

Taiwan scholars blast Foxconn's China operations

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(AP) -- A group of Taiwanese scholars urged Foxconn Technology Group to end a rigid and "inhumane" management style at its mammoth factory compound in southern China.

Their petition follows a recent string of suicides at the Shenzhen facility, which employs and houses more than 300,000 people, many from impoverished backgrounds in the Chinese interior.

Taiwanese and other labor activists have long accused [Foxconn](#) of having an excessively fast assembly line and forced overwork. The company denies the allegations, but recently announced two raises, more than doubling the basic worker pay in Shenzhen to 2,000 yuan (\$293) per month.

Taiwan-based Foxconn makes iPads and iPhones for Apple Inc., and also manufactures computers for Dell Inc. and Hewlett-Packard Co.

Social scientist Yang You-ren at Taichung's Tunghai University began the Taiwan petition drive earlier this month. He said he and fellow academics are appalled by Foxconn's labor policies.

"Foxconn's military management model, including scolding and sometimes beating front-line workers, helps drive isolated Chinese workers to kill themselves," Yang told The Associated Press on Monday. "If the company does not put an end to that, there will be more suicides in the future."

In the petition, the scholars charged Foxconn with using a "concentration camp styled controlling system" and said the recent pay raises do not address the problem. In addition to Foxconn, they blame the Chinese government and Apple for alleged poor working conditions at Shenzhen.

Among the 180 people who have signed the petition are social scientist Lin Thung-hong at the Academia Sinica and architecture professor Hsia Chu-joe at National Taiwan University.

Responding to criticisms of the company, Group Chairman Terry Gou told a shareholders meeting earlier this month that Foxconn has built dormitories and recreational facilities at its [China](#) plants, forcing it to take over social service functions that ought to be reserved for local governments. He said that its existing China factory model may not be sustainable.

Foreign companies that rely on China as a source of cheap labor are finding it harder to attract and keep workers, who in contrast to other workers as recently as five years ago are demanding significantly better pay and working conditions.

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