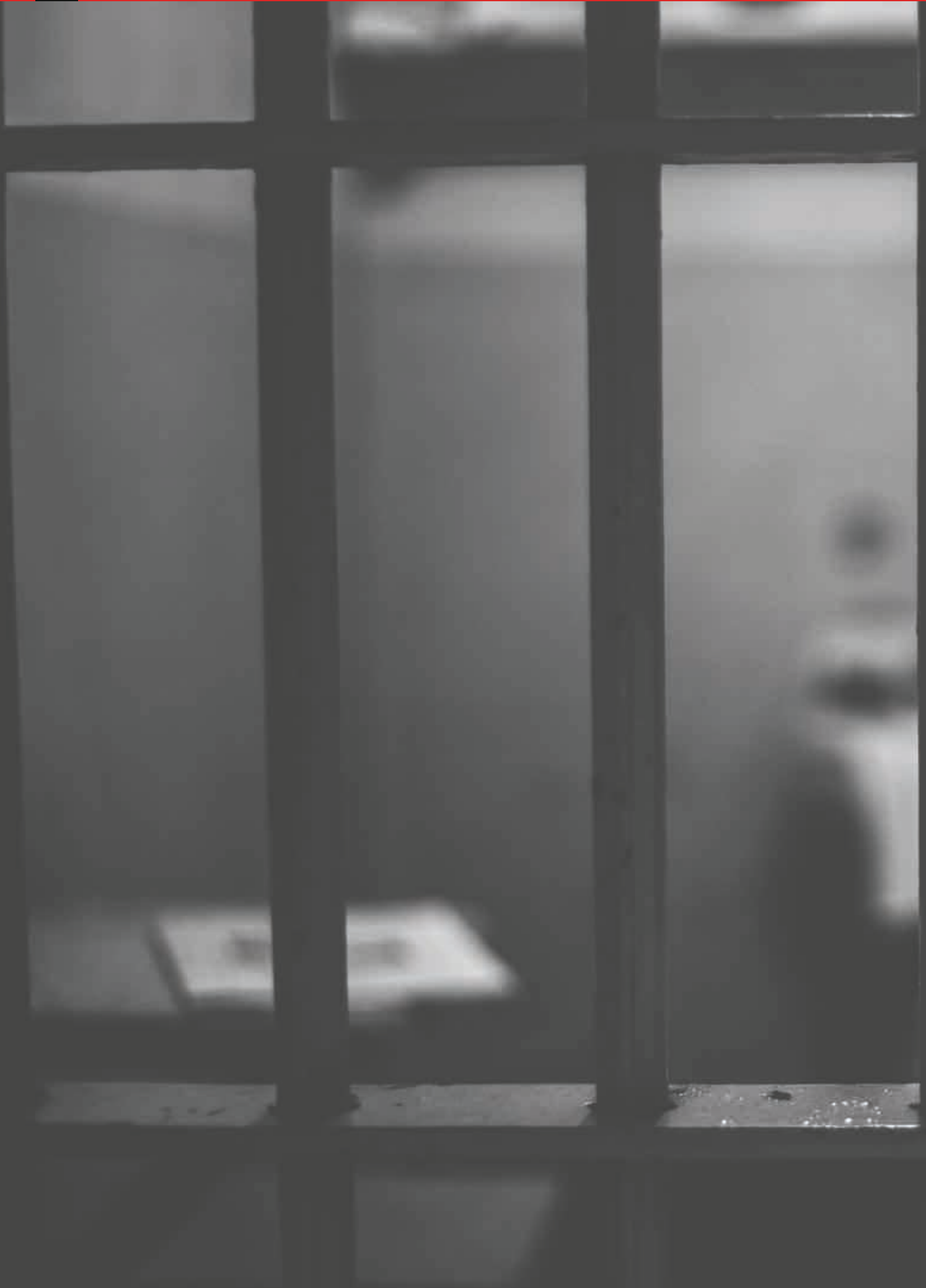




# CHINA'S GREAT MEDIA WALL: THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM







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**On the cover:** A journalist records as a member of the Chinese paramilitary stands guard during the opening session of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 5, 2015. AFP PHOTO / FRED DUFOUR

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# INTRODUCTION

**P**ress freedom in China, Hong Kong and Macau deteriorated further in 2015, as the Communist Party of China used every means at its disposal to control the media. Its ultimate target, as always, was to preserve its power in the mainland, extend its influence over Hong Kong and Macau, and tightly manage perceptions of its relationship with Taiwan. The law, the administration, the bureaucracy and the government-owned media were its weapons.

Propaganda, censorship, surveillance, intimidation, detention without trial, sabotage of the internet, brutality in the field, and televised “confessions” were its ammunition. The result was that 1.3 billion people – close to 20 per cent of the world’s population – were denied their full rights to information, free expression and a free press. The outlook for 2016 is even worse, as the Communist Party prepares to pass more oppressive laws in the mainland. As Hong Kong goes to elections next year the party is also using its considerable wealth to consolidate its influence over the region.

China’s constitution guarantees human rights in accordance with international standards, including the right to a free press, but these protections are routinely ignored. The laws built upon this foundation both violate those rights and distort the legal process so that the rule of law is compromised and there is almost no government accountability. The new National Security Law is full of vague definitions and requires Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan to maintain China’s “national sovereignty and territorial integrity”. The controversial anti-terrorism law was passed unanimously by the National People Congress, despite international criticisms of the law, which is full of vague definitions and states that no persons or news media are allowed to report on terrorist activities attack unless they received a pre-approval from the counter-terrorism agency. Telecommunications and internet providers also have to “provide technical support and assistance including decryption”. The Criminal Law was amended to introduce severe punishments for people involved in the internet coverage of matters of public importance, such as disasters, epidemics or security alerts. New laws under discussion – the draft Cyber Security Law, draft Overseas Non-Governmental Organisations Management Law– are all designed to strengthen the powers of the party.

Decision-making at the level of editorial management was controlled through both direct censorship self-censorship. Editors were instructed on the “line to take” on historical events and political and economic policies, and told what not to publish through a stream of restrictive orders. They were often ordered to republish articles produced by state-owned media, such as Xinhua news agency and the *People’s Daily*, and forbidden to do independent reporting or reproduce original accounts or images generated by citizen journalists on social media. Reports from foreign media, particularly those on



↑ Two girls celebrate with Chinese flags at Tiananmen Square.

corruption in the leadership elite, were banned. On sensitive issues editors did not need to be told what news to suppress: they knew enough to censor their own content without external instruction.

Journalists and crews in the field were hampered by physical harassment, especially when reporting on man-made disasters that showed the authorities had failed to ensure public safety. The local authorities declared wide exclusion zones around the sites of the tragedies, such as the capsizing of a cruise liner on the Yangtze that killed 442 people, and gave favoured access to certain groups of journalists, while banning others. The release of information was delayed, press conferences were called late and some media were excluded. Reporters were detained, interrogated



AFP / Greg Baker

PROPAGANDA, CENSORSHIP, SURVEILLANCE, INTIMIDATION, DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL, SABOTAGE OF THE INTERNET, BRUTALITY IN THE FIELD, AND TELEVISED "CONFESSIONS" WERE ITS AMMUNITION.



Ming Pao Staff Association

## WHEN INDIVIDUAL JOURNALISTS DID THEIR JOBS FEARLESSLY, IN DEFIANCE OF THESE REPRESSIVE MEASURES, THE GOVERNMENT RETALIATED.

and roughed up by police. Lenses were blocked, recording equipment was confiscated and memory cards were deleted. Police intimidated sources so that they refused to speak, incited local crowds to harass journalists and then stood by while they were attacked.

