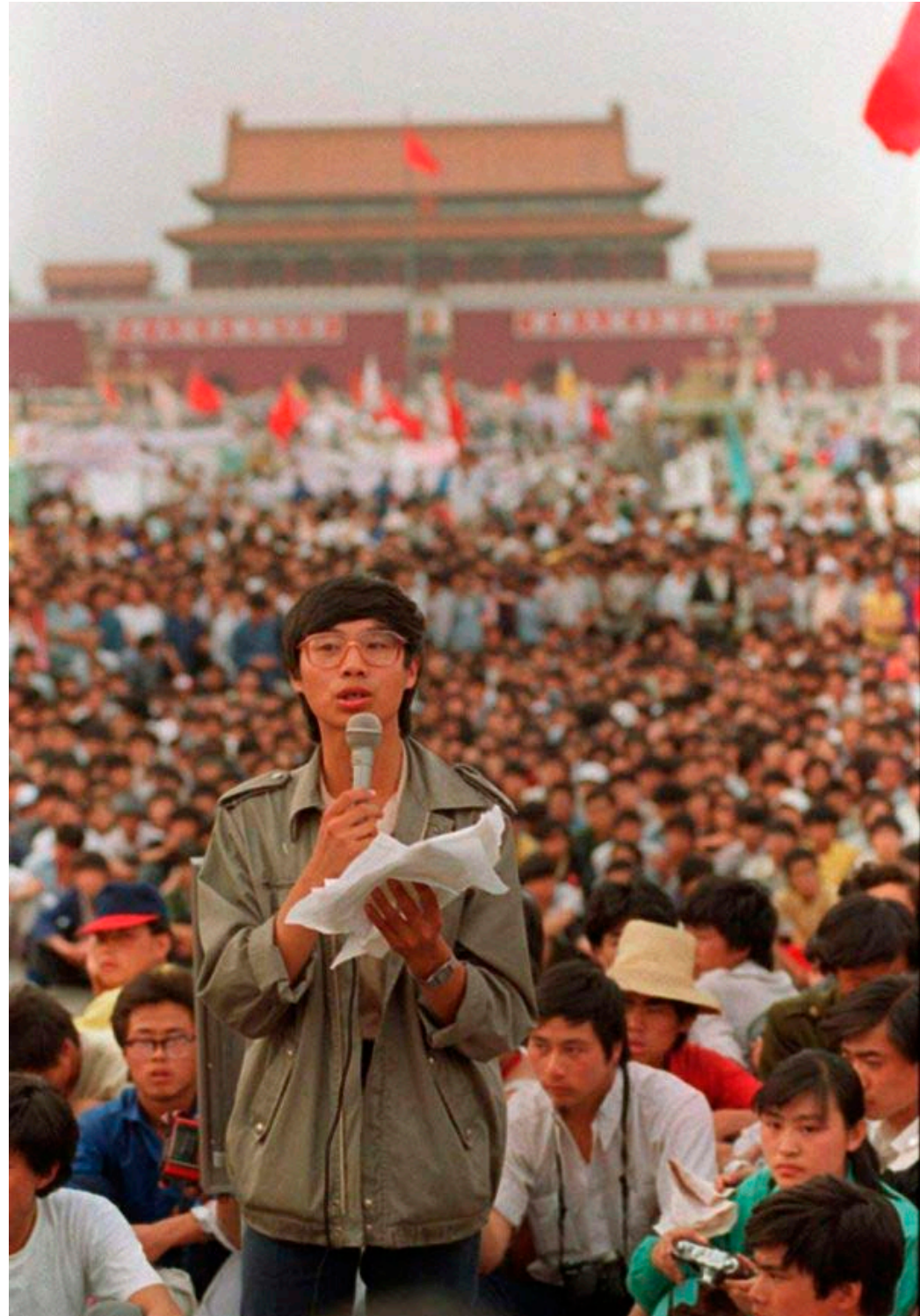
The economic situation in Poland at that time was very grim, Reginia-Zacharski said. "The hyperinflation raged, wages in Poland peaked at millions but the purchasing power of the Polish currency dropped to almost nothing."

