CHINA'S MEDIA WAR:

Censorship, Corruption & Control

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Journalists covering street protests during Hong Kong's Occupy Movement often found themselves the victims of heavy-handed treatment by police and anti-Movement protesters. *Image: Hong Kong Press Photographers Association*

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Thousands of demonstrators seized the Legislative Council building in Taipei to protest against a trade pact between China and Taiwan. No media in China reported the incident, except official news agency Xinhua and the English edition of the state-owned *Global Times*. *Image: Internet*

PREFACE

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) initiated a program in early 2008 to monitor and report on press freedom and violations of media rights in China in the lead-up to the Olympic Games in Beijing in August of that year. The IFJ's first annual report on press freedom in China, *China's Olympic Challenge,* assessed the media environment through 2008. Even as it noted many infringements of journalists' rights and media freedom, there was some optimism that China was moving, if slowly, toward a freer, safer and more secure working environment for local and foreign journalists.

Sadly, the situation has steadily grown worse since Xi Jinping became President of China in 2013. The state of press freedom and freedom of expression in China in 2014 was deplorable. Several journalists on the Mainland faced criminal charges, or were detained or forced to resign, after they carried out their reporting duties. Independent journalist Gao Yu made a confession under duress when police threatened to prosecute her son. Her case was a landmark showing how the authorities, on one hand, chant that China is a country governed by the rule of law, while, on the other hand, law enforcement officers violate proper legal procedures. Many prominent lawyers, scholars and bloggers suffered similar ill treatment.

The IFJ applauds the courage and tenacity of journalists reporting on China in 2014. We urge the media to remain vigilant and defend press freedom, despite the very difficult conditions under which it is forced to operate.

Online freedom was further restricted when President Xi set up the Central Internet Security and Informatization Leading Group to focus on cyber security. In the group's first meeting on February 27, Xi said: "Efforts should be made to build our country into a cyber power." These efforts actually limited the freedom of at least 600 million netizens to exercise their right to expression. Under an anti-pornography campaign, 2200 websites were forced to close and 300 blogs and video channels were shut down. At least 20 million posts were deleted on social media platforms such as forums and WeChat, and hundreds of citizens were detained without charge for posting their opinions.

Foreign journalists in China struggled against government restrictions. Working conditions remained difficult and the authorities used the content of their reports to decide whether to issue working visas. Their freedom of movement continued to be limited by security officers when they tried to visit "sensitive" region such as Xinjiang. The authorities appeared to deliberately delay releasing information about deadly incidents that occurred in Xinjiang, and forbade local media to publish original reports of such events.

Press freedom in Hong Kong came under unprecedented pressure. When the Occupy Movement was sparked off on September 28, only a very few print media outlets were able to report the facts, while the rest of the print media and television media followed the tone set by the central authorities of China. At least 39 journalists were harassed, detained, assaulted or maliciously accused by Hong Kong police or anti-Occupy Movement demonstrators during the 79 days of the Movement. Many reporters and photographers were injured during incidents on the streets. Some media displayed self-censorship, in particular by downplaying a scandal involving Leung Chun-Ying, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong. In separate incidents, at least four media workers were threatened or brutally assaulted by unidentified assailants. Nevertheless, many journalists continued to defend the right of press freedom and several new independent media groups were established.

Press freedom in Macau did not improve. Journalists were arrested on spurious grounds and two outspoken scholars were "kicked out" of their universities. The local government continued to use the "law" to bar pro-democracy journalists, scholars, politicians and activists from entering the territory.

The IFJ applauds the courage and tenacity of journalists reporting on China in 2014. We urge the media to remain vigilant and defend press freedom, despite the very difficult conditions under which it is forced to operate.

The information in this report has been provided by a growing network of contributors to the IFJ monitoring project, from Mainland China and beyond. Many of these contributors must remain anonymous but, without them, this report could not have been produced.

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2014 was a shocking period for the citizens of Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau. Some progress was made towards democracy and accountability, with the central authorities of China making an effort to fight against graft and malfeasance, regardless of the perpetrators' position in the official hierarchy of the Communist Party, the government or the military. However, the Communist Party of China also became more skillful and sophisticated at ironing out "problems" and was able to use the "rule of law" as camouflage to deviate from proper legal procedures and imprison people who raised dissenting voices.

On the positive side, Zhou Yongkang, a former member of the Politburo Standing Committee member and former "security tsar" of China, was arrested on allegations of bribery and leaking Communist Party and state secrets. Xu Caihou, a former People's Liberation Army commander was charged with graft. Disappointingly, the media were not allowed to make their own original news reports on these cases involving official corruption. In Taiwan, the Sun Flower Student Movement in March led to massive changes in Taiwan's local elections, also known as the "nine-in-one" elections, which chose mayors, councillors, township chiefs and other local officials at the end of November. In Hong Kong and Macau, civil organizations mounted significant actions in order to awaken citizens to their political rights.

On the negative side, the Chinese authorities used heavy-handed means to control all kinds of traditional and new media. They also used the old Mao-era trick of setting "man against man". They manipulated groups of people to hold events in competition with the voices of Hong Kong citizens who were fighting for true universal suffrage for the election of the next chief executive in 2017. In Mainland China, no voices expressing political dissent had a chance to be heard in either the traditional or the new media.

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The Occupy Movement brought thousands of citizens into the streets to put pressure on the Hong Kong Government and Central Government of China to allow people to have true universal suffrage for the 2017 Chief Executive poll. *Image: Internet*

Prominent figures such as Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti, law professor Xu Zhiyong and civil rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang were not only forbidden to publish their opinions, but also had the law used against them. Ilham Tohti was convicted of separatism and sentenced to life imprisonment. Xu was convicted of "gathering crowds to disrupt public order" and sentenced to four years in jail. At the time of publication, Pu was awaiting trial on four charges including subversion of state power and inciting hatred, but no evidence had been presented to support the allegations.

As the International Federation of Journalists 2013 report recorded, the authorities used the law as a weapon to target people throughout that year, and many citizen journalists and bloggers were prosecuted. In 2014, the situation grew worse, with the authorities expanding their scope to include veteran journalists, particularly those working for Hong Kong media or international media groups.

Leading figures Gao Yu, Vivian Wu, Xin Jiang, Xiang Nanfu, He Yang, Zhang Miao, Yao Wentian (also known as Yiu Mantin), Wang Jiaomin and Wai Zhongxiao were either detained or prosecuted on various allegations. Gao was charged with disseminating state secrets because

Restrictive orders were delivered continuously in secret to all media outlets, but the authorities started issuing oral orders to avoid leaving any written "evidence" to leak out.

she allegedly disseminated "Document Number 9", a Communist Party document that sets out the "seven perils" facing China, which are reported to include "universal values" and "a free press and civil society". There is no legislation clearly stating that a party document can be regarded as a "state secret" but, according to her defence lawyer, Gao was pressured to make a "confession" to that effect. Yao Wentian, a resident of Hong Kong who is a veteran publisher of "banned" books, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in China for "smuggling ordinary goods".

Several journalists were prosecuted and detained, and general working conditions did not improve. On the contrary, journalists faced a much tougher situation and several were demoted or sacked.

At the beginning of 2014, a new National Security Commission was established under the leadership of China's President Xi Jinping. Its stated mission was to focus on internet development, but the connection of this with national security allowed the commission to expand its power to limit people's right to expression, both online and offline. The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) in June issued a public notice to all media reminding them they were forbidden to publish "critical reports" without prior approval from their employers. The notice also barred journalists from doing work "outside their assigned area of coverage", whether these were geographical areas or "beats". Previously, such restrictions were implemented subtly, but the authorities began to do it openly, and this was perceived by some as evidence that the restrictions were justified. Restrictive orders were delivered continuously in secret to all media outlets, but the authorities started issuing oral orders to avoid leaving any written "evidence" to leak out. At the same time, they mandated that only senior journalists had the right to know about the restrictive orders and required them to sign confidentiality agreements. Any journalist who disclosed the contents of an order faced retaliation. For example, Zhang Jialong was sacked after he disclosed several restrictive orders on the internet.

Journalists' rights at work and in their personal lives were also limited. Under the new regulation issued by the SAPPRFT, all local media workers, including anchormen, editors and "others who aid media personnel", and anyone who works as a "correspondent, writer or columnist" for a local, non-local or online media outlet were banned from reporting "state secrets, commercial secrets, unpublished information, and so on". The rules further constrained journalists' activities in their private lives. Journalists were told they could not "reproduce, copy or store" such information or "disseminate state secrets via any means to others" or "talk or write to others in private". The SAPPRFT said all media outlets must sign confidentiality agreements with their personnel to ensure journalists would not disclose information of that nature to others via any means, including microblogs or online forums. However, the announcement did not deal with the legal basis of the rules. In addition, the power of SAPPRFT intruded into the administration of private companies and individual people's lives. Because of this overbearing instruction, Song Zhibiao, a journalist with *China Fortune Weekly Magazine*, a subsidiary of the Nan Fang Media Group, was forced to sign an agreement terminating his contract with the group.

The Chinese authorities continued to tighten up on working visas for foreign journalists. According to the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China, four American journalists – Phillip Pan, Chris Buckley, Austin Ramzy and Javier Hernandez – were denied working visas. The power of the Chinese authorities even reached the senior executives of news organizations in their headquarters in their home countries, where the authorities pressured the executives not to publish certain stories about China. At least three

media companies – France 24, ARD TV (Germany) and the *Financial Times* – came under unusual Chinese government pressure after publishing news reports that angered the authorities. Chinese embassy officials in Paris, Berlin and London lodged direct complaints with senior editors, in an apparent effort to pressure them into restraining their reporters in Beijing. The Tokyo headquarters of Japanese media outlets received similar visits. Su Yutong, a Chinese journalist who worked for Deutsche Welle's Chinese-language service in Germany, was one of the most prominent victims of this intervention. She was abruptly terminated by her employer after she disclosed how Chinese officials had successfully influenced DW's editorial decisions.

With the Communist Party's influence clearly extending to the headquarters of overseas media outlets, there was no doubt they could influence media close by in Hong Kong and Macau. Obvious evidence of this emerged when Hong Kong rocked the international arena with unprecedented mass protests. At the end of September, hundreds of university students launched a one-week strike to press the Hong Kong Government and the Central Government of China to quash a controversial decision by the Standing Committee on August 31. The decision imposed tight restrictions on the system for the 2017 election of Hong Kong's next chief executive, and retained functional constituencies for the Hong Kong Legislative Council election in 2016. The decision and the strike brought an early start to the Occupy Central with Peace and Love Movement, which became known as the "Occupy Movement". This campaign of civil disobedience concentrated on bringing out thousands of citizens to occupy major roads. Instigated by civil society leaders Benny Tai, Chan Kin-Man and Chu Yiu-Ming, it was aimed at putting pressure on the Hong Kong Government and the Central Government of China to allow the people to have true universal suffrage for the chief executive poll.

During the months-long Occupy Movement, more than 200,000 people occupied major roads in three districts. Hong Kong police fired 87 tear gas grenades and numerous canisters of pepper spray, and used batons and shields to try to evict the protesters, but failed. During the clearance attempts, many protesters and journalists working at the scene were shoved, jostled, harassed, beaten up and arrested. The IFJ confirmed at least 39 cases in which journalists suffered inappropriate treatment by police, but the true number was certainly much higher. This was in clear violation of Chapter 39 of the Police General Orders, which state that all officers at the scene of an incident shall "facilitate the work of the news media as much as possible and accord media representatives consideration and courtesy; and not block camera lenses". Among these cases, at least three Hong Kong journalists were accused by Hong Kong police of "assaulting a police officer" or "snatching a police gun", even though there was independent footage to prove they were innocent. A prominent photographer, Paula Bronstein, was charged with criminal damage after she stood on a car bonnet to take pictures of Hong Kong police dispersing protesters at Mong Kok.

Massive cyber attacks were directed at groups on both sides of the political debate.

Several media outlets were suspected of exercising self-censorship by removing critical comments or negative reports. For instance, almost all media played down a scandal involving Leung Chun-Yin, the Hong Kong Chief Executive, after an overseas media organization disclosed he had accepted money during his tenure without reporting this to the public. Furthermore, three journalists suffered "retaliation" after they reported that seven policemen assaulted a protester. Pro-democracy media became a major target for anti-Occupy Movement protesters.

Kevin Lau, former editor-in-chief of Ming Pao newspaper, was brutally attacked with a meat cleaver. Thousands of journalists and peoples from all walks of life rallied to demand that Hong Kong Police bring the culprits to justice. *Image: Internet*

During the movement, it became obvious that an unidentified group of people were working behind the scenes to attack the movement and its three instigators. In this annual report, the IFJ is pleased to feature a report by a veteran Hong Kong journalist, who reveals the forces that were orchestrating the series of anti-Occupy protests.

Four veteran media figures suffered brutal attacks. Among them was the former editor of *Ming Pao*, Kevin Lau Chun-To, who was struck with a meat cleaver. He spent two months in hospital and will need to use a mobility aid to walk in years to come.

Massive cyber attacks were directed at groups on both sides of the political debate. Pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* and the Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme were hit by a series of massive cyber attacks during the civil "referendum" in June. Conversely, the Hong Kong and Mainland governments, as well as pro-establishment political parties and civil society organizations in Hong Kong, were attacked by an international hackers group after police fired 87 tear gas grenades at Occupy Movement protestors.

Macau's press freedom situation was not much better than Hong Kong's. An online media outlet was targeted by the authorities, and academic freedom also came under threat. Two outspoken scholars were terminated by government-funded universities.

Although press freedom worsened, at least three independent media-related groups were formed to defend press freedom. Furthermore, all media associations, including the IFJ, and journalists in Taiwan and Macau, individually or jointly issued several strong statements to condemn the brutal attack on former *Ming Pao* editor Kevin Lau. The IFJ Asia-Pacific Office sparked off an international signature campaign to defend press freedom after a series of press freedom cases, including that of Kevin Lau. IFJ affiliate the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) worked to prevent self-censorship by establishing a special committee to receive complaints.

Although 2014 was a bumpy year for Hong Kong, the IFJ applauds the many frontline journalists, camera operators, photographers and other media workers who determinedly and professionally carried out their duties. We encourage all media managers, whether they are on the Mainland or in Hong Kong and Macau, to defend their colleagues' work, and not to align themselves with any individual interests. They should stand firm and say "no" to any undue influence, and should use creative methods to disseminate information on all issues of public concern. We urge all media personnel to remember their duty and, by seeking the truth, make governments accountable to their own citizens.

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We urge the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct an independent investigation into human rights violations in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia. The IFJ believes China will not deter the investigation if it believes it did not do anything wrong.

MAINLAND CHINA

At the beginning of 2014, the authorities in Mainland China began acting on the Communist Party's dictum: "Strictly follow party political discipline." No media personnel, intellectuals and people in other sectors could avoid this pressure, which was implemented through various kinds of rules, directions and instructions. Punishments were imposed to stop anyone to taking any risk. The ideology rocked the whole country, sparking off drastic regression. The President of China, Xi Jinping, also tightened up national security, with consequences for internet freedom. Immediately after becoming President, he set up China's National Security Commission and Central Internet Security and Informatization Leading Group and warned: "Without cyber security, there is no national security."

Media integration spreads ideology

On August 19, during the fourth meeting of the Leading Group for Overall Reform, President Xi said China will build several new-style media groups that are strong, influential and credible. He also called on all traditional media to integrate with new media. In fact, demands for media integration had already been made during the Third Plenum of the 18th China Communist Party Central Committee in November 2013. According to the Communist Party's *People's Daily*, the Head of the Central Propaganda Department, Liu Qibao, said in a speech on April 23 that there was an urgent need to speed up integration because the new media had become the major channel for imparting and receiving information. However, Liu admitted that the need for change was related to state security and ensuring that the Communist Party of China could disseminate its message.

Under the integration policy, many media outlets have struggled to survive. They have either been merged with other giant media outlets or are in danger of being eliminated from the market. This consolidation of the industry poses a risk to media diversity, which is one of the core factors that make press freedom possible. On Journalists' Day, November 8, President Xi listed 10 qualities that a good journalist should have. Some of the requirements he listed were widely interpreted as meaning that all media workers should stick to the principles of the Communist Party. The last requirement of the 10 was that the media should "speak well Chinese story", which

Since Xi Jinping became President of China in March 2013, media freedom has declined drastically, particularly online. *Image: Internet*

carries a double meaning. Many media workers believed the connotation was that the journalists should act as the mouth piece of the Party, as the Central Government has been asking the media to do.

Journalists must take press card exam

From the start of 2014, all journalists in Mainland China were required to attend the inaugural national press accreditation examination. If journalists wish to work in the media industry, they must pass the examination to qualify for a press card. The training materials for the examination contain a great deal of Socialist ideology and clearly demand that journalists act as mouthpieces for the Communist Party and the government. Furthermore, the course materials demand that all journalists take on the role of guiding public opinion. The materials are an attempt to "brainwash" journalists and clearly violate the principles of press freedom. It is believed there are 700,000 journalists in China, but only 250,000 of them have press accreditation cards.

On Journalists' Day, November 8, President Xi listed 10 qualities that a good journalist should have.

Faculties, media, politically controlled

Meanwhile, the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party appointed Communist Party members to the journalism faculties of China's top 10 universities in an attempt to ensure their teaching is in line with the directives of the authorities. A Mainland journalist told the IFJ that Tsinghua University, Fudan University and Renmin University were on the list. The authorities acted on their belief that Mainland journalists are being increasingly influenced by Western liberal thinking. Quite a number of deans and lecturers at journalism schools were demoted to positions as ordinary lecturers. One university lecturer trying to uphold the principle of press freedom, who spoke on condition of anonymity, was removed from his teaching position without explanation and assigned to manage the school library. He said: "I'm very angry but I know what's going on." A common factor among those who were removed or demoted was that they were relatively outspoken or active on social media platforms.

The Central Inspection Team (CIT) under the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Chinese Communist Party (CCDI) extended their reach into media organizations' offices. On June 9, official news agency Xinhua reported that the CCDI reminded a party group within Xinhua to insist on upholding "correct guidance of public opinion" and to "strictly follow party political discipline". The Xinhua report said CIT, under CCDI, found some journalists were losing their sense of political discipline, so Xinhua should strengthen it by organizing training courses and conferences. The CIT conducted an investigation within Xinhua from October 2013 to January 2014 but publication of its report was delayed until June 2014. Around the same time, the Central Inspection Team in the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS), an official think tank, also criticized academics for losing political discipline, according to *Global Times*, an English-language subsidiary of *The People's Daily*. The report said CASS faces four major ideological problems, including acceptance of the penetration of offshore forces and use of the internet to disseminate cross-border sophistry. No evidence for these claims was given. Radio Free Asia reported that Zhang Boshu, formerly a scholar with CASS, said CIT has controlled ideology within the think tank for a long time. Zhang was not surprised by the CIT report but said it never has evidence to back up its claims. Several online media outlets republished the *Global Times* report, but it was removed speedily from the sites, including the CASS's official portal, without explanation.

Cyber security targets online content

President Xi continued to target the cyber world with the aim of strongly reinforcing the ideological line "strictly follow party political discipline" in the media industry and intellectual sector. Xinhua reported that President Xi made himself the head of the newly formed Central Internet Security and Informatization Leading Group, which was set up to focus on the cyber aspects of economic, social, political and military issues and on defining China's cyber security strategy. On February 27, at the group's first meeting, President Xi said: "Efforts should be made to build our country into a cyber power." The deputy heads of the new leading group are Premier Li Keqiang and the former Minister for the Propaganda Department, Liu Yunshan. Li and Liu are both members of the Standing Committee

From 2014, all journalists in Mainland China must pass the national press accreditation examination to qualify for a press card. *Image: Internet*

of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee. At the end of 2013, China counted about 618 million internet users. Although nearly half of the population lives outside urban areas, only 28.6 per cent of internet users live in the countryside.

President Xi also made himself the head of the new National Security Commission, which was formally established by the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Chinese Communist Party Central Committee in November 2013. At a meeting on April 15, 2014, the commission said that a national security system should cover 11 fields, including culture and information. President Xi said the role of the NSC should be "comprehensive and authoritative" so that it could safeguard China's internal and external security. Several days later, on April 19, official news agency Xinhua reported that China's National Computer Network Emergency Response Technical Team Coordination Center said in its annual report that nearly 11 million Chinese personal computers were infected in 2013. The report said 30 per cent of the attacks came from US sources. About 15,000 computers were hit by Trojan Horse malware and 61,000 websites were targeted by backdoor attacks that originated overseas.

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China has represented itself as a victim in the cyber world, but numerous news reports disclosed that many cyber attacks also came from China. *The Australian Financial Review* reported on April 28 that Chinese intelligence agencies had penetrated Australia's parliamentary computer network in 2011 and may have been inside the system for up to a year, with access to documents and emails that revealed political, professional and social links. The newspaper said the report was based on information from seven sources with knowledge of the security breach. A spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry did not answer questions raised by media after the report was published. The spokesperson continued to repeat that "China opposes and forbids any computer hacking" and said it was doubtful whether there was enough evidence to prove the accusation.

"Critical" reporting banned

The state's crackdown on press freedom and free speech continued. China's major media regulator, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT), issued a notice on June 18 that forbade publication of "critical reports". The notice was issued without consultation. Journalists feared that the notice could create excuses for management to impose self-censorship. It specifies that journalists must not

Under Director Cai Fuchao, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television has expanded its scope from traditional television to include online television. *Image: Internet*

write "critical" articles without prior approval from their employers, and bars journalists from doing work "outside their assigned area of coverage". It also demands that media outlets forbid journalists to take bribes. Those who do take bribes will have their press accreditation cancelled. Although some Mainland journalism scholars and experienced Mainland journalists said the notice only targeted state-controlled media outlets, many independent journalists and citizen journalists were deeply worried that their investigative reports could be affected.

On July 18, Song Zhibiao, a journalist with *China Fortune Weekly Magazine*, a subsidiary of the Nan Fang Media Group, was forced to sign an agreement terminating his contract with the Group after he wrote an article for a Hong Kong-based online platform, *Oriental Daily*. Several journalists said the Guangdong Propaganda Department pressed Song's supervisor to sack Song on the grounds that he had allegedly violated the latest notices issued by SAPPRFT.

In a comment piece posted on July 16, Song analysed the differences in social reactions between two attempts by the Guangdong Province government to force Guangdong television stations to broadcast news bulletins in the national language, Mandarin, instead of the regional language, Cantonese. The government had tried to implement the same policy four years earlier, but withdrew the plan after an outcry from local people. In 2014, the government acted on the lessons learned from experience. Rather than announcing the plan, they subtly implemented it through the TV stations. This time, there was no public outcry, although the reasons for this were not clear. Some of the people who were opposed to the policy told the IFJ that the instigators of the previous protest had either left Guangzhou or were busy in their own businesses.

Song Zhibao, a journalist with China Fortune Weekly Magazine, a subsidiary of the Nan Fang Media Group, was forced to sign an agreement terminating his contract with the Group. *Image: Internet*

Bans constrain work and private life

Many rules imposed unnecessary burdens on journalists. New rules banned all local media workers, including anchormen, editors and "others who aid media personnel" or work as "correspondent, writer or columnist" for a local or non-local media outlet or online media from reporting "state secrets, commercial secrets, unpublished information, and so on". The rules further constrain journalists' activities in their private lives. Journalists cannot "reproduce, copy or store" such information or "disseminate state secrets via any means to others" or "talk or write to others in private". The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) said all media outlets should sign confidentiality agreements with their personnel to ensure journalists would not disclose information of that nature to others via any means, including microblogs or online forums. However, the announcement did not deal with the legal basis of the rules. It said that anyone who breached the rules would be prosecuted under China's laws covering state secrets or sued for civil liability for breach of agreement, and have their press accreditation cancelled.

Entertainment came under scrutiny. The SAPPRFT banned four popular US television shows being aired in Mainland online video sites on the ground that the "shows committed certain violations of state regulations", but did not elaborate. The four dramas were *The Big Bang Theory, The Good Wife, NCIS* and *The Practice.* Analysts said none of the shows had political or sexual content, and the authorities may have wanted to protect the state-owned CCTV or prevent US cultural values from influencing Chinese attitudes. In March, SAPPRFT said online video sites would be punished if they did not submit US and UK shows for censorship by the local department of SAPPRFT before buying them.

