



Press Release

Toronto - Saturday June 27, 2026

Human Rights Defender Dong Guangping resettled in Canada after an 11-year attempt to flee China

Chinese human rights defender Dong Guangping arrived at Toronto's Pearson airport on Friday, concluding an arduous life journey to flee China. It took him 11 years.

Arriving directly from Seoul, South Korea, Dong was visibly in good spirit. He thanked the Canadian government for its humanitarian gesture by accepting him under the Refugee Resettlement Program. He was reunited with his family who had settled in Canada in 2015 under the same program.

In May this year, Dong fled China in a three-meter inflatable rubber boat on a 30-hour journey across the Yellow Sea to South Korea. Arriving in a state of extreme exhaustion and near coma, he was rescued by the South Korea Coast Guard and detained for "suspected immigration violations."

A valiant effort by human rights lawyers and activists in South Korea and Canada, with support from governments in those two countries, secured his recent release.

"At a time when global respect for international law and human rights is in disarray, this is a powerful reminder that when states do live up to those fundamental obligations, as South Korea and Canada have in this instance, freedom prevails," said Alex Neve, professor of international human rights, University of Ottawa.

Neve continued: "Even in the face of powerful geopolitical interests, such as the pressure generally exercised by China to punish dissent, when states do the right thing humanity triumphs."

This was Dong's fourth attempt to flee China. In 2015 he and his family fled China to Thailand and were granted UN refugee status. But Thailand authorities deported him back to China while his family re-settled in Canada.

His 2019 attempt to swim across the Taiwan Strait was aborted. Dong escaped to Vietnam in 2022 only to be deported after more than two years in hiding trying to secure safe passage to Canada.

A former police officer, Dong was dismissed and subsequently jailed multiple times for his open support for the victims of the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.



“I tried to dissuade him from fleeing to South Korea by sea, but he did it anyway,” said Sheng Xue, Toronto-based writer and China critic. “I have nothing but admiration for his courage and resiliency, and his fight for justice.”

Xue continued: “For the past 11 years as his contact person, I've held a deep conviction that we must successfully rescue him to Canada.”

“This has been an international effort to bring Dong to Canada,” said Winnie Ng, co-chair, Toronto Association for Democracy in China (TADC). “It is the true spirit of our collective humanitarian work. His arrival in Canada is a tremendous boost to our movement.”