In Reginia-Zacharski's opinion, dramatic and traumatic news about the massacre on Tiananmen Square in Beijing that broke on the election day fueled such fears. "The martial law inflicted very deep trauma on the Polish society," he added.

The second round of the election was needed to fill out vacant seats, but the electoral law did not allow candidates who had not received the required 50 percent of the votes to run in the second round, Reginia-Zacharski said. Therefore the communist government changed the electoral law to allow candidates who lost the first round to run in the second one, he explained.

As a result of the second round, which took place on June 18, Solidarity won one lower chamber seat allotted to free election candidates but vacant after the first round and gained 7 out of 8 remaining seats in the Senate. One remaining Senate seat was filled by an independent candidate. Communists had no representation in the Senate.

In the second round, the communists won all seats in the lower chamber reserved



Student leader Wang Dan calling for a city-wide march, in Tiananmen Square in Beijing on May 27, 1989.

for them but they did not get any representation in the Senate. The risk of losing their reserved seats was very low despite little voter turnout—only 25 percent—because those who had not voted for the communist candidates did not show up in the second round, Reginia-Zacharski said.

Out of 299 lower chamber seats designated for the government by the coalition, the PUWP gained only 173 seats and the remaining seats were taken by its satellite parties.

## Election Aftermath

The impact of the election turned out to be much bigger than it seemed, Reginia-Zacharski said. Despite the fact that Solidarity only had 161 seats out of 460 in the lower chamber, the so-called deconstruction of the communist camp started shortly after the election.

After the election the two biggest satellite parties, United Peasants' Party and Democratic Party began to collaborate with Solidarity and formed a coalition government with Solidarity led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a non-communist prime minister, Reginia-Zacharski said.

However, the government was not fully controlled by Solidarity because the communist party retained for itself key offices such as Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister of Defense, Reginia-Zacharski explained. The new parliament also elected by a margin of one vote a communist president, Wojciech Jaruzelski, the architect of the martial law declared in Poland to suppress Solidarity. Jaruzelski held the office for more than a year until the first presidential election in Poland since World War II.

The political arrangement designed during the round table negotiations was supposed to function after the election but it was never realized, Reginia-Zacharski said.

Activists of satellite parties that formed a coalition with the communists were clear that "the communists do not have absolutely any support... [and] The Polish United Workers' Party [PUWP] after the June election ceased being a hegemonic political group in Poland," Reginia-Zacharski said.

The Polish communist party's membership had shrunk from about 3 million in 1980 to about 1 million in the fall of 1989. In January 1990, the PUWP dissolved itself.

In 1991, the first truly free parliamentary elections were held in post-war Poland, which was a prerequisite for the country to accede to the Council of Europe, Reginia-Zacharski said.

## June 4, 1989, at Tiananmen Square

On the same day that Poland started its peaceful transition from communism, soldiers and tanks of the People's Liberation Army in China entered the country's capital and killed hundreds, maybe thousands, of unarmed protesters in Tiananmen Square—the "gate of heavenly peace."

The protesters—college students and university staff from around the country joined by the nationwide demonstrations—called for human rights, an end to corruption, and democratic reform.

It is possible that Chinese communist leaders were watching processes and changes taking place in the Soviet Union and in the Eastern Bloc including Poland, and were clear that "these processes once started had tremendous potential to escalate, [and] it was something that could not be stopped," Reginia-Zacharski said. It is not known however if these observations influenced their decision to brutally quell the protest, he added.

The New York Times reported in 1989 that Jiang Zemin, who had become the General Secretary of the CCP in the wake of the bloody resolution of events on June 4, corrected an Italian reporter who used the term "Tiananmen tragedy" in his question to Jiang.

According to the New York Times, Jiang said, "I'd like to correct you in your use of the word tragedy. We do not believe that there was any tragedy in Tiananmen Square. What actually happened was a counterrevolutionary rebellion aimed at opposing the leadership of the Communist Party and overthrowing the socialist system."

## DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS

# 3-Child Policy, Raising Retirement Age Won't Solve China's Pension Deficit

NICOLE HAO

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has changed its notorious one-child policy to allow for three children and said it would raise the retirement age to resolve the huge pension deficit and dramatic decline in births. However, economists and experts say these methods can't resolve the deficit nor the issue of the country's aging population.

China has been an aging society since 2000, with the rise in average age accelerating significantly over the past 10 years. China's working population is projected to decrease to 795 million in 2050—20 percent less than in 2010—as long as China's fertility rate doesn't decline, according to Dong Keyong, human resource professor at Renmin University of China.

In the 2010s, the CCP launched various versions of a two-child policy to rejuvenate the aging population, but the effect was limited. Now, authorities are hoping a three-child policy can resolve the issues.

Economists doubt whether the policy will work, saying that Chinese parents feel unable to have more children because of economic pressures and the high cost of raising a child in China. A survey conducted by CCP mouthpiece Xinhua on May 31 showed that over 90 percent of respondents were unwilling to have a third child.

In addition, raising the retirement age makes it harder for younger people to find a job. Meanwhile, the older generation won't have time to take care of grandchildren if they're not able to retire on time.

Many Chinese people are worried that the CCP will launch policies to force couples to have more children.

## Thorny Issues

The CCP's politburo on May 31 discussed related policies to support families in having up to three children. Members said that doing so could "modify [China's] population structure," provide a "response to the aging population issue," and "maintain the advantage, endowment of [China's] human resources," according to Xinhua.

To solve these three issues, Beijing officials announced a plan to raise the retirement age. Xinhua reported on April 13 that the regime would raise the age gradually over the next five years because "China's working-age population has been declining for eight consecutive years, with an average over three million per year. The decreasing rate is increasing."

Among China's many thorny issues caused by the population imbalance is the pension deficit, the key cause being the rapidly shrinking working population and the increasing older population.

In July 2018, northeastern Heilongjiang Province couldn't pay all its pensions due to the deficit. In January 2019, state-run National Business Daily reported that Liaoning, Jilin, Hebei, Shaanxi, and Qinghai provinces also suffered from pension deficits.

The Chinese regime hasn't released the size of the pension deficit, but the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences published its China Pension Actuarial Report 2019–2050 in April 2019, in which it said the whole of China faced a pension deficit, that the pension required state financial aid in 2019, and that the deficit would expand exponentially each year.

In recent years, the Chinese regime has withheld pensions from specific groups, including political dissidents, religious believers, and rights advocates.

Beijing officials, citing the country's seventh census, announced on May 11 that 264 million people, nearly 19 percent of the population, were over the age of 60 by the end of 2020, an increase of 86.4 million, or nearly 49 percent, from the sixth census released in 2011.

Meanwhile, the working population shrank 45.2 million, or around 5 percent, in 2021, according to the census.

"Our country has come out of the demographic dividend period," Miao Wei, member of the CCP Central Committee and vice chairman of the Economic Committee of the National Committee of the CPPCC, said at a financial summit in Beijing on Nov. 14, 2020.



An elderly woman carries a boy on a street in Beijing on May 11, 2020.

The online survey that Xinhua launched for third-child policy on May 31, 2021.

Response	Count	Percentage
准备好了, 迫不及待	1443	4.7%
已摆上日程	213	0.7%
犹豫中, 很多问题待考虑	828	2.7%
完全不考虑	2.8万	91.9%

## Are you ready to have the third child.

Response	Count	Percentage
Ready	1443	4.7%
Planned	213	0.7%
Maybe	828	2.7%
Won't have	28,000	91.9%

## Will the 3-Child Policy Succeed?

Economists and experts questioned the claim that the three-child policy and raising the retirement age would help China regain the demographic dividend.

"Education, health insurance, housing, utilities ... all living necessities are expensive in China," Chinese independent economist Gong Shengli told the Chinese-language Epoch Times on June 2. "Chinese people are struggling with even basic living needs, even without having a child—how can they dare to have more children?"

The Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences released a report in December 2019 that said the average cost of raising a child from birth to middle school graduation—typically 15 years old—in the Jing'an district of Shanghai is 840,000 yuan (\$131,400). A family normally spends over half of its total income on its children, with lower-income families spending more.

At the same time, the majority of Chinese people aren't wealthy.

On May 12, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said at a state council meeting in May that 200 million Chinese, or 22.4 percent of the working population, are "in flexible employment," which means they're "street vendors" or have temporary jobs. In May 2020, Li said that 600 million Chinese earned \$140 per month, which isn't enough to pay for monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment in a mid-sized Chinese city.

Despite the disparity between the high cost of living and low income, Chinese people still prefer to have children, because in traditional Chinese culture, having children is considered essential.

On average, each Chinese family had 2.62 members by the end of 2020, and the majority of Chinese families have three members—two parents and a child—Xinhua reported on May 20.

"It shows that Chinese people haven't followed the two-child policy. ... So how will the three-child policy work?" Frank Tian Xie, professor of business at the University of South Carolina-Aiken, told The Epoch Times in a phone interview on June 1.

The willingness to have children is also reflected in the birth rate. China's

fertility rate was 1.3 children per woman in 2020, far short of the 2.1 replacement rate, and lower than Americans' 1.637, according to Ning Jizhe, director of the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics.

"Raising the retirement age can only make things worse," Lai Jianping, a North America-based former Chinese lawyer and democracy activist, told The Epoch Times on June 1.

In China, it's usually the grandparents who take care of the children. A large number of young couples have their first child when at least one of the grandparents retires.

"If the grandparents don't retire, young couples don't dare to have children," Lai said. "On the other hand, young people will have trouble finding a job if the old ones don't retire."

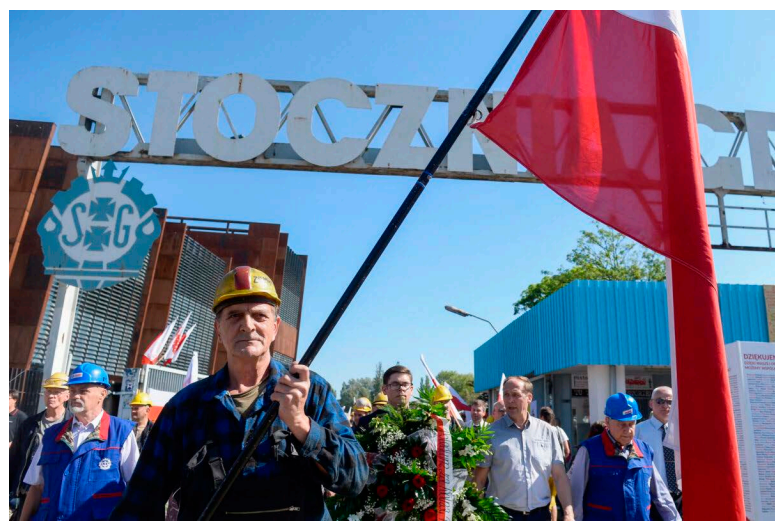
As Li pointed out, jobs are hard to come by, which is reflected in the high number of people with "flexible employment." The real Chinese unemployment rate is a state secret, and the regime only releases data on those who have an urban hukou—a city household registration—and have registered their employment with the local government.

In July, over 9 million Chinese students will graduate from universities and start looking for a job. "Graduation means unemployment" has become a common saying in China in recent years, with Chinese state-run media, including Xinhua, resorting to publishing articles that teach students how to find a job.

"If young people can't find a job, they won't have the income to raise children," Lai said.

The CCP launched its infamous one-child policy in 1979. The majority of Chinese women of childbearing age are now themselves an only child. In China, older people rely on their children in their later years because social security isn't enough to take care of them.

