

Family Planning Official Says China Must Adhere to One-Child Policy

A top family planning official dashed hopes that China's one-child policy will be abolished, or even modified significantly, any time soon.

"We must unwaveringly adhere to the one-child policy as a national policy to stabilize the low birth rate as the primary task," stated Wang Xia, chairman of the National Population and Family Planning Commission, at a national conference on Jan. 14.

Xia further stated, "We need to keep the one-child policy and keep the national birth rate low ... It's our priority."

Chinese national media quoted expert opinions that "the current low birthrate is not stable, except for a few very advanced major cities. In most areas of the nation, if they were to give up the one-child policy, the current low birthrate would definitely rebound significantly. Therefore, in order to stabilize the low birthrate, it is necessary to hold on to the one-child policy as a basic national policy," according to a Zhong Xin China News Agency report.

Wang's announcement came amid criticisms by demographer Gu Baochang and statistician Ma Jiantang, that the declines in the labor force due to the policy are endangering China's economic future. Ma Jiantang added that China should look into "an appropriate and scientific family planning policy," according to a Reuters report.

Reggie Littlejohn, president of Women's Rights Without Frontiers, stated, "Gu Baochang and Ma Jiantang join a growing

chorus of critics of the one-child policy. The fact that criticism is growing does not warrant jumping to the conclusion that the policy is at an end.

“Such critics generally do not mention **human rights** abuses as the reason for reform,” she continued. “Nor do they advocate abolition of the policy, but rather gradual modification by transitioning to a two-child policy. Their concern is for the potentially devastating, long-term economic and demographic consequences of the policy.

“The central issue in the one-child policy is not whether the government allows couples to have one or two children,” Littlejohn added. “Rather, it is the coercion with which this limit is enforced. Even with a two-child policy, women will still be subject to forced abortion if they get pregnant without a birth permit.

“Also, a two-child policy fails to discourage gendercide, the sex-selective abortion of baby girls. In areas where couples can have a second child if the first is a girl, gendercide is rampant.”

Littlejohn concluded, “Wang Xia’s strong pronouncement should end speculation that China will abandon the one-child policy in the foreseeable future. **Forced abortion** up to the ninth month of pregnancy, and gendercide—the sex-selective abortion of baby girls—will continue until all coercive birth limits are abolished. We at Women’s Rights Without Frontiers are dismayed by this news, but will redouble our efforts to end this hideous crime against humanity.”