

NOTE

BEHIND THE BAMBOO CURTAIN

CPJ writes :

IT'S CHINA. AND SO THERE is bamboo curtain. So nobody knows the whereabouts of two Chinese journalists who reported on detained artist and social commentator Ai Weiwei.

The detention of the journalists came as Chinese officials warned off foreign nations against pushing Ai Waiwai's case forward.

"The issue is under investigation and the outside should not comment on this issue habitually," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told Agence-France Press. "We hope that the outside can respect China's judicial sovereignty and judicial authorities handling the issue in accordance with the law."

At the same time, the US-based online petition website change.org reported that its petition seeking Ai's freedom has been under sustained directed denial of service (DDoS) attack, presumably by Chinese hackers.

Family and colleagues have been unable to reach *Caijing* magazine journalist Zhang Jialong since the evening of April 28, according to Radio France Internationale. He was believed to have gone for a "talk" with Beijing police, but no notice of formal detention has been issued, RFI reported. Interrogations are informally referred to as "chatting" or "drinking tea" with police or security officials. The Global Post website posted a link to an online missing notice issued by Zhang's family. Zhang, a 23-year-old intern, had reported on a contaminated milk activist, Zhao Lianhai, and on Ai, the notice said. Zhang had also actively discussed recent detentions on his Twitter account, according to RFI.

Freelance journalist and documentary filmmaker Wen Tao has been missing and believed detained since April 3, when he was taken away by officials in plainclothes shortly after Ai Wen, a former *Global Times* journalist and also an active Twitter user, had been documenting Ai's work; his whereabouts and legal status are unknown, according to international news reports.

"The disappearance of two journalists who were reporting on Ai Weiwei and other Chinese activists is deeply concerning". In truth they are the latest victims of the Chinese Communist Party's efforts to stifle the flow of independent information.

Chinese authorities have detained a series of journalists and online commentators since anonymous calls for anti-government demonstrations appeared on Chinese-language websites in February, inspired by unrest in the Middle East and North Africa. Some of those detained, such as online writer Ran Yunfei, now face criminal prosecution. Many others, like Zhang Jialong and Wen Tao, have simply disappeared. Internet censorship has tightened since the crackdown, which has also extended to professional Chinese journalists, ethnic minority websites, and the foreign press. □□□