

Chinese activist detained when Obama visited

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A leading Chinese human rights lawyer who tried unsuccessfully to meet US President Barack Obama in Beijing last week was detained and interrogated twice during Obama's visit to China, a US lawmaker and a US-based Chinese activist said.

Jiang Tianyong (江天勇) had returned to Beijing after giving testimony last week at a human rights hearing in Washington on allegations of China's forced abortion practices.

Bob Fu, founder and president of China Aid, a US-based Christian group that promotes religious freedom and rule of law in China, said in an interview on Friday that Jiang told him that he was detained on Wednesday as he waited near the US embassy, hoping for an audience with Obama.

Obama was on an eight-day, four-nation tour of Asia in which global issues — nuclear disarmament, climate change, economic recovery — dominated.

Fu said Jiang told him that police also detained legal academic Fan Yafeng (樊亚峰) and interrogated them for two hours. They were then brought home and told not to leave until Obama left Beijing.

Jiang also told Fu that he was detained on Thursday as he tried to bring his young daughter to school. He said police hit his wife when she came to see what was happening and that he was at the police station for nearly 14 hours before being released.

Fu said Jiang told him that his daughter was interrogated by police at her school.

US Republican Representative Chris Smith told reporters on Friday: "[Jiang] has been absolutely tenacious, and he's now paying a price."

China is known to round up and threaten lawyers, activists and others it considers troublemakers before and during important visits from foreign dignitaries. Other Chinese have reported being detained, harassed or confined to their homes during Obama's four-day visit to China.

Jiang told the New York-based group Human Rights in China that Chinese police escorted him away from the US embassy area on Wednesday as he was trying to pursue a meeting with Obama.

He told the group police then picked him up on Thursday morning and questioned him for more than 13 hours before releasing him. He said police accused him of beating up a police officer.

An official at the Yangfangdian police substation, where Jiang has said he was taken and questioned, said yesterday he could not comment.

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A telephone call to the propaganda office at Haidian police station, which oversees the substation, went unanswered.

Jiang recently defended a Tibetan Buddhist cleric against charges of concealing weapons in an area of China where anti-government protests occurred.

In his testimony in Washington on Nov. 10, Jiang said that many local family-planning officials in China illegally enforce population laws through compulsory abortion and surgical sterilization.

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