"As an only-child couple, the two of us need to take care of our four parents and work 996," a Chinese netizen wrote on social media platform Weibo on May 31. "996" is Chinese IT-business standard working hours, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days per week. "If we have three children, how can we survive?"



Members of the Solidarity trade union walk by the historical gate of Gdansk Shipyard during the 30th anniversary of partial free elections in Gdansk, Poland, on June 4, 2019.



The round table talks between the Polish government and the opposition in Warsaw, Poland, on Feb. 6, 1989.



Practitioners of the spiritual discipline Falun Gong hold a parade in New York to celebrate World Falun Dafa Day and to protest the ongoing persecution of the group by the Chinese Communist Party in China, on May 13, 2021.

## OPINION

# After Nearly 22 Years, Brutal Persecution of Falun Gong Continues in China

SHI MING

As I browsed through the past few days of reports on Minghui.org, a U.S.-based website that documents the persecution of Falun Gong, I saw that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is still relentlessly persecuting Falun Gong practitioners for their faith, continuing to perpetuate untold human suffering.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is an ancient Chinese spiritual practice consisting of slow-moving meditation exercises and moral teachings that incorporate the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance in everyday life. It grew in popularity during the 1990s, with 70 million to 100 million adherents in China by the end of the decade, according to official estimates at the time.

Feeling threatened by its popularity, the CCP launched a systematic elimination campaign in July 1999. Since then, millions have been detained inside prisons, labor camps, and other facilities, with hundreds of thousands tortured while incarcerated, according to the Falun Dafa Info Center.

I'll mention a few of the Falun Gong practitioners who were persecuted, as documented in Minghui's latest reports.

Li Shunjiang, an engineer in Qiqihar in northeastern China's Heilongjiang Province, died in his early 50s on May 20. He had been imprisoned twice since 2001 and spent a total of 12 years in Fengtun Prison and Tai Lai Prison, where he was tortured by prison guards. As a result, he suffered severe pleural effusion with excessive fluid buildup in his lungs and chest cavity. He died after his release in poor condition, while caring for his wife and mother-in-law, who were in dire states after also being persecuted—his wife had become mentally ill after three years in prison, and his mother-in-law was paralyzed and bedridden after four years in prison.

Yang Wanxin, a 65-year-old resident of

Over the past 22 years, the persecution of Falun Gong has proven to be among history's most severe cases of crimes against humanity.

**70 to 100**  
million Falun Gong adherents in China by **1999**  
according to government estimates.

Beijing, was abducted from her home in August 2020 and has since been illegally detained in the Shijingshan District Detention Center in Beijing. The police raid terrified her bedridden husband, and he fell into despair over her detention. His condition quickly deteriorated, and he died in December 2020.

Mo Liqiong, an accountant in Xiangtan city of Hunan Province, has been arrested and detained multiple times since 1999. On Aug. 25, 2003, she was arrested and later sentenced to nine years in the Hunan Province Women's Prison, where she was tortured by prison guards. During her imprisonment, she was fired by her employer and abandoned by her husband. She was abducted again by police on Feb. 5 and has been illegally detained in the Xiangtan Detention Center.

Lu Mengjun, 59, also a resident of Xiangtan city, has been illegally sentenced three times for her faith, for a total of 15 1/2 years. Her latest prison sentence of 7 1/2 years began on April 28 after she was once again arrested and her home ransacked on June 2, 2020.

While she survived torture by prison guards during her previous two prison terms, two fellow Falun Gong practitioners who were arrested along with her, Lu Songming and Liu Liyan, were persecuted to death, in 2021 and 2014, respectively.

Gu Xiaohua, a 72-year-old Beijing resident, was tried by the Chaoyang District Court in Beijing for her faith on April 19, following her arrest by police, who ransacked her home and confiscated her Falun Gong books and personal belongings, on April 17, 2019. While detained in the Chaoyang District Detention Center, she was denied her right to have her lawyer visit her and defend her in court.

Gu has been repeatedly targeted for her faith since the persecution began in 1999. She was subjected to 1 1/2 years of forced labor in January 2002, four years in November 2005, and 2 1/2 years in February 2009.