As well as struggling with these restrictions, foreign journalists working on the mainland faced bureaucratic delays in obtaining press cards and working visas, or lost the opportunity to cover other stories in the region because they had had surrendered their passports for processing. Most concerning was the refusal by the Government to renew a press card for a French journalist due to an article she published about human rights violations in Xinjiang. Two Japanese journalists were detained on allegations of espionage. A German journalist left the country after being accused of spying and her assistant was detained for eight months without charge. Many reported problems receiving permission to visit border and ethnic minority regions, and several were detained by police when they attempted to visit human rights activists being held under house arrest. Many correspondents had personal possessions confiscated when they left China, particularly books, maps, globes and DVDs that made reference to the status of Taiwan.

Since the government cannot own the internet or social media, it uses the law, surveillance, police powers and massive cyber muscle to prevent its citizens from enjoying free expression and access to information. The draft Cyber Security Law proposes to make it an offence to use encryption programs or publish anonymously. “Internet police stations” will be established for major websites and internet companies, and online monitoring is being carried out by an army of students recruited by the Chinese Communist Youth League. Internet service providers (ISPs) can be held liable for hosting information that “violates the constitution”, “subverts state power” or “damages China’s reputation”.

Authorities launched massive cyber-attacks on international ISPs that provide access to Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), which are used to get around China’s “Great Fire Wall” of internet controls. Millions of messages and emails were deleted or blocked, and tens of thousands of websites and video channels were shut down for publishing “harmful messages”, discussing “sensitive topics” or disseminating “fake news”. Bloggers, human rights activists and citizen journalists who could not be controlled by these means were detained and accused of “spreading rumours”, “inciting separatism”, “inciting ethnic hatred”, “disseminating false information”, “illegally



AFP / Ed Jones

obtaining personal information” and “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”.

Journalists in Hong Kong and Macau fought to report independently amid difficult conditions, as the mainland government and local business people set up pro-Beijing news websites to fill the gap left by struggling print media. The 2014 Occupy Movement joined the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre on the list of historical events that could not be fully discussed or commemorated. Five publishing employees from of Mighty Current Publishing Ltd. and Causeway Bay Bookstore disappeared after the company published books that criticised the leadership of Xi Jinping and the Communist Party. One of them, Gui Minhui, a shareholder of the company, was reportedly secretly detained in Thailand and taken to China. Wife of Lee Bo, another of the disappeared, withdrew her missing person report after she reportedly received letters from Lee telling her he went to China on his own accord. Another worrying incident, Hong Kong University went to the High Court seeking injunctions to prevent the broadcast of speeches secretly recorded at a controversial meeting of the University Council.

When individual journalists did their jobs fearlessly, in defiance of these repressive measures, the government retaliated. Journalists were sacked, suspended, fined and forced to resign, or lost their livelihoods when their press passes were withdrawn. Still worse, journalists were subjected to administrative detention without trial or charged with vague


← In February the Ming Pao Staff Association protested a decision by the editor-in-chief Chong Tien-siong to move an exclusive story about the Tiananmen Square massacre off the front page. The story's position had previously been confirmed by the editorial board.

↑ China's draft cyber security legislation proposes banning the use of encryption, which will make it considerably more difficult for journalists to do their jobs.

offences and denied the right to proper legal representation and due process. One fled to India after being pressured into working as a spy for the government, and others were intimidated by threats to their family members. In the most shocking cases, journalists were forced to make “confessions” on national television, a punishment that shamed and defamed them before they could even go to trial.

Given these developments, it is not surprising that China slipped further to 176 out of 200 in the Reporters without Borders 2015 Press Freedom Index.

As China continues growing as an economic and diplomatic power we urge the government to recognise and respect the importance of a free press and free expression. We stand in solidarity with the journalists, bloggers, netizens and activists who persist in their essential work despite worsening conditions.



SINCE THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT  
OWN THE INTERNET OR SOCIAL MEDIA,  
IT USES THE LAW, SURVEILLANCE, POLICE  
POWERS AND MASSIVE CYBER MUSCLE TO  
PREVENT ITS CITIZENS FROM ENJOYING FREE  
EXPRESSION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION.



← A candlelight vigil in Hong Kong on June 4 marked the anniversary of the 1989 crackdown in Tiananmen Square. The topic remains off-limits for mainland journalists.



# CHAPTER 1: JOURNALISM ON THE MAINLAND

Press freedom in mainland China deteriorated in 2015, with the government tightening controls on both media outlets and professional and citizen journalists. The authorities attempted to limit and influence reporting by using unfair laws, police and administrative powers, directives on specific news events, and detention and harassment of reporters. The Mao-era practice of forced confessions on television was put to use to silence critics.

President Xi Jinping has repeatedly said that China upholds the rule of law, but official plans suggest China will continue to be governed by the rule of man. While Article 35 of the constitution of the People's Republic of China enshrines media freedom, the government routinely violates these rights in practice in order to maintain power. In the Reporters without Borders (RSF) 2015 Press Freedom Index, which ranks the degree of press freedom in 180 countries in 2014, China fell one place to 176, putting it ahead of only Syria, Turkmenistan, North Korea and Eritrea. RSF said 23 journalists and 84 netizens were held in detention in 2015. According to IFJ research, there are 41 journalists currently in jail in China.

According to the regulations of the People's Republic of China on Open Government Information, chapter 2, article 9, all levels of government in China have a duty to report to the public when it involves the vital interests of citizens. However, the authorities rarely follow the regulations, even when large numbers of people have been killed. Standard restrictive practices include delaying announcements, selectively admitting journalists to media conferences, excluding journalists from disaster zones, confiscating equipment, and deleting and blocking citizen reports on social media. The authorities also exercise controls such as forbidding original reporting and ordering all media to use approved versions from state-owned media.

## NEWS LAWS RESTRICT FREEDOMS

The Supreme People's Court's current five-year plan for judicial reform sets out in Chapter 7 that the court system will remain under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, which it says has established a socialist judicial system with Chinese characteristics. The statement clearly shows that China does not accept the separation between the party, the state and the judiciary.

A new national security law was adopted by the National People's Congress, China's top law-making body, on July 1, after only one month of public consultation. The law is full of vague definitions and lacks adequate protection for press freedom, freedom of expression and access to information. It also states that Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are obliged to maintain China's "national sovereignty and territorial integrity".

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein expressed deep concern about the human rights implications of the new law. On July 7 he said: "This law raises many concerns due to its extraordinarily broad scope, coupled with the vagueness of its terminology and definitions. As a result, the law leaves the door wide open to further

→ Chinese security officials monitor computers in Beijing in March 2015. China's draft cyber security laws will tighten government control on the internet, but critics say the law violates international covenants.



AFP / Teh Eng Koon

restrictions of the rights and freedoms of Chinese citizens, and to even tighter control of civil society by the Chinese authorities than there is already.”

The law attracted attention from local and international civil society organisations. During the brief consultation period the IFJ and its affiliates – the Hong Kong Journalists Association, the Macau Journalists Association and the Association of Taiwan Journalists – along with the Independent Commentators Association, made submissions to the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, but none of the recommendations were accepted. In Hong Kong the group invited the Secretary of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, Raymond Tam, to hear their concerns about the likely impact of the National Security Law on press freedom in Hong Kong, but Tam declined.

The IFJ suggested revisions to the Law Committee of the National People’s Congress of China, which released the draft law for a month of public consultation on July 6. The IFJ notes that all laws must recognise universal human rights, including the right to free speech and a free press. Both local and foreign media will face serious challenges under the draft law as it will impede the development of a free press.

