

Learn more about [LSEG](#)

US Supreme Court ends suit alleging Cisco helped China pursue Falun Gong

By Jan Wolfe

June 23, 2026 10:08 AM EDT · Updated June 23, 2026



A sign bearing the logo for communications and security tech giant Cisco Systems Inc is seen outside one of its offices in San Jose, California, U.S. August 11, 2022. REUTERS/Paresh Dave/File... [Purchase Licensing Rights](#) [Read more](#)

Summary Companies

- Court limits reach of Alien Tort Statute of 1789
- Lawsuit says Cisco tech helped China target Falun Gong
- Trump administration sided with Cisco in the case
- Lower court revived the litigation in 2023

WASHINGTON, June 23 (Reuters) - The [U.S. Supreme Court](#) further limited the reach of a federal law used to hold corporations liable for human rights abuses committed abroad, as it issued a ruling on Tuesday ending a lawsuit by members of the Falun Gong movement accusing Cisco Systems ([CSCO.O](#)) of facilitating religious persecution in China.

The justices, in a 6-3 ruling, reversed a lower court's decision that had breathed new life into the 2011 lawsuit, which was brought under the Alien Tort Statute of 1789. The suit had alleged that Cisco knowingly developed technology that allowed China's government to surveil and persecute Falun Gong members.

The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up [here](#).

The Alien Tort Statute had been dormant for nearly two centuries before lawyers began using it in the 1980s to bring international human rights cases in U.S. courts. The Cisco case posed the question of whether the law creates liability for corporations that "aid and abet" human rights abuses, a form of what is called accomplice liability.

Conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett, who authored the decision, said that a lower court erred in finding that aiding-and-abetting liability exists under the Alien Tort Statute, or ATS, for Cisco's disputed conduct.

"Courts cannot create new rights of action to remedy violations of international law, so there is necessarily no liability for aiding and abetting such violations," Barrett wrote. "Plaintiffs' ATS claims against Cisco must be dismissed."

The court's six conservative justices were in the majority on the ATS issue, while its three liberal justices dissented from the ruling.

Paul Hoffman, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, expressed disappointment with the court's ruling and said it was up to Congress to act "so that victims of serious human rights violations at the hands of U.S. corporations may hold those corporations accountable in U.S. courts under the Alien Tort Statute."

The court on Tuesday also decided 8-1 that a related statute, known as the Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991, did not permit a set of plaintiffs to move forward with a lawsuit seeking to hold two Cisco executives liable of aiding and abetting torture. Liberal Justice Sonia Sotomayor dissented from that part of the ruling.

The plaintiffs accused San Jose, California-based Cisco of knowingly designing and implementing the "Golden Shield," an internet surveillance system used by the Chinese Communist Party to target dissidents. The plaintiffs said China used the system to track and then torture Falun Gong members.

Cisco called the allegations unfounded and offensive.

President Donald Trump's administration sided with Cisco in the case.

The Human Rights Law Foundation, a nonprofit organization in Washington, sued Cisco on behalf of a group of Falun Gong members. A judge dismissed the lawsuit in 2014, saying the alleged conduct was not sufficiently connected to the United States for the case to proceed.

The lawsuit stalled for many years, in part because of a series of Supreme Court decisions since 2013 limiting the Alien Tort Statute's reach, making it more difficult to hold U.S. corporations legally liable for human rights abuses.

Falun Gong, founded in China in 1992, was banned by China's government in 1999 after thousands of members appeared at the central leadership compound in Beijing in silent protest. The group has called for people to renounce the ruling Chinese Communist Party. Falun Gong members founded a right-leaning U.S. media outlet called the Epoch Times that has been heavily critical of the Chinese Communist Party and supports Trump.

The San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals revived the case in 2023 and allowed it to move toward discovery, the evidence-gathering phase before a trial.

The 9th Circuit decided that the plaintiffs had plausibly alleged "that Cisco provided essential technical assistance to the douzheng (crackdown) of Falun Gong with awareness that the international law violations of torture, arbitrary detention, disappearance and extrajudicial killing were substantially likely to take place."