When the CCP launched a systematic

persecution campaign in July 1999, it declared that it would eliminate Falun Gong within three months by defaming practitioners' reputations, seizing their wealth, and attacking them physically. Practitioners murdered as a result of persecution would be declared victims of suicide and cremated immediately.

An increasing number of reports and investigations show that the CCP has been engaged in state-sponsored massive forced organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners and other victims, in what researchers David Matas and David Kilgour called "an unprecedented evil on this planet."

Over the past 22 years, the persecution of Falun Gong has proven to be among history's most severe crimes against humanity. The actual number of deaths caused by the persecution is difficult to estimate, due to the strict censorship in mainland China. Minghui has confirmed and verified the deaths of 4,641 Falun Gong adherents at the hands of the CCP authorities for refusing to abandon their faith.

However, this incomplete statistic is just a fraction of a much higher death toll, as many deaths have gone unreported—including those who have been murdered for their organs.

Today, large numbers of innocent Falun Gong practitioners are still suffering in prisons and detention centers in China, where they face the threat of torture and forced organ harvesting.

The persecution must end, and every day it continues is a day that the CCP's tyranny continues to triumph over the human conscience.

*Shi Ming is a freelance writer who has been covering China's affairs and human rights issues for many years. He has been contributing to the Chinese-language Epoch Times since 2011.*

*Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*

LARRY DAI/THE EPOCH TIMES

## OPINION

# Under CCP's Totalitarian System, Injustice Prevails in China

GU FENG

Under the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) totalitarian system, justice is often dispensed in the opposite way from what most people would expect. In many cases, hard-working citizens who stand up for their rights are sent to prison rather than the true perpetrators.

There are a number of examples of this injustice happening in China such as: those who owe wages do not go to jail, but those who ask for payment for owed wages do; those who demolish other people's houses do not go to jail while those who defend their homes against forced demolition do; those who commit corruption do not go to jail, but those who criticize or blow the whistle on corrupt officials do; those who persecute innocent people do not go to jail, but those who defend their rights do; those who create tainted food do not go to jail, but those who expose the truth do—the list goes on and on. Obviously, injustice prevails under the CCP's one-party rule.

Here are a few specific cases that illustrate this phenomenon:

## CASE 1: Migrant Worker Detained for Protesting Over Unpaid Wages

Many people in China's rural areas who go to big cities to make a living as migrant workers (mostly) for Chinese regime projects, often find themselves frustrated because they don't receive their wages. Protesting is often futile because local authorities usually impose crackdowns on them.

On Feb. 5, a migrant worker from China's Gansu Province was arrested and detained for 10 days after he climbed up a 50-meter-high tower crane arm at the construction site in an attempted suicide to protest his unpaid wages, according to a report by Chinese news portal Sina.

The local authorities accused him of disturbing the public order and maliciously demanding unpaid wages. Authorities have a "zero tolerance" rule and will crack down on any illegal acts of migrant workers, such as jumping from buildings or tower cranes, or other extreme actions to viciously demand unpaid wages, states the report.

## Disregarding China's constitutional provisions and its international commitments and obligations, the Chinese regime has continued its unrelenting persecution of human rights lawyers and activists.

### CASE 2: Resident Detained for Protesting Against Forced Demolition

Whether it is to make way for development or some other reason, Chinese authorities often forcibly demolish residential houses, but residents who protest against it face harsh treatment or arrest.

