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German Parliament Condemns Chinese Labor Camps, Irks Beijing (5/11/2007)



Press Release: Laogai Museum Now Open to the Public

Details...

LRF Executive Director has been in Berlin, Germany this past week in support of the German parliament's resolution condemning the Laogai. LRF is extremely pleased to report that it passed with a majority support.



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Laogai Handbook 2007-2008

Amid protests from Beijing, the German parliament Thursday condemned Chinese labor camps and called for special labels on goods produced in labor camps. Human rights activist Harry Wu came to Berlin for the vote.

Germany's parliament, the Bundestag, appealed for the Laogai labor camp in China to be closed down. The declaration, which was approved by a wide margin, condemned forced labor and child labor, as well as the use of torture, over-exhaustion and malnutrition as methods of punishment.

The motion also called for goods produced in labor camps to be identified with special labels.

Only the Left party parliamentary group voted against the declaration, which they said didn't go far enough toward upholding human rights.



Criticism from Beijing

The Chinese embassy in Germany has protested against the motion, which was brought by all of Germany's main political parties.

"We are opposed to irresponsible statements concerning China's domestic affairs from any country, including from the German parliament," said a statement from the embassy published in Germany's Tageszeitung daily.

The use of labor camps is "not a criminal act, but a legitimate way to ensure public security and prevent crime," the statement said.

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Prominent Chinese dissident in Berlin

One of the most outspoken Chinese dissidents, Harry Wu, came to Berlin Thursday as a guest of the speaker of the Bundestag lower house of parliament, Norbert Lammert.

In a conversation with Wu, Lammert said that Germany respected the internal affairs of other countries, but that basic rights were a matter of international concern, according to German news service dpa.

Harry Wu spent 19 years in a Chinese prison camp and later became a US citizen. He heads a group in Washington that researches the camps and the products made in them.



Harry Wu, 68, was born in 1939 in Beijing. He was a student leader at Peking University and was arrested in 1962 for participating in a student strike. He was sentenced to 15 years in a labor camp. He was released in 1977 and fled to the United States in 1981. He has been a vocal critic of the Chinese government and its human rights record.



Norbert Lammert, 68, was born in 1939 in Berlin. He is a member of the Bundestag and has been a vocal critic of the Chinese government and its human rights record.

Help free the innocent

Links

- Amnesty International
- Beijing Celebrates Humanity!
- The Cardinal Kung

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundation /China ● China Aid Association ● China Information Center ● Dossier Tibet ● US State Department ● Freedom House ● Human Rights Watch ● Human Rights in China ● The National Endowment for Democracy ● Olympic Watch ● International Campaign for Tibet ● Free The New Youth 4 	<p>Source: www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2510311,00.html</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Text of Resolution</p> <p>German Bundestag:16th electoral term</p> <p>Motion tabled by the parliamentary groups CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP and B"ndnis 90/Die Gr"nen</p> <p>Condemning the prison labour system ("laogai") in the People's Republic of China</p> <p>The Bundestag is requested to adopt the following motion:</p> <p>The German Bundestag notes:</p> <p>One of the most notorious instruments of oppression ever to be deployed by a totalitarian regime against its own people was the Soviet system of "gulags" "C a network of punishment and detention camps and prisons which reached its terrifying peak under Joseph Stalin. The West became aware of the atrocities being perpetrated in these camps largely as a result of the publication of The Gulag Archipelago by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who won the Nobel prize for literature.</p> <p>Whereas the Soviet system of gulags has been consigned to history, a similar instrument of oppression continues to exist in the People's Republic of China. Here, political dissidents, as well as people convicted of general often petty offences are made to suffer in the "laogai" camps. Furthermore, members of ethnic minorities such as Tibetans, Mongolians and Uighurs, and adherents of religious minorities--especially practitioners of Falun Gong--are subjected to the torments of the "laogai" system. In more than 1000 prisons, labour camps and what are claimed to be psychiatric institutions, originating during the Maoist period, dissenters are detained without proper trial and forced to undergo "political re-education", aimed at bringing their views into line with those of the Beijing regime. According to official accounts the number of inmates is given at 200.000. Non-governmental-organisations estimate this number to be far higher.</p> <p>Besides enduring this political brainwashing, prisoners are forced to work long hours in gruelling conditions, without pay, for up to 16 hours a day, seven days a week, with only three or four rest days a year. The prisoners, including minors, work at factories, farms and in the mining industry. Besides violating the prohibition of forced labour, the camps systematically violate the ban on child labour as well. The conditions of work and imprisonment are appalling: detainees are forced to handle toxic chemicals with no protective clothing, or work in asbestos mines without adequate safety precautions. No occupational health and safety provisions apply in the camps.</p> <p>Prisoners are also subjected to many different forms of torture. The death of prisoners from malnutrition, overwork, exhaustion and torture is accepted as a matter of course, and there is also a high suicide rate among detainees.</p> <p>Many former laogai inmates living abroad have campaigned tirelessly to raise the West's awareness of the conditions in these camps (e.g. Laogai Research Foundation). Professor Manfred Nowak, the UN's Special Rapporteur on Torture, also drew attention to the inhumane conditions in Chinese laogai-camps in the report which he published in December 2005 after his visit to the People's Republic of China.</p> <p>The repressive regime operated in the camps is so well documented that on 16 December 2005, the US Congress adopted a resolution (H. Con. Res. 294), by 413 votes to one, condemning the inhumane conditions in the laogai. While Germany has an interest in constructive relations with the People's Republic of China, the Federal Government must not remain silent on the issue of the conditions in the laogai camps.</p>	<p>R</p> <p>AI</p> <hr/> <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● C ill ● C H. ● D or <hr/> <p>I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● C pr ● C re de ce ● Lf R Lz <hr/> <p>I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● C Si ● C re cf ● C U: <hr/> <p>I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● H. C R: E: ● H. Te E: C ● R pr
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The German Bundestag therefore calls on the Federal Government:

1. to continue to condemn the conditions in the laogai camps, to urge the People's Republic of China to close these institutions, and to continue to make the issue of the laogai system a focus of attention in the bilateral rule-of-law dialogue as well in EU-China human rights dialogue;
2. to carry on requesting the Government of the People's Republic of China to release information about the laogai system, including the exact number of camps, their exact location, and the number of prisoners detained within them;
3. to request the Government of the People's Republic of China to release information about the goods produced in the laogai, including product descriptions and the countries to which they are exported;
4. in cooperation with appropriate multipliers (such as the chambers of commerce abroad), to make German companies with operations in China aware that their Chinese business partners may be fronting laogai-related activities;
5. to work pro-actively with appropriate private-sector bodies to establish a voluntary seal of quality for Chinese products which do not contain any components manufactured in laogai camps and also in the framework of the Global Compact move against the distribution of products originating in laogai camps;
6. to keep requesting the Government of the People's Republic of China to release information about the number of deaths of prisoners in the laogai camps;
7. to continue to urge the Government of the People's Republic of China to allow unrestricted visits by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, all UN Special Rapporteurs and representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to all laogai camps throughout China;
8. to use its influence to get the UN Human Rights Council to address the issue of the Chinese laogai camps.

Berlin, 7 March 2007

Volker Kauder, Dr. Peter Ramsauer and parliamentary group

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