The Supreme Court in 2013 and 2018 cases limited the ability of plaintiffs to sue corporations in U.S. courts under the Alien Tort Statute for overseas human rights violations. The court said in those rulings that there needed to be a strong connection between the alleged conduct and actions that took place in the United States.

In a 2021 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court threw out a lawsuit accusing Cargill and a Nestle subsidiary of knowingly helping perpetuate slavery at Ivory Coast cocoa farms, ruling that the plaintiffs did not show that any of the relevant conduct took place within the United States.

Reporting by Jan Wolfe; Editing by Will Dunham

Our Standards: [The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.](#) 

Suggested Topics:

- Society & Equity
 - Constitutional Law
 - Human Rights
 - Social Impact
 - Consumer Protection
- Purchase Licensing Rights

Read Next

World

Amazon vows action against India delivery partner after fire probe concludes

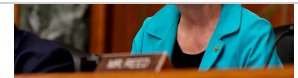
8 hours ago



Subscribe  

WSJ reports

July 1, 2026



Business

Russia warns Apple of \$52 million fine over alleged bias against local apps

July 1, 2026



World

Australia weighs break-up of Big Four accounting firms after scandals

July 1, 2026



World >



'Trump accounts' for newborns will accept stock donations, US officials say

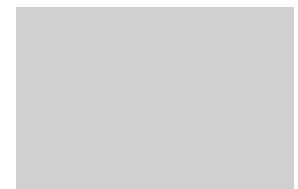
Legal · July 2, 2026 · 2:47 PM EDT · 22 mins ago

Individuals and corporations will be able to donate shares of stock to “Trump accounts,” the government-backed newborn investment accounts created as part of U.S. President Donald Trump’s landmark tax and immigration law, officials said Thursday.

United Kingdom

UK's likely next leader Burnham says has not decided on finance minister

1 hour ago



Africa

Somalia peacekeeping mission at risk as US blocks UN support, sources say

1 hour ago



World

Hungary revokes refugee status of fugitive minister, Poland says

1 hour ago



Sports

Forest parts ways with head coach Pereira

1 hour ago



Latest

Home

Authors

Topic Sitemap

Archive

Article Sitemap

Media

 Videos

 Pictures

 Graphics

 Podcasts

Browse

World

Business

Markets

Sustainability

Legal

Breakingviews

Technology

Investigations

Sports

Science

Lifestyle

About Reuters

About Reuters [↗](#)

Media Center [↗](#)

Advertise with Us [↗](#)

Careers [↗](#)

Reuters News Agency [↗](#)

Brand Attribution Guidelines [↗](#)

Reuters and AI [↗](#)

Reuters Leadership [↗](#)

Reuters Fact Check

Reuters Diversity Report [↗](#)

Commercial Disclosure (Japan) [↗](#)

Stay Informed

Download the App (iOS) [↗](#)

Download the App (Android) [↗](#)

Newsletters

Subscribe

Information you can trust

Reuters, the news and media division of Thomson Reuters, is the world's largest multimedia news provider, reaching billions of people worldwide every day. Reuters provides business, financial, national and international news to professionals via desktop terminals, the world's media organizations, industry events and directly to consumers.

Follow Us



LSEG Products

Workspace [↗](#)

Access unmatched financial data, news and content in a highly-customised workflow experience on desktop, web and mobile.

Data Catalogue [↗](#)

Browse an unrivalled portfolio of real-time and historical market data and insights from worldwide sources and experts.

World-Check [↗](#)

Screen for heightened risk individual and entities globally to help uncover hidden risks in business relationships and human networks.

Advertise With Us [↗](#) **Advertising Guidelines** **Purchase Licensing Rights** [↗](#)

All quotes delayed a minimum of 15 minutes. See here for a list of exchanges and delays.

Cookies [↗](#) **Terms & Conditions** **Privacy** [↗](#) **Copyright** [↗](#) **Digital Accessibility** [↗](#) **Corrections**
Data Disclosure and Sources [↗](#) **Site Feedback** [↗](#) **Manage Cookies**

© 2026 Reuters. All rights reserved