Corruption in media industry revealed

The National Audit Report of China disclosed on June 27 that 38 Government bureaus, departments and institutions had misused public money. The state-owned media outlets Xinhua and *People's Daily* and their subsidiaries were among the government bodies that violated the terms of their budgets. The violations involved buying properties without consent, taking overseas trips, organizing meetings and staying at five-star hotels. However the misuse of public funds by the two major state-owned media outlets were not covered by any Mainland media including Xinhua and the *People's Daily* themselves. The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) was also implicated in serious misuses of public funds. These involved overseas vacations and the use of fake invoices to obtain money. In fact, the misuse of public money is a common problem in Mainland China, with the authorities demanding that all government bureaus, departments and institutions limit their spending.

The SAPPRFT banned four popular US television shows being aired in Mainland online video sites.

Immediately after the authorities ordered all state-owned media outlets to fight against corruption, a number of staff members at China Central Television (CCTV), the state-owned television station, were suddenly informed that their salary system would change. Before the changes, staff received a basic monthly salary with some benefits, including a bonus. However, CCTV management reduced the amount of benefits, indirectly cutting salaries. It was reported that the basic salary for a staff member under the new system is about 8000 yuan (about US$1300).

"Transparency" produces mixed results

Premier Li Keqiang signed an enforcement regulation on the state secrecy law in an effort to boost government transparency. The new Regulations on Open Government Information, which came into force in March, define secrecy levels and authority limits, and clarify time limits for various levels of confidentiality and conditions for declassification. The regulations also say that "state secrets" should be

labelled prominently, that administrative departments should regularly carry out education on confidentiality, and that officials who fail to perform their duties will be punished. In fact, similar regulations aimed at making government more accountable have been issued previously, but many legal practitioners complained that administrative officers rarely followed the existing regulations.

Under the Regulations on Open Government Information, local government has a duty to release information to the public and answer all queries in a speedy manner. On May 28, a brutal murder occurred in Zhaoyuan, Shandong Province. A woman was beaten to death by six assailants in a McDonald's outlet after she refused to give them her cell phone number. According to Mainland media reports, the six people were members of a religious cult called the Church of Almighty God. Local police did not release information about the case until a video of the attack had been circulating on the internet for three days. Zhaoyuan police said releasing the information could affect the investigation, so they had to wait until the Public Security Bureau confirmed the case was related to a religious cult. Another case that threw doubt on a local government's commitment to the regulations occurred on May 22 in Yunan Province. According to official news agency Xinhua, the Jinan Civil Service Bureau organized a press conference to respond to media queries about why 22 out of 23 people scored zero in a civil service examination. The officer did not answer any questions, but merely said the bureau "is investigating". As a result, the press conference lasted only 1 minute and 35 seconds.

In Xinjiang Province, local government was slow to tell the public about a number of deadly accidents. In one such incident, in Luntai County, 50 people were killed and 54 people were injured. However, the news was withheld from the public for four days. (For further details, please refer to **Xinjiang reports limited, biased, delayed**, page 22.)

In Xinjiang Province, local government was slow to tell the public about a number of deadly accidents.

Just before midnight on December 31, New Year's Eve celebrations on the riverfront in Shanghai turned into a stampede in which 36 people were trampled to death and 49 wereinjured. The Shanghai Propaganda Department issued an order to control all information about the disaster, particularly in online media. According to *China Digital Times*, the department prohibited all online news portals from using information from netizens who were at the scene. Online outlets were also forbidden to use information from social media, including WeChat, and from

On New Year's Eve 2015, a stampede during celebrations on the Shanghai riverfront left 36 people dead and 49 people injured. *Image: Internet*

overseas and non-Mainland media outlets. The directive also forbade online media to give prominence to reports of the deadly stampede and banned images showing the injuries of the victims. No news articles were allowed to relate the incident to anti-corruption efforts, territorial discrimination, or malicious attacks on the Communist Party, government or the Socialist system. Although the order seemed particularly aiming at online media, Shanghai's traditional media also followed it. After the incident, the local government organized a press conference for local media, and excluded all non-Mainland media, including overseas and Hong Kong journalists. A local journalist told the IFJ that newspapers in Shanghai focused on the reports of President Xi's New Year's speech and downplayed the fatal stampede.

A similar case occurred in Harbin, where five fire fighters were killed in the course of their work. On January 2, a blaze broke out in an 11-story warehouse and residential complex. The five fire fighters were killed when an illegally erected part of the building suddenly collapsed. The local media, including newspapers and online media, focused on how the government responded after the fire, but avoided the issue of why people were allowed to live in the illegal part of the building for a number of years. Some local media played down the case.

Reports of corruption suppressed

Zhou Yongkang, 71, a former member of the Politburo Standing Committee who is also known as the "Security Tsar", came under investigation for alleged "serious disciplinary violations" of Communist Party rules. Although all reporting about the case was suppressed in traditional and online media on the Mainland, quite a lot of information related to Zhou was disclosed in the overseas media. On July 29, official news agency Xinhua reported for the first time that Zhou was under investigation by the Party, but the report contained only 54 words in English. The report did not give any details about how Zhou had violated the disciplinary regulations and how many people were involved. On the same day, a commentary published by *People's Daily Online* was completely blocked on the internet. The commentary admitted that some of the members had abused their powers but said the Communist Party would insist on fighting corruption regardless of who they were, and people would be brought to justice. All relevant weibo social microblog messages were deleted.

Zhou Yongkang, a former member of the Politburo Standing Committee, was charged with bribery and disclosing state secrets. *Image: Internet*

Another prominent news story that was totally banned on the Mainland was an investigative scoop about how top political and military leaders in China were using offshore companies to avoid taxation. On January 21, an international investigation reported that more than a dozen family members of China's top political and military leaders were using offshore companies based in the Cook Islands or British Virgin Islands, but no media in the Mainland republished or followed up the story. A very small number of relevant messages were posted online, but without details or comment. The reports were first published by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which obtained more than 200 gigabytes of leaked financial data from two companies in the British Virgin Islands. Several international media outlets which published the investigation, including *The Guardian*, reported that their official online portals were blocked in the Mainland. According to the report, the brother-in-law of China's President, Xi Jinping, as well as the son and son-in-law of former Premier Wen Jiabao, are among the relatives of top political leaders using such secretive financial structures to avoid taxes or for other purposes. Currently, neither Chinese officials nor their families are required to issue public financial disclosures. As a result, citizens in the country and abroad have been left largely in the dark about the elite's use of offshore structures that can facilitate tax avoidance or the movement of money overseas. The report also estimated that between US$1 trillion and US$4 trillion in untraced assets have left China since 2000. The people who are involved in this arrangement include at least 15 of China's richest individuals, members of the National People's Congress, and executives from state-owned companies.

Several international media outlets which published the investigation, including The Guardian, reported that their official online portals were blocked in the Mainland.

Taiwan's Sun Flower Movement forced the governments of China and Taiwan to suspend implementation of the second phase of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement. *Image: Internet*

China-related events overseas ignored

In Taipei on March 18, thousands of protestors led by students seized the Legislative Council building in Taiwan after the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) members of the Taiwan Legislative Council tried to push proposed legislation on trade with China directly to the Executive Council. The members were trying to bypass a committee set up to review each section of the second phase of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, the pact on trade in services signed by Taiwan and China in June 2013. The students queried whether the KMT members' actions violated due process. In addition, Taiwan students

The tensions between China and Vietnam in the South China Sea escalated, but no independent reports were published on the Mainland.

and the public were deeply concerned that the agreement could jeopardize Taiwan's economy, security and freedom of speech. No Mainland China media reported the incident, except the official news agency Xinhua and the English language edition of the state-owned *Global Times.*

The tensions between China and Vietnam in the South China Sea escalated, but no independent reports were published on the Mainland. On May 11, hundreds of Vietnamese citizens protested in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, against China's actions in the South China Sea. However no Chinese media, including official news agency Xinhua, reported the demonstration. The media merely repeated the statement of the Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, who said: "The Chinese side is always opposed to one or two countries' attempts to use the South Sea issue to harm the overall friendship and cooperation between China and ASEAN."

Dissent and protests not reported

No Chinese media reported on the death of activist Cao Shunli, 52, from organ failure, in 309 Military Hospital in Beijing on March 14, after she was transferred from Chaoyang District Detention Centre on February 16. Cao went missing at Beijing airport on September 14, 2013,

Cao Shunli, a Chinese activist, died amid suspicions that she was denied medical attention while detained. *Image: Internet*

Dark Clouds Press Down

Zhang Tong

Press freedom in mainland China deteriorated sharply in 2014, reaching the darkest days yet in the 21st century. The Chinese authorities continued to tighten the already stringent censorship and expand manipulation in the media, using the internet, television, newspapers, radio and other platforms to promote the Communist Party and the government's ideology.

In February 2014, the "Ministry of Truth" ordered a thorough search for "pornographic and vulgar information" on the internet. *Image: Internet*

In the first half of the year, the Chinese authorities issued a notice entitled "Fight Porn, Fight Fakes: An Autumn Wind 2014 Campaign". The new campaign required national media organizations to fight against "fake reporting organizations" and "fake reporters" from mid-March to September. The stated aim of the campaign was to clamp down on pornographic and vulgar materials. Focusing on the so-called "most recommended", "classic reads" and "hotspot" columns, it repeatedly asked website operators to delete such information. However, the definition of what constituted "pornographic and vulgar information" rested entirely with the Central Propaganda Department and its subordinate provincial propaganda departments, as well as the State Council Information Office, the State Press and Publication Administration of Radio. These agencies are collectively known among China's media personnel and netizens as the "Ministry of Truth", in a reference to George Orwell's novel *1984*. The real effect of the campaign was to prevent the media and internet users from enjoying their rights to express their views openly, using a typically totalitarian means of exercising social control.

China still has not passed a "Press Act". Press freedom does not exist under the regime and China's press freedom is rated very poorly on international standards by various press freedom ranking organizations.

Since taking office in 2012, President Xi Jinping has tightened up controls on free speech and press freedom. Well-known figures such as Gao Yu, Yan Yusheng, Nan Fu, Xin Jian, Wu Wei and Song Zhibiao are only a few of the growing number of media and internet users who have been subjected to political persecution by being harassed, dismissed, detained and arrested. As a result, President Xi Jinping and other leading government figures are seen as enemies of free speech.

Unrestrained state propaganda departments have been regular features of totalitarian states such as Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and China. Wherever these propaganda departments exist, there is no freedom of the press. In 2014, China's State Propaganda Department issued a directive to the media, just as it has often done in the past, advocating for strict controls on public opinion based on pragmatism and propaganda. Such orders aim to create artificial "truth" and "reality", and the Propaganda Department demands that even the directives that shape this artificial reality must be kept secret.

The new campaign required national media organizations to fight against "fake reporting organizations" and "fake reporters".

However, in 2014, some media personnel made several of the secret directives public and successfully tore open a gap in the iron curtain of the "Ministry of Truth", letting the world know how China's media censorship and control is carried out. Naturally, this angered the "Ministry of Truth", as the disclosures were considered an open challenge to the power of the Propaganda Department.

Zhang Jialong, a famous blogger, was one of the people subjected to punishment by the Communist Party for "leaking" propaganda orders. On June 30, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) issued "Job Behavior Information Management Measures for Journalists". The measures required all news media organisations to sign confidential, legally-binding undertakings with their employees setting out procedures for improving internal

management of information. The undertakings were considered to be a remedial measure after the Zhang Jialong "leak". Some critics called it the "Zhang Jialong Provision".

Some other orders issued by the "Ministry of Truth" include the following:
"A comprehensive clean-up" of anything related to Xu Zhiyong, Liu Xiaobo and other well-known scholars in the Chinese media and internet was ordered by the "ministry" on January 26. These scholars are considered sensitive, so no information about them is permitted. The authorities retaliated against the scholars because they expressed their views openly and peacefully.
"Delete all references to 'Xi-tler'." This is a nickname given to President Xi Jinping by China's netizens because of his hardline approach. The nickname obviously compares him to Hitler, the dictator of Nazi Germany.

In 2014, some media personnel made several of the secret directives public and successfully tore open a gap in the iron curtain of the "Ministry of Truth", letting the world know how China's media censorship and control is carried out.

"Delete immediately any English manuscripts from official news agency Xinhua on the events in Urumqi, Xinjiang province, because they are deemed non-normative." The media were advised to wait for the Chinese-language manuscripts from Xinhua.
"Weibo clean-up. All comment threads supporting civil rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang must be deleted. Regard words such as 'provoke' and 'trouble' as harmful information. All Weibo accounts associated with 'provoke and trouble' must be closed."
"Clean up all Weibo accounts that carry 'Xi Jinping speech research center' and prevent net users from using those words as key search terms."
"Delete all news related to 'CCAV exposes another insider trading scandal. Station chief takes profit of 40 million'. All past published reports, re-runs and reprints must be comprehensively and immediately deleted." CCAV is a parody term used by Chinese netizens to mock and ridicule CCTV, the state owned channel. Netizens use it to bypass the censorship system in order to let the public know how the authorities control messages on the internet. CCAV became a pop term when CCTV's evening bulletin broadcast a news item trying to push the need to crack down on pornography and prostitution. Many observers thought that this action was actually aimed at fettering the internet."

"Only manuscripts from Xinhua News Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be used for news related to incidents involving violent attacks and Chinese investment and construction projects in Vietnam. News media are not allowed to use their own reporting, or foreign sources. No forum discussions are allowed. Strict management of interactive discussion and news threads are enforced."

Ironically, the Ministry of Truth also ordered that news related to the suicide of a propaganda official, Li Wu Feng, must be deleted. Li was a senior official in charge of media censorship and was involved in the maintenance of the Golden Shield Network, which is colloquially known as the "Great Firewall of China" censorship and surveillance system. As the ancient Chinese saying goes, someone is "shooting himself in the foot."

The BBC, *The New York Times*, *Bloomberg News* and other popular websites are characterized as "illegal foreign websites" by the Chinese authorities and made inaccessible by the notorious Great Firewall. Media and internet users cannot log on these sites if they do not "climb over the wall".

With further intensification of contradictions between the Chinese Communist Party and the people, the Chinese authorities want to fully block and clean up the so-called harmful information that is bad for its rule. It is expected that the Party will continue to exert tight control over the media and the internet, so that it becomes a propaganda tool for the authorities rather than a relatively free public sphere for the people.

In today's globalized, information technology-driven and market-oriented world, no government will prevail if it intentionally casts an iron curtain over the media and cuts off public opinion. The presence of the Ministry of Truth is seen as a violation of freedom and of international laws; it is against humanity, as well as against freedom and truth.

Over the years, the Chinese people have shed their blood and sweat for freedom. These courageous Chinese will continue their efforts to tear down every wall that is erected by their autocratic government. It will help them achieve their desire sooner if the international community can help them and express support for the individuals concerned in China.

when she was en route to Geneva, Switzerland, to attend a training session on UN human rights mechanisms. At the time, the UN Human Rights Council was preparing to review China's human rights record over the previous four years under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. In October 2013, Cao was formally charged with "picking quarrels and provoking troubles". According to Amnesty International, Cao was prevented from receiving medical treatment even though she had serious health problems, including tuberculosis and liver disease. According to Human Rights in China, Cao's lawyer, Wang Yu, said authorities at the Chaoyang District Detention Centre took away the medications that Cao brought with her and refused to allow her medical treatment. A mainland Chinese journalist said: "We definitely could not report Cao's case on the first day. Because of her background and the suspicions that she died due to lack of proper medical treatment, her case has become an international issue."

Reporting of protests was totally forbidden. Citizens of Maoming City, Guangdong Province, began a series of protests on March 30 against plans by the local government to add a paraxylene plant to the city's petrochemical operations. Police used tear gas and force to disperse the crowds, but no Chinese media reported the rallies except the English edition of the *Global Times,* a daily newspaper published under the auspices of the government-owned *People's Daily*. A mainland journalist said: "As usual we can't report on any demonstration. This time, the order came not only from the Central Propaganda Department but also from the provincial propaganda department. They demanded that we publish the local government's response after the protest."

Silence on Tiananmen Square massacre

The Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989 is still a taboo subject in China. Not a single word on the event is allowed to appear. On June 4, the world marked the 25th anniversary

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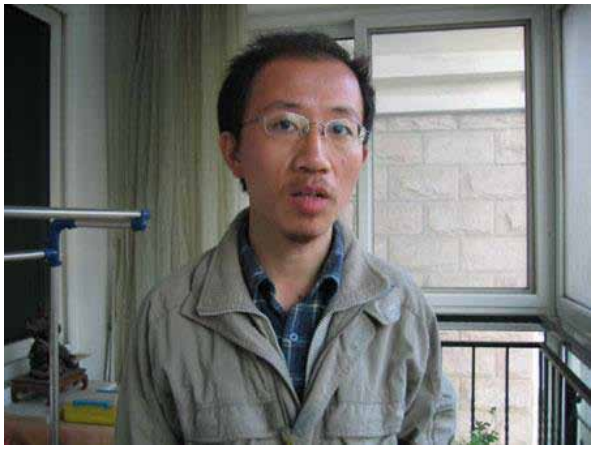
of the massacre. As the anniversary was approaching, repression of free speech became even more extreme. The Chinese authorities began cracking down in March to prevent journalists carrying out duty to report. At least seven media personnel working for Hong Kong and overseas media outlets were detained, charged or sentenced from early April onward.

Guangdong protests in March 2014 were not reported on Chinese media. *Image: Weibo.com*



Activist Hu Jia was placed under house arrest. *Image: Internet*

A movement called "Return to Tiananmen Square" was initiated by a group of activists, making the Chinese authorities very nervous. As a result, many activists, artists, prominent celebrities and scholars were either detained, put under house arrest or forced to vacate their apartments. They included Ding Zilin, a prominent member of the Tiananmen Square Mothers group of families who were bereaved by the massacre. It was reported that on May 3, when Ding was preparing to leave her home town in Jiangsu province on May 6, police asked her not to go back to her Beijing apartment. Similarly, a former Director of the Office of Political Reform of the Central Committee, Bao Tong, was forced to vacate his apartment. His son said the demand was quite unusual. Bao was also the Policy Secretary of Zhao Ziyang, who was the reformist General Secretary of the Communist Party from 1987 until 1989, when he was ousted in the aftermath of the massacre. Hu Jia, a prominent activist, was put under house arrest with several security agents surrounding his apartment.

On June 1, Beijing local government claimed that it would mobilize 100,000 people to act as informers and 850,000 volunteers to form a "safety network" to prevent anything happening in Beijing. On June 3, the government suddenly announced that several exits from Muxidi and Tiananmen Square subway stations would be closed until further notice. Many police cars were either parked or patrolling near Tiananmen Square and Muxidi, where the army opened fire at midnight on June 3, 1989. Hong Kong Radio Television reported that many policemen were patrolling on the street. The officers checked identifications and took photos of all journalists and asked them to leave, because they deemed all journalists to be working. A journalist told the IFJ that a security officer immediately identified them when they were riding on a bicycle and taking pictures with their smart phones. The officers deleted the images and demanded that the journalists reveal their colleagues' names and whereabouts.

Journalists barred from free speech trials

While President Xi Jinping says repeatedly that China should be governed under the "rule of law", in reality it is governed under "rule of man", which in fact means the rule of the Communist Party. Under Chinese law, the media are forbidden to attend court hearings in certain types of cases, but this ban does not include trials of people charged with "picking quarrels and provoking trouble". Nevertheless, on September 12, the media was refused permission to cover the criminal trial of journalists Guo Feixiong and Sun Desheng, who are fighting for good governance and press freedom. Guo, 48, whose real name is Yang Maodong, and Sun, 32, were taken into custody on August 8, 2013, and charged with picking quarrels and provoking trouble. The incident occurred in January 2013, when Guo and Sun held up placards and gave speeches at a demonstration outside the headquarters of the *Southern Weekly* in Guangzhou after journalists disclosed that the New Year's Day special editorial had been censored. They also campaigned for disclosure of government officials' assets. When their case came up for a hearing, several representatives of

Several prominent independent journalists were punished, in particular those who were working for overseas media or particular non-governmental organizations.

overseas and Hong Kong media were denied entry to the court room in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, without explanation. Police also insisted on checking journalists' press accreditation when they were waiting outside the court building.

Independent journalists penalised

Several prominent independent journalists were punished, in particular those who were working for overseas media or particular non-governmental organizations. Gao Yu, an outspoken freelance Chinese journalist aged around 70, was detained by the Chinese authorities and charged on May 8 with releasing "state secrets" to a Hong Kong media outlet. Gao was arrested by police on the street on April 24. Until May 8, official news agency Xinhua reported that Gao had released information to a non-Mainland media outlet in August 2013. Although Xinhua did not specify the information involved, it is widely believed to be document "Number 9", which was issued by the Central Committee warning its members against "seven perils", including "universal values," civil society and a free press. At the time, Gao was working for Deutsche Welle, Radio Free Asia and Hong Kong magazine *Mirror Monthly*.

Outspoken independent journalist Gao Yu said police threatened to prosecute her son unless she admitted that she had released a "state secret" to overseas media. *Image: Mike Clarke/AFP*

China Central Television (CCTV) aired film of Gao confessing to the charge of releasing state secrets. The report showed Gao with her face covered. According to Gao's defence lawyer, her confession was made under duress. Police threatened to prosecute her son if she refused to admit the charge. The Beijing Court conducted a closed door hearing on November 21. Dozens of police officers and its agents blocked all the entrances of the court building and did not allow any journalist to get close to it. Gao has been jailed twice before because she wrote about the Tiananmen Square Massacre. In 1999, she became the first journalist to receive the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize. In 2000, she was named one of the International Press Institute's 50 World Press Freedom Heroes of the twentieth century.

Gao's best friend, writer Yao Jianfu, 82, disclosed on August 26 that he had been detained by police in early May for a month without explanation after he gave an interview to an overseas media outlet. Yao, author of a biography of Chen Xitong, a former Mayor of Beijing, was asked to halt publication of his new book in Hong Kong, and warned not to give any interviews after he was released.

Critical journalists sacked, detained

Zhang Jialong, a journalist with popular listed online media company *Tencent*, was sacked on May 23 for allegedly "leaking business secrets and other confidential and sensitive information". He had been suspended from work on May 20. Zhang said in his blog that he believed his termination was decided by *Tencent* at the instigation of the propaganda authorities, including the Central Propaganda Department. He said a possible reason for his detention was that he disclosed online a restrictive order issued by the propaganda department. He said another likely cause was that he expressed concern about internet censorship in China when he met with the US Secretary State, John Kerry, on February 15. The meeting occurred while Secretary Kerry was visiting China, and included press freedom activists Wang Keqin, Ma Xiaolin and Wang Chong. The following day, the propaganda authorities forbade all media to publish any reports about Secretary Kerry's meeting with "four prominent Chinese social media bloggers to talk about internet freedom". Though Zhang faced tremendous pressure, he was not afraid to tell the truth. On April 16, he

The propaganda authorities forbade all media to publish any reports about Secretary Kerry's meeting with "four prominent Chinese social media bloggers to talk about internet freedom".

said in an article published on the website of *Foreign Policy* magazine that the number of media personnel and bloggers in detention had increased since President Xi Jinping was appointed. Zhang wrote: "Xi Jinping and his administrative are labeled as rivals of freedom of speech." In November,

Journalist Zhang Jialong met with US Secretary of State John Kerry and expressed his concern about internet censorship. He was later sacked from online media company Tencent, for allegedly leaking business secrets and other confidential and sensitive information" *Image: Internet*

Zhang was denied permission to leave the Mainland and go to Taiwan. No reason was given, but it is widely believed the refusal was due to an upcoming election in Taiwan.

Cao Baoyin, managing vice publisher of a branch of Central Compilation and Translation Press, was taken away by Nanjing police on September 23. A human rights lawyer said in his blog that he received a message from Cao's wife that Beijing police accused Cao of picking quarrels and provoking trouble, but gave no evidence to back up the allegations. Police also ransacked Cao's house. Cao is a former commentator with the *New Beijing Newspaper*.

Tie Liu, 81, former journalist, was detained on September 13 by Beijing police on the accusation of "provoking trouble" and then was charged with "illegally managing a business", but no evidence was given to support the charge. According to his wife, Ren Hengfang, Tie was probably detained because he had recently published an essay criticizing Liu Yunshan, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee who is in charge of all media control. Tie publicly accused Liu of suppressing press freedom.

Criminal law used to gag reporters

Accusations against journalists for alleged involvement in criminal acts were one of the themes of 2014. Liu Hu, 38, a journalist with Guangdong-based *New Express Daily*, was charged by Beijing police with defamation, extortion and disturbing social order after he revealed that several government officials might have been involved in criminal activities. The people allegedly defamed included Ma

Accusations against journalists for alleged involvement in criminal acts were one of the themes of 2014.

