《北京竭力控制雷洋案引发的公愤》

Beijing struggles to contain anger over death in custody

The family of a Chinese man who died in police custody in May has accepted a settlement offer from Beijing authorities as they struggle to contain public outrage over their handling of the incident. 5??

On December 23, officials announced their decision not to prosecute five policemen implicated in the death of Lei Yang, sparking online protests that have gone viral over the past week. The death of Lei, a university graduate who worked at a government environmental organisation, and last week's decision not to hold the police accountable shocked urban middle-class professionals across the country. 12?23??? ??

"This was a political decision rather than one based on rule-of-law," said Hu Xingdou, a professor at the Beijing Institute of Technology. "All of my friends are disappointed and indignant. Lei Yang's case reflected the reality that the rights of Chinese citizens are not protected." ??????(Beijing Institute of Technology)????????"??"

On Thursday, the Lei family's lawyer, Chen Youxi, said in a statement that his clients had accepted a settlement offer from the authorities. He quoted Lei's parents as saying that they would abandon their earlier plans for an appeal because the pressure was "too much for two old people to bear". Mr Chen declined to comment further when contacted by telephone. ??"? ?……??……?????????"?????????????????????

In a statement issued immediately after last week's decision not to prosecute, Mr Chen had said that the family "would not blink until they get a fair result that can stand the test of history". ????????????????????????????????????"????????????????????"?

Police said that Lei, whose wife gave birth to a baby boy just one month before his death, resisted arrest for allegedly soliciting a prostitute on the night of his death — a charge his family said was inconceivable. ??

Prosecutors later found that Lei had died as a result of injuries inflicted by police who were slow to seek medical treatment for him and also obstructed the subsequent investigation. Even so, they recommended that the officers involved receive only administrative punishment from Beijing's police department, which said it regretted Lei's death and would treat the matter "seriously". ?? ??????????????????????????????????????"??"?????

Reports of beatings and occasional deaths of migrants and petitioners at the hands of urban authorities are common. But the death of a middle-class professional has aroused widespread angst among Lei's peers, many of whom were already feeling demoralised by chronic air pollution and the ruling Communist party's tightening grip on civil society. ??? ????????????????????????????

"The Lei Yang case has had a huge public impact," says Minxin Pei, a Chinese studies professor at Claremont McKenna College. "Expectations were high that the government would do something different this time because the circumstances were very outrageous." ??????????(Claremont McKenna College)??????????????"??"

As of Thursday, a petition demanding justice for Lei circulated by alumni from Lei's alma mater, Renmin University in Beijing, had attracted 2,000 signatures, including some from people as far away as Lanzhou in north-west China.

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Censors were swift to react, deleting all social media posts about the case. One Beijing-based lawyer complained that people could read about it only in traditional Chinese characters — a reference to the script used by newspapers in Hong Kong and Taiwan. His link to one Hong Kong newspaper report, posted on China's most popular messaging app, was blocked with a message reading that "to keep WeChat safe for all members, this page cannot be accessed". ???——???????????????? ?????????????????????????(WeChat)?????????????????????????"?????????????????????????????????"?

Renmin University's campus was also quiet on Thursday. Students there said they had been warned not to participate in any protests, while monitors were told to report any classroom discussions about the case. ???

Prof Pei said that Lei's tragedy had forced the Communist party to choose between angering urban residents and punishing the police. "China is entering a very difficult period," he said, with economic growth slowing and President Xi Jinping preparing for a leadership transition at the end of 2017. "The government doesn't want to antagonise the police at the moment it needs them the most. ?????????????????????????????????????"???????????????"??????? ????????????????2017????????????"?????????????????????"

"They know they have the means to deal with the public blowback," he added. "They can go after the petition leaders, intimidate and threaten them, and it will blow over." "?????????????????"?????"????????????????????????????????"

One Beijing intellectual said he was "more afraid than angry" about the Lei case, but believed it would have at least one positive outcome. "Lei cried for help alone. Now we are all crying out for him." ?????????????????????"??????"????????????????????"???????????????????"

Additional reporting by Archie Zhang Archie Zhang????

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