



DEBATE PACK

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China's rapid expansion of the labour programme in Tibet

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 7 October 2020

9:30-11:00am

Debate initiated by Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP

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By Nigel Walker
and John Curtis

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1. Background

The report on which this debate is focused was compiled by Dr Adrian Zenz. Dr Zenz is an advisor to the [Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China](#) (IPAC).

The [report](#) was released on 22 September by the [Jamestown Foundation](#), a Washington, D.C.-based institute that focuses on policy issues of strategic importance to the U.S.

According to a statement from IPAC, the report raises concerns about:

A large-scale mandatory “vocational training” program, enlisting over 500,000 laborers [sic] in the region, together with accounts of enforced indoctrination, intrusive surveillance, military-style enforcement, and harsh punishments for those who fail to meet labor [sic] transfer quotas. The program appears disturbingly reminiscent of coercive vocational training and mass labor [sic] transfers imposed by the Chinese authorities in the Uyghur region.¹

Reuters, the international news agency, said in [an article](#) published on the same day as the report that it had “corroborated Zenz’s findings and found additional policy documents, company reports, procurement filings and state media reports that describe the program”.²

In a statement to Reuters, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly denied the involvement of forced labour, and said China is a country with rule of law and that workers are voluntary and properly compensated:

What these people with ulterior motives are calling ‘forced labor’[sic] simply does not exist. We hope the international community will distinguish right from wrong, respect facts, and not be fooled by lies.³

China remains a human rights ‘[priority country](#)’ for the UK, one of 30 in total.

The [2019 Foreign Office ‘Human Rights and Democracy’ report](#), published in July 2020, says this on Tibet:

Restrictions targeted at ethnic minorities continued in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas. British diplomats visited Tibet in July—the first time a request to visit has been accepted since the British Ambassador visited in 2017. They raised concerns about religious freedom in Tibet and the case of Gedhun Choekyui Nyima, the Dalai Lama’s choice of Panchen Lama, who remains missing.⁴

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, ‘[Prevalence of forced labor in the Tibetan Autonomous Region](#)’, 22 September 2020.

² ‘[Exclusive: China sharply expands mass labor program in Tibet](#)’, Reuters, 22 September 2020.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Foreign & Commonwealth Office, ‘[Foreign Human Rights and Democracy: The 2019 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report](#)’, page 42, 16 July 2020.

2. Press articles

The following is a selection of news and media articles relevant to this debate.

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[China accused of imprisoning 500k Tibetans in labour camps](#)

The Times
Didi Tang
25 September

[China 'coercing' thousands of Tibetans into mass labour camps – report](#)

BBC News Online
23 September 2020

[Report charts China's expansion of mass labour programme in Tibet](#)

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
22 September 2020

[Exclusive: China sharply expands mass labor program in Tibet](#)

Reuters
Cate Cadell
22 September 2020

[Xinjiang's System of Militarized Vocational Training Comes to Tibet](#)

The Jamestown Foundation
Adrian Zenz
22 September 2020

[Prevalence of forced labor in the Tibetan Autonomous Region](#)

Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China
22 September 2020

[UN experts call for decisive measures to protect fundamental freedoms in China](#)

OHCHR
26 June 2020

3. PQs

Tibet: Human Rights and Political Prisoners

11 Jun 2019 | 259434

Asked by: Alex Sobel

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what diplomatic steps the Government is taking with the Chinese Government to help (a) secure the release of Tibetan political prisoners, (b) ensure access by independent observers to Tibet and (c) protect the human rights of the Tibetan people.

Answering member: Mark Field | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) including restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, and restrictions on freedom of assembly and association.

We consistently urge China to respect all fundamental rights across the People's Republic of China, including in Tibet, in line with both its own constitution and the international frameworks to which it is a party. We believe that long-term stability in Tibet will be best achieved through respect for universal human rights and genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the Chinese constitution. Meaningful dialogue is the best way to address and resolve the underlying grievances and we continue to urge all sides to restart talks.

Further, the UK is active in raising Tibet in multilateral fora. We made a statement at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in June 2018 where we reiterated our concerns over restrictions on civil and political freedoms, particularly minority rights, and freedom of religion in China, including Tibet. Additionally, we asked an advanced question about Tibet at China's last Universal Periodic Review, and included our concerns in our statement.

We are also aware of, and concerned by, reports of the apparent increasing isolation of TAR through restrictions on foreign tourists, journalists and officials (including those representing the UN and EU) seeking to visit TAR. To this end, we are monitoring the progress and impact of the US Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, including through discussions with our US counterparts

Tibet: Human Rights

20 Mar 2019 | 231521

Asked by: Angela Crawley

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to his counterpart in China on allowing independent human rights observers into Tibet; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Mark Field | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We are concerned about the human rights situation in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) including restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, and restrictions on freedom of assembly and association.

We regard the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) as part of the People's Republic of China (PRC). We consistently urge China to respect all fundamental rights across the PRC, including in Tibet, in line with both its own constitution and the international frameworks to which it is a party. We believe meaningful dialogue between the Chinese Government and representatives from Tibet (including the 'Tibetan Government in Exile') is the best way to address and resolve underlying tensions, and we urge all sides to restart talks.

We raised our concerns about Tibet during China's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in November 2018. We asked an advanced question about Tibet and included our concerns in our statement.

**[Tibet: Human Rights](#)
26 Oct 2018 | 180821**

Asked by: Vicky Foxcroft

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans he has to discuss the human rights situation in Tibet with his Chinese counterpart as part of China's universal periodic review at the UN Human Rights Council on 6 November.

Answering member: Mark Field | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We pay close attention to the human rights situation across China, including in Tibet. We are currently considering our advance questions and statement (including recommendations) for China's Universal Periodic Review session on 6 November, and will be raising a range of our priority concerns. The UK engages consistently and comprehensively in the Universal Periodic Review process. We have spoken at every session and on every country since the process began, and are committed to its improvement.

4. EDMs

60th Anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan National Uprising

EDM 2133 (session 2017-19)

4 March 2019

Chris Law

That this House commemorates the 60th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising on 10 March 1959 in Lhasa, Tibet; notes that the uprising was met with extreme force, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of Tibetans and the beginning of increasingly harsh Chinese rule over Tibet; recognises that this resulted in the flight of Tibet's spiritual leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama into exile in India, from where he has been unable to return; acknowledges the hardship and struggle endured by the Tibetan people since the Chinese occupation began in 1950 and the some 150 Tibetans, young and old, monks and nuns, who have self-immolated since 2009 calling for freedom for Tibet and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama; regrets the Chinese authorities' ban on foreign travellers from entering Tibet during this 60th anniversary period; further notes that such restrictions on access to Tibet are not new and that Tibet is almost entirely closed to foreign journalists, diplomats and UN experts; and calls on the Government to intensify its actions within the international community to seek a solution for Tibet and to send a direct and stringent message to the Chinese Government that international observers must be granted immediate and unfettered access to the territory to monitor the human rights situation on the ground.

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