Zhengqi, deputy director of the State Administration for Industry and Commerce. Liu made the claims on his microblog between December 2012 and January 2013. He was detained for a month before he was charged. Liu was charged with "extortion" because he asked officials to donate 650,000 yuan (about US$80,000) to

Respected business newspaper *21st Century Business Herald* was forced to shut down. *Image: Internet*

a non-government organization that cares for orphans and disabled children. Liu's lawyer, Zhou Ze, asked in his microblog how such a donation could be regarded as "extortion" when Liu did not gain anything personally from it. Zhou also said that when Liu was being interrogated, the police asked him to reflect on how he had "damaged the image of the Communist Party". The charges drew protests from a number of legal practitioners and media workers. Some commentators asked why the government was taking legal action under the criminal law. Several said the move was aimed at suppressing online speech. The IFJ Asia-Pacific office demanded that Liu be given a fair and open trial. Since the case relates to Article 35 of Chinese Constitution, which guarantees free speech and freedom of the press, the IFJ also demands that the authorities arrange a microblog broadcast of Liu's trial so that the public can learn the truth.

In September, the website of a respected business newspaper, *21st Century Business Herald*, was forced to shut down and a number of senior managers and general journalists were accused of "extortion". The official news agency Xinhua reported on September 3 that eight suspects, including Liu Dong, president of the paper's website, and Zhou Bin, the website's editor-in-chief, had colluded with colleagues and two financial public relations firms to solicit protection money from companies that were about to list or be restructured, in exchange for not publishing negative reports about those companies. On September 25, two more managers of *21st Century Business Herald* were arrested. Shen Hao, the editor-in-chief, and Chen Dongyang, the general manager, were taken from their offices by Shanghai police. According to a report in Hong Kong-based *Ming Pao* newspaper, the editorial department in Beijing was searched at the same time as the managers were detained. The report did not say whether police had a search warrant. On September 11, the Central Propaganda Department ordered that the media should not use other sources of information about the incident, and should only republish Xinhua's report on it. The order said that news reports must support the police action and be accompanied by an editorial condemning the incident.

Campaign against "fake" news

Jinghua Newspaper, which is controlled by the Beijing Propaganda Department, reported on May 21 that eight out of 11 suspects had been charged after a campaign against "fake" news. The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) and other departments and offices launched the nationwide campaign in 2013 to "prevent extortion by news reporting and contain the spread of fake news". Two media outlets were forced to shut down because they were allegedly "fake media outlets". The SAPPRFT said it had received more than 400 complaints. After the investigation, 216 newspapers were accused of violating regulations, four publishing companies had their licenses cancelled, and six media outlets were forced to shut down. Some 14,000 press cards were cancelled because the journalists holding them were allegedly involved in reporting fake news.

On September 15, the SAPPRFT ordered the Chinese National Academy of Arts to supervise *Yanhuang Chunqiu*, a liberal reformist monthly journal. This journal was originally supervised by the Yan Huang Culture of China Association. Analysts, including the editor-in-chief of the journal, are deeply worried that the editorial direction will change in the future. The Chinese National Academy of Arts focuses purely on the arts.

Two media outlets were forced to shut down because they were allegedly "fake media outlets".

Wang Yaofeng, a commentator with *Jiaxing Daily*, a local paper directly controlled by the Communist Party, was terminated on November 23. According to an online report by the state-controlled *People's Daily* on November 24, a blogger complained that Wang posted "extreme" opinions on his weibo (micro blog) account. However the report did not elaborate on the content of Wang's supposedly "extreme" messages. According to Hong Kong-based *Ming Pao Daily*, Wang posted a supportive comment about the Hong Kong Occupy Movement on November 15.

Journalists accused of extortion

Li Jing of *West Times* was accused by the All China Journalists Association of involvement in bribery in 2011. On November 23, official news agency Xinhua reported that Li allegedly incited villagers in Heshui County, Qingyang Prefecture City, Gansu Province, to protest against the requisition of land by the local government in order to "extort" 130,000 yuan in public funds from the local county government. Li allegedly used a similar method in Qingcheng County to gain another 130,000 yuan from the county government. The Xinhua report also said Li "extorted" a necklace and five sets of clothes from the local government bureau.

Another journalist, Guo Haiwen of *Charity News*, collected 60,000 yuan to help villagers of Wucheng County, Shandong Province, to fight for compensation after their land was requisitioned by local government over the period from 2008 to 2011. However, the Xinhua report did not give details of how Li and Gao had allegedly "breached" professional ethics.

Publications suspended and shut down

The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) announced on November 22 that

four publications had been punished with penalties ranging from suspension to shut-down. The four – *Commercial Times*, a Communist Party controlled media outlet in Inner Mongolia, *Dianzi Shijie Magazine (Electronic World Magazine), Net Friend World* and *China Chain Store* – allegedly violated the rules by expanding their businesses without official approval. The report said *Commercial Times* allowed unauthorized people to act as reporters, while the other three illegally published essays. *Commercial Times* was ordered to shut down and the other three publications were suspended for six months.

Media workers physically attacked

It is still quite common in China for journalists to be physically attacked. According to media reports, Man Da, a journalist with *Chutian Metropolis Daily*, was attacked on May 18 by a group of six men while trying to investigate allegations against Zhong Qibin, the head of the Village Committee in Hongshan district. Man was investigating reports that Zhong may have breached Communist Party rules by planning to hold a birthday party for his 10-week-old son. Man Da was reportedly detained and attacked by the six men, who wanted him to disclose the source of the information that had led him to investigate Zhong. Man was slapped, kicked and punched by the men for an hour, causing multiple injuries all over his body. One of the attackers was reported to have said to Da: "Don't dare think you can leave if you don't tell us who the informer is." Following the attack, Hongshan District Police detained the six men and they were each punished with 10 to 15 days of administrative detention.

Man Da was slapped, kicked and punched by the men for an hour, causing multiple injuries all over his body.

On August 16, Ma Lingfeng of China Central Television (CCTV), a state media outlet, was harassed, blocked and attacked by a staff member of the China Railway Construction Corporation when he was trying to report on a landslide that trapped five construction workers. The landslide occurred on a site where the corporation is building a tunnel in Yuzhong County, Lanzhou, Gansu Province. The railway construction body is also known as China Railway Shisiju Group Corporation (CRSGC). According to a report in *Beijing News*, Ma was suddenly pushed to the ground by a CRSGC staffer while he was making a phone call, and the man took Ma's mobile phone. When the man noticed that a cameraman was filming, he tried to take away the camera. After Ma called the police, six men surrounded the television crew and Ma's finger, leg and head were injured.

On August 19, Li Runwen, a reporter with *China Youth Daily,* went with an intern to investigate alleged non-payment of student wages at a factory belonging to the Hangzhou Wahaha Group Co, Ltd (also known as Wahaha) in Jiangsu Province. A company security guard demanded to take a picture of Li's press card. When Li refused, the guard suddenly yelled at him and splashed tea over the two journalists. An unknown person cried out "fake reporter" and several workers surrounded Li and pushed him onto the ground. Li's head was injured by several kicks and punches. *China Youth Daily* issued a statement the next day condemning the guard's brutality. The secretary of Wahaha's publicity department visited Li and police launched an investigation into the attack. Wahaha claims it is the largest beverage enterprise in China. In 2013, Wahaha said it ranked number 179 among China top 500 enterprises and number 83 among China top 500 manufacturers.

Citizen journalists lack legal protection

Citizen journalists are still without any protection in Mainland China, particularly when they are working for "sensitive" websites. Three citizen journalists for website *64 Tianwang* were detained on March 9 after they published an article about a woman who attempted to commit self-immolation and a man who vandalized the portrait of Mao Zedong in Tiananmen Square, Beijing. According to Radio Free Asia report, the three citizen journalists – Wang Jing, Liu Xuehong, and Xing Jian – helped people in Beijing to write letters about their grievances to various government departments. Huang Qi, the founder of website *64 Tianwang*, said the incidents occurred separately on March 5 and 6, just at the time of the National Congress meetings in Beijing. Huang was also interrogated later by police.

Xiang Nanfu, 62, a citizen journalist with US-based *boxun.com*, was arrested on May 3 on accusations of making false reports, according to a report by official news agency Xinhua on May 13. Xinhua said Xiang was charged with

Xiang Nanfu, a journalist with overseas-based online outlet Boxun, was charged with "picking quarrels and provoking trouble". Boxun said the evidence produced by the authorities was incorrect. *Image: Internet*

"picking quarrels and provoking trouble". It cited a report headlined "Human organ harvesting from living; people buried alive" and said the reports had damaged China's reputation. China Central Television broadcast Xiang's confession. Boxun said there was no such report on its website, and added that the site had recently suffered a series of cyber attacks.

Activists and artists silenced

No media outlet can publish any independent reporting on outspoken intellectuals, activists and artists. On January 22, the Intermediate Court in Beijing held the trial of activist Xu Zhiyong but did not arrange a microblog broadcast of the hearings. This contrasted with the trial of disgraced party leader Bo Xilai. Xu was one of the founders of the New Citizens Movement, which is fighting for equal rights for every Chinese citizen. Xu's trial has drawn international attention, and several representatives of the European Union went to the court room planning to attend the hearing. Xu was charged with "gathering a crowd to disturb public order" after a series of protests demanding the right to education and calling on officials to publicly declare their assets. Zhang Qingfang, one of Xu's defence lawyers, was taken away by police when a crowd of journalists interviewed him after the trial. Xu's microblog and relevant messages he had posted were deleted. Xu is being compared to 2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo, a writer and academic who is in prison for "inciting subversion of state power". Xu was arrested on July 16, 2013, after he had spent more than three months under house arrest in Beijing. Xu stated openly that "the country should be ruled under the constitution".

Artist Chen Guang was detained by police on May 7 after he performed an art piece on April 29 in which he used red ink to write the years from 1989 onwards on a white wall in his studio in Songzhuang, an arts village in the eastern part of Beijing. Gao Jian, a Chinese Australian and former soldier of the People's Liberation Army, was taken away by police from his studio near Songzhuang on June 1. According to *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Gao's friend Melanie Wang said

Xu Zhiyong is charged with "gathering a crowd to disturb public order. *Image: Internet*

Gao had told her that he would be detained for 15 days, but no reason for his detention was given. It is widely believed his detention was related to his recent art work showing Tiananmen Square covered in meat. Prominent human rights lawyer Teng Biao, a lecturer at China University of Political Science and Law who is currently a visiting scholar at Hong Kong Chinese University, was warned by his employer and by Chinese security agents not to attend the candlelit vigil held at Hong Kong's Victoria Park on June 4.

An independent film festival in Beijing was shut down on August 23. According to overseas media reports, several local village leaders and police separately visited the executive administrators of the Li Xianting Film Fund, the organizer of the film festival, and Li Xianting, the founder of the fund. They all demanded that the organizer give up plans to hold the festival at Songzhuang. When they agreed to stop the screenings in Beijing and change the venue to a hotel in Hebei, local police in Hebei also banned the film festival. Li disclosed he had been under police surveillance for some time. A film, *The Road to Fame*, was barred from being screened even though it had received good comments from critics at the Europe Film Festival. According to reports, the film touches on the Cultural Revolution.

"Suicides" of media managers

Tragically, 2014 was marked by a series of mysterious "suicides" by senior media managers. On April 29, Song Bin, the deputy publisher of Xinhua News Agency in Anhui Province, was found dead in suspicious circumstances in his office. Despite rumours about the case, neither local police not Xinhua released any information about Song's death. On March 26, Li Wufeng, the deputy director of the State Council Information Office, who was responsible for online monitoring and directing online news reporting, was found dead after apparently falling from the sixth story of a building. The *People's Daily* English language Twitter feed reported that the cause of death was unknown, but the tweet was deleted and the State Propaganda Department issued a directive that internet media must delete all "speculative and accusatory comments". Since March, at least five senior Government officials with media-related responsibilities, including senior managers from the China Publishing Group Cooperation, the Central Propaganda Department and the State Council Information Office, have been investigated by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Communist Party.

Xinjiang reports limited, biased, delayed

A series of deadly accidents either occurred in Xinjiang Province or were connected to people of Uyghur ethnicity. In these cases, the local government chose to delay reporting about the incidents and released very limited information to the public. In addition, not a single Mainland

In Xinjiang Province, it is a common to see policemen patrolling the streets and checking the identification cards of Uyghurs. *Image: Serenade Woo*

media outlet found the courage to make an independent report about events in Xinjiang, even though the cases involved injustice or people's right to life.

On January 29, *Global Times*, the sister paper of *The People's Daily*, reported that about 10 terrorists had been shot dead in Xinjiang province on January 24. It was the first time such an incident has been reported by state-owned media, but the report appeared only in the paper's English language version. The report did not give details, and said only that the "terrorists" were hunted down by police. One policeman was injured and there were no civilian casualties.

Not a single Mainland media outlet found the courage to make an independent report about events in Xinjiang.

Just two months later, another deadly incident occurred in Yunnan Province. A group of black-clad assailants slashed at crowds with knives at a railway station in Kunming on March 1, killing 29 people and injuring 143. The incident sparked an accusation by the government-affiliated journalists' union that some western media had applied "double standards" in their reporting. The state-owned media described the brutal incident as a "terrorist attack" because the next day the Kunming police discovered several flags of the "East Turkestan" forces. The report said "evidence pointed to politically motivated Xinjiang separatists" and described it as "the latest in a spate of terrorist attacks carried out by them". A number of lawmakers and politicians pressed for a nationwide campaign against terrorist activities.

Some international media outlets, including CNN, BBC, *The New York Times*, Associated Press, Reuters and *The Washington Post,* carefully reported the incident in neutral language. The reports either used quotation marks around the term terrorist attack or called the assailants "attackers" or "activists", rather than terrorists. The All-China Journalists Association condemned the reports for their alleged "double standards" and accused the foreign media of having "violated the principle of being objective" and "lacking professional ethics in journalism". However, the association did not condemn the Central Propaganda Department's order to all media not to produce any independent reports on the Kunming incident. A Mainland journalist told the IFJ that an order was issued and media were told to stick with the principle that no separatism is allowed. Immediately after the accident, no reports were published on the official portal of the Kunming Government or on local news media websites.

Attacks blamed on "terrorists"

Similar cases continued to occur in Xinjiang. A deadly explosion occurred at South Urumqi Railway Station on April 30, which was the last day of a visit by the President of China, Xi Jinping, to the southern part of Xinjiang. Four hours later, the official news agency Xinhua issued an initial report on the incident, saying the explosion caused four casualties but otherwise giving very limited information. Four major websites – *Soho, Sina, 163.com* and *Tencent* – did not post the Xinhua report on their front page. According to Hong Kong's *Ming Pao Daily News*, images and comment about the incident were largely deleted from the internet. The next day, Xinhua reported that two suspects, both members of the Uyghur minority, had been arrested. Xinhua described them as being under the "prolonged

BBC reported the Kunming attack in neutral language. *Image: Internet*

influence of extreme religious thoughts". Previously, the state had described the suspects as "terrorists", the same description used for Uyghurs in connection with several other incidents in the past, but international experts asked whether China had abused the term "terrorism" to justify using excessive force to deal with suspects.

A Mainland journalist told the IFJ that an order was issued and media were told to stick with the principle that no separatism is allowed.

In mid-June, China Central Television suddenly aired 23 minutes of surveillance footage relating to a series of "terrorist" attacks allegedly committed by Uyghurs over the previous 12 months. The video covered the attacks in Turpan in June 2013, the Tiananmen Square jeep crash explosion in October 2013, the mass stabbings at Kunming railway station in March 2014 and an explosion involving cars at Urumqi market in May 2014. The video also featured online propaganda statements by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which is listed as a terrorist group by the United Nations Security Council. The State Internet Information Office said the materials put online by the ETIM were filmed in the past few years, but no evidence was given to prove the footage had not been altered. Reuter reported that the footage was provided to it by the State Council Information Office and commented that its release signalled China "step[ping] up its propaganda campaign to counter [the] upsurge in violence". On June 21, another attack occurred in Kashgar, during which police gunned down 13 people and three police officers suffered minor injuries, according to state-controlled local online media outlet Tianshannet.com.cn. However no further information was released and there were no independent reports about the case. On June 26, Xinhua published an open letter denouncing terrorism that was written by more than 200 Uyghur writers, poets and translators in Xinjiang. It was the first letter of this kind written by a group of Uyghurs. The publication of such a document by a state media outlet is extremely rare.

Censorship used in "war on terrorism"

After a number of deadly incidents, the Communist Party Chief in Xinjiang, Zhang Chunxian, on May 26 declared "a people's war" against terrorism. Zhang said a campaign to "safeguard stability and resolutely prevent malignant violence and terrorist attacks" would be implemented in Xinjiang, in particular after 39 people died and 94 were injured in an explosion involving two vehicles on May 22. The Xinjiang authorities escalated censorship on all online

Weibo circulated a photo of the car explosion in Sinjiang on May 22.
Image: Weibo.com

platforms and instant message communication channels, as well as videos. The Xinjiang authorities claimed they had cracked down on 2229 web links since March 31. According to a report by state-controlled *Global Times* on May 12, the authorities arrested 232 people who had circulated videos promoting terrorism through the internet and on portable devices. Among those arrested, 71 were in criminal detention, 107 were under administrative detention, and 34 people connected to 17 cases had been prosecuted. According to the report, the authorities said webpages, microblogs and internet chatrooms were being used more frequently to spread extremist ideology that could lead to terrorist actions. Therefore the government banned the use of all these channels, as well as cell phones, computers, portable storage devices, and mobile instant-message applications such WeChat to download, save, or spread terror-related videos. At the same time, hundreds of people were jailed after speedy trials in Xinjiang without any independent journalists attending the hearings to verify whether they were given due process of law. All the suspects were accused of spreading videos that incited violence, organizing and taking part in terrorist activities, advocating ethnic hatred, or illegally manufacturing firearms.

In June, reporting of a deadly incident was held back for several days. Official news agency Xinhua reported on July 30 that "dozens of Uyghur and Han civilians were killed and injured" early on the morning of July 28. The report said a number of assailants attacked government buildings and police station in Elishku Township, Yarkand County. Thirty-one cars were smashed, with six of them being set on fire. On August 4, the Xinjiang government announced that 96 people were killed and 215 people were arrested. The Communist Party Secretary of Xinjiang, Zhang Chunxian, claimed the riot was the result of cooperation by terrorist groups within and outside the territory because they found some "Holy Flags" and axes. However a Uyghur source living outside China told the IFJ that axes are a very common tool for Uyghur farmers in Xinjiang, so it was unreasonable to accuse Uyghurs of being involved in a terrorist attack on the basis of a common axe. The Uyghur also complained that the internet was completely shut down after the riot, and communication channels slowed down. He said he had tried numerous times to call his family members but found it very difficult.

Bloggers punished for posts on attacks

Three bloggers were detained after they posted messages via social networking platforms about the deadly attack in Elishku Township, Yarkand County, Xinjiang Province on July 28. Luo Guangmin, a Xian activist, and Yang Sheungyu, a Hunan activist, were placed in administrative detention by police for five days on August 5 after they posted or forwarded messages on the WeChat and QQ spontaneous chat rooms. A Uyghur was under criminal investigation by police in Xinjiang on August 6. He allegedly fabricated and posted a message about the deadly attack on an overseas website on July 31. Official news agency Xinhua reported on July 30 that a number of assailants attacked government buildings and a police station where "dozens of Uyghur and Han civilians were killed and injured" early on the morning of July 28. The report said a number of assailants were shot dead by police. On August 11, *Tianshan Online*, which is controlled by the Xinjiang government, reported that 37 civilians were killed, 13 were injured, and 59 assailants were killed by police. After the incident, 215 people were arrested.

Three bloggers were detained after they posted messages via social networking platforms about the deadly attack in Elishku Township, Yarkand County, Xinjiang Province.

On the night of September 25, *Tianshan Online* reported that a series of bombs exploded four days earlier, on September 21. This was the second time that the Government deliberately delayed reporting to the public after a serious attack. The incident killed 50 people and injured 54. According to *Global Times*, the explosions occurred in several locations in Xinjiang around 5 o'clock on Sunday, September 21. The locations included a shop in Luntai County and two police stations in the townships of Yangxia and Terakbazar. *Global Times* did not report on the cause of the incidents.

Uyghur activist convicted in secret

Ilham Tohti, a prominent Uyghur scholar in the Nationalities University in Beijing, was sentenced to life imprisonment on September 23 after being convicted of "separatism" charges, including hatred and forming an anti-government organization. Tohti was officially charged with separatism on

IlhamTohti, a prominent Uyghur scholar, was sentenced to life imprisonment after being convicted of "separatism". The verdict aroused an international outcry.
Image: Frederic J Brown/AFP

July 30 after six months in detention. Tohti was accused of using his website, Uyghur Online, to disseminate separatist ideas, incite racial hatred and advocate for independence for Xinjiang Province. However, the authorities did not provide any evidence to support the claim. Tohti was

Tohti was accused of using his website, Uyghur Online, to disseminate separatist ideas, incite racial hatred and advocate for independence for Xinjiang Province.

detained in Beijing and taken to Urumqi, Xinjiang, on January 15, 2014, but was not allowed to speak with his defense lawyer until June. Ilham's defence lawyers, Liu Xiaoyuan and Li Fangping, said the trial did not follow due process. The authorities refused to allow defense lawyers to read all the relevant documents on the grounds that they were "too sensitive". Two days after the trial, Ilham Tohti's "separatist" videos were released by state-owned news agency Xinhua. In the video, Tohti tells his students in their classroom that Xinjiang originally belonged to the Uyghurs. The authorities said making this claim violated the Constitution. The authorities admitted that Tohti had the right to speak but emphasized that this right is not absolute. Tohti established Uyghur Online in 2006, creating a platform for discussion in both Chinese and the Uyghur language to encourage understanding between the two groups, but the website was shut down in 2008.

According to Radio Free Asia, one of Ilham Tohti's defence lawyers, Wang Yu, was forced to stop representing him. The report said that after Wang and human rights lawyer Li Fangping met Tohti in June, Wang was called to a number of meetings at her law firm. She learned that the Justice Bureau, which has oversight of all legal practitioners and law firms, harassed her firm and started to investigate it. After being subjected to intense pressure, the chief of Wang's firm decided the firm should stop representing Tohti.

Uyghurs feel silenced, isolated, afraid

A Uyghur, who chose to remain anonymous, told the IFJ that it is rare to read an original news report in Xinjiang. People in Xinjiang, including both Han Chinese and ethnic Uyghurs, do not have faith in the media. He recounted how, when he was young, a Uyghur couple were killed by soldiers because they were seeking remedies from the soldiers who killed their goat and cow on their farm land. He said: "However, when you read it in the newspaper, the report said the police killed 'terrorists' and were being promoted by the authorities. I was really surprised. I was familiar with the couple because we were living in the same village."

In 2014, quite a number of deadly cases occurred in Xinjiang, or were related to ethnic Uyghurs, in which police claimed they found many weapons in the house of suspects. The Uyghur source told the IFJ that the claim was ridiculous because quite a number of so-called "weapons" are actually farmers' tools. "They even need those so-called explosives because they use them for digging wells to get underground water." He explained that water is precious in Xinjiang, in particular in undeveloped areas, so people have to find water for themselves. When the deadly incidents began, the authorities started to deploy more agents to monitor each village. If a stranger enters a village, an agent soon begins investigating the stranger.

All television programmes are controlled by the local government. Although Uyghur-language programs are allowed for one or two hours a day, the content of these programs is heavily censored. Only entertainment is allowed. Many Uyghurs, particularly of the younger generation, regularly access the internet but the service is not stable. People in the more remote cities or villages have great difficulty in accessing the internet. The IFJ's Uyghur source added that online surveillance is very powerful. One of his friends was interrogated by police because he browsed "sensitive" websites such as those of religious sect Falun Gong and the World Uyghur Congress. People also stopped using an instant communication tool that allows images to be attached to a voice recording, because the authorities have cracked down heavily on those services.

Uyghurs embrace traditions

The source said many Uyghurs are now afraid of Han Chinese, unlike in previous eras. Before the China Western Development project was launched in 2000, Han Chinese and Uyghurs lived harmoniously together. They respected each others' religious beliefs and cultures. However, when the project started, many Han flooded into Xinjiang. Many jobs went to Han people, and many traditional buildings and mosques were demolished. All mosques were required to fly the national flag and the imams had to listen to the party leaders. When there is a religious service, numerous uniformed and plain clothes government agents gather outside the mosque. "They just treat you like a criminal," he added.

