

China Rejects US Human Rights Criticism

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China has rejected U.S. criticism of its human rights record, accusing Washington of hypocrisy for not addressing its own abuses. In a tit-for-tat response to the U.S. State Department's annual human rights report, China issued its own report accusing Washington of systematic abuses both abroad - in Iraq and Afghanistan - and at home. Daniel Schearf reports from Beijing.

The Chinese report, entitled the "Human Rights Record of the United States in 2006," accuses the U.S. of condemning other countries' human rights abuses while ignoring its own.

According to the official Xinhua News Agency, the Chinese report says Washington uses its strong military power to "trespass on the sovereignty of other countries."

It cites the large number of Iraqi deaths since the U.S. invasion in 2003, and says the U.S. has run up a "flagrant record" of violating the Geneva Convention by systematically abusing prisoners in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The report goes on to criticize human rights in the U.S. itself, saying people's lives, property, and personal security are not secure. It cites western media and U.S. government reports on crime, racism, poverty, and low salaries for women as evidence.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang told reporters Thursday that the objective was to highlight what he called "double standards" on Washington's part.

"This report is like a mirror given to the United States so the U.S. will reflect on itself and take a look at its own human rights situation, and see what kind of qualifications it has for making unwarranted remarks against others, using human rights as an excuse to interfere in other countries' internal affairs, and using double standards," he said.

This was the eighth time Beijing has responded to the U.S. State Department's annual country-by-country report on human rights.

The U.S. report issued Tuesday says China's already poor human rights record worsened in 2006, with harassment and arrests of journalists, activists, and defense lawyers.

It says China has tightened restrictions on freedom of speech, the press and the Internet, and has placed private organizations under increased scrutiny.

The U.S. report says some of the more serious abuses in China include extrajudicial killings, torture, coerced confessions and forced labor.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-03-08-voa20.cfm>

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