

China forces 500,000 Tibetans into labour camps



Farmers in Tibet: In the first seven months of this year over 500,000 rural Tibetan labourers have been pushed into military-style training centres. *CREDIT:AP*

The evidence has been compiled by German anthropologist Dr Adrian Zenz, whose research was instrumental in raising the profile of the security build-up and mass detention of Uighurs in China's remote Xinjiang province.

The labour camps are accompanied by enforced indoctrination, intrusive surveillance, and harsh punishments for those who fail to meet labour transfer quotas, according to the research.

The new report by Dr Zenz, sponsored by a global coalition of MPs who have been urging governments to adopt a tougher stance on China, says Beijing has been setting quotas for the mass transfer of rural labourers within Tibet.

The labor transfer policy mandates that pastoralists and farmers are to be subjected to centralized "military-style" vocational training, which aims to reform "backward thinking" and includes training in "work discipline", law and the

Chinese language.

The new evidence will place further pressure on China's human rights record, which has been criticized for its policies in Xinjiang where more than one million ethnic Uighurs have been forced into internment camps, and a crackdown on pro-democracy leaders in Hong Kong.

Australian Liberal MP Andrew Hastie and Labor Senator Kimberley Kitching, co-chairs of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, said Dr Zenz's findings on the situation in Tibet were just as alarming as the treatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang.

"Just as the international community was rightly outraged by the details presented in the Xinjiang papers, and the treatment of the Uighur people, they will be just as troubled by this report on forced labour camps in the Tibet Autonomous Region," Hastie and Kitching said in a joint statement.

The founder of the alliance of MPs, Sir Iain Duncan Smith has urged the IOC to reconsider Beijing as the host of the Olympic Winter Games in 2022. MPs from New Zealand, the Netherlands and the UK have questioned whether the games can continue in China amid the growing human rights concerns and restrictions on freedom of the press.

Former Australian soccer captain Craig Foster said on Tuesday the IOC would be directly responsible if it allowed its "mega events to be used to whitewash broad scale abuse occurring under the shadow of the stadia".

"It is near impossible to see how China can stage a mega-sporting event in accordance with these basic human rights since many are antithetical to governmental principles themselves," said Foster, an adjunct professor at Torrens University.

Liberal MP Dave Sharma, who led the International Division of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, said a boycott would harden nationalist views in China, escalate a "cold-war mentality" and thwart attempts to moderate the Chinese Communist Party's actions in the region.

Sharma, Australia's former ambassador to Israel, said China's national prestige was "on the line" and concessions on human rights, civil liberties and media freedoms could be won in the lead up to the games.

“They don’t want their international prestige to be diminished. It would mean that they will have to end up agreeing to a whole bunch of things that in regular times they would not agree to.”

Labor’s foreign affairs spokeswoman Penny Wong said the Olympics would put China in the spotlight, “including scrutiny of their human rights situation” and urged the IOC to “ensure that the international media can report freely”.

On Tuesday, a prominent critic of China’s President Ren Zhiqiang, was sentenced to 18 years in jail for embezzling more than \$10 million and taking \$255,000 in bribes. The sentence came months after he described Xi as “a clown” in a highly critical essay on his response to the coronavirus crisis.

Carl Minzner, a professor of Chinese law at Fordham University, said the jailing of the property tycoon with high-profile party links sent a message that dissent would not be tolerated.

“This is a very high ranking businessman. Many thought he was untouchable but he takes a stand against Xi and he gets 18 years in prison. He has been made an example of,” Minzner said from Taipei.

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