The Uyghur emphasized that until recently the Uyghur people were not very attached to their traditional customs. However, since the China Western Development project started, many women had started wearing veils, something they never did before. It seemed that many young people had recently become pious Muslims. The Uyghur refused to speculate on whether there was a trend towards religious extremism in Xinjiang, but he admitted that quite a number of youngsters have a strong inclination to revolt, because Xinjiang was full of injustice and there was no outlet for ordinary people to speak out.

Media silent on Inner Mongolia dissident

The experiences of autonomous regions of Inner Mongolia are similar to those of Xinjiang. All prominent political or religious figureheads are under heavy surveillance. A political prisoner named Hada has been under house arrest for four years, but his case has not been reported once in the Mainland media. On August 15, Inner Mongolia police officers visited Hada's wife, Xinna, and accused her of posting illegal content on overseas websites. According to the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, at least eight police officers, some of whom were uniformed policemen who identified themselves as "Chinese Internet Security Police", warned Xinna and her son that they had posted "illegal content" on the internet, but did not explain what they were referring to. Two days later, all communication cables, including the internet and telephone, were disconnected without notice.

According to Radio Free Asia, Xinna received more than 400 death threats by text messages on her two cell phones from August 11 onward. She said she believed the harassment was due to her having posted several messages complaining that her husband, Hada, has been illegally detained since December 2010, after he had served 15 years in prison on accusations of being a separatist. Xinna had accepted several overseas media interviews and urged President Xi

After 19 years imprisonment, Hada was released on 9 December 2014, and remains under surveillance. *Image: Internet*

Corruption of Financial Media Originates from "Party Rule"

Chang An

A number of serious corruption cases broke out in 2014 involving China's financial media. It is clear that the root cause of corruption in the news lies in the Communist Party and its role as the main force for censorship.

In early September 2014, Shanghai police issued this earth-shattering news item: (The police) have successfully crushed an extortion ring involving news people who use public opinion monitoring as their cover to coerce and illegally extort huge profits. The alleged culprits included the (then) Executive Editor of *21st Century Economic Daily News*, Shen Hao, who later had his "confession" broadcast on state network CCTV. *21st Century Economic Daily* is a publication of the Southern Newspaper Group, a well-known Mainland media platform.

Official mouthpieces such as the Xinhua News Agency and CCTV voiced heavy criticism of the alleged corruption. In fact, before the incident, employees of both Xinhua and CCTV had been investigated by the authorities. Xinhua's Shanghai office was found by the central government's inspection team to have been involved in "paid news", and was ordered to refund the residual amount set out in the contract to the Bank of Communication, a total of 3.5 million yuan (US$3.56 million). CCTV's Finance Channel Director, Guo Zhenxi, and 10 others were arrested for alleged news corruption.

It is fair to say that corruption of all kinds is prevalent across mainland media. Over the years, the corruption has moved from the individual level into the institutional level. A common practice is "eat, take, stop and take". This refers to a journalistic extortion practice which starts with accepting an invitation to a sumptuous dinner, accepting an advantage, then holding back for a while in order to pave the way for asking more blatantly. At an organizational level, practices include biased reporting on Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) of new company stock and "paid silence", when the media stay silent by not publishing negative reports

A common practice is "eat, take, stop and take". This refers to a journalistic extortion practice.

or deleting them in exchange for "advertising fees" from business corporations. Such corrupt behavior has become rampant in recent years, particularly in the IPO markets and other types of business partnerships. Only a very few organizations, such as Cai Xin Media, opt to actively reject this kind of malpractice. Cai Xin Media Company Limited is a respected financial media corporation established by renowned journalist Hu Shuli. It has not only established an annual income system for its reporters, but also set up a firewall between its reporting team and advertising team. Such strict "disciplines", as well as professional ethics, are known to help stop corruption in the media.

Shen Hao, formerly Executive Editor of *21st Century Economic Daily News*, had his "confession" broadcast on CCTV. *Image: CCTV*

However, when we look at the corruption problem that has plagued mainland media, it is too narrow to identify only certain individuals or news organizations. That is to say, if news corruption is an unforgivable sin, it should not be seen as the responsibility only of the individuals or organizations involved, but of the entire mainland media, as well as the ecosystem they live in.

For a long time, only "the party's media" existed on the mainland. With the introduction of market-oriented reform, a variety of media with different capital structures emerged, but these were only an expansion of "the party's media" into "the party-controlled media", for there are no "out-of-the-party publications" or publications that are truly independent. Previously, the party's media received financial subsidies from the state. As reform moved forward, most media organizations gradually transformed themselves into business enterprises. While adhering to "the party", they also needed to self-finance and be responsible for own profits and losses, resulting in the formation of the so-called "media market" on the mainland.

While the financial media know they cannot flout the control of the ruling party, various financial media groups have done their best to grasp power and use it to their advantage.

Since such market-oriented reform is still tied to "party rule", the media do not have what it takes to face real competition, so the practitioners have not reached any consensus on a common set of discipline and ethics. Quite apart from the huge benefits involved in "paid silence" or "hush money", the news industry has no consensus on anything, not even on whether it is ethical to accept a few hundred dollars of "travelling expenses". The industry has been experiencing market development for more than a decade, but it remains in a chaotic state with confusion over rights and obligations, with the party's control continuing and profit being placed high on the agenda.

Communist ideology does not acknowledge the media as "the Fourth Estate", but the media's watchdog function remains a reality. On the mainland, the so-called "news media watchdog" function is actually a supervisory role played out under party control. The power derived from the party is so great that the higher the level of the media group, the greater its power is. Likewise, the greater the unsupervised power is, the more corrupt it tends to be. News corruption, therefore, originates from this power matrix. So far, China has not established its News Act, and such legislation seems elusive. Hence any type of arbitrary intervention in the production of media content is still possible. As it is different from comprehensive news media, financial news is slightly free from ideology, and hence relatively free from intervention.

While the financial media know they cannot flout the control of the ruling party, various financial media groups have done their best to grasp power and use it to their advantage: extortion or "paid silence" are just two of many examples of this. These corrupt practices simply turn the power of the media into a commodity. As the saying goes, "flies land on cracked eggs". For businesses to "cooperate" with the media, whether they do so actively or passively, they must be hiding a secret somewhere. So, when the news media and businesses collude on corrupt practices, in which covering the truth is seen as "cooperation", it is obviously done at the expense of the public's right to know.

At present, when traditional media is faced with a challenge, "cooperation" between the media and businesses is seen as a way out. However, as weak economic trends prevail – especially when an anti-corruption wave is led by President Xi Jinping and the party's Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, Wang Qishan – the balance between the interests of the financial media and those of businesses has been disrupted. This has exposed all sorts of problems and contradictions, including the "master-servant" relationship between the financial media and the businesses that has existed since the inception of the so-called "media market reform". The relationship is even more complicated now when the "servant" – business – is required by the "master" – the media – to earn his own bread and butter. It would seem natural for the financial media to use what they have to their own advantage, resulting in reckless collusion between business and professional interests.

As necessitated by ideological domination, mainland media are still under the "rule of man" – that is, the rule of the party – rather than the rule of law. Chaos and corruption in the media are due largely to this environment. As the popular saying goes, if you do not accept corporate "hush money" and insist on exposing those involved, you will often end up exposing yourself with the money taken away by others. The "others" refers to all levels in the propaganda departments within

The scandalous "DaVinci" case exposed not only that CCTV staffers were receiving millions of yuan as "hush money", but also that millions in public relations fees were being handed to propaganda departments via intermediaries. CCTV deny the allegation. *Image: Internet*

the Chinese Communist Party. This is because those departments can put their hands into whatever media content they see fit, and use their "killing power" to delete any news article before publication. Such power also brings benefits to the propaganda department. In late 2011, the scandalous "DaVinci" case exposed not only that CCTV staffers were receiving millions of yuan as "hush money", but also that millions in public relations fees were being handed to propaganda departments via intermediaries. This case was exposed by a report in the *China Daily*, which said a whistleblower at DaVinci Furniture Company Ltd disclosed that the furniture labeled and sold as "Made in Italy" was actually made at the Changfeng Furniture Company in Dongguan, Guangdong, in Southern China, then shipped to warehouses in Shanghai and sold as "imported goods."

In order to preserve its full control of executive power, the Communist Party does not give up using "party rule" to manage the media, nor does it include the media in its "legislature". It is therefore easy to understand why financial news media, already a "servant" to their party master, "fatten" themselves on corruption. Back in 2005, the Central Propaganda Department and the State Administration for Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television issued a joint directive known as "Journalists Management Guide (Trial Version)". This was largely seen as an attempt to regulate professional conduct and ethics. However, nearly a decade later, China is still ruled by the "party above the law", making such regulations empty words. Communist China does not want to include the media into a legal framework, as it surely does not want its right to intervention, or the "rule of man", to be compromised.

The current fight against corruption in the financial news media cannot be regarded as an application of the "rule of law", but rather an implementation of "party rule". For example, both Guo Zhenxi, the Finance Channel Director of CCTV, and Shen Hao of 21st Century Media group, are members of the Communist Party of China. Precisely because of that, we can understand why both the Xinhua News Agency and the 21st Century Media group have been involved in "news corruption", but Xinhua was able to get out of the situation by refunding the money, while representatives of 21st Century Media were forced to make high-profile confessions on TV and even before a court trial.

The power behind such news corruption is in fact the Communist Party's power. The monitoring power of the mainland media does not come from China's Constitution or the law, but from a number of Communist Party documents. Press freedom affords us the moral ground to form a free, yet responsible, journalistic community. It is, therefore, impossible to rely only on the party to eliminate or to curb news corruption on the mainland. It is also reckless to blame such corruption on individuals or simply on "party rule", if "rule of law" is not introduced. For China's mainland media, we can most certainly sum it up as: "Corruption thrives in party rule."

and all international organizations to be concerned about the violations of Hada's human rights. No Mainland media has reported the case of Hada and his family, because Hada is a political prisoner. On December 9, the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center reported that Hada was allowed to meet his family members in a heavily guarded apartment on November 17 in suburban Hohhot where he was under extrajudicial detention for four years after completing his 15-year-jail term on December 10, 2010. Although Hada was allowed to meet his family, he and siblings were warned by police not to accept any interviews with foreign media. All communication channels, including telephone and internet, were blocked.

A resident of Inner Mongolia told the IFJ that people are reluctant to put themselves in the position of people in Tibet or Xinjiang. They understand it is very dangerous to fight for their political rights, so they are more focused on their livelihoods. Recently large areas of grasslands have been polluted and destroyed by various kinds of development projects. Herdsmen have complained to local government but nothing has been done to stop the damage. A resident of Inner Mongolia who spoke on condition of anonymity said: "The damage could destroy our lives because quite a number of people are farmers. We are not merely asking for remedies, which they should responsible for, but we are asking for sustainability so that we can survive." He admitted that many people are not concerned about their political rights and would not think of "independence" because they know the issue is extremely sensitive. They also would not consider whether media reports are true or not, but they

understand the media is controlled by the government and they do not expect to see negative reports in the local media.

Commercial Times, a Communist Party-controlled media outlet in Inner Mongolia, was ordered to shut down by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT). The SAPPRFT announced on November 22 that *Commercial Times* allowed unauthorized people to act as reporters, which is against the professional code of ethics issued by SAPPRFT and the Central Propaganda Department in 2005.

News blackout on Tibetan activists

In Tibet, the rights of Tibetans in general showed no improvement. Several incidents of self-immolation occurred and these were barely reported in the Mainland media. No independent media were allowed to attend the trial of any protesters. On September 17, a 22-year-old Tibetan student, Lhamo Tashi, died after setting himself on fire in front of a police station in Gansu province in protest against Chinese rule. According to Radio Free Asia, Lhamo shouted slogans when he set himself on fire. The report said Lhamo was one of the protesters in the 2008 Lhasa riot. He was detained but subsequently released. His death brought to 132 the total number of self-immolations since the fiery protests began in 2009. According to the Central Tibetan Administration, the India-based Tibetan government in exile, the protestors are challenging Chinese rule in Tibetan areas and calling for the return from exile of the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

In September, Lobsang Gendun, aged about 21, was sentenced to 10 years' jail after being held in a detention center in the Tibetan area of Changdu Prefecture, Sichuan Province, for more than a year. According to Radio Free Asia, Gendun was detained on July 1, 2013, after he chanted slogans calling for Tibetan independence. The report said Lobsang called for a long life for the Dalai Lama and for the complete independence of Tibet for about five minutes before he was silenced by police. Lobsang's family members complained they were not allowed to meet him. His parents were summoned by the court and ordered to instruct their son to plead guilty to his crimes on January 28. The trial was conducted speedily, without any independent media present.

In fact, it is questionable whether any cases of this nature are conducted with due process of law. Cases related to protests, land evictions and deadly accidents in the three so-called Autonomous Regions – Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia – are always held in closed court. Several defense lawyers who have represented accused people say there are various kinds of illegal procedures. The irregularities of process include deprivation of opportunities to meet their clients, denial of access to all trial documents and evidence, and lack of ability to summon defense witnesses or raise questions during the trials.

FOREIGN JOURNALISTS IN CHINA

Foreign journalists in China experienced restrictions, harassment, editorial pressure and delays and denials of visas. According to an annual report by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC) in May 2014, none of the club's members believed there had been any improvement of working condition in China. On the contrary, several Chinese citizens working for foreign media outlets and international media organizations were "punished", either being detained for a certain period of time or being prosecuted. The content of journalists' reports was still used as the "measurement" by which the authorities decided whether to issue working visas.

Conditions for foreigners deteriorate

In September, the FCCC's position paper identified six main areas of concern. These were restrictive reporting conditions; interference with news assistants; interference with sources; denial of access to government information; denial of foreign media access to the Chinese market; and punitive immigration policies. The position paper reported on a survey carried out in May, which found that 99 per cent of respondents thought reporting conditions in China do not meet international standards. Eighty per cent though conditions had stayed the same or deteriorated in the previous year – a rise of 10 percentage points since the May 2013 survey. Half of the respondents with Chinese assistants said their assistants had been harassed or intimidated at least once; this figure was up from 35 per cent in the 2013 survey. One out of four respondents said the Chinese authorities had put pressure on editors at headquarters in their home country over news coverage. The top concerns included interference, harassment and physical violence by authorities against foreign media during the reporting process; attempts by authorities to preempt and discourage coverage of sensitive subjects; intimidation and harassment of sources; restrictions on journalists' movements in Xinjiang and Tibetan-inhabited areas; pressure directed to editors and managers at headquarters outside of China; and cyber-harassment and blocking of websites.

Two-thirds of the journalists said they had experienced interference, harassment or violence while attempting to report in China. Among them, 10 per cent – primarily TV journalists – said they were subjected to manhandling or use of physical force. TV crews and photographers are often the prime target of interference and harassment, with police or unidentified plainclothes personnel forcing them to delete pictures or confiscating tapes and memory cards. The FCCC has recorded several cases of authorities

Foreign journalists in China experiences restrictions, harassment, editorial pressures and delays and denials of visas. *Image: AFP/ FRED DUFOUR*

damaging equipment with impunity but only one case in which authorities compensated journalists for damage to equipment.

Reporters traveling to the western province of Xinjiang, which has been beset by violent unrest, have reported being followed by uniformed and plainclothes security officers – sometimes from the minute they step out of an airport – and disturbed in their hotel rooms. One foreign reporter whose articles angered elements of the Chinese government was told by the manager of the building where he lives that security officials had visited and asked the manager questions about the reporter's family life, the layout of his apartment, where his children went to school, and other personal matters.

Two-thirds of the journalists said they had experienced interference, harassment or violence while attempting to report in China.

Anniversary reporting discouraged

Foreign journalists also found the authorities tried to preempt their plans for reporting and to discourage their attendance at newsworthy events. In the weeks leading up to the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre on June 4, some reporters were harassed for reporting on the subject. Police summoned a number of foreign journalists to their offices and, while videotaping the encounters, lectured the journalists about reporting related to the anniversary. Some of the journalists were warned of serious consequences should they disobey authorities.

A European broadcaster said in the report: "We were reporting on the strict security in central Beijing ahead of the June 4 anniversary. In a span of two hours, police asked me for my documents five times. The next day two policemen came into my flat, which also serves as my office. They came with two women, who didn´t wear uniforms. These women recorded my house with some mobile phones while the police asked us for documentation. The police said the documentation was for internal use.

A correspondent working for North American media said: "I was called to the Entry and Exit Bureau, and basically told this year security will be especially strict during the 'sensitive period,' in 'sensitive areas' and with 'sensitive interviews' related to the June 4 anniversary. They asked me to convey this to the bureau chief and other journalists in our bureau. They said that this is a second warning for me personally, and if I do not abide by Chinese law, I should expect the most serious consequences."

Travel to sensitive areas restricted

Restrictions on foreign journalists' access to "sensitive" areas of the country remained widespread, arbitrary and unexplained. Large parts of Chinese territory remain officially or effectively out of bounds for foreign correspondents. The 2008 rules prevent foreign reporters from visiting the Tibet Autonomous Region without permission from the regional government. Such permission has rarely been granted in recent years. Even in areas that are not explicitly off limits – such as Gansu, western Sichuan, and Qinghai – obstruction by local authorities makes working there extremely difficult, while interviewing locals is risky or impossible.

Journalists seeking to report in Xinjiang have routinely been turned back by checkpoint police and other authorities telling them that they are forbidden to be there. In the FCCC 2014 survey, at least 42 respondents said that they were told reporting from Xinjiang and Tibetan-inhabited areas was restricted or prohibited. Still, many reporters did visit Xinjiang, encountering problems.

Restrictions on foreign journalists' access to "sensitive" areas of the country remained widespread, arbitrary and unexplained.

One correspondent said: "During a trip to Xinjiang, police officers in Kashgar informed me that I was not allowed to conduct interviews in Kashgar or report from there. The officers were waiting for me at my hotel; however, this only happened after I had already been out on the street conducting interviews and I didn't encounter any problems while taking pictures and doing interviews on the street. The officers said I needed permission from the local authorities in order to report from Kashgar. They insisted that they were only applying rules that were no different from the rest of

In the south of Xinjiang Province, armed patrols are a common sight. Foreigners have extreme difficulty gaining permission to pass through army check points. *Image: Serenade Woo*

China. In the city of Hotan, I was told by the police that I was not allowed to be there and that I had to leave."

Editors pressured in overseas HQ

The FCCC was also alarmed by the manner in which the Chinese government sought to persuade the senior executives of news organizations in their headquarters to kill stories about China. At least three media companies – namely France 24, ARD TV (Germany) and the *Financial Times* – came under unusual Chinese government pressure after publishing news reports that angered the Chinese authorities. Chinese embassy officials in Paris, Berlin and London lodged direct complaints with senior editors, in an apparent effort to pressure them into restraining their reporters in Beijing. The Tokyo headquarters of Japanese media have received similar visits. In total, a quarter of respondents to the FCCC Working Conditions Survey in 2014 said pressure had been applied to editors in headquarters about their coverage. "Diplomats in Copenhagen contacted my editor several times. They also had a meeting where the Chinese embassy sent three people including a lawyer," a European newspaper correspondent said.

Direct harassment escalates

Incidents of direct harassment escalated. On January 22, 2014, at least three foreign television crews suffered rough treatment at the hands of security officers while they were legitimately reporting on the trial of activist Xu Zhiyong, a former law lecturer at the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications. According to videos posted by CNN, BBC and Sky TV, the journalists were physically harassed outside the court building by uniformed and plainclothes agents who were accompanied by police officers. David McKenzie of CNN was manhandled, shoved into a police car and driven several blocks away from the court building. His camera was destroyed. Mark Stone of Sky TV was pushed away by a plainclothes agent who was believed to be acting on the instructions of the police department. Martin Patience of the BBC received similar treatment. In addition, at least three plainclothes agents covered their faces and blocked the camera with their hands. Journalists were also blocked and removed when they were trying to conduct interviews with Xu's supporters. The Foreign Correspondents' Club of China sent a letter of complaint to the Foreign Ministry but received no response.

David McKenzie of CNN was manhandled, shoved into a police car and driven several blocks away from the court building. His camera was destroyed.

David McKenzie was manhandled while reporting on the trial of activist Xu Zhiyong. *Image: CNN*

On October 3, Celia Hatton, a BBC journalist, was blocked from entering Song Zhuang, an artists' village in Beijing. When she insisted on entering the village, her press accreditation was confiscated by police.

As well as the above incidents, the FCCC received reports of another 12 incidents of suppression of press freedom between August and October, 2014. The cases including interviewees being detained after they gave interviews to foreign journalists, the arrest of a television crew member, and journalists being refused permission to enter Qinghai and Xinjiang. One of the most striking incidents occurred on October 23, when a correspondent was detained for 14 hours by Beijing police and forced to sit on an iron chair. When he asked to leave, he was surrounded by several police officers. During the negotiation process, one of the officers fell over, but the reason for the fall was unclear. It was reported that the correspondent was taken to the National Office for Petitions and Letters, an area where petitioners gather in Yongding Qiao, Beijing. During the interrogation, he was strip-searched, told to delete photos from his smart phone and required to undertake a drug test. Eventually, he was accused of "assault" of an officer. However the reporter's Bureau Chief said there was no sign of any "assault" on the policeman when he was summoned to the office of Ministry of Foreign Affairs on November 6 for a meeting. The correspondent was able to leave and was granted his working visa, but it was for only six months, rather than the normal period of one year.

Correspondents' assistants punished

Xiang Nanfu, 62, a citizen journalist with US-based *boxun.com*, was arrested on May 3 on accusations of making false reports, according to a report by official news agency Xinhua on May 13. Xinhua said Xiang was charged with "picking quarrels and provoking trouble". It cited a report headlined "Human organ harvesting from living; people buried alive" and said the reports had damaged China's reputation. China Central Television broadcast Xiang's confession. Boxun said there was no such report on its website, and added that the site had recently suffered a series of cyber attacks.

Xin Jiang, a Chinese news assistant for Nikkei Inc, the Japan Economic Times News Agency, was taken away from her home by Chongqing police on May 13. She was charged on May 26 with "picking quarrels and stirring up trouble" but the police did not produce any evidence to show Xin had violated any law. According to the IFJ's records, Xin is the first Chinese news assistant charged by police in the past five years.

Vivian Wu, a former journalist now working as a senior consultant to Internews, a non-governmental media training organization, has been out of contact since May 13, the same day as Xin Jiang was taken away by Chongqing police. Wu has reportedly been released since. It is widely reported that Wu's situation is related to that of detained human rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang, who was charged by Beijing police with "picking quarrels and stirring up trouble" after he attended a private gathering on May 3 to commemorate the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Pu's niece, who is also a lawyer, was also detained by police.

Vivian Wu was reportedly detained in May after she expressed concern about the arrest of human rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang. She has been out of contact since May. *Image: Weibo*

Vivian Wu, a former journalist now working as a senior consultant to Internews, a non-governmental media training organization, has been out of contact since May 13.

Zhang Miao, a news assistant for the German magazine *Die Zeit*, was taken away by police on October 2, and charged on October 13 with "committing provocative activities and creating troubles".

He Yang, an independent film maker, was detained by Beijing police for 20 hours on March 20 when he was travelling to interview Ding Zilin, a prominent figure in the Tiananmen Mothers group, a group of parents, relatives and friends of people killed during the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989. He and his crew were accused of acting against state security. Police ransacked his apartment

and took away belongings including two computers and equipment containing films and images. A journalist told the IFJ: "Police accused He of pretending to be a foreign journalist. He was a legitimate journalist because he was commissioned by Deutsche Welle (DW), a Germany international broadcaster, to conduct the interview with Ding. However he did not tell the police he was commissioned by DW. In fact, his identity was disclosed because police had tapped Ding's telephone when He arranged the interview." During the interrogation, police said that DW was a western anti-government media group and admitted that Ding Zilin was regarded as an important and sensitive person who had to be monitored tightly by police. On March 21, He was released but told by police that he was not allowed to film again.

