



‘Out of control’: China’s shocking human rights record and its plan to hush it up

China’s eagerness to condemn Australia on human rights grounds yet ignore its own long list of crimes is part of a “dystopian” plan, critics says.

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Benedict Brook

China has stirred up a hornet’s nest by sharing a sick doctored image of an Aussie soldier. Now they are being eviscerated for hypocrisy.

China’s spat at Australia, over a tweet slammed by Prime Minister Scott Morrison as “repugnant”, is just a sideshow to a far bigger and bolder plan by Beijing that could lead to its multitude human rights abuses being ignored not just at home, but globally as well.

Human rights experts have said China is slowly infiltrating multinational organisations which could lead to a “dystopian future in which no one is beyond the reach of Chinese censors”.

Bilateral relations between Beijing and Canberra, already at rock bottom, have soured even further since China’s foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian posted a now infamous and fake image in a social media post of a soldier preparing to kill a child in Afghanistan.

Mr Morrison said it was “deeply offensive and utterly outrageous” and demanded an apology.

Independent Senator Jacqui Lambie put all diplomatic niceties aside when she told radio station 2GB that China had hit a “whole new low”.

“Let’s call China for what they are.

“These guys are out of control – they are a pack of bullies,” she said yesterday

“How much more is Australia going to take from China?”

The damning report into alleged war crimes in Afghanistan, which stated as many as 39 civilians were murdered by Australian troops, has given China a handy stick to beat Canberra with.

It has enabled it to take the focus of its shopping list of human rights transgressions – from Hong Kong to Xinjiang – and attempt to take the moral high ground.

The Australian government has said it will investigate the incidents in Afghanistan and is preparing to take legal action against those named. China seems unconcerned to do the same about its own alleged atrocities.

WHERE CHINA RATES IN GLOBAL RIGHTS INDEX

Australia is by no means perfect, but various human rights organisations and non-governmental bodies have shown the country has a long way to fall before it gets anywhere near China's lowly position.

Libertarian think tank the Cato Institute, based in the US, publishes a "Human Freedom Index" every year based on measures including the rule of law, security and safety and free expression.

In the latest report, Australia is ranked sixth, behind countries including New Zealand, Switzerland and Canada.

And where does China dwell? At 126 out of 162 nations.

In terms of freedom, Beijing keeps company with a string of absolute monarchies, brutal dictatorships and plain old fashioned tyrants.

It is only slightly ahead of nations such as Myanmar, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Venezuela.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said the Chinese Communist Party's gift to itself on his 70th birthday this year was to "deepen repression".

"The motivation for Beijing's attack on rights stems from the fragility of rule by repression rather than popular consent," HRW's Executive Director Kenneth Roth.

"Despite decades of impressive economic growth the Chinese Communist Party is running scared of its own people,"

"The consequence under President Xi Jinping is China's most pervasive and brutal oppression in decades."

BEIJING BRUSHES OFF ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

China's ills are many and various.

Amnesty International puts the suppression on the ethnic Muslim Uyghur minority in Xinjiang province right at the top of Beijing's list of shame.

It's thought China has locked up 1.5 million of its own citizens in what it insists are "vocational educational and training centres" that teach skills, improve literacy and reduce the threat of terrorism.

Critics say they are little more than concentration camps where people are brainwashed into submission to the Communist Party's ways and parents wrenched from their kids in the process.

In October, 39 nations, including Australia, issued a joint statement condemning China's continued use of the camps.

elsewhere, there are allegations that earlier this year, Chinese soldiers used clubs studded with nails to injure and kill Indian soldiers in a disputed border regions.

Then there's the trampling of Hong Kong's freedoms, in direct contravention of the joint declaration signed by China for the return of the British territory.

CRITICS VANISH

Since the passing of the national security law earlier this year, multiple arrests have taken place in Hong Kong, pro democracy politicians have resigned, public institutions have sacked staff who criticised the CCP and police have raided media outlets that haven't kowtowed to Beijing's wishes.

“Communist China threatens to strip from Hong Kong its long-held status as one of the freest places in the world and to relegate it to the cellar, where the rest of China unfortunately dwells,” the Cato Institute stated.

The country has been called out for “disappearing” critics and holding them on spurious charges with little access to lawyers including in Hong Kong even before the harsh new laws came into play.

It has taken almost two years from when Australian writer and democracy activist Yang Hengjun was detained to be charged with espionage; charges that Mr Morrison has said are “completely untrue”.

We still don't know why Australian TV anchor Cheng Lei was arrested in August.

Two Canadians are locked up in China, also on espionage charges. The real reason is thought to be revenge for Canada's detention of an executive of tech firm Huawei on fraud charges.

Add to this China's muscling in on the South China Sea – far from its shores – and constant threats of invasion towards democratic Taiwan.

All of this doesn't touch on Communist China's historical human rights horrors including the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre where pro-democracy activists were killed and the taking of the once independent nation of Tibet.

CHINA'S “DYSTOPIAN” PLAN

Yet, astonishingly, China has slowly ingratiated itself into worldwide bodies, often parking itself in human rights related roles.

One of the most flagrant examples was this year when Beijing official Jiang Duan took up a position on a United Nations (UN) panel that makes decisions on which human right violations should be investigated.

Hillel Neuer, executive director of organisation UN Watch, which reports on the UN's performance, was scathing of the appointment.

“Allowing China’s oppressive and inhumane regime to choose the world investigators on freedom of speech, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances is like making a pyromaniac the town fire chief.”

Human Rights Watch’s Mr Roth said China’s “dystopian” plan involved using its economic and governmental clout to silence critics and neuter organisations around the world that would otherwise call out human rights abuses.

Notably, a number of Muslim majority countries that have benefited from China’s largesse have said little about the Xinjiang camps.

“No other government is simultaneously detaining a million members of an ethnic minority for forced indoctrination and attacking anyone who dares to challenge its repression,” Mr Roth said.

“And while other governments commit serious human rights violations, no other government flexes its political muscles with such vigour and determination to undermine the international human rights standards and institutions that could hold it to account.”

The aim, Mr Roth said, “is to portray China as open, welcoming, and powerful, even as it descends into ever more ruthless autocratic rule”.

Politicians of all stripes in Australia have expressed regret and shock at the Afghan war crimes report, and that those accused should be fairly tried.

But many of those same politicians have bristled at being called out by China, a serial and adept violator of human rights.

Senator Lambie said China’s record on freedom was “absolute rubbish” and claimed it had been given a free pass for too long due to lucrative trade between the two nations.

“If we’re really going to stand up to them ... whatever is left to trade with them will go down the gurgler.

“So, it’s whether or not Australians are going to be prepared to take that.”