



China

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China: Ai Weiwei's release

International community must press for more releases and systemic reforms

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and [Human Rights in China](#) (HRIC) welcome the release of Chinese artist Ai Weiwei on Wednesday, 22 June 2011, and urge the international community to continue to monitor the status of Ai Weiwei's associates and the ongoing crackdowns, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary detentions of individuals who are peacefully exercising fundamental rights and freedoms.

"At this time of the most serious human rights deterioration in China since 1989, the international community must also press for systemic reform and the institutional protection of human rights in China," said Sharon Hom, Executive Director of HRIC. "The detentions of Ai Weiwei, activists, lawyers, and other rights defenders demonstrate the Chinese authorities' contempt for rule of law when dealing with individuals perceived as 'threats' to the regime."

The release took place almost three months after the arrest of Ai on 3 April 2011 at the Beijing Capital Airport. However, the Chinese authorities only released him on a 12-month bail and reportedly warned him against speaking publicly about his detention and any political matters. Ai Weiwei is also not allowed to leave his area of residence without permission. The authorities' statement that Ai Weiwei's release is related to "his good attitude in confessing his crimes" [tax evasion] signals the ongoing threat of potential criminal prosecution.

Ai's release also came just days before the start of the upcoming visit of Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao to Germany and Britain. Wen's visit is a key opportunity for European governments and civil society organizations to pressure the Chinese government for the immediate release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, including Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo.

"China cannot expect to credibly project a positive image of itself abroad as a rising power while blatantly trampling on internationally recognized human rights at home," said Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President. "And European governments should not be satisfied solely by the release of Ai Weiwei, whose arrest and detention was unlawful to begin with, and must continue to place human rights on the top of their bilateral agenda with China while strengthening actions to support the development of independent civil society in China," Ms. Belhassen added.

FIDH and HRIC call for the immediate release of all other rights defenders and activists arrested or imprisoned for peacefully exercising their freedoms of expression, association, and assembly, rights that are guaranteed by the Chinese Constitution and international human rights law.

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