Pressure reaches all the way to Germany

The Deutsche Welle journalist who organized He's interview with Ding Zilin was also "punished" at her workplace in Germany. Su Yutong, a Chinese journalist who had been working for DW's Chinese-language service since 2010, was suddenly sacked on August 19. Su told the IFJ that the Director of Programs, Gerda Meuer, said Su was not suitable for the new direction of the Chinese language service and accused her of violating DW's rules two months previously. Su agreed that she had expressed her personal feelings about comments on DW by a pro-Beijing analyst about the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre on June 4. Su also said she forwarded an altered "tank man" image, which was posted by another blogger through her personal Twitter account. However, she said, management had not issued a warning or claimed that she had violated any internal rules. Su said: "Regarding the change in direction of the language service, I never received any official notice that there was any change. In September 2013, when the new DW Director General, Peter Limbourg, visited us, he did say he wanted us not to produce only negative reports about the Chinese Government but instead to give the Chinese Government some positive news coverage. He also said he had visited the Chinese Ambassador to Germany. However, since then, there has been no change of direction."

Su Yutong, a journalist working for Deutsche Welle in Germany, was sacked suddenly. She was told she was not suitable for the new direction of the Chinese language service and accused of violating DW's rules two months earlier.
Image: Internet

He was warning foreign news organizations that their troubles are self-inflicted; they are being penalized for unfavorable or controversial news coverage and could correct the problem by changing that approach.

After Su's employment was terminated, several articles that were critical of her were published in state-owned Chinese media. On August 28, DW's Director General Peter Limbourg visited Wang Gengnian, Director of China Central Television International Channel. Limbourg said later that DW would carry more reports covering German-China trade, history and culture. He said that, "under the principle of respect for China", DW would report on China fairly. Some internal staff members disclosed that the original report was removed because Limbourg had initially used the word "follow", not "respect". The Journalists Association of Germany issued a statement reminding Deutsche Welle to uphold press freedom, and also financially supported Su in her fight for severance pay.

Critical journalists denied work visas

Applying for a working visa is still a hurdle in the eyes of foreign press because the content of reports can become the "measurement" by which the Chinese authorities decide whether they issue a visa to a journalist.

Austin Ramzy, 39, a journalist for *The New York Times* who has been based in China for more than six years, was required to leave China on January 30 because his month-long visa, issued at the end of December 2013, was due to expire. According to a report in the NYT, Ramzy was the second journalist at the paper who was unable to get a working visa. The report said: "It would be the latest

New York Times journalist Alex Ramzy has been unable to get a working visa. *Image: Twitter*

sign of official displeasure with the newspaper since it reported in October 2012 that close family members of Wen Jiabao, who was then China's prime minister, had accumulated vast wealth during his leadership." Qin Gang, a spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry, said that the Chinese authorities considered Ramzy's application "according to laws and regulations" and that Ramzy had violated Chinese regulations last year by continuing to travel to and from the country using the journalist visa he was issued before he left his previous employer, *Time Magazine*.

The FCCC released the results of an annual survey of visa issues conducted at the end of 2013. It said most correspondents received their new press cards from China's Foreign Ministry within seven working days, and new residence visas were issued within 15 working days by the security bureau. However, the Chinese authorities abused the press card and visa renewal process in a political manner, treating journalistic accreditation as a privilege rather than a professional right, and punishing reporters and media organizations for the content of their previous coverage if it had displeased the government.

During the summit meeting of APEC in Beijing, Xi Jinping and United States President Obama held a press conference on November 12. Xi was asked by *New York Times* journalist about the fact that foreign journalists have had a difficult time obtaining permission to work in China. The NYT reported that Xi circled back to the issue, saying: "The Chinese Government protects the lawful rights of media but media should comply with laws. When a car breaks down on the road, perhaps we need to step down and see what the problem is." The Times said the metaphor of Xi's speech was oblique but they believed the message was clear: "He was warning foreign news organizations that their troubles are self-inflicted; they are being penalized for unfavorable or controversial news coverage and could correct the problem by changing that approach." The Times stated clearly that it has no intention of altering its coverage to meet the demands of any government. Since 2012, at least four *Times* journalists – namely Phillip Pan, Chris Buckley, Austin Ramzy and Javier Hernandez – have been denied working visas. However the authorities did not give any explanation for the decisions.

The IFJ strongly believes that when the Chinese authorities say others "need to step down and see what the problem is", China should do the same.

Foreign journalists mistreated

The IFJ is deeply disappointed with the treatment of foreign journalists in China. China on one hand claims that journalists should comply with laws, but on the other hand it cannot spell out which particular parts of the law have been "breached", and never provides any explanation for its decisions. The IFJ strongly believes that when the Chinese authorities say others "need to step down and see what the problem is", China should do the same. The principle of rule of law is that both people and government should comply with the law. By the same token, the application of the rule of law should include due process. When an accountable government wants to enact a law or change a regulation, it conducts a thoughtful consultation before making any changes.

CHINA ONLINE

China has 1.3 billion microblog account holders, as well as 600 million WeChat account holders in more than 200 counties and cities, according to a survey released by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) on June 25. The survey, reported by official news agency Xinhua, said China is moving into a new media era, with 103 companies providing microblog services. With the population of internet users increasing rapidly, and many of these using the internet to gain access to information, the Chinese authorities drastically changed their attitude to the internet. A new leading group was set up to focus on cyber security and people working within online media were brought within the restrictions covering traditional journalists. Meanwhile, China's internet freedom was ranked at 80 among 86 countries in the annual index issued by the World Wide Web Foundation on December 11.

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Controls extended to online media

At the beginning of 2014, China's President Xi Jinping made himself head of a new group called the Central Internet Security and Informatization Leading Group (CIS). The CIS was set up to focus on the cyber aspects of economic, social, political and military issues. According to Xinhua, President Xi said at the group's first meeting on February 27: "Efforts should be made to build our country into a cyber power." Premier Li Keqiang and the former Minister for the Propaganda Department, Liu Yunshan, are the deputy heads of the new leading group. Premier Li and former propaganda minister Liu are both members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee. At the same time, the reporting line for the State Internet Information Office was changed so that it reports directly to the CIS, rather than to the State Council. In October, the State Internet Information Office and the State Administrative of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of China (SAPPRFT) said in a notice that a press accreditation system would be launched for online journalists, overriding the previous policy, which did not recognize them as journalists. Although much uncertainty still surrounds the policy, including whether it is aimed only at state-owned online media or at all online media, many scholars and commentators believe the ideology and system for controlling traditional media have expanded to cover new media completely.

Anti-pornography powers used widely

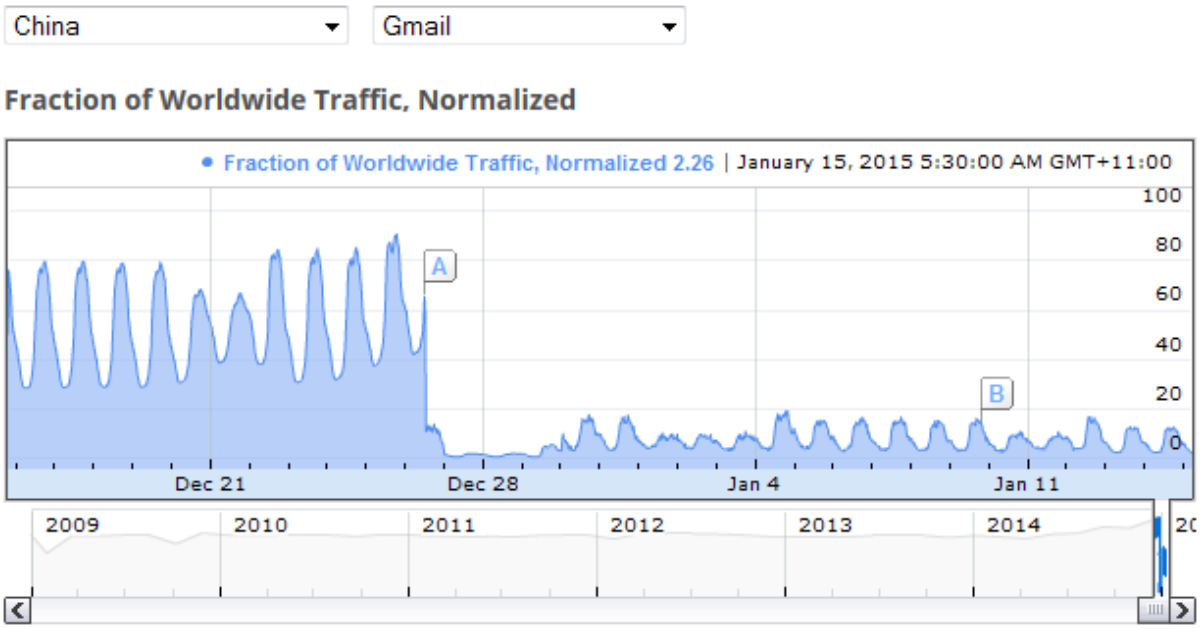
The Chinese authorities continued to use various methods to censor the contents of online media. The National Office against Pornographic and Illegal Publications (NOAPIP) is still the most fundamental tool. On April 13, the NOAPIP renewed its online campaign, which ran for eight months under the title of Cleaning the Web 2014. The NOAPIP has conducted thorough checks on websites in the past, but in 2014 it also checked search engines and mobile application stores, internet TV USB sticks, and set-top boxes. According to a NOAPIP circular, all online texts, pictures, videos and advertisements with pornographic content would be deleted. Websites, web channels and columns would be shut down or have their administrative licenses revoked if they were found to be producing or spreading pornographic material. The operators of all communication tools were asked to conduct self-examination to clean up information and links. Xinhua reported that more than 20 literature-related website were forced to shut down as a result of the campaign, but did not cite any evidence of how the websites had violated any law.

Weibo is a Chinese social microblog. *Image: Internet*

In Hong Kong, democratic legislator Albert Ho reported that his weibo account (a Chinese social microblog) was forcibly shut down in April without explanation. Ho told the IFJ he opened his account last year and posted only his political views, plus information and events relating to his party, the Hong Kong Democratic Party. Hong Kong's *Ming Pao Daily News* reported on March 14 that almost 100 accounts with We Chat, a spontaneous communication tool operated by listed company Tencent, were shut down on the accusation that they "violated laws and policies", but no details of the alleged breaches were given.

Cyber security the new war front

China's National Security Commission, meeting on April 15, said that a national security system should cover 11 fields, including culture and information. The chair of the NSC, President Xi Jinping, said the role of the NSC should



Google's Transparency Report recorded that data exchange with China via Gmail was drastically decreased from December 26, 2014, and onwards. However, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed to know nothing about the decline. *Image: Serenade Woo*

be "comprehensive and authoritative" so that it could safeguard China's internal and external security. President Xi has previously warned: "Without cyber security, there is no national security." The National Security Commission was established by the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Chinese Communist Party Central Committee in November 2013.

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Official news agency Xinhua reported on April 19 that the latest report from China's National Computer Network Emergency Response Technical Team Coordination Center said nearly 11 million personal computers in China were infected in 2013. The report said 30 per cent of the attacks stemmed from U.S. sources. About 15,000 computers were hit by Trojan Horse malware and 61,000 websites were targeted by backdoor attacks that originated overseas.

From December 26, 2014, data exchange with China via Gmail dropped suddenly. According to Google's own Transparency Report, internet traffic on Gmail was almost completely blocked from December 26 onwards. A Singapore-based spokesman for Google reported that the company had done various tests but found no disruptions from its end. On December 29, China Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said during a routine press conference in Beijing that she had no knowledge regarding Google services being blocked. Rather, she said, the government's role was to provide an appropriate business environment for all investors. Gmail's traffic pattern improved slightly after the press conference but at the time of publication it still had not returned to normal. It was widely believed that the abnormal traffic situation was due to interference by the authorities.

Tiananmen anniversary blackout

On June 1, just before the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre on June 4, Beijing local government claimed that it would mobilize 100,000 people to act as informers and 850,000 volunteers to form a "safety network" to prevent anything happening in Beijing. Security measures were also imposed to stifle free expression on the internet. GreatFire.org, an organization that focuses on monitoring online censorship behind China's "great firewall", reported that the major services of search giant Google.com were blocked in China. These included the search engine, images, translation and email services. Although a Google spokesperson denied there were any technical problems, Mainland people complained that they had serious difficulties in accessing their email accounts. Six members of the central committee of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China complained that their personal email accounts had been infiltrated since April. Some received 50 junk emails within 15 minutes. Many website operators said they were warned not to speak of June 4 or of recent violent events in Xinjiang Province. Many WeChat account holders also complained that their accounts were either forcibly shut down or hacked by unknown people. All messages related to June 4 were completely blocked. On the eve of June 4, some weibo microblog users complained that they were

Free expression on the internet was stifled before and during the Tiananmen Square anniversary, though some bloggers use creative ways to get around censorship. *Image: Internet*

blocked from using the "candle" icon to express their feelings.

Mobile and texting services targeted

On May 26, the State Council Internet Information Office, one of the key offices censoring online messages, released a Human Rights White Paper entitled *Progress of China's Human Rights in 2013*. The report said Chinese netizens posted and forwarded 250 million microblog messages and more than 20 billion WeChat and other instant messages every day. However, it did not mention that thousands of microblog messages were blocked and account holders of microblog and WeChat were suspended without explanation. The report also did not admit that many people were given administrative detention and charged with crimes after they posted messages. In Zhejiang Province, seven people were punished with five to 10 days' administrative detention on accusations of spreading rumours about the deaths of civilians during a protest on May 10 against the planned installation of an incinerator in Hangzhou City. Under the current law, police can detain anyone without going through any legal process.

The State Internet Information Office announced that the Chinese government would start cyber-security vetting of major IT products and services for use by national security and public interests. According to a report by official news agency Xinhua on May 22, the office said that ensuring IT technologies and cyberspace are "safe and under control" is vital to China's national security and economic and social development, as well as to people's legitimate rights and interests. Within a week, the office announced another campaign to target all mobile phones and instant communication services such as WeChat in order to prevent the spreading of rumors and any anti-government movements. With the government stifling freedom of expression, the online service providers are assisting the government to achieve its goal. Listed company Tencent, which provides the WeChat service, announced that each account will be limited to a network of 5000 people.

Thousands of microblog messages were blocked and account holders of microblog and WeChat were suspended without explanation.

The China Internet Network Information Center reported on January 17 that the number of microblog accounts, known as "weibo", fell by 9 per cent in 2013. The report said the total number of microblog accounts was 281 million at the end of 2013, or 27 million less than at the end of 2012. Analysts said the fall appeared to be largely due to users' fear that they could be punished by the authorities for exercising their right to free speech online. In September 2013, a Chinese court ruled that a netizen might be prosecuted if a message that was ruled to be defamatory

was browsed more than 5000 times or forwarded more than 500 times. Two months later, President Xi Jinping, announced that the government would tighten up the online monitoring system.

Online crime vaguely defined

With the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum planning to hold its summit in Beijing, the police announced on June 26 a five-month campaign against online crime, entitled Internet Security Comprehensive Special Action. Police monitored online messages, including texts on cell phones, that they regarded as "traditional crimes that endanger social order" such as disseminating information that endangers state security. The police did not define "illegal online messages", "hazardous illegal messages" or "traditional crimes that endanger social order".

Analysts said the fall appeared to be largely due to users' fear that they could be punished by the authorities for exercising their right to free speech online.

On September 11, the State Council Internet Office issued an order to all online media that they must destroy records of all its past restrictive orders within a week. Radio Free Asia reported that the new order said media were not allowed to release the content of previous orders. The office said orders could only be read by certain management staff and those managers had to sign a confidentiality agreement. If any online portal did not sign the agreement, the site's administrator or another responsible person would be punished.

On September 29, President Xi, former President Jiang Zemin and all members of the Politburo Standing Committee attended a concert on to mark the 65th anniversary of the Communist Party's rule of China. Several netizens posted messages with the title "Xi Jinping and Jiang Zemin attended the Concert marking 65th anniversary", but the messages were deleted. The following day, on the eve of China's National Day, President Xi Jinping, with members of the Politburo Standing Committee, paid tribute at the Monument to the People's Heroes in Tiananmen Square. The ceremony marked China's first Martyrs' Day. Bloggers posted queries about the ceremony on Sina Weibo, but they were deleted within an hour.

The website Tencent Xian was ordered by the local Internet Information Service Office to shut down for seven days from October 19, without explanation. Many Mainland media outlets suggested the website may have not tightly controlled its content and may have allowed "malignant and harmful" messages to be disseminated through the internet, thereby breaching the Provisions for the Administration of Internet News Information Services. However, none of the articles covering the shut-down reported any details of particular content or said which provisions had been breached.

Netizens punished over "rumours"

The IFJ Asia-Pacific office understands that hundreds of people were detained and punished in other ways because they posted online messages, in particular in relation to deadly attacks that occurred in Xinjiang. On March 1, a group of black-clad assailants at a railway station in Kunming, Yunnan Province, slashed at crowds with knives, killing 29 people and injuring 143. In the aftermath of the deadly incident, 45 people were punished for allegedly spreading rumors, deliberately fomenting panic online and disturbing social order. The Kunming police bureau microblog cited several messages, posted on March 3 and 4, in which the netizens reported that some people were also injured by Uyghurs in separate incidents in Hangzhou and Sichuan, and urged people not to visit those areas. The police did not report the range of punishments imposed on the 45 netizens.

Xinhua reported on July 20 that Beijing police detained two people and punished 37 others for fabricating and spreading rumors online. It said people with the surnames Ma and Pei were detained because they published false information on their social microblog weibo accounts, saying that "flight delays in Shanghai were due to an operation, disguised as a military drill, to hunt down an official who might be trying to flee the country or resist arrest". Police said the rumour had drawn the attention of many online users, causing adverse influence.

A prominent blogger, Qin Zhihui, known in cyber space by his penname "Qinhuohuo", was sentenced to three years' imprisonment on April 17 at Chaoyang District People's

A prominent blogger, Qin Zhihui, also known as Qinhuohuo, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment after he admitted spreading rumours about several celebrities. *Image: Internet*

Court in Beijing after he admitted he had created and spread rumours about several celebrities. The trial was televised via the microblog service weibo. During the trial, Qin said: "My acts were banned by law. Indeed, I misled the public about celebrities and government … There is freedom on the internet. I crossed the red line and severely damaged the reputation of others … The internet is not a place with no law; I overlooked this point. I ignored the existence of law and morals, and interrupted the normal order in cyberspace." *China Digital Times* reported that the "authorities", believed to be the State Internet Information Office, ordered that all online portals must exert strong control over any comment about Qin and "clear it up". Qin is the first person to appear in court on charges of rumour-mongering since the Ministry of Public Security vowed in August 2013 to target those who spread rumours online. However, since the crackdown, police have detained a number of other suspects who are also accused of spreading rumours or posting messages online.

Qin Zhihui, known in cyber space by his penname "Qinhuohuo", was sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

Free speech lawyer charged

The most striking case involved civil rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang, who is well-known for defending dissident writers and journalists. Pu was accused of "picking quarrels and stirring up trouble", "inciting subversion of state power"," inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination" and "illegally obtaining personal data". Pu's defence lawyer, Mo Shaoping, said all the allegations related to Pu's right to free speech and his professional work. The authorities said Pu posted about 30 messages on his *sina weibo* account. The content related to several public figures such as Mao Xinyu, a grandson of Mao Zedong who is a Major General in the People's Liberation Army, the killing of 33 people at Kunming train station in March, and the international dispute over the Diaoyu Islands, which are known as the Senkaku Islands in Japanese. Mo said all the messages expressed Pu's personal comments and suggestions, but this was being treated as a crime in clear violation of China's Constitution. Mo said that if a person felt his reputation was damaged, they should file a civil claim rather than use the criminal law as a tool to suppress people's right.

Regarding the charge of "illegally obtaining personal data", Pu conducted company searches at the request of several media outlets, including popular financial magazine *Caijing*, *Southern Weekly* newspaper and *The Beijing News Daily.* Such searches were permitted under the regulations, but this activity was also being treated as a "crime". The charge

Prominent civil rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang was charged with "picking quarrels and stirring up trouble" and other alleged crimes because he exercised his right to free speech on the internet. His lawyer said the prosecution was illegal.
Image: Internet

of "picking quarrels and stirring up trouble" has been widely used to attack bloggers who exercise their right of speech on the internet, but the victims of the charges rarely challenge their legitimacy. Therefore, Pu's case is thought likely to become a landmark case in 2015.

Online journalists required to register

On October 29, China's State Internet Information Office changed the press accreditation system. The new system requires online journalists, as well as traditional journalists, to register at the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT). Although the Office did not give any reason for the change, it is widely seen as evidence that the Chinese authorities are extending their reach into online media .

Online television programs censored

Online television has become a very popular platform for entertainment and information. With no specific rules governing the sector, the authorities invested great effort in attempts to control the content of online TV. Quite a few prominent entertainment programmes from overseas were ordered to be removed. On October 26, the SAPPRFT ordered all television stations to stop showing a Taiwanese film that was on the program of the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival. The film was *Kano*, a baseball drama that allegedly gives a rosy depiction of the Japanese colonization of Taiwan in the 1940s. According to a report by Radio Free Asia on November 5, the SAPPRFT ordered all online media to censor all the content of entertainment programs

produced outside the Mainland before they are aired on the internet. The reports gave rise to the widely held belief that SAPPRFT plans to control internet programming completely.

Hong Kong hit by cyber-attacks

Hong Kong suffered massive cyber-attacks. *Apple Daily*, a pro-democracy newspaper published by Next Media Group, was the major victim, along with pro-establishment political parties and civil society organizations, which were targeted by hacker groups sympathetic to the political opposition.

Picking quarrels and stirring up trouble" has been widely used to attack bloggers who exercise their right of speech on the internet.

The first major cyber-attacks occurred in the lead-up to an online opinion poll that was seen as an unofficial "referendum" on franchise options for the 2017 Hong Kong elections for the Chief Executive. A website built to host the Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme Poll, planned for June 20 to 22, suffered a distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack. *Apple Daily* suffered a similar attack starting around 3.30am on Wednesday, June 18. Next Media reported that its system was inundated with 40 million inquiries per second, leaving it "paralysed" for more than 10 hours. All Next Media Group websites and cell phone apps in Hong Kong and Taiwan were shut down. Next Media chairman Jimmy Lai Chi-ying blamed the Chinese central authorities for the attack, saying Beijing wanted to silence supporters of universal suffrage and public nomination of candidates in 2017. A Next Media senior executive told the IFJ: "We have never seen such a massive attack before. I haven't received a report from my colleagues but you may guess the attack was similar to the HKU Poll."

The attacks did not stop there. On June 23, *Apple Daily* reported that its Taiwan system was inundated with more than 2 million inquiries per second. The report also said the paper found that a pass code for a "switch" had been changed by an unknown person. The attack made the connection speed to the site unstable. A Next Media Group senior executive who is responsible for the IT system told the IFJ: "We are still investigating the attack. We noticed that some of the attacks came from Russia, the United States and China, but we are not sure of their origins." Hong Kong University discovered that two fake websites had been established by unknown people. *Apple Daily* reported that the websites were registered on the Mainland between June 22 and 23. The Chinese authorities demanded that all website operators on the Mainland delete "all information

Hackers attacked the online system of Next Media, publisher of pro-democracy paper *Apple Daily*, during the Occupy Central Movement. *Image: Internet*

that could endanger Hong Kong right before the referendum started on June 20". *Apple Daily* also claimed its IT system and smart phone apps system were attacked occasionally after the Occupy Movement protests started on September 28.

In early October, an international hackers collective called Anonymous Asia announced that they would launch a massive cyber-attack on the Hong Kong Government and some pro-establishment political parties and civil organizations in Hong Kong in retaliation for a police action on September 28 in which 87 tear gas canisters were fired

The first major cyber-attacks occurred in the lead-up to an online opinion poll that was seen as an unofficial referendum.

at protestors from Hong Kong's Occupy Movement. On October 4, the Hong Kong Government admitted that the government official portals suffered a massive DDoS attack. Some pro-establishment media outlets, political parties or organizations official websites also admitted that their websites were forced to shut down due to the attacks.

Bullying, fake claims spread online

During the Occupy Movement in Hong Kong, there were many cases of online bullying and the dissemination of false information. Many people, including journalists, complained that they had received fake information through internet or smart phone instant communication services, and these false messages required them to spend a lot of time verifying the information. On October 25, Wong Wing-Yin, a Radio Television of Hong Kong (RTHK) journalist, was harassed and assaulted by several protesters opposed to the Occupy Movement while she was reporting at Tsim Sha Tsui in Kowloon. When the media widely reported her experience, fake allegations related to her professionalism were disseminated through the internet. RTHK rejected the allegation after conducting an investigation.

