

Netizens urge Carrefour boycott after torch relay incident

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BEIJING - Online and text message calls for a boycott of the French retailer Carrefour are circulating in China in response to the disruptions of the Olympic torch relay in Paris.

The public relations manager of Carrefour in Shanghai, Li Jing, said that the chain had started an investigation of the call, the Beijing News reported on Tuesday. He said the company didn't have any plans to deal with a boycott at present.

"Some Chinese have expressed their opinions and feelings. This is not a coincidence and the French side needs to ponder and reflect upon them," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told reporters on Tuesday. She added: "I believe people will abide by laws and regulations in expressing their reasonable appeals."

On April 7, the relay in Paris was interrupted when several backers of "Tibetan independence" rushed the wheelchair-bound torch bearer Jin Jing and tried to seize the torch.

Chinese search engine Baidu turned up about 170,000 Internet entries supporting a boycott of Carrefour starting on May 1. Similar calls have circulated on www.qq.com, a popular chat site, and through text messages.

The financial and economic channel of the popular portal Netease.com posted a survey about a boycott of French products. Among the 43,880 respondents, 95.4 percent were in favour.

Not everyone in the online community agrees with the idea of a boycott. Some pointed out that Carrefour's staff in China were mostly Chinese nationals, who might be hurt by a sales fall-off. Others said a boycott wouldn't do anything to penalize backers of "Tibet independence."