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China bans Liu Xiaobo's lawyer from flying to UK

Nobel peace prizewinner's lawyer urges British Prime Minister David Cameron to raise human rights with Chinese leaders

[Tania Branigan](#) in Beijing

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David Cameron's aides have indicated he will raise the case of jailed dissident Liu Xiaobo during his visit. Photograph: Liu Xia/handout/EPA

China's [human rights](#) record was thrown into the spotlight within hours of [David Cameron](#)'s arrival this morning, as police banned [Liu Xiaobo's](#) lawyer and another of his supporters from flying to the UK.

[The two men urged the prime minister](#) to raise the issue along with other human rights problems when he meets Chinese leaders today and tomorrow. Cameron's aides have indicated he will raise the case of [Liu Xiaobo](#).

Mo Shaoping, who helped in the Nobel peace prizewinner's unsuccessful fight against charges of inciting state subversion, was stopped at Beijing airport this morning – not long after Cameron touched down there.

He Weifang, another leading lawyer and supporter of Liu, was also prevented from travelling. He told the Guardian that officers had said it "might harm state security" if they were allowed to go.

The two men were travelling to an International Bar Association seminar in London and had return tickets for 15 November, but He Weifang believes officials were worried they planned to go to Norway for next month's Nobel prize ceremony.

Liu was jailed for 11 years last December for [co-authoring Charter 08](#), a call for democratic reforms in China. Beijing reacted with [fury when the Nobel committee announced that they had chosen him for this year's peace prize](#).

"[Cameron] should mention this when he meets Chinese leaders, and the general human rights situation in China as well. Business profits cannot be all we pursue. We cannot trade the most basic things such as human rights and legislation," said Mo.

He added: "I hope he will mention this when he meets them and other human rights issues as well, because every country has a responsibility [to protect human rights]."

In a round of TV interviews – conducted before news of the flight ban emerged – Cameron said that "of course" human rights was part of a high-level dialogue that also included issues such as economics and trade.

"That is how it should be. Of course we shouldn't be lecturing and hectoring but it is right we have a dialogue on these things," he said.

He Weifang said police stopped him and Mo at the airport's immigration controls, asking them where they were going and what they would be doing there.

"We answered them and even showed them our invitation letters. Then they told us that us going abroad 'might harm the state security', so we were not allowed to go. They did not say anything about when we would be able to travel," he said.

"I think the reason is that they are afraid we will be going to Norway, because Liu Xia [wife of the jailed dissident] wrote an open letter inviting friends to attend the award ceremony."

[Liu Xia has been under house arrest since the announcement of the prize and has had communications cut off.](#)

The Chinese Human Rights Defenders network said today that it had received around 100 reports of citizens who had been harassed, interrogated, subjected to surveillance, detained, or placed under "soft detention" across the country following the Nobel announcement.

One man – Guo Xianliang, an engineer from Yunnan Province – is detained on suspicion of inciting subversion of state power after distributing flyers about Liu and the prize in Guangdong, southern China, the organisation reported.

But one of Liu Xia's invitees – well-known dissident Dai Qing – is already outside China and has said she will attend the ceremony.

Mo took on Liu's case but was prevented from representing him in court because he too had signed Charter 08. A colleague from the same law firm represented the writer in court.

He Weifang is a former law professor from Beijing University who was sent to work in a remote part of north-western Xinjiang for a year after signing the document.

A press officer for Beijing police said he was not aware of the case and would have to check what had happened.

Artist Ai Weiwei –who in a comment piece for the Guardian [urged Cameron to press Chinese counterparts on human rights](#) – told Radio 4's Today programme that leaders were committing "some kind of crime" if they did not raise rights.

"You are dealing with a society that has sacrificed a lot of human rights just for the growth of business. Anyone who's dealing with China in business, they have an obligation to emphasise that, otherwise you just commit some kind of crime by not looking directly into this issue," he said.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/09/china-bans-liu-xiaobo-flying-uk>