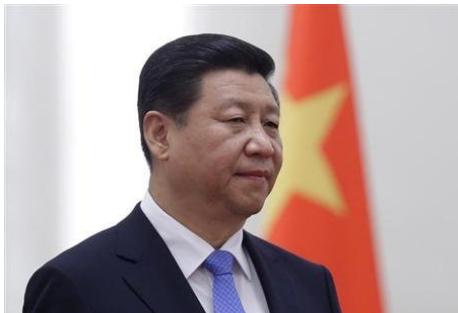


Human Rights Watch chides China for failing to push reform

 **REUTERS** Reuters – 4 hours ago



Reuters/Reuters - China's President Xi Jinping stands next to a Chinese national flag during a welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People, in Beijing, November 13, 2013. REUTERS/Jason Lee

BEIJING (Reuters) - New York-based Human Rights Watch accused [China](#) on Tuesday of failing to embark upon political reforms which meet the people's demands for real change and of pursuing anti-corruption activists despite its declared crackdown on graft.

"The Chinese government has responded to domestic and international pressure by announcing partial reforms on issues such as Re-education Through Labour and the one-child policy," Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

"But the leadership has also embarked on a harsh crackdown on critics, while using hardline rhetoric to make clear they have no intention of liberalising the political system."

China has consistently defended its human rights record and lambasted foreign groups and governments which criticise it. Beijing says lifting millions out of poverty, as it has done, is an important achievement in its rights record, and that it guarantees its people wide-ranging freedoms.

When Xi Jinping became president last year, there had been hopes that he would take a softer line on government critics and embark upon political reform, but since taking office the ruling Communist Party has gone after critics with renewed vigour.

In its annual world report, Human Rights Watch said that China had "yet to embark on fundamental reforms that adequately respond to the public's increased demands for justice and accountability".

The group said it was particularly concerned about the arrests of activists who have campaigned for officials to publicly disclose their assets.

One of the most prominent of those, Xu Zhiyong, goes on trial in Beijing on Wednesday.

"While Xi Jinping has spoken a lot about tackling corruption and there have been some high profile arrests, the government has harshly retaliated against those who exposed high-level corruption in the government and Party," Adams said.

Other areas of concern include a government campaign to stifle online rumours, and continued repression in the restive ethnic minority regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, Human Rights Watch said.

It added that international pressure on China over its human rights situation was "inconsistent" last year, saying that some countries like France and Britain had toned down criticism in summits with China.

"China is home to more than a billion people and is a major global power, so how the rest of the world addresses its human rights situation is more vital than ever," Adams said.

(Reporting by Ben Blanchard; Editing by Ron Popeski)