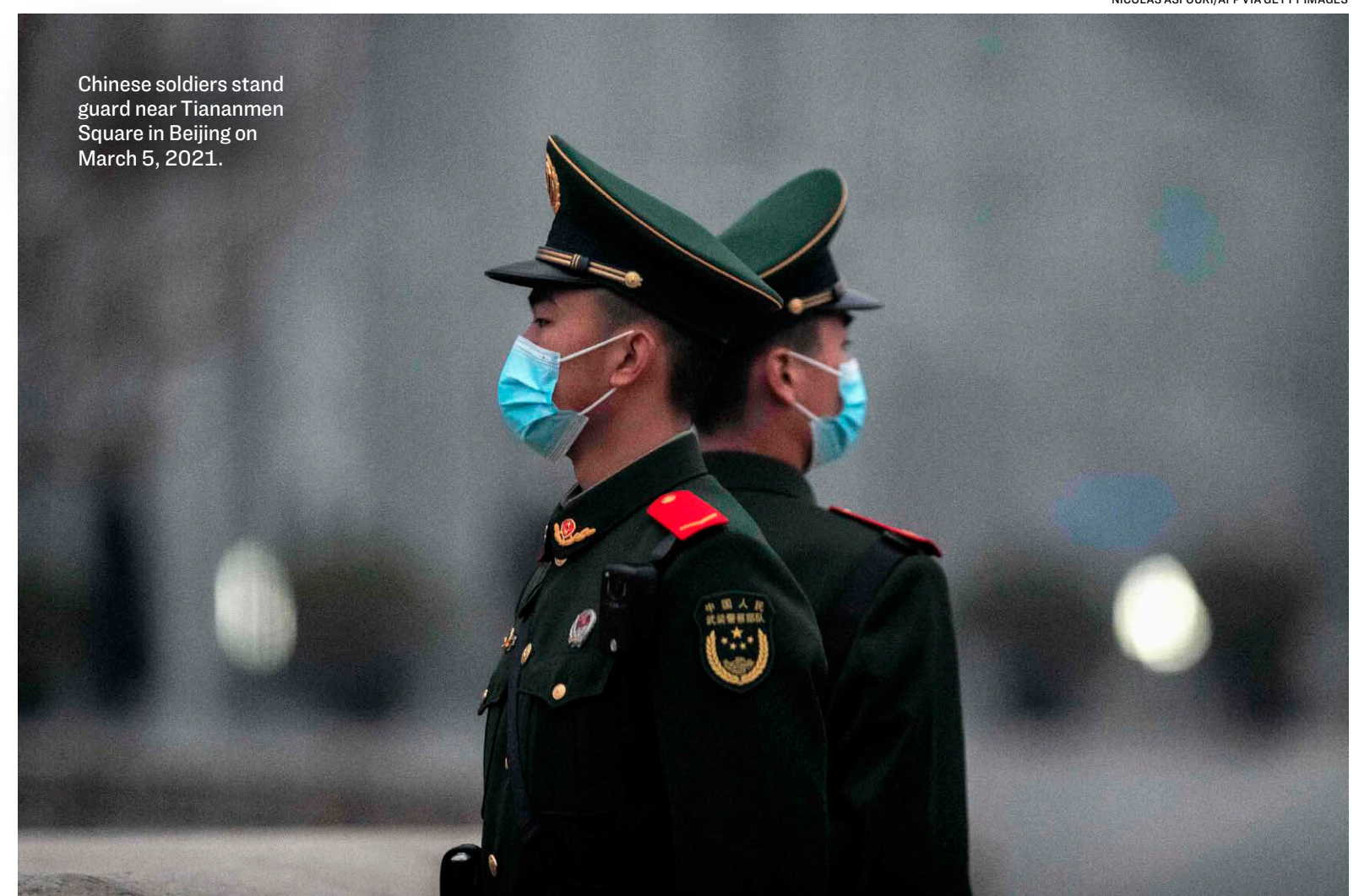
In early December 2020, Beijing authorities started forcibly demolishing a 3,800-house residential community, Xiangtang Village, in the Changping district of Beijing, setting off a surge of protests among the community residents.

Resident Guo Lingmei, a 70-year-old retired film director and the daughter of renowned Chinese poet Guo Xiaochuan, was arrested and detained by local police for allegedly inciting protests after she pledged to continually defend her rights to save her home and the community.

### CASE 3: Citizen Sentenced to 4 Years for Exercising Free Speech

Under the CCP's one-party rule, moral depravity and corruption are ubiquitous, but citizens who dare to publicly criticize the regime or its corrupt officials face grim consequences. Cases of citizens getting punished for exercising free speech are quite common.

