Google partners in China appeal for word on plans

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(AP) -- Chinese companies that sell advertising on Google's China search engine have appealed for information on its future and say they might want compensation if it is shut down.

The appeal in the name of 27 companies comes as Google might be moving toward closing China-based Google.cn after saying Jan. 12 it would no longer cooperate with Beijing's Internet censorship. Chinese authorities insist Google must obey the law, appearing to leave few options other than closing down.

In a letter to the executive in charge of Google's China business operations, John Liu, the advertising companies said uncertainty has damaged their business and strained relations with customers and investors.

"When we ask Google for a response, we are told to wait," says the letter, a copy of which was posted on the Web site of Chinese state television. "We can no longer wait!"

In a written response to questions, Google said, "We have received the letter and are reviewing it."

The letter to Google said companies might seek compensation for employees or customers if the company closes Google.cn.

The letter was not written by all 27 companies but was sent by one

company that added the names of the others, said a manager at one of those listed, Universal Internet Media in the eastern city of Suzhou. He would give only his surname, Wu, and declined to say which company wrote the letter.

"Ideally, the best status would be their not going. But if they finally decide to go, then we hope this will be dealt with properly," Wu said.

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