



THE HON STEPHEN SMITH MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
PARLIAMENT HOUSE ACT 2600

09 MAR 2010

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Julia'.

Dear Mrs Irwin

Thank you for your letter of 11 February 2010 about a petition recently submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions on persecution of Falun Gong in China. In accordance with Standing Order 209(b), I make the following response to the Committee.

The Australian Government has long held concerns about the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in China. While the Government takes no position on Falun Gong beliefs, it considers that China's ban on Falun Gong and the treatment of its practitioners are in breach of international human rights standards.

The Government has raised consistently these concerns with Chinese authorities. Senior officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have also raised Australia's concerns about the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners through diplomatic channels in Canberra and Beijing, and during the Australia-China Human Rights Dialogue, the most recent of which took place in Canberra on 9-10 February 2009. We expect the next round to take place in China in 2010.

The Government is aware of Falun Gong-related claims of organ harvesting. If true, these reports would be very disturbing. China has denied the allegations and the information we have seen so far is inconclusive.

The Government will continue to raise its concerns on the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in China with Chinese authorities.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Smith