In April 2020, Liu Yanli, a female bank employee in Hubei Province, was sentenced to four years in prison by the Dongbao District Court in Jingmen city of Hubei Province for posting on WeChat (a popular Chinese social media platform) messages that allegedly attacked CCP leaders and requested transparency of CCP officials' personal assets, according to a report by Voice of America.



Chinese soldiers stand guard near Tiananmen Square in Beijing on March 5, 2021.

NICOLAS ASFOURI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Screenshots of forced demolition and protests in Xiangtang Village, Beijing, in December 2020.

Liu was charged with causing serious public disorder by "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," a vague charge often used against people the CCP sees as threatening. Prior to her arrest, Liu became a "key target of concern" for CCP authorities after she posted, on her WeChat account, several articles that called on CCP officials to disclose their assets and showed support for military veterans, who had staged nationwide protests to demand better health care and pensions. Since September 2016, she has been detained and placed under residential surveillance. Unable to bear the persecution, she attempted suicide but was rescued and taken to the Jingmen City Detention Center, said the report.

Later, many of those released were still subject to surveillance, harassment, and economic restrictions. In addition, lawyers who had provided legal representation during the crackdown also became targets of political persecution themselves. As human rights lawyers continue to face criminal prosecution, the regime further tightens its control over the legal profession by restricting speech and requiring loyalty to the CCP.

### CASE 4: '709 Crackdown' Against Human Rights Lawyers

Disregarding China's constitutional provisions and its international commitments and obligations, the Chinese regime has continued its unrelenting persecution of human rights lawyers and activists, according to reports by Amnesty International.

On July 9, 2015, more than 200 people were arrested and interrogated by the CCP



Wang Quanzhang with his wife, Li Wenzu, and their son, Wang, a human rights lawyer, has been detained in China without trial since August 2015.



SCREENSHOTS PROVIDED BY THE EPOCH TIMES

months. But many questions still remain unanswered, for example, how could an online post lead to the local police (who likely colluded with the company) traveling thousands of miles for a "cross-province arrest?"

### CASE 6: Judge Arrested for Exposing Judicial Misconduct

In December 2018, Wang Lingqing, a Chinese supreme court judge, went missing after he exposed judicial misconduct at the regime's highest court involving two multi-billion-dollar mining cases. Later, the whistle-blower was arrested and placed under criminal investigation for leaking state secrets.

On Feb. 22, 2019, state-run television CCTV aired a video "confession" from Wang, in his first public appearance since he disappeared in early January. The "confession" video followed the release of two other videos in which he disclosed alleged misconduct in the two high-profile cases.

Having Wang openly take the fall revealed that the CCP would never allow anyone to expose its internal scandals to the public.

### China's Social Justice Is Dead

The law is the cornerstone of social justice. On Dec. 16, 1966, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which obliges each state party to respect and ensure the rights of its citizens, including: the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, the right to vote, due process of law, and the right to a fair trial.

Since the Chinese regime formally signed the Covenant on Oct. 5, 1998 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the CCP has never kept its promise to honor it.

In the past decade, China's human rights situation has worsened, and despite reporting international criticism, the CCP has continued to act in total defiance of international conventions and continues to violate human rights in the country. These include forced family planning, construction of a national internet firewall, forced demolition of residential houses and churches, suppression of religious freedom, deprivation of freedom of assembly, deprivation of freedom of speech, construction of concentration camps in Xinjiang, arrests of Hong Kong citizens in the fight for their freedoms, arrests of human rights lawyers and activists, to name just a few. All of these are sufficient to show that social justice in China is dead.

*Gu Feng is a former media veteran from mainland China who spent many years reporting on the country's political, economic, and social issues. He is now living in the United States.*

*Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*

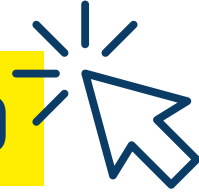
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