

# Deconstructing CCTV's Footage Deception or Self-Immolation?



On January 23rd, 2001, the alleged “self-immolation” incident took place on Tiananmen Square. China’s government-controlled Xinhua News Agency broadcast its report of this incident to the whole world within two hours of the time of occurrence, claiming that the self-immolators were Falun Gong practitioners. Normally, every report from Xinhua must be approved by all levels of government before it can be broadcast.

Analysis of CCTV’s footage of the incident in slow motion reveals many suspicious points:

- Officials claim that Wang Jingdong drank gasoline from the bottle before he set himself on fire, and that he was seriously burned. Yet the plastic bottle holding the gas, which was between his legs, is undamaged.
- It was reported that Wang was seriously burned, yet his hair remains untouched.
- Practitioners of Falun Gong are required to sit with both legs crossed while meditating, called Full Lotus position. Beginners are allowed to sit with just one leg crossed over the other. Yet Wang is not even sitting with one leg crossed although the media reported that he had been practicing since 1996.

- The Beijing Evening News reported on February 16 that there were three or four policemen putting out the fire of each self-immolator and that the fires were put out one minute after they started. Officers who patrol the Square do not normally carry firefighting equipment with them. The closest building to the immolation site is at least 10 minutes away.
- Normally, the Tiananmen Square surveillance camera covers a fixed area. But on this particular day, the camera follows the police to the scene and zooms in to focus on the incident. It seems as if this camera was set up specifically to tape the self-immolation.
- The Chinese media claims that it was CNN journalists who recorded the close-up shots. But the head of the International Department of CNN stated that CNN did not film anything because at the very beginning of the incident, CNN reporters were arrested and their equipment confiscated.



- In the film from CCTV, we can see a man carrying a camera bag at the scene. He seems to be shooting the whole incident. Why didn't the police stop him the way they stopped the CNN reporters?

The purpose of this apparent staging of multiple self-immolations is clearly to incite hatred among the Chinese people toward Falun Gong practitioners and to discredit Falun Gong in the eyes of the world. However, all information about the self-immolations that occurred in Tiananmen Square was blocked. Access to the victims and the scene after the incident was restricted. Only Chinese government officials were allowed to conduct any investigation. The interviews of the victims, conducted by the state-run Xinhua News Agency, resulted only in more questions about the authenticity of the self-immolations and further speculation about the role that Jiang’s regime had in orchestrating it. No third-party investigation has ever been allowed to uncover that true facts. The horror of this self-immolation incident truly reveals the lengths that the regime will go to in its attempt to wipe out the practice of Falun Gong.