The draft Overseas Non-Governmental Organizations Management Law has the potential to stifle the development of civil society. The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to peaceful assembly and of association Maina Kiai said in his report to the Human Rights Council in June 2013 (A/HRC/23/39) that undue restrictions to funding, including

percentage limits, would be a violation of the right to freedom of association, as well as other human rights instruments such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The IFJ said: “We recognise that if the Overseas Non-Governmental Organizations Management draft law is enacted in its current form, it clearly departs from the Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai’s report that allows for the existence of unregistered associations.”

A new counter-terrorism bill is pending consideration by representatives of the National People’s Congress in Beijing. The IFJ and other international organisations expressed their concern that the bill would extend the powers and control of the Chinese authorities. In particular, it is feared that the counter-terrorism laws will be used against minorities in areas such as Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang.

The Criminal Law was amended to introduce severe punishments for people involved in internet coverage of matters of public importance, such as disasters, epidemics or security alerts. Under Article 291 of the amended law, people who are found guilty of “fabricating” news reports on such matters, and releasing these reports on the internet, can be jailed for up to seven years. People at Internet Service Providers (ISP) who do not manage information network security properly can be jailed for up to three years. The role of managing network security includes monitoring information transmitted through the ISP. The amendments came into effect across China on November 1.



← A placard of jailed journalist Gao Yu is front of Hong Kong's China liaison office where local journalists protested against her forced televised confession.

AFP / Philippe Lopez

## TELEvised CONFESSiON PRESSURE

Two veteran journalists, Wang Xiaolu and Liu Wei, made dubious on-camera confessions without having been formally tried. Independent writer Gao Yu also spent more than a year in jail after making a similar televised confession in 2014. State-owned channel China Central Television (CCTV) broadcast the confessions nationally and state-owned news agency Xinhua disseminated the stories to the print media. By participating in these abuses CCTV and Xinhua clearly violated the Code of Professional Ethics for Chinese Media Workers which specifies in Section 3 that all reports should be true, accurate, complete and fair. The code is maintained by the All China Journalists Association (ACJA) but the ACJA did not comment on the televised confessions or on the unethical conduct of CCTV or Xinhua in facilitating them.

Wang Xiaolu, a business journalist for one of China's leading financial publications, *Caijing Magazine*, was detained by police on August 25. Wang had written on July 20 that the Chinese Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) was considering ending interventions aimed at stabilising the stock market. Following the report, CSRC's spokesman Zhang Xiaojun said the CSRC had no plan to stop the intervention and accused Wang of being irresponsible by not verifying the information before his article was published. Six days later, on August 31, Wang made a public confession and apology which was televised on state-owned CCTV. Wang said: "I shouldn't have published the report at such a sensitive time, especially when it could have great adverse impact on the market. I'm regretful of what I have

done and am willing to confess my crime. I hope the judicial authorities will give me a chance and treat me leniently."

Liu Wei, a deputy assignment editor of investigative news with Guangzhou's *Southern Metropolis Daily*, was arrested on October 8 in Jiangxi province on suspicion of obtaining a "state secret". The authorities did not provide any details of the supposed state secret. On October 30, state-owned news agency Xinhua reported that Liu was involved in the criminal case of spiritual leader Wang Lin, who is a suspect in a murder case. Xinhua claimed that Liu had an exclusive report about Wang as a result of his interactions with Wang's wife, mistress and police officers involved in the case. One report alleged that Liu had helped Wang's family obtain other people's identity cards so that they could get new phones and thereby hinder police, who they believed were eaves-dropping on their communications.

On October 31 Liu made a confession on CCTV. He said: "I confess I have committed a crime. Now my only wish is I can return to my family as soon as possible and start a new page of my life." Liu was released on bail soon afterwards, but information about the charges against him has still not been released.

After spending 18 months in prison independent journalist Gao Yu, 71, was released on medical parole on November 26, 2015, after a trial that was globally condemned.

Gao was arrested in Beijing on April 24, 2014, on charges of illegally obtaining state secrets and sharing them with foreign media. The state secret in question is believed to be Document No. 9, an internal Central Committee of the Communist Party



## GAO WAS CONVICTED AND SENTENCED TO SEVEN YEARS IN PRISON, REDUCED TO FIVE YEARS ON APPEAL. THE JUDGE CITED HER TELEVISED CONFESSION AS A REASON NOT TO OVERTURN THE CONVICTION.

of China report that warns against seven perils including a free press. Gao and the magazine that published the document, *Mingjing News*, have maintained that she was not the source of the document. Nevertheless in May 2014, CCTV broadcast a confession which her lawyer argues was forced. Her lawyer said that police threatened to arrest her son if she refused to make the confession. In April 2015, following a four hour trial that was closed to the media, Gao was convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison, reduced to five years on appeal. The judge cited her televised confession as a reason not to overturn the conviction. Gao suffers from heart disease, high blood pressure, Meniere's disease, an abnormality in a lymph node and dermatosis. Her family has said that, while in prison, she wasn't given appropriate medication and that her food, clothing and treatment were poor.

The IFJ, IFEX and other press freedom organisations strongly condemned China's treatment of Gao Yu. Following her conviction the IFJ launched an international campaign calling for her release. In November 2015, the IFJ submitted a report to the United Nations Committee against Torture asking it to demand that China's delegate respond to the concerns.

### DISASTER REPORTING CONTROLLED

On New Year's Eve a stampede in Shanghai left 36 people dead and 49 others injured. The Shanghai Propaganda Department immediately issued a restrictive order to control all reporting on the horrific tragedy, in particular in online media. According to *China Digital Times*, an online-only outlet run by graduate students at the University of California (Berkeley), the department prohibited all online news portals from using information from netizens who were at the scene, social media platforms and non-mainland Chinese and overseas media outlets. In particular, the use of extreme graphic images was banned. The directive said online media were forbidden to use the fatal stampede as headline news. Articles were not permitted to refer to anti-corruption efforts, territorial discrimination, or place blame for the stampede on the Communist Party, the government or the socialist system. Although the orders appeared to refer particularly to online media, Shanghai's traditional media also followed them. The local government later organized a press conference but only local media were admitted and all non-mainland media were specifically prohibited.

On January 2, five firefighters died while they were battling a fire in Harbin in an 11-storey warehouse and residential complex. The firefighters were killed when an illegal section

of the building collapsed. Local media focussed on how the government responded in the aftermath of the tragedy and failed to ask questions about how people had been allowed to live in the illegal building for a number of years. A journalist said that the response of local media was "normal" because the propaganda department in each province uses restrictive measures to control coverage, in the same way as they did for the Shanghai stampede.

At midnight on June 1, an Oriental Star cruise ship capsized on the Yangtze River in Jianli, Hubei Province, with 456 people on board. *The People's Daily* reported on June 13 that 442 people died. The disaster attracted national attention but the media encountered many obstacles when they tried to report on it.

On June 2, the Central Propaganda Department of China ordered all media to stay away from the site of the accident. The local government deployed public security officers to set up road and river blocks preventing access to reporters. A journalist who had tried to report from the scene told the IFJ: "We were not allowed to enter into the area, although it was still far away from the scene. You could see many police officers and military agents everywhere. All the major roads were blocked."