Hong Kong criminalises online speech

As online communication became commonly used, Hong Kong Government enacted a law that was based on a case of cyber fraud in 1993. The law was suspected of being used by Hong Kong police suppress free speech in the online world. According to the Security Bureau of Hong Kong, at least 11 people were detained on allegations of "accessing a computer with criminal or dishonest intent" in a period of one month during the Occupy Movement. The Security Bureau said their "crimes" included inciting people to use hacker software to attack the Hong Kong Government computer system and urging people to assemble at the Occupy Movement protest zones at Mong Kok. At least two people were charged and investigations continued into the other nine. Although Hong Kong's Secretary for Security, Lai Tung-Kwok, denied police had abused their power, legislative Councillor Charles Mok queried whether the police had used the new law to limit freedom of speech. A barrister, Alvin Yeung, expressed concern that the Hong Kong police department had abused their powers. He said the intent of the law was to tackle online fraud, but it was being used to attack people who exercised their right to free speech.

During the Occupy Central Movement, thuggery reached out from the streets to the cyber world, and included online bullying and the dissemination of false information.
Image: Internet

HONG KONG AND MACAU

Hong Kong's media entered a chilling period in 2014. Not only did Hong Kong media personnel suffer life-threatening assaults, but they also struggled under significant self-censorship. During the Occupy Central Movement, dozens of journalists were roughly treated, harassed and assaulted by ordinary people and Hong Kong police officers, even when they explicitly declared they were journalists. The central authorities of China were suspected of "packaging" news events to create an alternative stream of propaganda, including staging anti-Occupy Movement demonstrations, distributing media releases and following up with individual journalists to influence angles. Advertising was withdrawn from media that supported the Movement and journalists who wrote critical articles or columns were demoted or sacked. A prominent editor was attacked with a meat cleaver and others were assaulted and intimidated. In Macau, journalists were disciplined for making a subtle on-air protest in commemoration of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing. Media workers were harassed and university scholars sacked for speaking out.

Trust in media plummets

In January 2014, a survey of the public's trust in the media by the journalism school of the Chinese University of Hong Kong found that the credibility of all forms of media had fallen to the lowest level since 1997. For the electronic media, the average credibility score was 6.08 out of 10, while the average credibility score for print media was only 5.72. Bruce Lui, lecturer at Baptist University of Hong Kong, said the influence of political and commercial power in the media was escalating, causing the media to increase self-censorship. Just one month later, on February 18, another poll conducted by the Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong found that the public's rating of press freedom had dropped to 6.61 out of 10. This score was the lowest since the United Kingdom's handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997.

In April, the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Journalists Association established a new press freedom index to measure regular self-censorship and intrusion by owners or management.

Wong Chun-Lung, a photographer for *Apple Daily*, was handcuffed by Hong Kong Police and accused of "assaulting a police officer" during the Occupy Movement. After several hours of detention, he was released without charge because independent footage showed the police officer had in fact knocked his head against the camera.
Image: A blogger

Their survey found that the scores given by journalists were more negative than those given by the general public. On a scale of zero to 10, where 10 represents "very common", the public rated self-censorship at 5.4 while journalists rated it at 6.9. The public rated pressure from owners or management at 6.2, while journalists rated it at 6.5. HKU pollster Dr Robert Chung Ting-Yiu said the difference in responses between the public and journalists was very significant. He said: "Journalists take a much more pessimistic view of the press freedom situation in Hong Kong than the general public. This could be due to [journalists'] understanding of the industry." The Hong Kong Journalists Association chairperson, Sham Yee-Lan, said the findings were worrying. "The indexes reflect the fact that Hong Kong's press freedom is at a low level." The University of Hong Kong's public opinion programme surveyed 1,018 members of the public in December last year, while the Hong Kong Journalists Association interviewed 422 journalists from December 23 to February 4. However, the survey findings did not take into account the demotion or the brutal attack on former *Ming Pao* editor Kevin Lau Chun-To, or the abrupt sacking of outspoken radio host Li Wei-Ling by Hong Kong Commercial Radio.

The low scores on the press freedom index were largely due to advertisers suddenly stopping advertising in pro-democracy Hong Kong newspapers. Shih Wing-Ching, the owner and founder of the free Hong Kong newspaper *am730*, disclosed that several Mainland-backed companies had suddenly stopped advertising in his newspaper, without explanation. Shih said in a talk show on Commercial Radio that he believed the sudden move might be due to the Chinese authorities' dislike of some of the pro-democracy columnists in his newspaper. Meanwhile, Ip Yut-Kin, the chief executive of *Apple Daily*, an outspoken newspaper, said in his column that advertisers had suddenly stopped advertising in his newspaper. He said the authorities had decided that they were going to use an iron fist to deal with any Hong Kong media that supported the Occupy Central Movement. This is a political movement that demands that the central government of China and the local government of Hong Kong conduct the 2017 election for the next chief executive of Hong Kong on the basis of genuine universal suffrage and unrestricted nomination of candidates.

Outspoken journalists penalised

On February 12, an outspoken veteran talk-show host, Li Wei-Ling, was sacked by Commercial Radio of Hong Kong three months after she was removed from her popular morning show. Li had openly criticised certain Hong Kong government policies, as well as the performance of the Chief Executive, Leung Chun-Ying. On February 13, Li disclosed in a press conference that she had been told by an official that Leung had criticised her several times during his

Outspoken radio talk-show host Li Wei-Ling said she believed she was sacked as part of efforts by Hong Kong's Chief Executive Leung Chun-Ying to suppress press freedom. *Image: Serenade Woo*

morning briefings with government officials. She reported the official as saying she "was the person Leung hated the most in Hong Kong" and she should "watch out for her job". Li said: "With my clear judgment, I believe Leung Chun-Ying is suppressing press freedom and Commercial Radio of Hong Kong has bowed to government pressure in order to renew its licence, which is due in 2016. I also believe the central authorities of China have definitely played a role in this incident, although I do not have any evidence to prove it."

Major media accused of self-censorship

Two leading Hong Kong-based newspapers, *Ming Pao* and *Economic Journal*, were accused of practising self-censorship. The largest free-to-air television station, Broadcasting Television of Hong Kong (TVB), and public broadcaster Radio Television of Hong Kong (RTHK) were also suspected.

Editor replaced by out-of-towner

On January 6, Kevin Lau Chun-To, 49, editor-in-chief of Hong Kong's *Ming Pao* newspaper, suddenly announced that he was to be replaced. On March 3, he was replaced by Singapore-based Malaysian journalist Chong Tien-Song, the former editor-in-chief of Malaysia's *Nanyang Siang Pau.* Both papers belong to the same group, Media Chinese International Ltd, which is owned by Malaysian timber tycoon Tiong Hiew King. Tiong has extensive business interests in Malaysia and China and owns two pro-government Chinese-language newspapers in Malaysia. Kevin Lau Chun-To's announcement immediately created turmoil, sparking a petition campaign. More than a thousand people, including staff members of *Ming Pao,* the newspaper's columnist, former staff members, journalism students and several pro-democracy politicians, wrote to the media group demanding an explanation for the change. They were deeply worried the newspaper's editorial independence would be compromised. It was said that the paper's editorial director, Lui Ka-Ming, had intervened in the extensive coverage of the row over the issue in 2013 of Hong Kong's new free-to-air television licences. The paper's executive committee said Lau's replacement was due to the group's desire to expand its new media operations. Furthermore, editorial director Lui Ka-Ming said he formed his opinion about the coverage of the new licences when he was in Canada, but insisted he did not intervene in the coverage, and that similar things had happened several times before.

They were deeply worried the newspaper's editorial independence would be compromised.

The Ming Pao Concern Group, also known as Ming Pao Staff Association which is made up of *Ming Pao* staff members, discussed the matter with the paper's executive committee on January 13. The executive committee accepted the

Ming Pao Staff Association, a newly established union at Ming Pao newspaper, voiced their outrage after the paper's well-regarded editor in chief was a suddenly replaced by a Malaysian Chinese. *Image: Ming Pao Staff Association facebook page*

Concern Group's proposal that the new editor-in-chief should be someone who is widely accepted by the public and is determined to defend press freedom, but rejected its request that it should someone who is familiar with Hong Kong issues and widely accepted by the editorial staff. On January 20, *Ming Pao* determined that Cheung Kin-Bor, one of the executive committee members and a former chief editor, should replace Kevin Lau until further notice. Cheung insisted that *Ming Pao* had the right to choose its own appointees and said Chong Tien-Song would likely be the next editor-in-chief. The Concern Group protested outside the building after the meeting and the IFJ's affiliate, the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA), launched a "writing marathon" campaign to the people of Hong Kong, urging them to write to *Ming Pao* to address their concerns. During the turmoil, some of *Ming Pao's* columnists expressed their anger in their columns, but these articles were removed in the paper's Canadian edition. As expected, Chong Tien-Song was appointed as Kevin Lau's replacement on March 3.

When Lau was removed from his position as editor-in-chief, the editorial department was deeply worried that self-censorship might occur. In July, the staff's concern was proved right. On July 1, the anniversary of Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997, the annual Hong Kong democracy rally was held. The rally supported calls for genuine universal suffrage and public nomination of candidates in the 2017 elections for the Chief Executive and Legislative Council. The Occupy Central Movement announced that a small-scale "occupy" demonstration would be organized after the rally. A senior manager of *Ming Pao* newspaper bypassed normal procedures for making changes and deleted key words from a headline about the rally. According to a statement by the Ming Pao Staff Association, *Ming Pao's* editorial director, Lui Ka-Ming, did not follow regular procedures for getting approval from the executive editor-in-chief and the assistant to the executive editor-in-chief. Lui unilaterally stopped the printing process and replaced "Fighting for universal suffrage" with "Police clearance action". The Ming Pao Union said: "We are deeply furious with Lui's unusual action. We strongly condemn it because such a manoeuvre breaches the normal practice of the editorial department. An intangible interference has finally become tangible, which sets a dangerous precedent for the paper." Lui said he had discussed his decision with the deputy editor-in-chief, but did not say whether the deputy editor-in-chief agreed to the change and why he had deviated from the normal procedure.

Outspoken political columnists silenced

Hong Kong Economic Journal (HKEJ) was also suspected of self-censorship. In February, Edward Chin, a columnist for

A columnist for Hong Kong Economic Journal, Edward Chin, was told without warning that his column was to be discontinued. *Image: Edward Chin*

the newspaper who was also a supporter of the Occupy Central Movement, was reminded by Alice Kwok Yim-Ming, HKEJ's editor-in-chief, that he should focus on finance markets, rather than comment on public affairs. Chin had used his column to discuss a report by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists which estimated that between US$1 trillion and US $4 trillion in untraced assets have left China since 2000, while many top Chinese leaders are using offshore companies to arrange their business. Six months later, Chin was suddenly told that his column would cease in September. The reason given was that the content of the pages was to be changed. Chin believed his column, which had been running for nine years, was terminated because he supported the Occupy Central Movement.

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Another columnist, Joseph Lian Yiz-Heng, accused the chief editor, Alice Kwok Yim-ming, of deliberately deleting a paragraph in his article that speculated on why Hong Kong Television Network (HKTV) failed to win a free-to-air television licence. Lian also said HKEJ demanded that an independent book publisher withdraw three "sensitive" articles he had written for a new book. Kwok said she deleted a paragraph of Lian's article on legal advice. She denied that HKEJ had pressed the publisher to withdraw Lian's articles. Lian, a former consultant to a Hong Kong Government think tank, received a legal threat from Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-Ying after he wrote an article saying that Leung had suspect links with organized crime. Another columnist, Chan Ka-Ming, also alleged HKEJ self-censored after he wrote an article in response to a speech made by Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-Shing.

Chan King-Cheung, the vice-publisher and chief executive officer of HKEJ's online portal, resigned on October 17, saying: "We do not share the same ideology." It is widely believed he resigned because of the HKEJ's growing self-censorship. Alice Kwok, HKEJ's editor-in-chief, denied the allegation.

TV news report edited to obscure truth

The largest free-to-air television station, Broadcasting Television of Hong Kong (TVB), practised obvious self-censorship during the series of demonstrations called the Occupy Central Movement.

In the early hours of October 15, journalists from TVB exclusively recorded about seven policemen moving an Occupy Movement protester to a dark corner and beating

A TVB camera operator recorded several policemen assaulting an Occupy Movement protester, but the footage created turmoil over self-censorship and the journalist who wrote the script was penalised. *Image: Internet*

him up for four minutes. The report was aired, but in the 7am news bulletin, the script of the report was changed and the voice-over was deleted, sparking an outcry both inside the station and among the general public. According to a TVB journalist, the head of the news department, Keith Yuen Chi-Wai, called the news room around 6.30am and ordered it to stop airing the original script, which described several policemen kicking and punching a protester in a dark corner. Journalists said at a meeting later that Keith Yuen had said the script should not use the words "kicked and "punched" because they were "subjective". Twenty-eight TVB journalists initiated an open letter to protest against the changes. They wrote: "Using this version (with the voice-over deleted) means the truth is missing from the report. We would like to reiterate that the script for the voice-over was factual and objective. The description did not involve any personal feeling or position." News department head Keith Yuen then arranged an internal meeting with all staff of the news department. On this occasion, he explained that the script should not have used the words "dark corner", in contrast to his initial explanation that the problem was the "subjective" words "kicked and punched.

During the meeting, Ho Wing-Hong, assistant assignments editor and the original script writer, openly disagreed with Yuen's comment. A staff member secretly recorded the meeting and later posted it on internet, where it immediately drew public attention. Two weeks later, on October 29, Ho suffered retaliation. A journalist told the IFJ that Ho was demoted to chief of a research team. However, according to an internal email from the manager to all staff, Ho was moved because the news bulletin will be extended next year. This explanation was widely rejected. According to *Apple Daily* on November 13, Wong Pun-Nam, a managing editor, was told in early November that he

would become the assistant of the main daily news bulletin, and another managing editor, Peri Chow, was told she would have her annual bonus reduced. Although Ho, Won and Chow did not explain the reasons behind their moves publicly, it was widely believed they were "punished" because they were involved in the script of the report about the policemen beating up the protester on October 15.

A TVB crew exclusively recorded about seven policemen moving an Occupy Movement protester to a dark corner and beating him up for four minutes.

The head of TVB's news department, Keith Yuen, explained to the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) that the October 15 script was changed because the case had been investigated by police after someone filed a complaint, and it therefore became known that the original report was incorrect. But Keith Yuen's explanation did not resolve the dissatisfaction. The number of signatures on the open letter to TVB continued to increase.

At the same time, several journalists said they felt confused because news department head Yuen demanded they be objective, but he himself had expressed his strong feelings against the Occupy Movement several times during the editorial meeting. Although he did not demand that journalists follow his views, the reports were always similar to the ideas he expressed. An intern noticed that Yuen regularly made a phone call at the end of the editorial meeting, during which he spoke Mandarin rather than Cantonese, which is the everyday language of Hong Kong. A journalist told the IFJ that all staff of the news room and senior media workers in Hong Kong were well aware that Yuen has a good relationship with the officers of the Chinese Liaison Office in Hong Kong, which is an agency of China's central government. Although this by itself does not prove anything, the close relationship drew the attention of the news room.

RTHK's director of broadcasting, Roy Tang Yun-Kwong, refused to adopt a staff committee request to include a commitment to free speech in the guide book for program producers. *Image: Internet*

Broadcaster shy of free speech

Public broadcaster Radio Television of Hong Kong also came under threat. Roy Tang Yun-kwong, RTHK's director of broadcasting, refused to adopt a staff committee request to include a commitment to free speech in the guide book for program producers. The committee wanted to include the following sentence: "We promote freedom of expression, open and democratic society, civil participation and a caring community." Tang said the suggestion did not fit within the definition of public broadcaster under UNESCO and that it was already stated in the RTHK Charter. However, the chairwoman of RTHK's Programme Staff Union, Bao Choy Yuk-Ling, said: "The changes we proposed are in line with the principles of a public broadcaster accepted in the West and by the United Nations." Tang rejected a suggestion by a senior manager to change the wording from "we promote" to "we believe in". Director of broadcasting Tang then demanded that the managers individually state their views on whether to delete the phrase or the whole paragraph. According a report from the staff union, the management took just 15 minutes to decide by majority vote to delete the phrase. On May 5, RTHK staff held a blue ribbon protest during a ceremony and asked Tang to wear one, but Tang refused. Blue ribbons have become a symbol of the defence of press freedom among the Hong Kong media during 2014. Choy said Tang's refusal "showed his stance regarding press freedom".

Roy Tang also ignored staff requests and put programme quality at risk. On July 30, RTHK's English television service programme staff and the RTHK Programme Staff Union issued a rare joint statement expressing their concern over the decision by Roy Tang not to renew the contract of an executive producer, Gary Pollard. In June, RTHK suddenly tightened up its employment rules so that contract staff who reach retirement age need approval from the Director of Broadcasting to continue their contracts. The move clearly deviated from the regulations issued by the Civil Service Bureau, under which there is no compulsory retirement age for non-civil service contract employees. RTHK posted a recruitment advertisement for Pollard's position twice in April 2014, but no suitable candidate was found. Even so, RTHK insisted that Pollard leave in August, provoking anger among staff. An RTHK staff member told the IFJ: "We have repeatedly voiced our concerns to management, saying we lack manpower and there is nobody internally who can perform multiple functions in the way that Pollard does. However, management simply ignored our views. The most enraging thing is that we demanded twice to speak with the director of broadcasting, Roy Tang, but he refused." Tang, a career administrative officer, was appointed in 2011 as both director of broadcasting and editor-in-chief. Since then, several incidents have aroused public concern that freedom of expression is shrinking. Recently, many staff members have expressed concerns that RTHK will let go all veteran and outspoken journalists under the new rules.

ATV delays paying staff wages

Hong Kong Asia Television Ltd, a free-to-air broadcaster that is in financial difficulties, was prosecuted by the Labour Department of Hong Kong on 34 summonses after the company was late in paying salaries to around 700 staff. ATV delayed paying the salaries from July to September, finally paying in October. Similar delays occurred in November and December. According to the executive director of ATV, Ip Ka-Po, the company legally rescinded the contracts of about 30 staff members on January 3, in accordance with the Employment Ordinance of Hong Kong. Seven of the staff came from the news department. According to the ordinance, an employer can be prosecuted if, wilfully or without a reasonable excuse, it does not pay staff within seven days of the last day of the wage period. ATV has been involved in number of lawsuits, including a dispute between two major shareholders, businessman Wong Ching and Taiwanese media tycoon Tsai Eng-meng. It has also been involved in breaches of television programme service licences issued by the Communication Authority. The Executive Committee of Hong Kong will consider whether ATV should be granted a licence when it is due for renewal in 2016. ATV is one of the two free-to-air television broadcasters in Hong Kong. Established in 1957, it was the first Chinese television station in the world. However, ATV's reputation has declined since the involvement of Wong Ching, who has been accused of influencing the news department. In 2011, ATV made a false report about the death of former leader Jiang Zemin.

ATV delayed paying the salaries from July to September, finally paying in October.

Journalists subjected to physical assaults

Hong Kong media experienced many challenges in 2014. Not only were media workers badly hurt by unidentified people, but also, during the Occupy Movement, they were targeted by anti-Occupy Movement protesters and Hong Kong police.

Protestors opposed to the Occupy Movement beat up three journalists while they were carrying out their professional responsibilities. Journalist John Sin and two camera operators, Lui Chiu-Ho and Poon Kwok-Fai, were brutally attacked at Tsim Sha Tsui by anti-Occupy Movement protesters on October 25. The three were reporting on an assembly organized by the Blue Ribbon Movement, which comprises three groups that support the Hong Kong police.

Some 200,000 unarmed Hong Kong citizens occupied major roads in Hong Kong to pressure China to allow unrestricted nomination of candidates in the election of the next Chief Executive. Police fired 87 tear gas grenades during demonstrations. *Image: Hong Kong Press Photographers Association*

They were verbally abused, and kicked and punched all over their bodies. Sin's and Lui's clothes were badly torn and both lost their glasses. Lui said: "I put up my hands and kept silent, but people simply ignored this and kept kicking and punching my body, head and arms." Hong Kong police later

They were verbally abused, and kicked and punched all over their bodies.

arrested the attackers. The attack immediately prompted Radio Television of Hong Kong, *Apple Daily* newspaper and Digital Broadcasting Cooperation (DBC) to refuse to report all events organized by the Blue Ribbon Movement. A TVB union member launched an online signature campaign which drew around 300 signatures, but senior managers threatened to reduce annual bonuses and sack the TVB staffers if they did not remove their signatures.

Editor attacked with meat cleaver

After Kevin Lau was removed as editor in chief of *Ming Pao Daily* in January 2014, he was attacked by an assailant with a meat cleaver on February 26. He underwent lung surgery and remained in intensive care at Eastern Hospital for several days. The attack sparked outrage among the media and the public. On March 2, five major media organizations, along with a number of independent media unions, various associations, the IFJ and people from all walks of life held a rally outside government headquarters, drawing 13,000 people. During the rally, an audio recording of Kevin Lau speaking from his hospital bed was played to the crowd, in which he called on journalists and supporters to "remain fearless". Just a week earlier, on February 23, an estimated 6000 people joined the HKJA in a march to call on Hong Kong chief executive to keep his 2012 election promise to defend press freedom. Hong Kong police, with the help of Mainland police, arrested two people suspected of involvement in the cleaver attack on Kevin Lau when the suspects fled to Mainland. In the court, the suspects alleged that they were beaten to confess, but police denied the claim. As this report was going to press, police had still not arrested the mastermind behind the cleaver attack. The reason for the attack is still unknown, but Lau and his family have said clearly they do not have any financial difficulties. In addition, Lau was not involved in any other business. Lau resumed to his duties on August 1, but months later he still needed a walking stick.

Plans for new paper cancelled

At least two more physical attacks on media industry figures occurred. On March 19, Peon Lei Lun-Han, 46, the sole

Kevin Lau, former editor in chief of *Ming Pao* newspaper, was brutally attacked with a meat cleaver. Thousands of journalists and people from all walks of life rallied to demand that Hong Kong Police bring the culprits to justice. *Image: Internet and Serenade Woo*

registered director and vice-president of a group preparing to launch a new newspaper, to be called *Hong Kong Morning News*, and news controller Lam Kin-Ming, 54, were attacked by four masked men wielding iron pipes when the pair were walking along Science Museum Road, Tsim Sha Tsui East. Lei's nose and knees were injured and Lam's right elbow was hurt. Lei resigned on May 12, eight weeks after the attack. It was also reported that the person funding the newspaper project had been detained by Mainland authorities on allegations of fraud.

After the attack, preparations for *Hong Kong Morning News* ceased. Hong Kong-based newspaper *Oriental Daily* reported on June 18 that more than 30 media personnel at *Hong Kong Morning News* arranged through the Hong Kong Labour Department to have a closed door discussion with senior management to ask for overdue wages and severance pay. However, the senior managers did not come to the meeting. The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, which is helping the media workers to fight for the late payments, said it had received 120 complaints involving more than HK$3 million. The workers demanded that senior management disclose the identity of the paper's backer so that they could file a lawsuit directly. Meanwhile, nine senior managers including Peon Lei Lun-Han issued a legal document on June 11 asking the company for late payments and severance pay. Creditors have pushed the owner of the newspaper to file for bankruptcy.

Knife attack at Cable TV office

On September 22, a 19-year-old man armed with two knives entered the building of Cable Television of Hong Kong (Cable TV) at Tsuen Wan in the New Territories and attacked three people, including a security guard and a cameraman from the news department. According to Hong Kong police, the alleged attacker wanted to meet a person from Cable TV to discuss his service contract with the company. When the security officer refused to let the suspect into the building, the suspect slashed at the guard. According to a report on Cable TV, the security guard's head and hand were hurt, and the cameraman's head was hit once by the suspect when he tried to intervene to stop the attack. The attacker was arrested and charged by police.

Occupy Movement calls for democracy

At the end of 2012, Benny Tai Yiu-Ting, an associate professor of Law at the University of Hong Kong, suggested people should fight for genuine universal suffrage for the chief executive elections through a civil disobedience movement in 2014. Benny Tai and two others, Reverend Chu Yiu-Ming and Dr Chan Kin-Man, an associate professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, then launched Occupy Central with Love and Peace, which focused on mass demonstrations in major business districts such as Central, and quickly became known as "the Occupy Movement" for short. After the idea was proposed, various critical articles were published in the media.

