

INTERCONTINENTAL, STARWOOD, WYNDHAM AND SHANGRI-LA CHALLENGED OVER RACIAL PROFILING IN TIBET



Campaigners demand answers on cooperation with police state

Tibet campaigners have written to four multinational hotel companies regarding a requirement from security forces in occupied-Tibet for hotels to report Tibetan guests to the police. According to a leaked document made available by a highly respected Tibetan source, the police in Tibet's capital, Lhasa, have instructed hotels in the city to report Tibetan guests from certain politically-sensitive areas to them and then await permission before registering them. The policy is explicitly racist, specifying that there is no need to notify the police of Han Chinese guests from the same areas.

A number of Western hotel companies operate or plan to operate in the city. InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has been targeted by Tibet campaigners over its forthcoming luxury hotel in Lhasa and has repeatedly refused to answer questions about how it will prevent its facilities being used by the security forces in Tibet. Although it was made aware of the racial profiling policy last month, the company has also yet to answer the campaigners' specific questions on the subject.

Other Western companies operating in the city include Starwood (the St Regis and Four Points by Sheraton hotels) and Wyndham Worldwide (Super 8 DuoDiLu hotel). Hong Kong-based Shangri-La is due to open a hotel in Lhasa in April. These companies have also been contacted by Free Tibet and the International Tibet Network to seek information regarding their compliance or otherwise with the policy.

Last month, IHG was directed by the office of the United Nations Global Compact to respond to a complaint submitted by Tibet campaigners about its plans in Lhasa. The company is a signatory to the Global Compact, a scheme designed to foster best practice in corporate responsibility. Principle Two of the Compact advises companies to take steps to avoid providing "material support" to human rights abuses. IHG has until March 15 to provide a written response.

IHG has recently advertised for a Director of Security at the Lhasa hotel whose responsibilities included "liaison" with the police and "law enforcement agencies".

Repression in Tibet - which has been occupied by China since 1950 - is severe. Human Rights Watch's World Report 2014 states:

"The Chinese government systematically suppresses political, cultural, religious and socio-economic rights in Tibet. . . Arbitrary arrest and imprisonment remains common, and torture and ill-treatment in detention is endemic. Fair trials are precluded by a politicized judiciary."

Free Tibet's director Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren said:

“IHG’s reputation as a responsible business has already suffered because of its plan to open a playground for the rich in one of the most repressed places on earth. If this hotel opens, InterContinental will either have to comply with a racist policy directly implicating the company in the abuse of Tibetans’ human rights, or it will have to defy the Chinese authorities in Tibet, putting its employees in Lhasa at risk of arrest. Every hotel in Lhasa must address this very serious issue but IHG has a chance to keep its hands clean by doing what it should have done a long time ago and pulling out of this ill-advised and irresponsible deal.”

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