Eventually authorities allowed state-owned media like *Xinhua* and CCTV to enter the disaster zone. Later, on June 3, it was reported that more than 40 journalists from about 30 international media outlets were allowed to board the ship. No explanation was given of the criteria used to select those journalists. In keeping with usual practice, the Central Propaganda Department ordered that any coverage of the incident must use information released by state-controlled media outlets. When journalists attempted to visit survivors at the hospital in Jianli, they were stopped by security agents. Journalists in Shanghai said they were stopped by police when they attempted to report on a protest organised by the victims' families.

On August 12 a series of explosions at a chemical container warehouse in the port of Tianjin in northeastern China killed 173 people and injured 797. The first explosion occurred just before 11pm, but the Tianjin government delayed releasing information on the disaster for about three hours. The news was released early on August 13 by the *New Beijing Newspaper*, which is directly controlled by the Beijing Propaganda Department. Many mainland media complained that the local authorities did not follow the government regulations which require prompt announcements of information relating to matters of public importance.



Authorities established a restricted zone around the Tianjin disaster scene and only gave state-owned media right to enter. Even then police forced four journalists from state-owned *New Beijing Newspaper* to leave. Images taken with mobile phones, cameras and computers were checked and deleted by police, and in one case a journalist was subjected to a body search by police looking for concealed memory cards.

Unidentified plain-clothed officers incited local people to harass journalists when they reported from outside the hospital where the victims were being cared for. The local government was slow to organise a press conference to answer the questions of the media and only local media were allowed in.

The government announced that all media were banned from making independent reports, analysis or live broadcasts. Instead all media were required to republish reports by state-owned news agencies Xinhua, the *People's Daily Online* and *Tianjin Northern Online*. Many mainland media groups ignored the ban. One of these was *Zhengzhou Evening Newspaper* (a subsidiary newspaper of *Zhengzhou Daily*, which is controlled by Zhengzhou City government). The State Internet Information Office shut down the newspaper's online account for one week. The Office said that the newspaper's social media platforms did not verify the information they were posting.

On August 14, the State Internet Information Office said it had shut down more than 360 social media accounts. The Office said that the accounts had violated the administrative regulations by disseminating rumours or defrauding people of their money. The Office also said that some prominent bloggers were creating an atmosphere of terror by comparing the Tianjin explosions to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in Japan in 1945. As a result, more than 70 social media accounts of prominent bloggers were shut down permanently. On August 15, the State Internet Information Office shut down another 50 websites for the publication of information relating to the explosions. Of the 50 websites, 18 were shut down permanently, while the rest were shut down for one month. On August 16, the Tianjin Police Department arrested a man for allegedly reporting on his social media account a casualty total that was higher than the official figure.

## CENSORSHIP AND PROPAGANDA DISTORT NEWS

A *New York Times* article analysing the cult of personality surrounding President Xi Jinping was blocked. The article, headed "Move Over Mao: Beloved 'Papa Xi' Awes China" and published on March 9, discussed how Xi's name has been widely promoted by the authorities. Several veteran journalists have suggested the promotion of the president is much more significant than that of Mao. In response the Cyberspace Administration Office issued an order to all media to "block and delete the article and relevant messages".

The *China Daily* appeared to mislead readers by publishing an article under the byline of Peter Hessler, a columnist for *The New Yorker*, which he said he had not written. In early January Hessler gave an interview to a *China Daily* journalist who said he was writing a 'year-end special' reflecting on achievements, favourite books, etc. In one question he was asked to compare Egypt and China, two countries where he

AFP/Johannes Eiseles

↓ At midnight on June 1, an Oriental Star cruise ship capsized on the Yangtze River in Jianli, Hubei Province, with 456 people on board. The disaster attracted national attention but journalists encountered many obstacles as they tried to report. Rescue workers pay their respects during a memorial service.



has worked. *China Daily* reframed the interview as an op-ed and published it with his byline on January 20. The article praises China's stability and the education system as compared with post-revolution Egypt. Writing on his Facebook page Hessler said he did not write the article and it omitted several crucial aspects of what he said. In particular, the *China Daily* article did not include his view that he believed it was "harder to make political change in China than in Egypt, because the Chinese system is more entrenched, and thus its flaws are more entrenched as well".



ON JUNE 2, THE CENTRAL PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT OF CHINA ORDERED ALL MEDIA TO STAY AWAY FROM THE SITE OF THE ACCIDENT. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEPLOYED PUBLIC SECURITY OFFICERS TO SET UP ROAD AND RIVER BLOCKS PREVENTING ACCESS TO REPORTERS.



**"THERE IS NO NEED FOR ANY ORDER OR DEMAND. ALL MEDIA PERSONNEL UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS NO WAY TO PUBLISH ANY NEGATIVE REPORT RELATING TO ANY LEADERS. THIS IS THE REALITY IN CHINA."**



Hessler said he told the *China Daily* reporter that the current anti-corruption campaign would fail because China was not addressing its systemic flaws. This opinion was not published. Hessler said he thought the comparison with Egypt was useful and that he would be willing to do an interview on that subject providing that *China Daily* remove the original article from its website and publish a retraction. *China Daily* removed the article from the English website but Chinese translations remain online and have been picked up by various outlets. The paper refused to issue a retraction. The All China Journalists Association did not condemn *China Daily's* violation of professional ethics.

## **GOVERNMENT SETS THE STORY ANGLE**

In February President Xi Jinping announced the "Four Comprehensives", a new set of national goals that involve building prosperity, deepening reform, and better governance of the state and the party. The media strongly promoted the goals even though the government did not provide any details on how they are to be reached.

The government often demands journalists strictly follow the official angle on major issues. An example of this was the coverage given to the "One Belt One Road" development strategy. This policy is designed to push China into taking a bigger role in global affairs and exporting more into the



countries of Eurasia. Traditional and online media were instructed to run a series of promotional reports about the policy. Within three months, seven prominent metropolitan newspapers in seven provinces published promotional stories. On May 12 the executive editor-in-chief of the *Chang Jiang Times*, Zhao Shilong, was suspended, reportedly because the Hubei province office of the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television decided that an article he wrote on April 13 deviated from the “line to take” regarding One Belt One Road.

The death of the former Vice-Chairman of China’s Central Military Commission Xu Caihou was downplayed by the media.

← Politburo member Wang Qishan was implicated in a US Securities and Exchange Commission investigation into JPMorgan on the hiring of children of high-ranking Chinese officials. No mainland Chinese media outlet published reports on the topic.

On March 15 a directive was issued that ordered media not to publish news of his death on the front page of any newspapers and to disable all comment functions for online news. According to *China Digital Times* the order also instructed all media to republish the news report from Xinhua, which said the former leader had died of bladder cancer. Only *Global Times*, the English language sister publication of *China Daily*, defied the order. Xu was promoted to Vice Chairman in 2005, but was investigated in March 2013 on suspicions that he was accepting large bribes and using his position to assist the promotion of others. In 2014 Xu was expelled from the Communist Party and discharged from military service with his rank revoked. Xu was awaiting trial when he died.

## SELF-CENSORSHIP ON LEADERSHIP SCANDALS

US investment bank J.P. Morgan was ordered by the US Securities and Exchange Commission to hand over any correspondence with Wang Qishan, one of the seven members of China’s ruling Politburo, according to a *Financial Times* report on May 28. The SEC order was in connection with an investigation into whether the bank hired the children of high-ranking Chinese officials in order to dominate business. The news article was republished by international media but was ignored by media on the mainland. A mainland journalist said: “There is no need for any order or demand. All media personnel understand that there is no way to publish any negative reports relating to any leaders. This is the reality in China.”