The Occupy Movement was triggered by a decision by the National Congress Standing Committee of China on the voting systems for the elections for the Legislative Council in 2016 and the Chief Executive in 2017. *Image: Internet*

In June 2014, the Occupy Movement commissioned the University of Hong Kong's Public Opinion Programme (HKUPOP) to run a poll on three proposals – all of which involve allowing citizens to directly nominate candidates for the 2017 elections – to present to the Beijing government. A total of 792,808 people, equivalent to a fifth of the registered electorate, took part in the poll by either voting online or going to designated polling stations. However, this unofficial "referendum" infuriated Beijing and prompted a flurry of vitriolic editorials, preparatory police exercises and cyber-attacks. Before the poll opened, it was quickly hit by what one US-based cyber-security firm called the "most sophisticated onslaught ever seen". In an interview with *South China Morning Post,* Matthew Prince, the chief executive of CloudFlare, which helped defend HKUPOP from the cyber-attack, said: "[The attackers] continue to use different strategies over time … It is pretty unique and sophisticated." The firm could not identify the origin of the attack. However Mainland officials and newspapers called the poll "illegal", while many condemned the Occupy Movement and claimed it was motivated by foreign "anti-China forces" and would damage Hong Kong's standing as a financial capital. Many former Chinese officials criticized the movement through the media. The Chinese government paper, *Global Times,* mocked the referendum as an "illegal farce" and "a joke".

On July 1, the annual march commemorating the 1997 handover of Hong Kong to China drew at least 100,000 protesters (500,000, according to the organizers). The Occupy Movement rehearsed the occupation immediately after the rally. Thousands of people, including students, stayed in the streets until midnight. Police arrested 511 people in the early hours of July 2.

Voting system is key issue

At the end of August, tension came to a head over the voting system for the 2017 election of Hong Kong's next chief executive, which became the key issue for the upcoming Occupy Movement. On August 31, China's National People's Congress Standing Committee decided that voters would have a choice of only two or three candidates, all of whom must have received the support of more than 50 per cent of a 1200-member special electoral committee. Critics said the decision did not meet international standards of democracy. The Movement said: "The aim of ensuring that the chief executive election in 2017 meets international standards was brutally strangled by the Standing Committee." The tension between the Movement and the Government immediately escalated.

On September 22, the Hong Kong Federation of Students launched a one-week strike, with students refusing to attend their university classes to express their strong demand for direct elections for all seats in Hong Kong's Legislative Council in 2016, as well as direct nomination of candidates and universal suffrage for the election of the chief executive in 2017. They assembled outside the headquarters complex of the Hong Kong Government. On September 26, Scholarism, a teenage student group, joined the strike. The student strikes developed into a wave of demonstrations, which led to civil disobedience and an early start to the Occupy Movement. The protests gradually developed into a non-centralised movement, largely organized by volunteers, that spread to several areas of Hong Kong.

The student strikes developed into a wave of demonstrations, which led to civil disobedience and an early start to the Occupy Movement.

On the night of September 26, students stormed into the government headquarters complex and several student leaders were arrested. The arrests sparked off the full-scale Occupy Movement in the early hours of September 28.

Dozens of media workers assaulted

According to the IFJ's tally, at least 39 journalists, photographers, cameramen and student interns were roughly treated during 79 days of the Occupy Movement, including through verbally abuse, jostling and assaults by anti-Movement protesters and police officers. The media workers affected were working at Radio Television of Hong Kong (RTHK) , *Ming Pao Daily*, *Apple Daily, Oriental Daily, South China Morning Post , U Magazine, AM730* (free newspaper), InMedia (online media), SocREC (online media), Coconut Media (online media), Digital Broadcasting Corporation (DBC) Radio, Hong Kong Television Broadcasting (TVB) television station and Asia Television (ATV). This tally did not include the dozens of media workers who were caught in clouds of tear gas and pepper spray. They suffered

various degrees of injury, including bleeding and extensive bruising. Quite a lot of reporting equipment was damaged by unknown anti-Occupy Movement demonstrators and police using batons. Throughout the Movement, including during these violent incidents, journalists identified themselves as media workers by showing their press cards, wearing press jackets and holding microphones with their station's logos, but this did not make it easier for them to carry out their duties. On the contrary, police tried to force media to show their press cards before they took photos or entered into restricted areas. Police also used the light from their handheld torches to frustrate the journalists' efforts to film the action in the streets.

A journalist of Radio Television of Hong Kong was punched by an unknown anti-Occupy Movement protester when the protester provoked a scuffle against Occupy Movement protesters at Mong Kok, Kowloon. *Image: Hong Kong Press Photographers Association*

The following cases were recorded by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its affiliate, the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA).

September 27: Many journalists were caught by pepper spray when Hong Kong police used it to stop student protestors trying to storm the public area of the Hong Kong Government Headquarter Complex. An Asia Television (ATV) journalist's neck was grabbed violently by a police officer when he was trying to get into the complex.

September 28: Journalists were caught in 87 tear gas grenades when Hong Kong riot police used them to disperse thousands of unarmed Occupy Movement protesters, who were trying to spread out across Wan Chai to Central district. Many journalists were struck and jostled by riot police using batons and shields.

September 28: A DBC Radio journalist was filming the retreat of protestors from a ramp when Hong Kong riot police fired 87 tear gas grenades. He refused a police order to get down. A policeman grabbed him by his backpack, yanked him down and forced him onto a pedestrian bridge. He fell and was injured.

September 29: A journalist with *Post 852*, an online media platform, was blocked and insulted by Hong Kong police when he was trying to enter a restricted area at Mong Kok. When the police officer saw his press card, he said: "This media, rubbish."

October 3: A freelance writer who had been criticising the Occupy Movement protestor was suddenly hit in the face with a water bottle.

October 3: A Radio Television Hong Kong journalist was reporting on the clash between a team of police officers and the Occupy Movement protestors at the pedestrian flyover near the Citic Pacific Tower in the Admiralty district. A policeman hit the journalist on his lower back with a baton. The journalist suffered painful bruising and the soft tissues near his pelvis were damaged.

October 3: A *South China Morning Post* journalist was working behind a cordon formed by police officers at Mong Kok when police were trying to settle a series of scuffles between protesters with different views. The SCMP reporter was hit in the head by a full water bottle thrown from the side of the anti-occupy protestors.

October 3: When a *Ming Pao* news photographer was filming the encirclement of the Occupy protestors by their opponents at Mong Kok, a man punched his camera. The flash light broke away and could not be found.

October 3: A *U Magazine* journalist was hit on her arm several times by a man with a hard object and sustained bruises.

October 3: Mak Ka-Wai, a TV journalist with Radio Television Hong Kong, was punched in the head by a man at Mong Kok who was shouting angry remarks at the Occupy Movement protestors. Mak called out that he was a journalist but the man ignored him and kept on punching his head. He sustained a bruised eye and swollen nose. His camera and glasses were damaged.

October 3: The Coconut Media multimedia director was filming a group of men criticising the Occupy protestors at Mong Kok. One of the men slapped his camera and punched him on the side of his head.

October 4: A *Ming Pao* journalist was elbowed in the chest by two to three plainclothes policemen, sustaining painful bruises, when he was witnessing the clash between the occupy protestors and their opponents at the pedestrian flyover of the Citic Pacific Tower in Admiralty district.

October 4: A journalist with Shue Yan College online newspaper was filming the clash between the police and the protestors on the flyover. A police officer slapped his camera and another attempted to snatch his phone. He stopped filming. On his way out, a policeman caught him by his face and slapped him on his head. His leg was kicked several times. The lower part of his right eye was scratched.

October 4: An *Apple Daily* journalist who was covering the clash between the police and the protestors on the flyover was pushed back several times.

October 5: An online journalist with *InMediaHK* was suddenly shoved by a police officer after the journalist indicated his identity when police were trying to settle the scuffles between protesters from different movements. The journalist and several protesters fell down. He was stepped on by the police and the people at the scene, so that his left leg was injured.

Next Media headquarters, publisher of *Apple Daily*, was surrounded by anti-Occupy Movement protesters for several days, created difficulties with delivering newspapers on time. *Image: Serenade Woo*

October 11 onwards: The Next Media Building was surrounded by more than a dozen anti-Occupy Movement protesters. They initially parked cars and lorry at the entrance of the building, blocking the delivery of newspapers to the distribution zones. The next day, dozens of anti-Occupy Movement protesters protested and erected tents outside the building. Journalists were verbally abused, threatened and jostled by protesters when they were trying to report the case. A journalist's T-shirt was torn protesters. Many Next Media senior managers received nuisance phone calls. Next Media succeeded in getting an injunction against the blockade, but anti-Occupy Movement protesters continued to assemble and used torch light to make it difficult for photographers to take pictures.

October 12: A *Ming Pao* photographer was hit on the leg by unknown people when he was reporting on the Hong Kong police efforts to disperse protesters at Mong Kok.

October 15: An *Inmedia HK* journalist was pushed back by the anti-riot police when he was reporting. His head was injured by a police shield.

October 15: A camera operator with online media outlet *SocREC*, Daniel Cheng, was dragged away by a group of anti-riot police when police took clearance action at Lung Wo Road, Admiralty. He was allegedly kicked and punched for 30 seconds, before being dragged onto the floor of a coach. Cheng said later he repeatedly waved his press identity card but was ignored. He suffered injuries on his face, forehead, nose, mouth, neck and left arm.

October 15: A camera operator with free newspaper AM730 was pushed against a staircase and a police officer suddenly ripped off his glasses when police were taking clearance action at Lung Wo Road, Admiralty. The lenses broke but luckily his eyes were not injured.

October 16: An *Apple Daily* photographer felt that he was hit by police batons at least twice when he was reporting on the arrest of an Occupy Movement protester by three police officers. His abdomen, right arm and right thigh were bruised.

October 17: Getty Images photographer Paula Bronstein was accused of criminal damage to a vehicle after she jumped on to a car in order to take photos of Hong Kong police dispersing protesters at Mong Kok. Bronstein paid

Paula Bronstein (centre), a photographer for Getty Images, was charged with criminal damage when she stood on a car bonnet to take pictures when Hong Kong police tried to disperse protesters. *Image: Yik Yeung-Man*

A police officer sprayed pepper spray into Ronson Chan's eyes (centre) after Chan accused police of violating Police General Orders. *Image: Yik Yeung-Man*

HK$300 dollars (US$50) in bail after she was detained in a police station for several hours. She explained that she jumped onto the car because she was pushed against a car by a large crowd of people, leaving her no space to stand. She was convicted and sentence for two years self-discpline in December. Many journalists were choked by pepper spray when police used it to disperse protesters.

October 18: Two *Oriental Daily* television journalists were pushed down onto the ground while they were reporting on police officers settled a scuffle at Mong Kok. One of the journalists, Ronson Chan, demanded an explanation of why police used a baton to push him and his female colleague onto the ground, when they were repeatedly crying out that they were journalists. A policeman sprayed pepper spray directly towards Chan's eyes without giving any warning, as required by the Police General Orders.

October 18: Two *Apple Daily* journalists were jostled and attacked by police when they were trying to report on police dispersing protesters at Mong Kok. Hon Yiu-Ting was grabbed around the neck from behind by an officer and dragged backwards when he was taking photos of three police officers arresting a protester. His colleague was jostled by several police officers on another occasion on the same day. When the colleague demanded the officers' identification, she was asked to give her identification in return.

October 10 and 20: In two separate incidents, 10,000 copies of *Apple Daily* were splashed with dirty fluid by unidentified people.

October 24: An *Apple Daily* journalist with the surname Kwan was punched on the left side of his face by a man wearing a mask who was trying to abscond from police after he had assaulted some Occupy Movement protesters at Mong Kok.

Three TVB News journalists, John Sin, Lui Chiu-Ho and Poon Kwok-Fai, were verbally abused and violently assaulted by anti-Occupy Movement protesters. Sin's and Lui's clothes were badly torn. *Image: Internet*)

October 25: Three TVB News journalists, John Sin, Lui Chiu-Ho and Poon Kwok-Fai, were verbally abused and violently assaulted by anti-Occupy Movement protesters at Tsim Sha Tsui. They were severely bruised; Sin and Lui's clothes were badly torn and they lost their glasses. Lui said: "I put my hands up and remained silent, but people simply ignored my actions and kept kicking and punching my body, head and arms."

October 25: A part-time journalist with Radio Television of Hong Kong, Wong Wing-Yin, was pushed to the ground and kicked several times after she took photos of the anti-Occupy Movement protestors at Tsim Sha Tsui. Wong had showed her press card but anti-Occupy Movement protesters ignored this and snatched away her press card and backpack. She was eventually escorted to safety by a foreign photographer. Luckily, the assault did not make her back injury worse.

October 26: TVB staff organized an online signature campaign to call for non-violence at the Occupy Movement demonstration after three journalists were violently assaulted on October 25. The campaign immediately collected more than 300 staff members' signatures. However a senior manager immediately threatened staff who had signed that they must remove their names from the list or be sacked or have their annual bonus reduced.

November 25: A member of a Now Television crew was accused of "assaulting a police officer" and pushed to the ground by several officers. Now TV footage showed there was chaos after police used pepper spray to disperse dozens of peaceful protesters. One officer tried to remove a ladder from the Now Television crew while the team was reporting. The crew member defended the ladder, and then tried to leave the scene. Suddenly a police officer grabbed him from behind and shoved him onto the ground. Dozens of officers surrounded him, and ignored him and his colleagues when they repeatedly called out that they were journalists. The crew member sustained a black eye and injuries to his body.

November 26: A photographer with *Oriental Daily* was threatened with arrest if he continued to use a flash to take photos of police clearing the demonstration. The officer said: "Don't use your flash – otherwise I will arrest you!" Police insisted on recording details of the photographer's personal identity before allowing him to leave.

November 26: A crew from another Hong Kong-based television station, Asia Television, was threatened with arrest by a station sergeant if they continued to film the clearance action.

November 26: Lynn Lee of Al Jazeera and Isabella Steger of *The Wall Street Journal* were shoved and jostled by Hong Kong police. Lee was pushed to the ground from behind by unknown people. She suffered severe bruising on her knees and her camera lens was damaged.

November 26: Wang Lin of New Zealand Asia Television was shoved during the clearance at Mong Kok. He said he was pushed onto the ground and assaulted by three Hong Kong police officers several times, receiving injuries to his legs, back and shoulders.

November 26: A camera operator for Hong Kong-based *Apple Daily* was accused of trying to snatch a police officer's gun when he was filming police attempting to disperse protesters at Mong Kok. He said police initially accused him of snatching the gun, but this was changed to "touching" the gun.

November 26: Another camera operator for Hong Kong-based *Apple Daily* was accused of assaulting a police officer when he was filming the same action in Mong Kok. However, *South China Morning Post's* online footage showed a man believed to be the camera operator holding his camera to film protesters. A police officer's forehead accidentally knocked the camera when he turned around. The officer immediately shoved the camera, and several uniformed police officers surrounded and pushed the operator to the ground and handcuffed him. He was detained for almost six hours.

December 1: Many camera operators, photographers and journalists were hit in the eyes by pepper spray while police were dispersing hundreds of protesters at Lung Wo Road and Tamar Park.

True number of attacks much higher

The IFJ believes the tally of journalists who received rough treatment, threats or assaults is far higher than the cases above. Quite a number of journalists did not speak out because they believed it was useless and did not report the incidents to police at the scene. As well, police turned a blind eye to incidents, did not take immediate action or delayed responding to complaints. Their behaviour was similar to that of the police on the Mainland when

IFJ believes the tally of journalists who received rough treatment, threats or assaults is far higher.

journalists are reporting on so-called sensitive cases, such as protests or court news. In these cases, Mainland police turn a blind eye and quietly release the assailant. Another reason why journalists did not put their complaints on the record was that their managers did not encourage their staff to speak out about their treatment.

China drives critical propaganda

During the summer, a group of senior managers of Hong Kong media outlets visited Beijing, where they were asked by China's Vice-President, Li Yuanchao, to do more negative reports on the Occupy Movement. Not surprisingly, self-censorship and partial reporting occurred frequently during the movement. Before and after the Movement was launched, quite a few media outlets labelled it an "illegal campaign", and said it would "jeopardize the global image of Hong Kong and erode the rule of law". These claims were in line with the attitudes of the Hong Kong government and the Central Government of China. In all national mouthpiece media, the general thrust of the argument in editorials and commentary was to criticize the Movement, to emphasize the Communist Party's complete power over Hong Kong's affairs, and to suggest the majority of Hong Kong people welcome the 2017 political framework.

Zhang Xiaoming, Director of the Chinese Liaison Office in Hong Kong, repeatedly said the Occupy Movement was "illegal". *Image: A blogger*

At the same time, the Central Government used propaganda to publish a series of editorials, commentary and reports that were critical of the Movement. On September 28, the state-controlled news channel Dragon TV broadcast the images of a few thousand people jubilantly waving Chinese flags, participating in a celebration of the upcoming 65th anniversary of China's National Day in Tamar Park, while the coverage of student protests was omitted. Interviewees overwhelmingly welcomed China's proposals for Hong Kong's 2017 election.

On September 21, a day before the university students' strike-for-a-week campaign started, it was reported that China's Central Propaganda Department and Internet Information Office of the State Council issued an order to all traditional and online media in China that they should delete all reports about the student strike. Specifically, they were ordered to delete an article about the 10 questions asked by the student leaders.

The Central Government used propaganda to publish a series of editorials, commentary and reports that were critical of the Movement.

On September 28, Hong Kong riot police fired 87 tear gases grenades in areas from Wan Chai to Central District. Two days later, the Central Government demanded that all traditional and online media on the Mainland publish a series of very critical opinions and reports against the Movement. All media were told to post the critical articles in a prominent position. The articles had headlines such as "Who is the mastermind behind the fight for Hong Kong independence?", "Who wants to create trouble for China and leave China in a passive position?", "Occupy Movement brings shame on Hong Kong's rule of law", and "Chaos – neither a blessing for Hong Kong nor the will of Hongkongers". About 100 media personnel catering to overseas Chinese in foreign countries were organized to publish a statement attacking the Occupy Movement.

Movement's supporters smeared

After the direct attack on the Movement, the Central Government started to refocus its criticism on the topic of economy damage. During the middle phase of the Movement, the Central Government accused it of having links with anti-government organisations outside China.

Jimmy Lai, owner of Next Media, had his computer hacked. It was then revealed that he had donated money to pro-democracy politicians and groups. *Image: Serenade Woo*

Prominent media tycoon Lai Chi-Ying and labour rights activist and legislator Lee Cheuk-Yan, who both vocally supported the movement, were alleged to have strong links with foreign forces. Law enforcement officers ransacked their homes and offices. Towards the end of August, Lai and Lee, as well as several pro-democracy legislators and activists, were accused of accepting "political" money. Lai is the founder of Next Media, the publisher of *Apple Daily*, which vocally supported the Occupy Movement. He has a strong relationship with politicians in Hong Kong and the US and has often been accused by pro-establishment media, without any evidence, of giving financial support to the pro-democracy camp. This time, the pro-establishment media produced a number of Lai's bank statements to back up the claims. The evidence showed that legislator Lee Cheuk-Yan had received money from Lai, and also had strong links with the National Endowment for Democracy, a US-based non-government organization that receives funding from the US Congress. Critics believed the reports were orchestrated by the Chinese government with the aim of stopping Lai and Lee from supporting the Occupy Movement.

Corruption scandal downplayed

The reactions of the Hong Kong Government, pro-Hong Kong and China establishment legislators and quite a number of Hong Kong media outlets moved in step with each other. One of the most obvious examples of this was the efforts made to downplay a scandal involving the chief executive of Hong Kong, Leung Chun-Ying. An Australian media outlet, Fairfax Media, exclusively disclosed the story of how Leung had signed a secret agreement with an international company valued at HK$50 million on the day he announced he would run for chief executive of Hong Kong in 2012. When he ran for the office, he accepted one of the instalments but did not report it to the public. The Fairfax report immediately drew a public outcry, but only two newspapers followed up the report in a prominent position. Other newspapers downplayed the story and placed it on their inside pages.

The three Hong Kong newspapers controlled by the Central Government – *Wen Wei Po, Ta Kung Pao* and *Hong Kong Commercial Daily* – did not report the story even in the following days. In fact, the IFJ was told that the Central Government-controlled newspapers had organized a team to focus on reporting on the Occupy Movement in Hong Kong. They chose a negative angle to report the Movement every day, giving the coverage at least one full page. When the Movement started, the number of pages was increased but all the articles took a negative angle. Some positive reports were available from other newspapers.

Online outlet starved of ads

A new Hong Kong online media outlet, *House News,* was suddenly closed, with the co-founder admitting he was "afraid". The pro-democracy news website was established in 2012 by Tony Tsoi Tung-Ho and three others. Tsoi was one of 10 professionals who publicly vowed to take part in the Occupy Movement. On July 26, Tsoi posted a closure notice on the front page of the website. He wrote: "Hong Kong has been changed so that it is no longer easy to run a normal media. … The current political atmosphere is extremely disturbing. A number of democracy advocates have been followed, had their past investigated and been smeared.

Hong Kong has been changed so that it is no longer easy to run a normal media.

White terror has been spreading throughout society. I felt this stress." Tsoi said his family also felt the pressure. In the open letter he admitted: "Despite our popularity, many big companies do not place advertisements on our website because of our critical stance towards the government and Beijing." The website had an average of 300,000 unique visitors per day in the month before it closed, but in this "abnormal society", it had never made a profit because advertising revenues were disproportionately low.

Facebook suspends activists' accounts

Social media also came under scrutiny. Dr Benny Tai Yiu-Ting, one of the main organizers of the Occupy Movement, said Facebook suspended his account without explanation. Tai said Facebook notified him that, according to company policy, an account must list the account holder's real full name. In addition, it was "a violation of our policies to use a personal profile to represent anything other than yourself". Tai set up his Facebook account in the name "Benny Tai Yiu-Ting", by which he is commonly known. However, his Hong Kong identity card lists only his Chinese name, not his English name "Benny". He said he had supplied Facebook with his full name and his picture, and had been operating his account for some time without any problems. Under these circumstances, he did not know why his account was suddenly suspended.

Occupy Movement instigator Benny Tai found that his facebook account was suddenly cancelled by the company on the pretext that the name on his account was not identical to that on his identity card. *Image: Internet*

A similar complaint was made by Leung Kwok-Hung, the chairperson of the League of Social Democrats, whose Facebook account was suspended by the company without explanation. Leung, who is known by his nickname "Long Hair", is a pan-democratic member of the Legislative Council and has been labeled a radical activist. The Occupy Movement itself has complained that its Facebook account has been impersonated by unidentified people.

Cyber bullying becomes political

Cyber-attacks and online bullying escalated, particularly during the Movement. The Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data reported that it received 70 cases in a month during the Movement, compared with only 48 cases in the whole of 2013. Some of the targets were journalists and the key figures of the Occupy Movement. Wong Wing-Yin, a journalism student of Shue Yan University and a part-time reporter for RTHK, was represented as an Occupy Movement protester after she was pushed to the ground and kicked by several anti-Occupy Movement protesters at Tsim Sha Tsui on October 25. The home addresses, telephone numbers and names of family members of key Occupy Movement leaders were posted on the internet. These were the three instigators of the movement, Benny Tai Yiu-Ting, Chan Kin-Man and Chu Yiu-Ming; student leaders Alex Chow Yong-Kang and Joshua Wong Chi-Fung; and the chairperson of Next Media, Jimmy Lai Chee-Ying. A number of protesters demonstrated outside of Jimmy Lai's house for several days afterwards. At the same time, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner said some bloggers and other users of online media may have violated the law. In one such case, a student threatened to pay the mafia HK$60,000 to chop off the hand of a policeman's daughter. The Privacy Commissioner, Allan Chiang, condemned the threat. Chiang did not specify which particular laws that he believed bloggers had breached. However the law being used by police to charge those speaking out online was "access to computer to computer with criminal or dishonest intent".

Cyber-attacks target government

Meanwhile, a well-known international hacker collective known as Anonymous Asia admitted they had launched a massive DDoS cyber attack on the Hong Kong Government and pro-establishment political parties and groups in Hong Kong in order to express their outrage at the Hong Kong police's action in firing tear gas grenades at protestors on September 28. The Hong Kong Government, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, pro-China newspaper *Wenweipo* and other groups were targeted. A few days later, several government departments on the Mainland also suffered massive DDoS cyber-attacks.

