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China Detains Dissident, Citing Subversion

By [JOSEPH KAHN](#)

BEIJING — The authorities have detained a prominent Chinese human rights advocate on suspicion of subversion, escalating a crackdown on dissent during the West's holiday season.

The police detained the advocate, Hu Jia, 34, at his home in Beijing on Thursday. They gave his wife a warrant stating that he was suspected of "incitement to subvert state power," a catchall charge often used against people whom the authorities deem threatening to their power, a friend of Mr. Hu said.

If indicted and convicted, Mr. Hu could be sentenced to a long prison term. But a prosecution of one of the best known human rights advocates would generate negative publicity about China's rights record before the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

Mr. Hu became well known for helping people with AIDS get treatment despite official attempts to cover up the extent of China's AIDS crisis. Recently, he has acted as a clearinghouse for information about lawyers, peasant protesters and labor and human rights advocates around China who have faced intimidation, beatings or arrest.

Mr. Hu and his wife, Zeng Jinyan, maintain a blog that chronicles their lives under effective house arrest. Mr. Hu writes often about his run-ins with state security offices and hired thugs.

Using a Web camera, Mr. Hu participated in a European parliamentary hearing in Brussels in November about human rights in China. At the hearing he said: "It is ironic that one of the people in charge of organizing the Olympic Games is the head of the Bureau of Public Security, which is responsible for so many human rights violations. It is very serious that the official promises are not being kept before the games."

Reporters Without Borders, a Paris-based group that speaks out on behalf of journalists and rights advocates worldwide, condemned the detention.

"The political police have taken advantage of the international community's focus on Pakistan to arrest one of the foremost representatives of the peaceful struggle for free expression in China," the group said. Mr. Hu had been detained briefly in the past. But although he lives under scrutiny, the authorities have until now refrained from arresting him.

The decision to take him into custody was made after peasant leaders in several Chinese provinces issued a manifesto demanding broader land rights for peasants whose property had been confiscated for development.

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