In August the *New York Times* reported that the Chinese government demanded the US deport Ling Wancheng. Ling is the younger brother of Ling Jihua, a former senior official of the Communist Party, and is wanted on suspicion of obtaining a “state secret”. His older brother is a close ally of former President Hu Jintao and was expelled from the Communist Party on July 20 for allegedly accepting huge personal bribes through his family. He is currently under criminal investigation. No mainland media picked up the story.

Two other cases involving high-level party members stand out in 2015. Zhou Yongkang, a former member of the Politburo Standing Committee, was sentenced to life imprisonment on June 11 for corruption and intending to reveal state secrets. Guo Boxiong, the former vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, was expelled from the Communist Party and placed under investigation for corruption on July 30. In both cases mainland Chinese media republished official reports produced by state-owned outlets.

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS COVERAGE BIASED

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Taiwanese President Ma Ying-Jeou met in Singapore on November 7. It was the first meeting between leaders of the two sides since civil war



**MANY MAINLAND REPORTERS WERE AMONG THE 629 JOURNALISTS FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD WHO COVERED THE MEETING. EVEN SO, THE NEXT DAY, ALL THE MAINLAND NEWSPAPERS REPUBLISHED REPORTS FROM XINHUA AND OTHER STATE-OWNED NEWS AGENCIES.**

divided them in 1949. Many mainland reporters were among the 629 journalists from all around the world who covered the meeting. Even so, the next day, all mainland newspapers republished reports from Xinhua and other state-owned news agencies. People on the mainland were not told that the meeting was heavily criticised in Taiwan. On November 8 China Central Television (CCTV) disconnected the live signal after President Xi had spoken but before Taiwan's Ma Ying-Jeou made his speech.

"Emotional" and "negative" reports of a China-India meeting were discouraged. The Second China-India Media Exchange Program drew together academics and media professionals from the two countries for a two-day dialogue in New Delhi starting on January 30. The meeting was co-hosted by China's state-owned Global Times Foundation, and India's independent Observer Research Foundation. The dialogue focused on establishing new cooperative relations and achieving the two nations' economic potential and also discussed the China policy of new Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The chairman of the Global Times Foundation, Hu Xijin, who is also editor-in-chief of the *Global Times*, the English language sister publication of the state-owned *People's Daily*, said: "Negative reports in both countries should not be exaggerated." Hu also reportedly said Chinese and Indian media should cut down on emotional reports.

Reports of the shooting deaths of Chinese consular officers in the Philippines were downplayed and deleted. Three officers at China's Consulate in Cebu were shot while eating lunch at a local restaurant on October 20. The deputy consul,

↑ The meeting of Taiwan President, Ma Ying-Jeou, and China President, Xi Jinping, in Singapore in November 2015 was the first between leaders since civil war divided the countries in 1949.

Sun Shen, and finance officer, Li Hui, died when they were shot in the neck. The consul-general, Song Rongjua, was admitted to hospital with a bullet wound in his neck. Song, Sun and Li were celebrating Song's birthday with six other people at the Lighthouse restaurant, a local spot popular with politicians. According to reports, a man and a woman, identified as Li Qing Li and Guo Jing, entered the private dining room and opened fire. Later they were detained at the Chinese Consular Office, where they had worked alongside the victims. Although the incident received widespread reporting in international and Philippine media, mainland media downplayed the incident. Numerous online reports were immediately deleted, with one mainland journalist noting: "Some content is deleted because it relates to foreign affairs, so the media has to follow the tone of the authorities."

## **MEDIA CONTROLS ON CAPITAL MARKETS**

From June 19 monitoring authorities issued a series of directives to mainland media telling them to curb their reporting of the stock market. The first directive, which was issued by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, told all media to limit coverage of



the stock market to prevent fluctuations. The directive said that all reports should be balanced, objective and rational to guide the market and should refer only to information provided by the Chinese Securities Regulatory Commission. Defying the orders three media reports detailed the suicides of three people allegedly due to losing money on the stock market. On July 4 the Chinese Securities Regulatory Commission claimed the reports were “false” and announced that it would partner with the police to investigate and clamp down on false reporting.

Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-Shing was criticised by four mainland media outlets, including the *People's Daily*, on the grounds that Li had moved significant investments from China to other countries. A think tank at state-owned news agency Xinhua published an essay on September 12 which claimed Li had continuously divested his major properties on the mainland, even though China had helped him a lot. Three more media outlets published similar articles in following days. On September 21, the *People's Daily* said Li's moves were “immoral” and “stupid”, but “China did not need him anyway”.

## PROPAGANDA SHAPES MEMORIES OF HISTORY

The Tiananmen Square massacre of June 4, 1989, remains taboo for media. Around the anniversary of the tragedy, online media was heavily censored, with some bloggers reporting that they could not type any number related to the massacre, such as 4, 6, 8 or 9, on any social media platform. On May 20 an open letter written by 11 Chinese students studying overseas was disseminated across social media. The open letter stated that students of the post-80s and post-90s generations were fooled by mainland authorities and were unable to learn the “truth” about the massacre until they moved abroad to study. On May 26 commentary in the state-owned English language *Global Times* newspaper claimed that the students had been brainwashed by “Western forces”. The State Information Internet Office then issued an order to all online media that they were to delete the *Global Times* commentary.

The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II and of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression was celebrated with a series of military parades between August 23 and September 5. Before the celebrations began the State Internet Information Office issued a directive to all online media that they should publish only positive reports and images of the upcoming military parades. Hong Kong-based *Ming Pao* reported: “The order demanded all reports and posted messages related to military parade must be censored before publication and ensure all are positive, no discredit, no distortion and no attack towards the military. Not a single harmful message is allowed to be posted on the internet.”

## CRIMINAL ACTS NOT REPORTED FULLY

In Guangzhou two knife-wielding assailants killed nine people in an attack at a railway station on March 6, while the National People's Congress, China's parliament, was in session. Authorities immediately demanded that all media keep the news off the front page and not repost any images. The order

said: “No similar negative news reports should be posted on the front page during the National Congress.”

A series of explosions in Guangxi Province, on China's southern border with Vietnam, between September 30 and October 1 triggered a similar response by the authorities. Ten people were killed and 51 injured in the attack. Xinhua reported that the explosions were set off by Wei Yingyong, who was believed to have been in dispute with his neighbours and who died in the blasts. Local authorities blocked family members and people from Wei's village from giving interviews to the media. Journalists from outside the area discovered that at least one member of Wei's family was taken away by the police. Since the incident, no media have reported on its cause without following the tone set by the local authorities.

On March 25 at least six people died in a fire in Karamay, a city in Xinjiang. According to reports by state-owned news agency Xinhua, the fire broke out in a residential area in the early hours of the morning. However, the local government did not post any information about the fire on its official weibo account until after midday. It said the fire was due to windy weather and warned people to “be careful of your works and deeds. Don't disseminate the videos and photos [from the fire] with friends and in social platform weibo.” In a brief statement local government did not produce any evidence supporting claims that the fire was an accident. Media republished the statement and no further reporting was undertaken.

## GOVERNMENT IN THE NEWSROOM

Early in 2015 the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), China's highest anti-corruption body run by the party, prepared to step up anti-graft inspections of state-owned media. On January 30 Xinhua reported that CCDI would increase inspections in the television and broadcasting sector over the coming year. Li Qiufang, head of the CCDI team at the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, said 49 officials from the sector were investigated for corruption in the previous year. This was the highest number investigated in five years. The CCDI introduced an anti-graft code of conduct for media employees in the publishing, television and broadcasting industries, which included not allowing special guests to host television programs. Having guests host programs was regular practice as they could speak more freely than media professionals. The CCDI also established a blacklist system, aimed at curbing dissident voices, to prevent certain programs being aired on television or made available online.

