

# China tells world to stay out of its 'domestic affairs' over Liu Xiaobo's death

Beijing dismisses 'improper remarks' over decision to not allow democracy advocate to be treated overseas for liver cancer

[Tom Phillips](#) in Beijing

Friday 14 July 2017

China has pushed back against a wave of international censure over the death of democracy advocate [Liu Xiaobo](#), telling the world to stay out of its “domestic affairs” and labelling the 2010 decision to award the late activist a Nobel peace prize “a blasphemy”.

[Liu, 61, died](#) of multiple organ failure on Thursday, the first Nobel peace prize winner to die in custody since the German pacifist [Carl von Ossietzky](#), who died under surveillance in 1938 after years confined to Nazi concentration camps.

Beijing had ignored international calls for Liu to be allowed to seek treatment abroad after [he was diagnosed](#) with late-stage liver cancer in May, apparently fearing he would use his final days of freedom to denounce its authoritarian rule.

Geng Shuang, a spokesman for China’s foreign ministry, on Friday tried to downplay international condemnation of his government as the work of “a few foreign officials”.

The leader of the Norwegian Nobel committee on Thursday accused Beijing of bearing “a heavy responsibility” for Liu’s death, while the British foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, said China’s treatment of him was “wrong”.

“Foreign countries are in no position to make improper remarks,” Geng said, according to [an English-language report](#) published by a Communist party tabloid.

## Liu Xiaobo obituary

He told a daily press briefing that [China](#) had lodged representations with “certain countries” over their comments relating to Liu’s death. He also lashed out at the decision to award the dissident a Nobel prize in 2010, the year after he was sentenced.

“Conferring the prize to such a person goes against the purposes of this award. It’s a blasphemy of the peace prize,” Geng said. He nevertheless claimed “all-out efforts” had been made to treat the dissident with “humanity and in accordance with the law”.

[Human rights](#) activists and friends reject those claims as lies designed to mask Beijing’s responsibility for Liu’s demise, who was sentenced to 11 years in jail for his role in a pro-democracy protest. “This is ultimately a political murder,” said Hu Ping, who had known Liu since the spring of 1989, when pro-democracy protests shook Beijing.

On Friday, there were signs that having condemned Liu to almost a quarter of his life behind bars, China's leaders were also seeking to control his funeral.

Activist Hu Jia said authorities were pressuring Liu's family to quickly cremate his body. Relatives would only be allowed to hold "a simple farewell ceremony, under severe surveillance," Hu said, adding that Liu's friends had been unable to find out specific details.

"Most likely, it was already held this morning or will happen at some point this afternoon," he said.

[A brief report](#) in China's state-run media claimed Liu's funeral "would respect the wishes of his family and local customs, with relevant authorities providing assistance if the family requests it".

Ye Du, another activist and friend of Liu, said he had been warned by Chinese security services that he was forbidden to travel. A "national ban" had been placed on activists hoping to attend Liu's funeral, he added.

Internet censors meanwhile scrubbed Chinese social media of comments related to the Nobel laureate, blocking search terms including Liu Xiaobo, LXB and RIP. The phrase "I have no enemies" – Liu's famous Tiananmen Square rallying call – was also banned.

With Beijing desperate to tamp down discussion of Liu's fate and ideas, China's state-run media all but ignored his death. [An editorial](#) in one English-language tabloid sought to portray Li not as a victim of the Communist party, but of western "forces" who had tried to use him to undermine party rule.

"The west has bestowed upon Liu a halo, which will not linger," the newspaper said, before attempting to rubbish the Nobel laureate's legacy. "Even if he could live longer, he would never have achieved his political goals."

Jerome Cohen, an expert in Chinese law and human rights from New York University, said Beijing's treatment of Liu and his wife revealed "the Orwellian China that is developing under president Xi Jinping". He predicted that even after Liu's death, Beijing's attempts to cover up his message of democratic change would persist.

"I'm sure that [his funeral] will be kept under strict wraps. They will have to probably make sure they deny him a prestigious place of burial. They will restrict the mourners to just a few people who are close to him.

"There will not be publicity about the site of the burial. There will not be any sort of public mourning or funeral service. And then they will hope the whole thing will be buried with him." However, Cohen said he feared Beijing's persecution of the dissident's wife, Liu Xia, would continue as it fought to prevent her becoming a symbol of political resistance and freedom of expression.

"One-party dictatorships can't allow free speech. That is why they tried to keep her quiet," he said. "They may decide just to keep her under wraps indefinitely until she, too, succumbs to either mental illness or physical illness."

He said Beijing had prevented Liu from travelling and making a final denunciation of its authoritarian rule to avoid "an enormous public relations disaster ... this one is bad enough".

Friends and activists have [urged western governments](#) to demand Liu Xia's freedom from China.

*Additional reporting by Wang Zhen*

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/14/china-rejects-foreign-condemnation-over-liu-xiaobo-death>