

# Police stop rights lawyer from leaving China

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Beijing - Border police prevented a prominent human rights lawyer, whose firm represents jailed Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo, from leaving China on a flight to London on Tuesday.

The police told lawyer Mo Shaoping that his journey could 'endanger state security' after they stopped him and fellow lawyer He Weifang at an immigration checkpoint in Beijing's Capital Airport, Mo told the German Press Agency dpa.

The lawyers were held for about one hour before they were told that 'higher authorities' had ordered their detention at the airport.

'The reason is that we may possibly endanger state security,' Mo said by telephone following his return home.

The two men had planned to attend a conference on the difficulties facing lawyers in China, where legal processes are subject to political interference by the ruling Communist Party.

But Chinese authorities may also have feared that they might try to attend the award ceremony for the Nobel Peace Prize on December 10 in Oslo.

'We planned to come back to Beijing on November 15,' Mo said, adding that there were probably 'many others' who were prevented from leaving China ahead of the Nobel award ceremony.

Shang Baojun, the main lawyer representing Liu Xiaobo and his wife, Liu Xia, works for Mo's Beijing-based law firm.

Police have kept Liu Xia under house arrest at her Beijing apartment since the announcement of the Nobel prize on October 8.

In an open letter two weeks ago, Liu Xia invited a group of 140 leading dissidents, lawyers and rights activists to travel to the award ceremony in Norway, including Mo and He.

Most of those on Liu Xia's list are based in China and are under close police surveillance or house arrest, making it unlikely that the government would allow any of them to travel to Norway for the ceremony.

The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute had invited Mo and He to join a panel discussion on Wednesday on the 'problems plaguing the legal profession in China.'

Liu, a prominent writer and one of China's leading dissidents, was sentenced to 11 years in prison in December for his part in writing Charter '08.

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