In November, Li Xin, a former *Southern Metropolis Daily* commentary page journalist, fled to India and sought asylum, saying he had found it unbearable to be an “undercover state security agent”. According to a series of reports by Radio Free Asia Li was monitored by security agents of Yunnan and Henan government because for a time he ran a website that published pro-democracy articles. He had also previously written some analytical articles for a Taiwanese scholar. Li believed that the scholar had some relationship with the Taiwanese government. State security agents told him he might be regarded as having breached the law unless he helped them collect information



about civil society organisations on the mainland and in Hong Kong. Faced with these threats Li promised to do so. Li also revealed he had been detained by the state security agents of Henan for a week in 2013. During the detention, he was interrogated by the agents for almost 18 hours a day.

Li also revealed that his former employer, *nandu.com*, the official website of *Southern Metropolis Daily*, demanded that he take note of 14 topics on which it was forbidden to publish. The topics, which are well known to the media and the public, include state secrets, subversion, separatism, and inciting racial hatred. Li said two lists were provided to journalists. One was a “whitelist” of authors and topics that should be encouraged. The other was a so-called “blacklist” which was full of “sensitive words” that journalists were not allowed to write or republish. If an article contained any of those sensitive words, it should be removed from the internet. Li recalled that he was forced to delete an article which was written by a prominent pro-democracy journalist, Du Daobin, who was on the blacklist.

## PRESSURE INSIDE MEDIA OPERATIONS

On June 1, Zhao Wen, an editor of *Lanzhou Daily*, was sacked by management, who cited a post on his Weibo account that was critical of local police. A Communist Party secretary working inside the paper believed Zhang’s message could cause an adverse effect to society and hurt the feelings of the police. Newspaper management agreed with the decision of the secretary and said Zhang violated the company’s code of ethics, though they didn’t specify which parts of the code.

Yang Jishen, the chief editor of the mainland’s most liberal political magazine *Yanhuang Chunqiu*, was forced out of his role due to political pressure. A letter by Yang Jishen that was subsequently made public, said government interference at the magazine had increased in recent years. It also said that state media *Xinhua*, the supervisor of *Yanhuang Chunqiu*, repeatedly demanded the magazine submit its articles before publication. In April, they received a warning order regarding 37 reports that had not been preapproved. Yang said he believed the magazine had already compromised as they agreed not to publish on sensitive topics like multiparty democracy or the separation of powers.

Bi Fujian, a prominent television host with CCTV, was suspended from his show and other work for allegedly mocking Mao Zedong at a private dinner on April 2. During the dinner Bi was filmed singing a song and mocking the former leader. After the film went viral on social media on April 6 Bi was suspended indefinitely. The state-owned newspaper *China Discipline Inspection Daily*, which is directly controlled by the Communist Party Discipline Inspection Unit (CPDIU), reported that a CPDIU unit demanded that CCTV punish Bi. The article said that the Communist Party said it would increase its control of party members and would punish any members who violated the code of conduct.

On September 28 the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television announced that 17 journalists from 15 media outlets were to be reprimanded because they had “manufactured fake or inaccurate news” between December 2, 2014, and July 13, 2015. The 17



journalists, including editors and editorial teams, received warning letters reprimanding them, and 16 journalists were fined. However the seventeenth journalist, Wang Xing, formerly of the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, was forbidden to apply for an accredited press card for five years. This means he cannot work in registered media industry for that period. Wang issued a statement to refute the accusation. He admitted he relied on only one authoritative source, but said this did not equate to fabricating news. Wang told the IFJ that he could not give an interview but he hoped the public would understand his situation.

## CRITICS CRIMINALISED

According to Hong Kong’s China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group at least 236 lawyers, law firm staff and human right activists were targeted by law enforcement bodies between July 9 and July 20, with 14 of them being detained on undisclosed criminal charges. They included a female lawyer, Wang Yu, and 11 male lawyers. Six people were disappeared and 216 people – of whom 119 were lawyers – were temporarily



↑ Hong Kong Democratic Party's Albert Ho wears mock handcuffs as he and legislator Leung Kwok-hung attend a protest in Hong Kong on July 21, 2015, after at least 50 Chinese human rights lawyers and activists were detained.

Anthony Wallace/AFP

detained, forcibly questioned or given summonses to appear before judicial authorities. Three state-owned media outlets – *People's Daily*, Xinhua and CCTV – published articles between July 11 and 18 claiming to unveil the criminal nature of the Fengrui Law Firm, and published comments about what they described as the “confessions” of the lawyers. The treatment of the detained lawyers is unknown, but it is clear that they could not obtain the legal assistance guaranteed by law.

One of the lawyers, Li Heping, was taken from his home by unidentified security agents on July 10. State-owned news agency Xinhua published an article on July 18 titled ‘Pursuing the Case of Beijing Fengrui Law Firm’. The article named Li Heping and eight other lawyers as members of a suspected major crime syndicate. Li’s wife Wang Qiaoling has been unable to find out where her husband is being held and has demanded Xinhua retract the article, calling it defamation.

Liu Xinglian, an operator of human rights website Rose Group in Hubei province, was formally charged with “inciting subversion of state power” on June 19. Liu’s daughter said that police confiscated her father’s computer and two cell phones

when they raided her apartment and took him into custody. She said she believed the arrest was related to Liu’s work.

Yang Dongying, a volunteer for the rights website *64tianwang.com*, was charged with “picking quarrels and provoking troubles” on June 24. Although there is no information about the reasons for Yang’s arrest, Huang Qi, an operator of the website, said seven volunteers including Yang were detained by local police with the aim of clamping down on their attempts to disseminate information about defence of human rights.

Blogger Wu Gan was detained by local police on May 18 and ordered to serve 10 days of administrative detention after he protested in front of Jiangxi’s High Court building. The police continued to detain him after the formal period of detention was over. On June 19, Wu Gan was charged with “picking quarrels and provoking troubles”, “defamation” and “inciting subversion of state power”. On July 1, Wu’s wife discovered two of their bank accounts had been suspended without explanation. She said the two bank accounts had been used to accept donations to support Wu’s defence and his family’s expenses.



Blogger Liang Qinhui was charged on May 4 with inciting subversion of state power after he posted messages on his social media accounts. The media did not report the case until June 30. According to the charge sheet of the Supreme People's Procuratorate Liang disseminated sensitive content and made critical comments. Liang also accessed and downloaded some critical articles about the Communist Party through Free Gate, software used to circumvent the online firewalls.

Liu Feiyue, the founder of online monitoring service *Citizen's Rights and Livelihood Watch* was punished with 10 days' administrative detention by local police in Suizhou City, Hubei, on August 31 because he posted a report about domestic security. Liu told the IFJ that police detained him and confiscated his computers and other electronic devices because they felt upset by his report.

Zhang Xiaohui, a journalist with the *Economic Observer*, said on June 5 that he was interrogated by police from Chongqing after he reported that staff of the Oriental Star cruise line were suspected of destroying company documents. On early June 2, 442 people died when the Oriental Star cruise ship sank on the Yangtze River near Jianli in Hubei Province. Following the Oriental Star sinking, all media except state-owned news agency Xinhua and China Central Television were denied access to the scene. According to social media reports, Zhang went to the office of Oriental Star cruise line and found staff destroying suspect documents. However, all the messages on social media were deleted afterwards and Zhang refused to disclose further information under instructions from his employer.

