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Asia - China

Dawn raid

Dissident octogenarian writer Tie Liu arrested for “provoking trouble”

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Police carried out a dawn raid on the home of 81-year-old dissident writer Tie Liu three days ago and took him and his assistant Huang Jing into custody. Reporters Without Borders demands their immediate release.

Tie, whose real name is **Huang Zerong**, was charged with “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”. No reason was given for the arrest of Huang Jing, who is also Tie’s care worker and occasionally helps him publish his writings. The police also seized his computers and some of his books.

His arrest was believed to be the result of an essay he published recently on the former head of the government’s propaganda department, Liu Yunshan, and the restrictions imposed on the media while he was running the main censorship organ of the Chinese Communist Party’s repressive machinery. Tie was placed in criminal detention, which allows the authorities to hold him for at least 30 days.

“This arrest shows how far the Peking government is prepared to go to muzzle critical voices,” said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia desk. *“We add our voice to that of the international community in condemning the arrest of Tie Liu. We urge the Chinese authorities to release both him and Huang Jing immediately.”*

At the age of 81, Tie is one of the oldest dissidents in China. Branded a “rightist” for rebelling against Mao Zedong and the Communist Party, he spent more than 20 years in a re-education camp. However, he has continued to write essays and pamphlets criticizing the Chinese government.

According to his wife and his lawyer, he believed he was unlikely to be arrested again given his age. However, his family reported that he recently received threats and warnings, such as the poisoning of his dog the day before he was arrested.

The charge of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” is used regularly by the Chinese authorities to detain political dissidents. At least 30 journalists and 72 netizens are currently in prison in the country.

China is ranked 175th of 180 countries in the [2014 World Press Freedom Index](#) compiled by Reporters Without Borders.
