

Prisoner Profile: Du Daobin

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At a little after 4 o'clock on the afternoon of October 28, 2003, Public Security officers marched into a government office in Yingcheng, Hubei Province, and arrested civil servant Du Daobin. Another team of PSB officers conducted a three-hour search of Du's home, after which they confiscated his computer, manuscripts and address book. On October 30, the Yingcheng Public Security Bureau issued a formal notice of arrest to Du's wife, stating that Du was being held for "incitement to subvert state power." An arrest warrant issued on November 12 formally charged Du with subversion, and since then he has been detained at the Xiaogan District No. 1 Detention Center in Hubei.

Du Daobin's arrest stems from a large quantity of essays that he posted over the Internet in recent years. Du was not what anyone would consider a radical political activist. During his spare time, he enjoyed reading, writing and going for walks. His 12-year-old son, answering a telephone call from a well-wisher following Du's arrest, said of his father, "He never did anything wrong. All he did was write a few essays!" It is this fact that has caused such consternation among other Chinese Internet users. Thousands of people have signed online petitions addressed to the Chinese leadership demanding the release of Du Daobin. On February 1, more than 100 Chi-

nese intellectuals in and outside of China signed their names to an online petition additionally calling for the Chinese authorities to clarify exactly what constitutes subversion.

The fact is, public security officials had been keeping an eye on Du Daobin for some time. Back in 1989 Du took part in massive student protest in Wuhan voicing support for the students protesting in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Subsequently, police searching the home of Hubei writer Xiong Zhaozheng discovered some essays written by Du Daobin on sensitive topics, and from then on Du was placed on a public security "watch list."

When the levying of arbitrary fees became intolerable in 1999, Du wrote an open letter to Yingcheng's Municipal Party Secretary, demanding that the practice be halted. At the beginning of 2001, Du wrote a long letter to Jiang Zemin calling for redress to the unequal tax burden shared by residents of rural and urban areas, and the discrepancy between resources devoted to development of China's eastern and western regions. In July 2001, Du became the first person in China to openly criticize Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" policy when he posted his essay, "Jiang Zemin's Worthless July 1 Speech." Many Netizens picked up the essay and circulated it widely through e-mail.

In the autumn of 2001, Du posted another essay on the Internet expressing sympathy for the senior staff of Guangzhou's *Nanfang Zhoumo*, who had been purged following a series of articles exposing China's social problems. In his essay Du blamed the official media for deceiving the public. At the beginning of 2002, Du posted an essay entitled, "The Need for a Middle Class," in which he exposed the failures of economic reform and placed the blame for increasing social polarization on the one-party dictatorship. When China began implementing its Internet monitoring strategy in August 2002, Du circulated a petition over the Internet and initiated proceedings in the Supreme People's Court claiming that the authorities were infringing on the constitutional right to free expression.

On February 28, 2003, Du Daobin joined Wang Yi and others in an open letter calling for the release of university student Liu Di, who had been arrested after posting

essays on the Internet under the pen name "Stainless Steel Rat." In early March 2003, Du Daobin was placed under house arrest, and at the beginning of June he received a formal warning from the local Public Security Bureau. On July 26, 2003, Du Daobin posted an essay entitled, "My Conscience Won't Let Me Remain Silent," in which he severely criticized the government's persecution of Falungong practitioners. He was reprimanded for this at the beginning of August, and again later in the month when he attended a meeting of Internet users in Wuhan. At the end of August, while Du was at the train station with the intention of traveling to Beijing with his son, public security officers escorted him back to his workplace and ordered him not to leave the city. On September 30, Du Daobin and others issued a petition entitled, "We are Willing to be Imprisoned with Liu Di."

Du Daobin, 39 years old, graduated from the Hubei Institute of Light Industry, and prior to his arrest he worked for Yingcheng's Medical Insurance Management Bureau. He posted many articles on overseas Web sites such as Epoch Times, Democracy Forum (*Minzhu Luntan*), Beijing Spring, *Guangcha* and China Eweekly (*Yi Bao*). His essays drew admiration for their fresh perspective, trenchant style and strong sense of justice. All of his human rights activities were confined to circulating petitions.

At the end of 2003, Public Security authorities referred Du Daobin's case to the Xiaogan Procuratorate. In early 2004 the Procuratorate returned the case to the Public Security Bureau, stating that evidence was inadequate to proceed with a prosecution. Nevertheless, on February 17 the official Xinhua News Agency quoted a Hubei Provincial PSB spokesman as emphasizing that "Du Daobin's activities did not constitute normal civil rights in the form of benevolently reflecting criticism to government organs; rather, he chose hostile, slanderous methods to incite subversion of state power."

Du Daobin's family has been refused permission to visit him since his arrest at the end of October. His lawyer was allowed to confer with him for the first time on January 7, 2004.

Translated by Stacy Mosher