Online bullying escalated during the Occupy Movement. Several key leaders of the Movement, including Wong Chi-Fung, convenor of Scholarism, had their home addresses, cell phone numbers and parents' names posted on the internet by unknown people. *Image: Serenade Woo*

Hong Kong journalists harassed in China

Hong Kong journalists working in Mainland China repeatedly faced problems. In Maoming City in Guangdong province, the government was planning to build a paraxylene plant near a residential area. Residents held a rally to demonstrate against the lack of consultation and express their fears that the plant could endanger their lives. Local police used water cannons to try to disperse protesters, and the action attracted a lot of media attention. On April 2, journalists from *Apple Daily* newspaper were harassed, detained, interrogated, forced to sign a letter of repentance and escorted out of Maoming. Journalists from *Ming Pao* had a similar experience on April 3. A *Ming Pao* journalist and a photographer tried to report on the protest, but provincial propaganda department officers located the hotel where they were staying. Five officers went to the hotel at night and interrogated them for some time. The officers copied all the reporting materials from the computers and cell phones onto a USB drive, and deleted all the images that the photographer had taken at the scene.

More than 10 policeman and security agents blocked access to the cemetery and took them away.

In Shaoyang City in Hunan Province, six Mainland activists travelled to a cemetery in Shaoyang to pay tribute to Tiananmen Square dissident Li Wangyang, who died in suspicious circumstances in a Hunan hospital on June 6, 2012. Lam Kin-Seng, a journalist with Hong Kong Cable Television, and Yip Chi-Kwan, a Mainland cameraman, and a Mainlander driver were detained for six hours on May 4 by security agents of the police bureau when they were reporting on the memorial service. More than 10 policeman and security agents blocked access to the cemetery and took them away. One of the police officers threatened Lam, saying: "I remember who you are!" During the interrogation, police repeatedly asked them what route they took to Shaoyang and whom they had contacted. The officers also checked their cameras and smart phones and demanded that they delete the images. Lam said: "When police officers understood they couldn't force us to surrender the footage, they asked officers of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office to persuade us." All the Hong Kong people, including the three television crew members, were released on the same day, but three of the six Mainland activists were punished with five days administrative detention. The police did not specify which law they had broken.

Hong Kong journalists detained in China

Three Mainland-born Hong Kong journalists were detained and charged by the Mainland authorities. Yao Wentian, also known as Yiu Man-Tin, a Hong Kong publisher, was sentenced to 10 years in prison by Shenzhen Intermediate People's Court on May 7 after he was convicted of "smuggling of ordinary goods". At the time of his arrest, Yao was preparing to publish a book entitled *Chinese Godfather Xi Jinping* by exiled dissident writer Yu Jie.

Wang Jiaomin, the Hong Kong publisher of political magazines *Xin Wei Monthly Magazine* and *Face Magazine*, and Wai Zhongxiao, a Hong Kong editor and publisher,

Teledifusao De Macau was accused of self-censorship after program hosts Chan Ka-Chon and Io Hao-Kei were reportedly "scolded" because they wore black overcoats when hosting the program "Macau, Good Morning" on June 4, 2014, the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre. *Image: Internet*

were charged by Shenzhen police on May 30 with "illegally operating a publication". The magazines, which focus on reporting internal affairs of Communist Party in China, are printed in Shenzhen for costs reasons. There was no further information about whether the Shenzhen authorities proceeded with the prosecution.

Macau public broadcaster self-censors

Macau media and civil society figures also received direct threats from the local government. The Macau Government appointed a civil servant, Manuel Goncalves Pires Junior, as the new President of the Executive Board of Teledifusao De Macau (TDM), Macau's public broadcaster. Goncalves Pires Jnr was previously the Deputy Director of the Tourist Office of Macau. The incumbent president of TDM's Executive Board, Leong Kam-Chun, had made several reforms which were largely accepted by TDM staff. Leong, who is an auditor by profession, was an elected Legislator in Macau in the 1980s. Although Leong said he would be delighted if the government asked him to continue in the job, his contract was not renewed. The Macau Journalists Association (MJ) was concerned that the decision might have been made under outside influence. In addition, MJ received several anonymous complaints from TDM journalists that self-censorship in the news department was escalating. The complainants alleged that sensitive issues are being placed at the end of news broadcasts.

One of the most prominent cases occurred during the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre of June 4, 1989. TDM allegedly imposed self-censorship by demanding journalists to choose "decent" on-screen clothing. On the eve of June 4, supervisors at TDM demanded that all journalists remain political neutral and wear "decent" clothing when they were presenting programmes. On June 4, Chan Ka-Chon and Io Hao-Kei wore black overcoats when hosting the program "Macau, Good Morning". They were reportedly reprimanded by their supervisor immediately after the news bulletin. A Macau journalist said Chan and Io's supervisor told them they would not be promoted or receive an increase in salary in the coming year because they wore black. It was also reported that the pair were immediately removed from their original positions and reassigned to jobs behind the scenes. After the incident was widely reported, the TDM president, Manuel Goncalves Pires Jnr, denied that TDM exercised self-censorship and claimed to have already demanded that the board investigate the case.

Leung Ka-Wai, an intern journalist at Macau Concealers, was arrested by Macau Police on the allegation that the online outlet had illegally published the logo of the police department in an article which appeared to suggest that a public servant supported a "civil referendum" in Macau. *Image: A blogger*

2014: A Watershed Year for Hong Kong Media

Lam Hei

The year 2014 marked a watershed for the Hong Kong media industry, when the media abandoned editorial independence, embarked on being quasi-official media, and set out on the path to becoming a Party-led media.

When the Occupy Central Movement burst into action on September 28, Hong Kong media organizations took sides, either supporting or opposing it. Almost no media remained unbiased. This was unprecedented in Hong Kong's journalism industry. While it is not uncommon for media organizations in the West to take sides in political affairs, this has not been the case for their Hong Kong counterparts. The problem was that the bias was not an expression of what the media groups genuinely believed, but rather the result of intervention from behind the scenes, with several pairs of invisible black hands manipulating the media's soul.

The Hong Kong media faced unprecedented editorial intervention during the Occupy Movement. My observation is that it came mainly from the government

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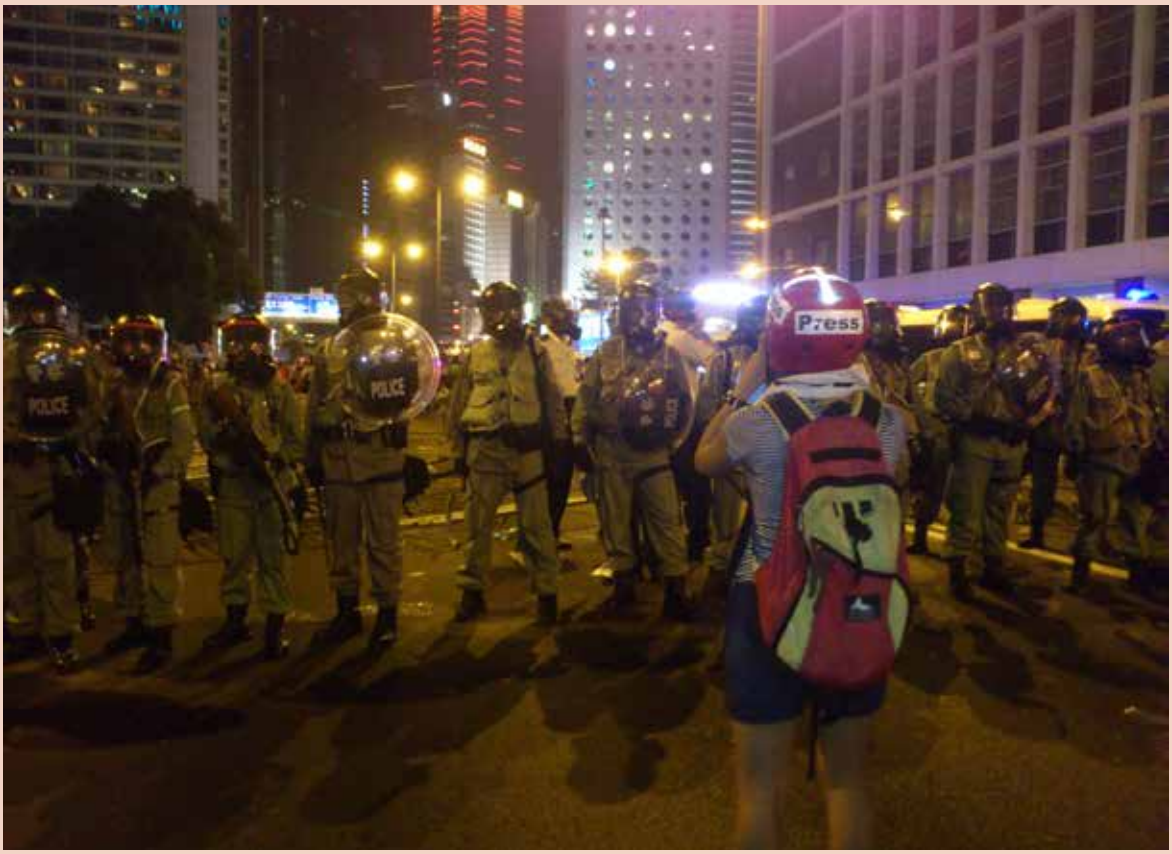
of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the government of Mainland China. It was targeted not only at the media owners, but also at their managers.

The tactics used against the media owners were mainly advertising, economic benefits and awards of honour. After the Occupy Movement began, the amount of advertising placed in the media groups that supported the movement fell substantially. Advertising by state-owned enterprises, as well as companies that are closely connected to the Mainland authorities, almost disappeared. I am not a core media manager, so my assessment is purely based on observation, but let us take as an example *Apple Daily*, a supporter of the Occupy Movement. At *Apple Daily*, advertising fell substantially, not only from State-funded companies, but also from those that are on friendly terms with the



A journalist covers the Occupy Central Movement protests. *Image: Serenade Woo*

Leung Chun-Ying, Chief Executive of Hong Kong, was exposed as having accepted HK$50 million from an overseas company and not having disclosed this to the public. Many media outlets downplayed the story. *Image: Internet*

Mainland. Needless to say, advertising by the Hong Kong SAR government was also substantially reduced.

The tactics used against media people, on the other hand, were more blatant and multi-pronged. First, contact between Hong Kong officials and media managers became unusually frequent. The Hong Kong government used leaks to generate continuous favorable reports. When negative information emerged concerning Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, the intervention was even more naked. Officials called up media managers not only to break the news, but even to suggest what angles to use or how to frame the reports. For example, when it was revealed that Leung Chun-ying had accepted kickbacks of HK$50 million in the sale of property services company DTZ Holdings, government officials called up news people for three consecutive days on the pretext of trying to understand how they would handle the news, and then to go on the defensive and offer explanations under the guise of "a source". Another example occurred when news emerged concerning a funding source directly linked to the three founders of the Occupy Movement, known as the "Occupy trio". People with close ties to the government took the initiative to contact journalists and suggest angles that might be easily overlooked.

The intervention from Beijing, however, renders one speechless, as it is simply raw, undisguised, and far worse than that of the Hong Kong Government. During the Occupy Movement, Beijing had officials stationed in Hong Kong to collect intelligence. They would often invite media people to have "yum cha", that is, to get together informally for tea and snacks. One reporter revealed that they received at least three such telephone inquiries from mainlanders each week. Their conversation centered on the movement, or involved direct requests that the journalist report events organized by anti-Occupy groups. Journalists in many media organizations experienced such incidents. They were asked about their company's reporting angles, and asked to help amplify the anti-Occupy aspects of the reports. One journalist said he received a tip-off for an anti-Occupy demonstration in November three days before it took place. The mainlander who called him admitted openly that the demonstration was instigated by mainlanders but executed by some Hong Kong friends. Another journalist was asked to "yum cha" several times a week. Feeling miserable, but worried that his future reporting work in the Mainland would be limited if he declined, this person simply did not have the nerve to refuse the invitations.

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Not only did these Mainland officials contact news management in multiple ways, but they also intervened in the media's reporting direction. Worse still, they created news events and initiated "one stop shop" news stories, from incident to reporting, in order to manipulate public opinion. One such example was the exposé of the donation to the University of Hong Kong by the three founders of the Occupy Movement. First, the information appeared online and reached media people via e-mails. Next these media people were contacted by mainlanders asking if they had received the materials, and if they would be published. The media people were even reminded about how to prepare their stories and what angles to pay attention to. Such cases were rare in the past, but became more frequent and technically skilled during the movement. This appeared to show how Mainland departments have increasingly mastered the mode of operation, as well as the tastes, of the Hong Kong media, and were pushing the latter to follow their playbook. These materials were published very often in the next day's papers, even though they were questioned by some journalists, because the materials were inherently attractive and some media managers who were close to the authorities encouraged the reports.

I shall use "Jimmy Lai's Donations to the pan-democrats" and "Donations from the OC trio to the University of Hong Kong", as examples, to illustrate how the Mainland authorities manipulated the media and public opinion in a new manner. The two exposés were extensively reported over many days. As far as I could establish afterwards, all media people received the materials on the same day, at the same time, almost simultaneously.

They appear in e-mail formats and obviously contained material stolen by hackers. The revelations came at critical moments during the movement. Interestingly, the emails were written in a mixture of simplified Chinese and traditional characters, suggesting that the writer was trying very hard to pretend to be a Hongkonger, but without success. Who has such an extensive ability to hack into so many accounts of the pan-democrats? Who could have deliberately collected so many e-mails from the people concerned, even before the Occupy Movement began? Who broke the news under the guise of being a Hongkonger? All these questions raise doubts. Based on my experience and connections, I believe these revelations have a lot to do with the Mainland authorities.

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Secondly, after the revelations were published, there were marches and demonstrations to the police stations, ICAC or the university involved, demanding a thorough investigation of the allegations against the parties. The reporting of these incidents sustained the momentum of the news. The pattern of "exposé, report, protest, report" was "coincidentally" repeated, with many participants appearing several times a day.

My fellow journalists and I, when reporting on those demonstrations, found that some protesters were from the Mainland. One source, who was not willing to be identified, said that these protesters were recruited by Mainlanders and funded and supported by provincial and municipal authorities, while the demonstrations were executed by their counterparts, the clansmen associations in Hong Kong. To pump up the number of participants, Mainland authorities even arranged for their staff to join, and to avoid mistakes, officials were there to monitor all such demonstrations. All expenses incurred were charged to the "stability maintenance budget".

When the Occupy Central movement broke out, the Mainland authorities unleashed their full force on Hong Kong, to the extent of creating a "showdown". Watching how the media was affected, the depth of the penetration by the Mainland became clear. I feel deeply that Mainland authorities have penetrated every aspect of media companies, ranging from their owners and management to editorial staff. Faced with intervention in the form of political pressure and economic interests, most of the local media did not offer resistance. Many were not just submissive, but actively cooperative. The Hong Kong media have already half-knelt.

Police abandon political neutrality

On August 29, the Macau Judiciary Police was suspected of abandoning their political neutrality by detaining two journalists – the deputy publisher of *Macau Concealers*, Choi Chi-Chio, and a journalism intern, Leung Ka-Wai – on the accusation that the outlet had illegally published the logo of the police department. Under Macau law, it is a crime to publish a police logo or an image of a public servant's uniform with the intention of suggesting the logo or the uniform belongs to a particular person. On August 29, *Macau Concealers* published an image which appeared to show that a man casting his vote via the internet in an unofficial "civil referendum" was a plain clothes police officer. In the image, unidentified people showed the purported officer's work permit, which contained a police logo. The Macau Journalists Association said this was not the first time that the media had published the police logo, but until this incident the police had not lodged any complaints. When the "referendum" was launched on August 24, police banned it and detained the organizer, Jason Chao, and four other volunteers. On August 31, *Apple Daily* journalists and photographers attempted to report on the official election of the Chief Executive of Macau by the 400 members of a special electoral committee. They were denied entry to the venue on the grounds that they did not have accreditation. *Apple Daily* said they had applied for a permit to the Press Office of the Macau Government in mid-August.

Bill Chou Kwok-ping, an outspoken associate professor at the University of Macau, was unable to renew his contract after he made critical comments about the controversial retirement packages of top officials. *Image: Internet*

Macau academics under pressure

Security guards at the University of Macau restricted press freedom when a journalist was photographing a silent protest by a student. Choi Chi-chio, the deputy publisher of *Macau Concealers*, an online media outlet, was dragged out of the university's congregation hall on June 21 when he was taking a photo of a female graduate who was holding up a placard during the congregation ceremony. The placard said: "Support scholars to speak up. Please stop persecution of scholars." Choi said he and a camera operator from a local television station were trying to film the graduate. A security guard blocked his path and pushed down his camera. His neck was bruised and his glasses were broken. Choi said: "Several security guards immediately pulled me from behind, but they did not interrupt the other cameraman. I neither disrupted the ceremony nor blocked anyone, but only took a photo. How could I interrupt anyone by merely taking photos?" Initially, some journalists were not allowed to return to the congregation hall when they reported on Choi's condition outside the hall.

Six Macau scholars were reportedly subjected to disciplinary action for publicly criticizing the government or allegedly imposing their political beliefs on students. One of the scholars, Eric Sautede, a senior lecturer in Asian Politics at the University of Saint Joseph, was asked to leave when his contract expired, and Bill Chou Kwok-Ping, an associate professor of University of Macau, was informed to that his contract would be not be renewed when it fell due, after he suspended from his duties for 24 days without salary in August. Sautede and Chou believed they were punished for exercising their right to free speech. Sautede regularly accepts interviews from media to make comments about public affairs. He said that, before he was told his contract would be discontinued, he had made several comments about Macau's election system. Similarly, Bill Chou spoke up on sensitive issues. Chou was almost the only Chinese scholar in Macau to criticize the controversial retirement package bill introduced to Macau's Legislative Assembly in May, which would have granted lavish retirement packages, including exemption from prosecution to top officials in Macau. The proposal sparked the largest peaceful protest since the 1999 Handover, forcing the Macau Chief Executive, Fernando Chui Sai-On, to withdraw the bill by the end of May because, he said, he "didn't want to prolong a split in society". Chui also said he would resubmit the bill but would go through a fresh round of public consultations.

Health department plays PR tricks

It was discovered that the Health Department of Macau had sent an employee to pose as a journalist at a press conference where a patient complained of medical negligence. Macau-based *Cheng Pou* newspaper reported on June 20 that the head of the Health Department's press relations unit admitted the department had sent a public relations officer to the conference disguised as a reporter. It was reported that this was the third such incident. According to *Cheng Pou*, the PR officer recorded the press conference and took photos but did not disclose her true identity. When pressed to explain the incident, the Director of the Health Department remained silent until the head of the press relations unit claimed that he himself was aware of the arrangement.

Reporters, politicians denied entry

On December 12, a journalist with Hong Kong-based *Apple Daily* tried to enter Macau to report on the 15th anniversary of the handover of Macau to China. The President of China, Xi Jinping, was due to attend the ceremony. When the journalist disclosed his reporting assignment, he was denied entry by immigration officers on the pretext that he "posed a threat to internal security". Immigration gave the same reason for blocking other Hong Kong citizens from entering Macau as well. They included people arrested by Hong Kong police after attending the Occupy Movement demonstrations, people who wore a "yellow ribbon", the signature of the Occupy Movement, and ordinary citizens who had not participated in the movement or expressed their political affiliations. When the media asked Wong Sio Chak, the Secretary of Macau's Security Bureau, about the situation, he replied that all governments have the right to stop anyone from entering their territory and claimed that the immigration department had no "blacklist. However he did not give any further explanation for the visa denials or details about the number of cases.

When the journalist disclosed his reporting assignment, he was denied entry by immigration officers on the pretext that he "posed a threat to internal security".

In fact, similar things occurred quite often during the Occupy Movement. In particular, students were barred from entering the Mainland, including several student leaders who intended to protest in Beijing, and university students who were carrying out projects on the Mainland as part of their curriculum studies.

In November, Sir Robert Ottaway, the Chairperson of the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Select Committee, announced that the committee wished to conduct an inquiry in Hong Kong into the implementation of the Joint Declaration signed by China and Britain 30 years ago. However the Chinese Embassy in Britain replied that the Central Government of China would not issue visas to the 11 committee members because their visit would constitute "interference in internal affairs".

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mainland China

The International Federation of Journalists recommends that the Central Government of China implement the following policies.

1. The Central Government should implement the recommendations of United Nations Special Rapporteur Frank La Rue to the United Nations Human Rights Council in reports A/HRC/23/40 in 2013, and A/HRC/17/27 and A/66/290 in 2011. These analyse the implications of government surveillance of communications for the promotion and protection of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression on the internet, and underline the urgent need to study further new modalities of surveillance and to revise national laws regulating these practices in line with human rights standards.

2. The Central Government should implement fully the Regulations on Open Government Information across the nation and ensure all levels of government, including the Autonomous Regions of Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia, cease any delays in reporting on all cases of public concern.

3. The Central Government should order the immediate release of all jailed journalists, and issue orders to all levels of government that journalists and writers are not to be jailed for doing their jobs and serving the public interest.

4. The Central Government should order an end to all arbitrary and unexplained employment terminations, punishments and detentions of journalists, and demand that media outlets allow journalists to resume their duties.

5. The Central Government should establish an independent body to investigate fully all acts of violence committed against local and foreign media personnel, including cases in which violence is allegedly committed by government officials. The authorities should ensure the independent body is composed of front-line journalists, scholars and representatives of the All Chinese Journalists Association in order to bring perpetrators of such violence to justice and ensure all parties understand that attacks on the media will not be tolerated.

6. The Central Government should order state security to stop misusing the law to intimidate and silence journalists.

7. The Central Government should order officials and police at all levels of government to end interceptions, harassment and punishment of journalists, their local assistants (including drivers), their sources and interviewees. It should also forbid the confiscation of journalistic materials.

8. The Central Government should order the appropriate authorities to implement fully the extended Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists (the Olympic regulations). It should order officials at all levels to comply with the October 2008 announcement that the relaxed restrictions put in place before the Beijing Olympics remain in force.

9. The Central Government should ensure that officials at all levels allow freedom of movement and free access to information for journalists and local Chinese assistants to report in all areas of China, without restriction, in line with the Olympic regulations.

10. The Central Government should order the appropriate authorities to implement visa policies in accordance with international best practice, and apply them to foreign journalists including freelancers. The procedure for visa approval should be consistent, timely and transparent.

11. The Central Government should order the appropriate authorities to rescind the 2009 changes to entry permit requirements for Hong Kong and Macau journalists, so that they may again conduct journalistic work on the Mainland without obstruction.

12. The Central Government should carry out a meaningful consultation with the public before setting up rules on further surveillance of online communication.

13. The Central Government should order an end to efforts to restrict journalism conducted online, or otherwise republished in online formats.

14. The Central Government should order the authorities at all levels not to manipulate local or

national telecommunications systems or impose communication blackouts at any time, most importantly during times when there is great public interest in receiving information about unfolding events.

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

The International Federation of Journalists recommends that the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region implement the following policies.

1. The Hong Kong Government should uphold people's right to know and the freedom of the press, as enshrined in Article 27 of Hong Kong's Basic Law and Article 16 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights.

2. The Hong Kong Government should set up an independent committee led by a retired judge to investigate whether, during the Occupy Movement commencing in September 2014, the Hong Kong police breached Chapter 39 of the Police General Orders, which mandates that all officers at the scene of an incident shall "facilitate the work of the news media as much as possible and accord media representatives consideration and courtesy, and not block camera lenses."

3. The Hong Kong Government should facilitate the establishment of a confidential and independent complaints bureau for journalists experiencing any violation of press freedom.

4. The Chief Executive of Hong Kong and the Executive Council Committee should direct all civil servants, including the Chief Executive, all heads of bureaus, departments and institutions, to uphold press freedom. They should answer the media's questions directly and be accountable to the public.

5. The Hong Kong Government should direct the Police Department to honour their pledges to disseminate information to the press in a timely manner and in accordance with their general practice.

6. The Hong Kong Government should enact a law on Access to Information and a law on Archives and abide by the current Code of Access to Information.

7. The Hong Kong Government should remove the civil servants appointed as the Director of Broadcasting and the Editor-in-Chief of Radio Television Hong Kong.

8. The Hong Kong Commerce and Economic Development Bureau should ensure all free-to-air television media outlets practise plurality and impartiality, and have sufficient financial backing to ensure that the media outlet runs smoothly.

9. The Chief Executive of Hong Kong should initiate a dialogue with the Central Government of China to quash the entry regulations that control Hong Kong media reporting in China.

10. The Hong Kong Government should uphold people's right to know by instructing government officials to conduct formal press conferences rather than closed-door briefings.

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