

## Ai Weiwei: To improve Tibet situation 'system must change'

[18 September 2015] Chinese dissident and artist, Ai Weiwei, has said the political system in China needs to change in order for there to be an improvement in the situation in Tibet. Ai Weiwei has also revealed the lack of support from the British government following his arrest in 2011 and subsequent years under house arrest.

Ai Weiwei is in London to open his new exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts (which runs 19 September to 13 December 2015).

During a Q&A session, at an event hosted by the Royal Academy on 16 September, Ai Weiwei was asked by an audience member how the Chinese felt about the "oppression of the Tibetan people".

Ai Weiwei answered carefully saying, "Tibet, and also some related situation like minority situations, [is the] result of this whole system. If the system is not changed, if the political situation is not changed, I don't think Tibet has a chance for the condition to change."

Ai Weiwei continued, "It's a very sad situation but I think it is lacking of communication, lacking of sincerely understanding of humanity or respect of different culture and language. This not only happens to Tibetan people but also happens to Chinese. It's just the general condition."

Ai Weiwei's interview at The Royal Academy (16 September 2015)

View the Tibet question and response at 1:04:39

"I never met a British Ambassador"

In an interview with The Guardian, Ai Weiwei revealed that the British government were the only major government not to send a representative to meet him following his arrest in 2011 on spurious charges.

"I met all the ambassadors in Beijing, from US, Germany – Germany, we have very frequent contacts, like monthly – and Canada, Australia, even the French once, but I never met a British Ambassador."

He criticised the British government saying, "They should have a voice in matters because this is a fundamental value ... It is the value of a civil society, that's why a society becomes healthy. By doing that [ignoring him] it shows a distrust in those values, I do not think it shows respect to the Chinese people."

The British authorities had initially refused to give Ai Weiwei a business visa to allow him to be in the UK for the period of his exhibition. However, after he posted on social media a letter from the British Embassy in Beijing which stated he was only allowed a 20 day visa due failure to declare his "criminal conviction", Home Secretary Theresa May intervened and ordered he was given a full six-month visa.

## China needs rule of law

During the Guardian interview, Ai Weiwei also called on the Chinese government to introduce the rule of law, democracy and freedom of the press.

When asked what he would like to change about the Chinese government, he said, "First they have to be a society ruled of law rather than ruled by law, so nobody is above the law. And second, to really have an election. And to really have freedom of media, so people can state their mind and can examine the government's performance."

[Read the Guardian interview \(11 September 2015\)](#)

[Ai Weiwei's exhibition at The Royal Academy of Arts](#)

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