



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on December 16, 2022

Pro-Beijing Student Arrested After Threatening Pro-democracy Activist in Boston

SINGAPORE — A pro-Beijing student who stalked and threatened a pro-democracy activist has been arrested, said U.S. prosecutors on Wednesday.

According to the Justice Department, Wu Xiaolei, 25, a student at Boston's Berklee College of Music, a private institution commonly regarded as the largest independent college of contemporary music in the world, saw someone posting flyers on October 22 near the university containing messages that said "Stand with Chinese People," "We Want Freedom," and "We Want Democracy."



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Federal prosecutors in Boston declared that Wu threatened to chop off the hands of the activist — a permanent resident from China who has family there — if she persisted with "reactionary posters," reportedly saying on WeChat, email, and Instagram, "You go to post them at Tiananmen Square. Post more, I will chop your bastard hands off."

Wu was arrested on Wednesday and released later in the day.

Prosecutors said Wu, via a Berklee-focused WeChat group whose 300-plus members included the activist, demanded that any flyers be torn down and threatened to report her to the public security agency in China.

"I already called the tip-off line in the country. The public security agency will go greet your family," he wrote. Prosecutors said they believed Wu was alluding to either the Ministry of Public Security or the Ministry of State Security in China, "both of which investigate political dissidents, including those who voice support for democracy."

They said Wu, in a later post on the university WeChat group, asked others to find out the victim's address, and posted her email address online so that others could also harass her. "Anyone who has the authority to check or is willing to do so, we would greatly appreciate it," he wrote.

In an October 24 email, Wu told the activist to expect to be detained upon returning to China. To add fuel to the fire, he told the victim that he believed her family members would undergo a "political review" from the Chinese government.

"You should wash dishes for the capitalist dogs," Wu wrote.

Amid reports of China establishing police offices in foreign countries to illegally harass its overseas citizens, the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts and others have noted that Chinese nationals have been harassing U.S. residents, a topic detailed in an annual report released last month by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, an influential advisory body.

The same report asserted that Beijing has "continued a multi-year campaign of transnational repression



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against critics, Uyghurs, and others to stifle criticism and enhance control over emigrant and diaspora communities.”

Rachael S. Rollins, U.S. attorney for the district of Massachusetts, declared in a statement that the department was alleging that Wu’s “threatening and harassing behavior” did not amount to free speech, but “rather, it was an attempt to silence and intimidate the activist’s expressed views dissenting from the PRC [People’s Republic of China].” “Freedom of speech is a constitutional right here in the United States and we will protect and defend it at all costs,” she added.

FBI agents added that they believed Wu successfully informed Chinese authorities about the victim’s actions for them to investigate her and her family. “This alleged conduct is incredibly disturbing,” said Joseph Bonavolonta, a special agent in the FBI’s Boston division.

Andrew Kirk, the FBI special agent who investigated Wu’s case, said in an affidavit that Wu pleaded guilty to sending and posting the messages to terrify the victim. He added, however, that Wu lacked sympathy for the victim and wanted others to “abuse” the victim online, as her pro-democracy actions were a serious crime in China. Wu further indicated that the victim betrayed her country and “does not deserve to be Chinese.”

The accused’s Instagram account, which according to court documents is “aldimeowu,” portrayed images of a young bespectacled Chinese man playing the guitar and the cello, holding a large gray cat and posing near the water at sunset. The Instagram profile hinted that Wu hailed from Beijing and liked jazz. His last posting to his WeChat account, which contains many of the same images as his Instagram profile, was three days prior to his arrest.

The charge of stalking carries a prison sentence of up to five years and three years of supervised release, as well as a fine of up to \$250,000.

Recently, the Justice Department also unsealed criminal charges against seven Chinese nationals [accused of surveilling and harassing](#) a U.S. resident and his family in an expatriation campaign operated by the Chinese government called “Operation Fox Hunt.”

Last year, a U.S. federal court also accused a Chinese prosecutor of traveling to America and cooperating with eight other individuals to threaten a U.S. resident and his family. The accused called for evidence of such harassment to be removed.

Worries that the Chinese government has been illegally harassing its citizens via outposts in Canada and the Netherlands has made authorities in those two countries act. Dutch Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra closed the Chinese outposts last month, and the Canadian government has related to Beijing’s ambassador in Ottawa worries about such outposts.

In response, Beijing has said that they advise all Chinese citizens to abide by local laws abroad, and stated that the overseas outposts are not doing anything wrong. “Chinese public security authorities strictly observe the international law and fully respect the judicial sovereignty of other countries,” Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said in October at a regular briefing in Beijing.



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