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Hong Kong printer agrees to keep Falun Gong-linked newspaper running for two more months

AP (18.05.2005) / HRWF Int. (19.05.2005) – Website: www.hrwf.net – Email: info@hrwf.net - A newspaper linked to the Falun Gong spiritual group said Wednesday that it has found a new printer willing to keep the publication running for another two months, despite fears that doing so could offend China.

Last week the former printer of The Epoch Times which frequently criticizes Beijing and employs Falun Gong followers said it would print its last edition of the newspaper last Friday.

Amy Chu, a spokeswoman for the newspaper, said Wednesday that one of its readers had agreed to print the newspaper for another two months starting from Monday. The newspaper runs five days a week from Monday to Friday, so there was no break in production, she said.

The temporary printer was fearful of committing to a longer print run, Chu said.

The newspaper had difficulty finding a long-term printer as many expressed fears that taking on the publication may offend China's Communist leadership, which outlawed Falun Gong as an "evil cult" on the mainland in 1999.

But the group, which has attracted millions of practitioners with a mix of slow-motion exercise and Buddhist and Taoist teachings, remains legal in Hong Kong, a former British colony that returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Falun Gong often accuses Beijing of persecuting and torturing its followers on the mainland. It also alleges that China is extending its crackdown on the group in Hong Kong.

Chu said the paper's last printer did not mention that it came under direct pressure from Beijing.

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Hong Kong printer drops newspaper linked to Falun Gong over fears of offending China

AP (11.05.2005) / HRWF Int. (11.05.2005) – Website: www.hrwf.net – Email: info@hrwf.net - A Hong Kong printer will stop publishing a newspaper linked to the Falun Gong spiritual group over fears that it may offend China, the newspaper said Wednesday, sparking worries about censorship in this former British colony now ruled by Beijing.

The printer for The Epoch Times newspaper gave notice in March that it will stop churning out copies of the daily on Saturday, breaking a one-year contract signed in January, Epoch Times spokeswoman Amy Chu said. Chu declined to identify the printer.

She said the publication, which is critical of China and counts Falun Gong followers among its staff, hasn't been able to find another printer in Hong Kong, a vibrant newspaper town that has at least a dozen papers.

The Epoch Times said the decision to stop printing the paper came under "an environment of 'self-discipline' and self-preservation now common in Hong Kong society."

Chu said the printer did not mention direct pressure from Beijing.

News of The Epoch Times' plight came as the deputy director of China's liaison office in Hong Kong attacked Falun Gong, which is banned as an "evil cult" in the mainland.

"The Falun Gong has long staged sit-ins and protests at the entrance of the liaison office. Now they're still fixated on attacking the central government and national leaders. I think everyone is disgusted with this," Li Gang said Wednesday.

Falun Gong, which combines slow-motion exercise with Buddhist and Taoist beliefs, remains legal in Hong Kong, a British territory that returned to China in 1997 with promises of Western-style civil liberties.

But Falun Gong believes China is extending its crackdown on the group to Hong Kong.

Such fears were aggravated when the Hong Kong government charged followers who demonstrated outside the Chinese liaison office with obstructing and assaulting police. They were convicted, but successfully appealed.

Beijing has arrested at least hundreds of Falun Gong followers in China. The group alleges many have been tortured and in some cases murdered.

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