

Yang appeals to Scott Morrison in message issued by supporters

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Yang Hengjun has appealed to Scott Morrison to please “help me go home as soon as possible” in a message his supporters say came via Tuesday’s visit to him by Australian officials.

As the Australian government continues its pressure on China over Yang’s formal arrest on suspicion of espionage, the message said Yang thanked his supporters.

He said:

I am deeply indebted to the Australian embassy for coming to see me.

An [Ministry of State Security] investigation officer told me that Australia was small and wouldn’t care about me.

He said Australia was dependent on China for its trade and economy, and Canberra wouldn’t help me, let alone rescue me.

He said Australia wouldn’t help because I am not white.

This is nonsense. He was wrong. I am extremely grateful to the Australian Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Members of Parliament, the Embassy team, and the Ambassador for their help.

Read more: [Foreign Minister Marise Payne says Yang Hengjun is not Australian spy](#)

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Yang said he had devoted the past 15 years to writing for China, for Chinese people, reform, and improving China-United States relations and China-Australia relations. He did not deserve the kind of treatment he was getting, he said.

Foreign Minister Marise Payne, who issued a strong statement on Tuesday, again said the government was seeking Yang's release "particularly if he is only being held for his political beliefs."

In comments on Wednesday, she also stressed that Yang should be accorded access to lawyers and held in appropriate conditions while in detention.

Read more: [Australian writer Yang Hengjun is set to be charged in China at an awkward time for Australia-China relations](#)

Payne said the government had no reason to think his detention was connected to any other issues. The government has said Yang was not spying for Australia.

The Chinese government has reacted sharply to Australia's pressure over Yang. A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry told reporters on Tuesday: "China deplores the Australian statement on this case. I would like to reiterate that China is a country with rule of law. Australia should respect China's judicial sovereignty and not interfere in any way in China's lawful handling of the case."

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

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