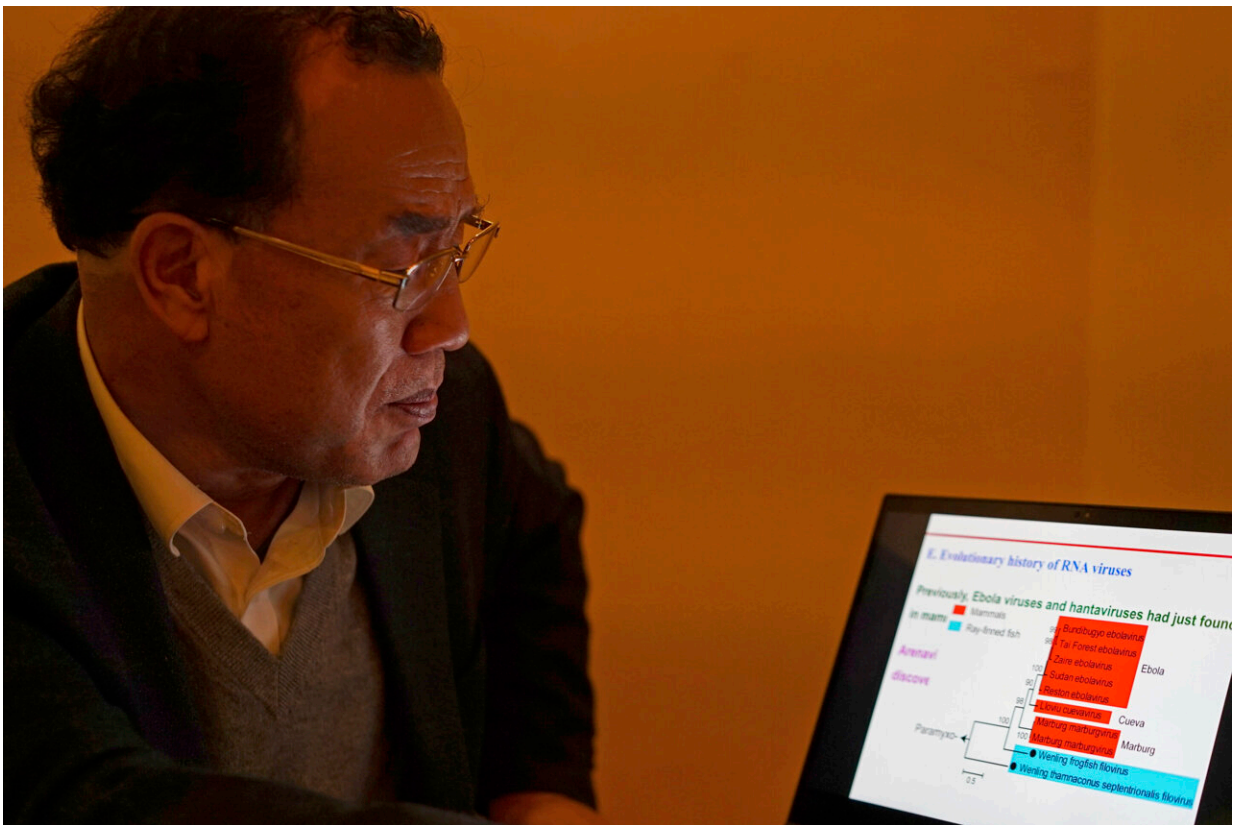


# Chinese scientist who published COVID-19 virus sequence allowed back in his lab after sit-in protest

May 1 2024

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Zhang Yongzhen, the first scientist to publish a sequence of the COVID-19 virus, looks at a presentation on his laptop in a coffeeshop in Shanghai, China on Dec. 13, 2020. Zhang was staging a sit-in protest after authorities locked him out

of his lab. Zhang wrote in an online post on Monday, April 29, 2024, that he and his team were suddenly notified they were being evicted from their lab, the latest in a series of setbacks, demotions and ousters since he first published the sequence in early January 2020. Credit: AP Photo/Dake Kang

The [first scientist](#) to publish a sequence of the COVID-19 virus in China said he was allowed back into his lab after he spent days locked outside, sitting in protest.

Zhang Yongzhen wrote in an online post early Wednesday that authorities had "tentatively agreed" to allow him and his team to return to his laboratory and continue their research for the time being.

Zhang had been staging a sit-in [protest](#) outside his lab since the weekend after he and his team were suddenly notified they had to leave their lab, a sign of Beijing's continuing pressure on scientists conducting research on the coronavirus.

The Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center previously said Zhang's lab was being renovated and was closed for safety reasons. But Zhang said his team wasn't offered an alternative until after the eviction and the new lab didn't meet [safety standards](#) for conducting their research.

Zhang's latest difficulty reflects how China has sought to control information related to the [virus](#): An Associated Press investigation found that the government froze meaningful domestic and international efforts to trace it from the first weeks of the outbreak. That pattern continues to this day, with labs closed, collaborations shattered, foreign scientists forced out and Chinese researchers barred from leaving the country.



Buildings in the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center stand near the entrance of the compound in Shanghai, China Tuesday, April 30, 2024. Zhang Yongzhen, the first scientist to publish a sequence of the COVID-19 virus, staged a sit-in protest after authorities locked him out of his lab at the center. Credit: AP Photo/Dake Kang





Buildings in the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center stand near the entrance of the compound in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 30, 2024. Zhang Yongzhen, the first scientist to publish a sequence of the COVID-19 virus, staged a sit-in protest after authorities locked him out of his lab at the center. Credit: AP Photo/Dake Kang



Virologist Zhang Yongzhen, the first scientist to publish a sequence of the COVID-19 virus, walks down a street in Shanghai, China on Dec. 13, 2020. Zhang was staging a sit-in protest after authorities locked him out of his lab. Zhang wrote in an online post on Monday, April 29, 2024, that he and his team were suddenly notified they were being evicted from their lab, the latest in a series of setbacks, demotions and ousters since he first published the sequence in early January 2020. Credit: AP Photo/Dake Kang

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