

China warns states not to support Nobel dissident



Liu Xiaobo: Jailed for 11 years in December 2009

China has warned that there will be "consequences" if governments show support for jailed Nobel peace laureate Liu Xiaobo at the award ceremony.

Vice-Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai said the prize was highly politicised and "a challenge to China's judicial system".

Diplomats in Oslo said China's embassy had sent letters implicitly warning them not to attend the prize-giving.

Liu was jailed in December for subversion after calling for sweeping political reform in China.

China angrily condemned the decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to the dissident. It has said the award was tantamount to "encouraging crime".

'Political tool'

"The choice before some European countries and others is clear and simple: do they want to be part of the political game to challenge China's judicial system or do they want to develop a true friendly relationship with the Chinese government and people?" Cui Tiankai said.

"What image do they want to leave for ordinary Chinese people? So, in my view, they are facing such a choice. They have to make the choice according to their own judgement," Mr Cui said.

“Start Quote

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End Quote UK Foreign Office statement

"If they make the wrong choice, they have to bear the consequences."

A commentary published in Friday in the People's Daily, the Communist

Party's flagship newspaper, described the prize as a Western political tool used to attack a rising China.

The newspaper said the Nobel Prize has become wrapped up in ideology since the end of the Cold War and had become "a tool for Western countries to impose peaceful evolution on powers which do not meet their standards".

'Clear message'

Ambassadors in the city normally attend the ceremony, to be held on 10 December in Oslo City Hall.

"We have received a letter which explains the Chinese position and which asks us not to do anything which could destabilise China," Olof Huldtgren, the deputy head of mission at the Swedish embassy in Oslo, told AFP.

Mr Huldtgren said the letter did not explicitly warn against attending the ceremony, but that "the message is clear".

A spokesman for the Foreign Office in London acknowledged the Chinese "have raised the issue with us". But the spokesman stressed: "It is the normal practice of the British ambassador to Norway to attend the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony. The ambassador intends to attend this year."

The Dutch foreign ministry said it had "taken note of China's concerns", but had told Beijing that the ambassador would be attending.

It is not known who will pick up Mr Liu's Nobel prize on his behalf.

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