## JOURNALISTS ROUGHED UP

At least three journalists working for Guangzhou-based *Southern Metropolis Daily* were beaten up by police officers in Shenzhen after they revealed police were using public funds for their meals and eating protected species. On January 21, journalists discovered that 28 people attended a dinner party at which meat from a protected salamander was consumed. When the journalists at the dinner were discovered, they were assaulted by policemen and security guards at the restaurant. A camera was damaged and taken away. After the incident was revealed 14 police officers were suspended.

Luo Guowei and Yang Zheng of Yibin Television were blocked by construction workers on October 1 when they were trying to report on a fatal industrial accident. According to the victims' families, the accident occurred on the rainy night of September 30. Luo said he and Yang were filming with the help of locals when unidentified people restrained his movements, leaving him with some bruises on his body. The construction site said they needed to protect journalists' safety.

Liu Jun a journalist with state-owned broadcaster China National Radio, was attacked by a group of people in front of several police officers on October 10. The attack came after Liu reported on the aftermath of a gas explosion at a restaurant in Wuhu City in Anhui Province. Liu filed a complaint with local police who then opened an investigation. The explosion in Wuhu City killed 17 people, 14 of whom were secondary school students from a local school.

The Beijing office of *Watching*, a new mainland online

media platform, was broken into by more than 50 people on November 10, five days after it published an investigative report on investment company Zhou Da New Material. According to reports, the trespassers were rowdy and ignored police orders to leave. They stayed in the office for 12 hours and prevented the staff from continuing their work. When they left they were taken away in a coach. On November 14 authorities issued a directive demanding that all media downplay the case. The next day, the company issued a statement saying it had filed a police complaint.

## THE FIGHT BACK AGAINST HARASSMENT

Journalists in mainland China are accustomed to being pressured by the authorities for having allegedly breached their professional ethics. One quasi-authority is the All China Journalists Association, which operates under the direction of the Communist Party of China. It is rare to hear of journalists openly expressing their disagreement with a decision made by authorities, but in 2015 a new landscape emerged.

An *ad hoc* council of the official media professional association the All China Journalists Association (ACJA), announced on January 29 that three media outlets in China had produced "false reporting". The January announcement revealed some journalists' names but held back others, and no information was given regarding how the council determined that the reports were "false". However, one of the journalists named in the list was Chai Huiqun, a veteran reporter at the *Southern Weekly* in Guangzhou. Chai immediately refuted the claims with a message on his Weibo account and questioned the integrity of the council.

Chai told the IFJ that the operations of the council, including its hearing procedures, were flawed. He said that a representative of the All China Journalists Association asked him to provide information about his sources. At least one of the people he had interviewed volunteered to attend the hearing, but the source was not invited. Chai said the most frustrating aspect of the process was the conflict of interest between members of the council and the Chinese Medical Doctors Association. It was the Medical Doctors Association that lodged the initial complaint, in which it alleged false reporting. A number of council members were connected with the association, Chai said, with connections including working as legal consultants to the medical doctors association.

The ACJA is under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and has a duty to promote the ideology of communism. Eighteen former committee members of the ACJA are now either members of the Communist Party or are working for state media outlets. The ACJA website does not list the council as one of his bodies, nor does it mention its objectives, purpose or structure. Several veteran journalists on the mainland said they were unaware that such a council even existed.

Liu Hu, a veteran investigative journalist, was released after the Supreme People's Procuratorate investigating the case admitted it did not have enough evidence to prosecute. Liu revealed evidence of corruption by a number of government officials in 2013. At the time the Central Government was encouraging the public to support an anti-corruption campaign. He was arrested for criminal defamation and detained for almost a year. Police released him on September 11, saying they did not have enough evidence to prosecute.



↑ More than 70 Mongolian herders protested on land dispossession in Beijing in January 2015. They were warned not to speak to foreign media and no mainland publications carried the story.

## TIBET, XINJIANG, INNER MONGOLIA CLOSED OFF

Since 2012 it has been difficult for journalists to talk to people living in the autonomous regions of Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. It seemed that those areas were being isolated from the rest of the world. Some journalists and human rights activists who focused on news in the three regions told the IFJ that it was extremely difficult to collect even a single piece of information or cross check the facts with local people. They said the sources they would normally speak to have either changed their contact numbers or have been detained.

A pattern of intimidation of sources and self-censorship by the media is noticeable around incidents that the authorities might view as “separatism”.

## HERDER PROTESTS IGNORED

Chinese authorities are planning the expansion of a military base and enforcement of the so-called “ecological migration” policy. Vast areas of grazing land are being expropriated and Mongolian herders are being forced off their land to make way for forestry enterprises. US-based Southern Mongolia Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC) has expressed concern about police crackdowns down on a protests by herders in 2015. In some cases, hundreds of riot police used rubber bullets, water cannons and tear gas to disperse protesters. Two herders who gave interviews to international media were later arrested. One was detained for three days and the other imprisoned for 15 days, but neither was given a chance to test the police claims through proper legal procedures. According to Radio Free Asia police intimidated local villagers so that they refused to give interviews to international media. Content on social media was also censored.

About 150 Mongolian herders protested in separate locations in Inner (Southern) Mongolia and Beijing on January 20, 2015. SMHRIC said at least a dozen herders,

activists and their family members were questioned, warned and threatened not to speak to foreign news media or to spread information about the protest via social media. On January 31 and February 1, at least five herders, named Ms Odonhuaar, Mr Davshilt, Ms Naranhuaar, Mr Adiyaa and Ms Alimaa, were accused by police of organizing “illegal demonstrations”. No mainland media outlets covered the protests.

From early May onward, Mongolian villagers from Tulee Village, located in Mingren Township in Naiman County in eastern Inner Mongolia's Tong Liao Municipality, staged protests against the expropriation of their lands. On May 9 five herders were arrested when they went to Beijing intending to appeal to the Central Government about their grievances. On May 28 police cracked down on more than 100 herders protesting a highway construction site. Cell phone photographs were deleted and one woman was hospitalised.

On June 3 herders from Ulzeimurun Township in the east were attacked by the county's forestry bureau. A herder named Buyan was reportedly beaten unconscious when he tried to prevent the confiscation of his livestock.

On September 6 to 7, hundreds of herders protested in front of the government building of Huvuut Tsagaan County when several central government and Communist Party officials made an official visit to the community. According to the SMHRIC five herders were taken away by local police. However, this did not deter herders from continuing their protest. On September 8, more than 400 herders took to the streets of Mingant Township and marched to Mingant-Shiliinhot Highway to try to block the path of the visiting officials. The SMHRIC said nearly 500 local policemen and riot police cracked down on the march.

This significant issue in Inner Mongolia has been largely ignored by mainland media organisations.



# MY EXPERIENCE OF GOVERNMENT DETENTION AND INTERROGATION

BY LIU HU

From mid-2013 to mid-2014, under a policy of China's Ministry of Public Security, the police conducted campaign "Internet Struck Hard", with the goal of rectifying China's social media. This meant "combatting [an] organised network of fabricated rumours".

The movement essentially morphed into a terror campaign orchestrated by the public authorities to intimidate the people. Many internet celebrities, known as "Big Vs", such as Qin Huohuo, Stand-Two-Split-Four (Yang Xiuyu), Xue Manzi and Wang Gongquan, were arrested as rumour-mongers. They all fell into the net.

Unfortunately I had the honour of being one of them.

I had opened Weibo accounts at Sina, Tencent, Sohu and Netease, as well as a personal WeChat public account, capturing more than 1.55 million followers. My "Big Vs" status as one of the 200 or so thought leaders on the Net was duly established. This rendered me, a two-decade long serious news practitioner, a prime target of the Beijing police. I was taken 1,000 miles from southwest Chongqing to the capital and locked up in the First Detention Centre in Beijing.

