



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on June 2, 2016

Report of 45.8 Million Enslaved People Underestimates Problem, Offers Wrong Solution

The Australia-based Walk Free Foundation released its annual Global Slavery Index on May 31, stating that an estimated 45.8 million people live in modern versions of slavery. The organization said that its latest figures are about 28 percent higher than its last estimate two years ago.



A commentary on the report in the *New York Times* observed that its definition of slavery differs from the historical one — in which people were held as legal property. Modern slavery, notes the *Times*, “is generally defined as human trafficking, forced labor, bondage from indebtedness, forced or servile marriage or commercial sexual exploitation.”

The Walk Free Foundation’s report said more than half of those living in what it defines as “modern day slavery” are in five countries: India, with 18.35 million, China, with 3.39 million, Pakistan, 2.13 million, Bangladesh, 1.53 million, and Uzbekistan, 1.23 million.

The report also found that North Korea, which is ruled by an oppressive communist regime, has the highest per capita level of modern slavery, at 4.37 percent of its population.

Andrew Forrest, who, with his wife Nicola, founded the Walk Free Foundation and its parent Minderoo Foundation in Australia, said forced labor means workers cannot leave their place of employment. To control these workers, he said, their passports might be taken from them, or there might be a threat against them or their family members.

Forrest said such workers cannot leave their situation and are treated like “a farm animal.”

In an interview with the *Economic Times*, Forest said:

The prevalence of slavery severely affects the country’s attractiveness as an investment destination. As an international investor, I run to places and look at macroeconomic indicators before making investment decisions. A government committed against slavery would definitely figure high up on my investment list.

In addition to his activities in founding the Walk Free Foundation, Forrest is the chairman of the Australian iron ore producer Fortescue Metals Group, according to the *Economic Times*.

Going back to the Walk Free Foundation report, itself, the fact that it listed 18.35 million victims of “modern day slavery” in India, as opposed to only 3.39 million, in China, indicates that the criteria it uses for slavery is quite subjective. If we compare these findings with the Amnesty International State of the World 2015-2016, for example, we find in China an “escalating crackdown against human rights defenders and a series of sweeping laws in the name of ‘national security.’” The organization reports:



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Amnesty International has documented widespread human rights violations in China. An estimated 500,000 people are currently enduring punitive detention without charge or trial, and millions are unable to access the legal system to seek redress for their grievances. Harassment, surveillance, house arrest, and imprisonment of human rights defenders are on the rise, and censorship of the Internet and other media has grown.

In its most recent comparison of human rights among nations, Human Rights Watch noted about China:

China remains a one-party authoritarian state that systematically curbs fundamental rights. Since President Xi Jinping assumed power, the government has detained and prosecuted hundreds of activists and human rights defenders. Between July and September 2015, authorities interrogated some 280 lawyers — the backbone of China’s human rights movement — in a nationwide sweep. The government has moved to tighten control over nongovernmental organizations, activists, and the media through a slew of new laws that cast activism and peaceful criticism of the government as state security threats. The “Great Firewall” used to censor the Internet has been expanded. Despite legislation to curb ... torture in custody, police and interrogators have found ways to evade legal protections.

In comparison, India did not fare nearly so poorly:

India, the world’s largest democracy, has a strong civil society, vigorous media, and an independent judiciary, but also serious human rights concerns. Civil society groups face harassment and government critics face intimidation and lawsuits.

A key factor that the Walk Free Foundation seems blind to is that slavery requires brute power to keep the slaves in bondage, something that private entities rarely possess. In countries where human rights are most suppressed, it is generally the government that is doing the suppressing. However, the report proposes “government intervention” as the answer. One section of the report reads:

Government intervention can have an immediate impact.

We call on Governments of the top ten economies of the world to enact laws, at least as strong as the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015, with a budget and capability to ensure organizations are held to account for modern slavery in their supply chains, and to empower independent oversight.

In another places, the report states: “The key to ending modern slavery is global coordination and government engagement.”

This proposal ignores that fact the slavery (which might be defined as the ultimate elimination of human rights) is most likely to occur in countries where government has the most control, usually communist nations. In countries that enjoy limited government and a free market economy, competition for labor in the market place makes slavery anachronistic. Among other reasons, this is partly because free workers are more productive than slaves and those who rely on slave labor cannot compete with the free market.

The ultimate example of slavery exists wherein a powerful force — usually government — has the power to kill its own population. The late professor Rudolph J. Rummel coined the term “democide” to define: “the murder of any person or people by a government, including genocide, politicide, and mass murder.”

Rummel wrote:

I use the civil definition of murder, where someone can be guilty of murder if they are responsible



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in a reckless and wanton way for the loss of life, as in incarcerating people in camps where they may soon die of malnutrition, unattended disease, and forced labor, or deporting them into wastelands where they may die rapidly from exposure and disease.

Rummel was the author of 24 scholarly books, but his most famous is perhaps *Death by Government*. In that book, Rummel listed the People's Republic of China as the greatest perpetrator of democide of all time. He stated in one note:

Among all the democide estimates appearing in this book, some have been revised upward. I have changed that for Mao's famine, 1958-1962, from zero to 38,000,000. And thus I have had to change the overall democide for the PRC (1928-1987) from 38,702,000 to 76,702,000.

The communist government of today's People Republic of China has inherited a totalitarian state that is so efficient it no longer needs to kill its own people in the very large numbers that Mao did. But the government is nevertheless repressive. As one example, freedom of religion is nonexistent. A [recent report in *The New American*](#) provided the details of how the Chinese government has engaged in a campaign of destroying crosses atop churches in an attempt to snuff out all visible signs of Christianity in China.

The lack of freedom and human rights (including freedom of religion and forced abortions for women who violate the country's "one-child" policy) makes every resident of China (except for Communist Party members) nothing short of a slave. In a country of one and a third billion people, therefore, the Walk Free Foundation report's figure of 3.39 million victims of modern day slavery does not begin to tell the complete story.

The solution to slavery in the world will not be found in more government intervention, but in just the opposite — more limitation of government and more individual freedom. An important part of this solution might also include better education among citizens of the free Western nations about the inherent evil of communism. In modern times, communist governments have been the biggest slave masters of all.

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