

Doctor 'disappears' after raising alarm about coronavirus in Wuhan

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Dr Ai Fen has reportedly vanished after hitting out at China's handling of the coronavirus outbreak (Picture: AFP, EPA)

A Wuhan doctor who was one of the first to sound the alarm about the spread of **coronavirus has reportedly disappeared, sparking fears she has been detained for speaking out.**

Dr Ai Fen, head of the emergency department at Wuhan Central Hospital, gave a grim account of the deaths and strain on medical staff to Chinese magazine People, and criticised the authorities' handling of the outbreak.

She described how, instead of heeding her warnings and taking early precautions, the hospital dismissed them and reprimanded her for 'illegally spreading untruthful information online' and





Ai Fen, director of the emergency department at Wuhan Central hospital (Picture: <https://archive.vn/y6fTu>)



Dr Ai was one of the first to raise the alarm about coronavirus (Picture: <https://archive.vn/y6fTu>)

According to **60 Minutes Australia**, Dr Ai has not been seen for two weeks after going public.

Following the show's airing, Dr Ai's Weibo account – a social media platform similar to Twitter – was updated with a picture captioned: 'A river. A bridge. A road. A clock chime.'

Her rumoured disappearance follows comes on the back of criticism of China's perceived efforts to cover up the true scale of the outbreak at each stage of its response.

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And once the epidemic exploded the authorities began censoring information about the virus in the public domain.

The original article was removed, but in an effort to publish Dr Ai's words, internet users translated the interview into at least five languages and reformatted it in at least 22 different ways.

The text was rendered backwards, into emojis, Braille, oracle bone script, Morse code, song sheets and even the Elvish language from Lord of the Rings.





The doctor shared photos of a patient report with the words 'SARS coronavirus' circled (Picture: <https://archive.vn/y6fTu>)

During the interview, the doctor spoke of her regret at not speaking out more following the deaths of four colleagues fighting the outbreak.

She said: 'Had I known how things would turn out, I wouldn't care if I got criticised. I would've told the whole world.'

On December 30 she received a patient's report labelled SARS coronavirus.

The SARS epidemic killed more than 800 people after infecting more than 8,000 worldwide 17 years ago.





A couple wearing protective suits in Wuhan (Picture: AFP via Getty Images)



A worker in a protective outfit (R) registers an elderly woman's information at the entrance to a bank in Wuhan (Picture: EPA)

Dr Ai circled the words 'SARS coronavirus' and shared a photo of the report in a department group chat



She said: 'I was in shock. What did I do wrong? Knowing the fact that a significant virus has been found on a patient, how can I not tell when another doctor asks about it?'

The medic said she does not consider herself a whistleblower, but rather 'the one handing out the whistles'.

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