



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

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## **Human Rights group says to Prime Minister Albanese: 50 years of Australian diplomacy with China has not helped Tibet.**

### **Don't trade away Australia's values! Human Rights are more important than trade deals!**

Australia Tibet Council is calling on Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to speak up for Tibet while he is visiting China and meeting with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiangji.

This will be the first visit of an Australian Prime Minister since 2016 and will mark the 50th anniversary of the first visit to China by an Australian Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, in 1973. Since Australia has begun diplomatic visits to China the situation for Tibetans, under Chinese occupation, has not improved. In fact, with each year it has become more desperate with China now using the removal of Tibetan children to escalate their attempts to destroy Tibetan language, religion and culture.

The Australia Tibet Council urges the Prime Minister to stand up for Tibet while he is in China.

Australia's complicity in raising China's economic fortune has only led to an emboldened China, determined to continue to occupy Tibet and eliminate Tibetan identity, while Western Nations stay silent on Tibet and instead prioritise more trade deals.

"Recent polling of Australians via Essential Media found that two-thirds (66%) felt that trade resumption with China was less important than action on China's human rights abuses" says Dr Zoe Bedford, Executive Officer of Australia Tibet Council. She added, "Australians do not want to see Australian values compromised when negotiating trade with China, failing to raise Tibet allows China to believe they have the tacit approval of their trading partners, Australians have an expectation our values will be represented by the Prime Minister and that he will raise China's human rights abuses in Tibet."

The Australian Government has said they will raise publicly and privately human rights concerns with China and to disagree with China where they must.

Tibet is one area where the Prime Minister and his Chinese Counterparts will and should disagree. The now 74 year occupation of Tibet, a sovereign country by their larger aggressive imperialistic neighbour, China is one of the world's great injustices and the ongoing human rights abuses in Tibet can not be ignored by Australia.

### **In 2023 alone, the UN is investigating China on three cases of serious human rights abuse:**

- Tibet's Stolen Children, the separation of up to 1 million Tibetan Children from their families. [1]
- Forced Labour in Tibet. [2]
- The arrest and imprisonment of 9 Tibetan environment activists. [3]

"Instead of seeking trade relations with China, Australia Tibet Council believes that Australia should be echoing in the UN's concerns about these issues and furthermore handing Chinese Government officials Magnitsky sanctions" says Dr Zoe Bedford, Executive Officer, Australia Tibet Council.

Tibet has an estimated population of between 6 and 7 million people, therefore the 1 million Tibetan children removed from their families by the Chinese Government to be put into Chinese Government run institutions, denying them access to their Tibetan culture, their Tibetan Buddhist religion, their Tibetan language rights and indeed their families.

"This is indeed 20th Century colonialism in this, the 21st Century. Australia has an obligation to take the lead on these issues as the Australian Government now recognises our own terrible colonial history of the Stolen Generations as a historical mistake and injustice" says Dr Zoe Bedford, Executive Officer, Australia Tibet Council "Australia must now take action for Tibet's Stolen Children and not allow another colonialist cultural genocide to occur in Tibet in the 21st century".

Once again we urge you as Prime Minister to raise Tibet's Stolen Children, forced labour in Tibet, Tibetan political prisoners and the lack of religious freedoms in Tibet with your Chinese counterparts, publicly and privately and demand that China cease human rights abuses in Tibet.

Cultural Genocide: Tibet's Stolen Children. The UN has estimated up to 1 million Tibetan children have been removed from their families, separated from their language, their culture and their religion,:

- Nearly 80 % of all Tibetan Children between the ages of 6 and 18 have been systematically separated from their parents and housed in State-run boarding schools and preschools throughout jurisdictions designated by the PRC government as 'autonomous' for Tibetans.
- The schools separate Tibetan children from their families and are "colonial" in design and practice, serving the Chinese Communist Party's goals of 'sinicising' Tibetans through immersion in Mandarin Chinese instruction and a "highly politicised curriculum." Which also does not allow children to practise Tibetan Buddhism.
- These actions by Chinese authorities constitute a fundamental violation of the rights of Tibetan parents and children by interfering with their rights to preserve the integrity of their family units and stripping them of their right to choose the educational direction for their children.
- The PRC government is violating its obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child "to respect the right of the children to preserve his or her identity,

including nationality, name and family relations as recognised by the law without unlawful interference" and to ensure the rights of 'ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities... to use their own language."

Dr Zoe Bedford from Australia Tibet Council says " members of the Chinese Government should be facing Magnitsky sanctions for their human rights abuses in Tibet rather than be rewarded with trade deals with Australia."

Dr Zoe Bedford of Australia Tibet Council says "Australia's own colonialist history should make us more determined as a nation to take the lead against Chinese government actions to strip children of their families, language, culture and religion – we should be standing firm against the Chinese Government's attempts at cultural genocide via the colonisation of Tibetan children and creation of a new stolen generation in Tibet."

Australia Tibet Council urges Prime Minister Albanese to raise the human rights abuses occurring in Tibet at the hands of the Chinese Government with Chinese Government counterparts while in China. Prime Minister Albanese needs to remember and respect Australia's values above the resumption of trade deals with China.

#### **For more information contact:**

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#### **Media links:**

[1] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/china-un-experts-alarmed-separation-1-million-tibetan-child-ren-families-and>

[2] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/04/china-vocational-training-programmes-threaten-tibetan-identity-carry-risk>

[3] [https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/08/china-un-experts-seek-clarification-about-nine-imprisoned-tibetan-human?utm\\_source=miragenews&utm\\_medium=miragenews&utm\\_campaign=news](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/08/china-un-experts-seek-clarification-about-nine-imprisoned-tibetan-human?utm_source=miragenews&utm_medium=miragenews&utm_campaign=news)

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Australia Tibet Council campaigns for the freedom and human rights of Tibetans. We are a not-for-profit organisation, funded by members across Australia.

*In the spirit of reconciliation, Australia Tibet Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.*

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