

100,000 Tibetan nomads ordered to settle in towns

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(AFP; Xinhua) Chinese government officials are ordering 100,000 ethnic Tibetans to give up their traditional nomadic habits and settle in towns because their way of life is allegedly threatening the environment. A report from Xinhua claims that overgrazing from the Tibetan herders' livestock and the growing number of people living on the grasslands of Qinghai province (known traditionally to Tibetans as Amdo) are endangering the sources of China's great rivers. By the end of this year, 60,000 Tibetans will have been moved into new towns in Qinghai, with the number to grow to 100,000 by 2010, Xinhua reports, citing a government document and local environment officials. While Xinhua highlighted compensation packages of up to 8,000 yuan (UK£738; US\$1,060; €1,060) a year for families, it acknowledged that not all Tibetans were happy with having to give up the lifestyles their families have known for centuries. While the Tibetans are being moved into towns, the Xinhua report did not mention Chinese government efforts to create huge industrial towns along the Yellow River, which environmentalists have warned are also a major threat.

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