I had suddenly descended from social life observer into criminal suspect, barred behind tall walls.

According to Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau Prosecution Submission No. 000057 2013, I was charged on three counts: affray, defamation and extortion. These charges covered more than 20 illegal acts, all undoubtedly "heinous".

Following my unrelenting struggle during a detention lasting 346 days, the case was finally dropped. Nine prosecutors from the Beijing Dongcheng District People's Procuratorate escorted me out of the detention centre and saw me off at its heavy doors. On September 10, 2015, the Procuratorate issued a written statement recording its decision not to prosecute, concluding that "the Procuratorate examines the evidence collected with regards to the suspect, Liu Hu, and concluded that it has not met the conditions for prosecution. In accordance with the People's Republic of China Criminal Law Procedures, Article 171, fourth paragraph, we have decided not to proceed with the prosecution."

## AN ACCOUNT OF WHAT HAPPENED

**August 23, 2013.** Noon. Fourteen police officers from Beijing and Chongqing tricked their way into my home on the pretext of fixing the water pipes, and forcibly took me away in front of my four-year-old daughter. As well as using coercive measures to restrict my personal freedom, they confiscated my laptop, a desktop computer for my child and the elders, two mobile phones, a U-disk, several bank cards and eight notebooks from my work over the past years as a journalist.

I was brought to Chongqing Municipal Public Security Bureau's new northern district branch, handcuffed behind my back and bound to an interrogation chair. Two young police officers began interviewing me. One of them introduced himself as a GuoBao, a member of the Special National Security Police branch (China's secret police).

"You are well-intentioned, but what you don't know is that you were being used." "People used you for your microblogging to help them achieve what they want without you even knowing about it ... we've investigated ... they are bad ...". "Did you know that your microblogging has caused much harm to the officials involved?"

The secret police were brainwashing me.

They took turns. I was tortured by such interrogation from noon through the small hours into the next day. I was deprived of food and was only given a dry bread roll and a bottle of water.

Police interrogated me about China Resources Group (SOE)'s Chairman Song Lin, Shanghai Municipal High Court Acting President Cui Yadong, Shaanxi Provincial Public Security Bureau Director Du Hangwei and the State Administration for Industry and Commerce Deputy Secretary Ma Zhengqi. All were suspected of corruption and misconduct and regularly discussed in the microblog arena.

I asked: "What's that to do with the police?"

They answered: "You maliciously attacked government officials."

I asked again: "How does it come under Beijing Police's jurisdiction?"

They answered: "You published your comments on Sina



Weibo, right? Sina's server is located in Beijing, so this is our jurisdiction!"

The police wanted me to budge and admit I was wrong so they could broadcast my confession on national television and destroy my moral image. Then they could do whatever they wanted to punish me.

I did not grant them their wish. The next morning, August 24, the Beijing Police announced I would be placed on criminal detention on suspicion of spreading rumours and causing affray.

I was mistreated, even while resting. I was handcuffed to the interrogation chair and expected to sleep there. I was placed under the air-conditioner, hit with cold air all night without warm clothing or blankets. I asked the police to turn up the temperature but to no avail. I slept for an hour at most.

At 3pm on August 24 I was sent to Beijing by train. I had my first meal on that day.

Two police investigators, armed with not only a laptop, but also a portable printer, interrogated me three times during the journey. They even produced an interrogation record.

I arrived in Beijing the following night, August 25, and was sent to the Beijing First Detention Centre.

## DEPRIVED OF PERSONAL FREEDOM

I continued to clash with the police. They interrogated me more frequently, and kept on deploying deception and brainwashing techniques, as many as 70 times. The longest session lasted for 11.5 hours. The police also established an appointment system in order to stop me from meeting my lawyers. They would agree to a time for me to meet them then deliberately interrogate me at the appointed time.

The police tried to break me during my sleep by interrogating me at night when I was too fatigued to properly fight. They did it three times, but had to stop due to my unrelenting effort.

I was detained in Cell #508 West Fifth District. It measures approximately 35 square meters and housed 13 prisoners at first, and 18 later. As there were not enough beds, many had to sleep on the floor.

Once I was detained the inmates in this cell were illegally deprived of their right to watch news broadcasts and read newspapers, including state-owned media like CCTV's daily news program *Xinwen Lianbo* and the newspaper the *Beijing Daily*. The deprivation lasted for about five months, during which I repeatedly asked on behalf of the inmates for these rights to be restored. Again, this was to no avail. Access to the news was only restored when my interrogation ended.

On September 30, 2013, the third branch of the Beijing Municipal People's Procuratorate issued an approval for my arrest on a charge of libel, after which I was transferred twice to police prosecution. The first transfer was for alleged libel, and the case was transferred to the third branch of Beijing Municipal People's Procuratorate, but the prosecuting files were later returned. The second time it was on suspicion of libel, extortion and affray and the case was transferred to the Beijing Dongcheng District people's Procuratorate, and later to the detention centre in Beijing's Dongcheng District. Until my release on bail on August 3,

2014, I spent altogether 346 days deprived of my personal freedom on the basis of baseless charges.

## THE IMPACT

My case was personally supervised by the Deputy Minister of Public Security, Beijing Municipal Committee, Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau Chief, Fu Zhenghua. The Beijing police also formed a massive taskforce, mobilizing 100-plus people. They went to Shaanxi, Guangdong, Chongqing, Sichuan, Yunnan, Hubei, Henan and beyond to find evidence of my wrongdoing. That effort alone wasted considerable police manpower as well as millions in taxpayers' money.

The strike rumours movement spread white terror, especially for those who are active on the Internet. Many worried about being arrested. My relentless resistance, however, has given netizens in our nation a little courage, as it was legally tested.

There are selfless, brave people who questioned the arrest. For example, East China University of Political Science Scholar Zhang Xuezhong published an open letter, titled: "Strict Adherence to the Rule of Law, Serious Refusal of Judicial Persecution – To all Chinese Legal Professionals", in which he opined that Fu Zhenghua was in breach of the law and was suppressing public opinion. Guangdong newspaper *Southern Weekend* (also known as *Southern Weekly* or *Nanfang Zhoumo*, also published an article, titled: "Heavy Crackdown – A World Without Rumours?" In the article, the publisher questioned the Beijing police's legal boundaries.

However, the populist official newspaper, *Global Times*, a tabloid sister publication of the *People's Daily*, opined in its editorial that "Liu Hu's arrest is not an end to the people's anti-corruption war?" Obviously, the paper opted to speak for the government, elaborating on their judicial interpretation and denying that my arrest had anything to do with the Chinese Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate, or their efforts in the "Internet Struck Hard" movement. As a matter of fact, such an interpretation only provides a legal basis for combatting rumour-mongering or libel on the internet. Authorities are aiming at controlling negative messages on the internet but they can't do it obviously therefore they used different kinds of laws as an excuse to justify their combating action.

My wife spent a great deal of effort to exonerate me. During my detention, she had to give up her job and spend a large sum of money to hire legal professionals to deal with the authorities. All her energy was consumed in making sure I would be exonerated as soon as possible.

Other than reputational damage, I also suffered from severe post-traumatic stress syndrome due to prolonged detention, tiring interrogation and negative media publicity. My young daughter, too, is in need of professional psychological treatment, as she saw me forcibly taken away by the police and was affected by a long period of enduring rumors and discrimination.

So far I have not applied for any state compensation.



## SURVEILLANCE INCREASES IN XINJIANG

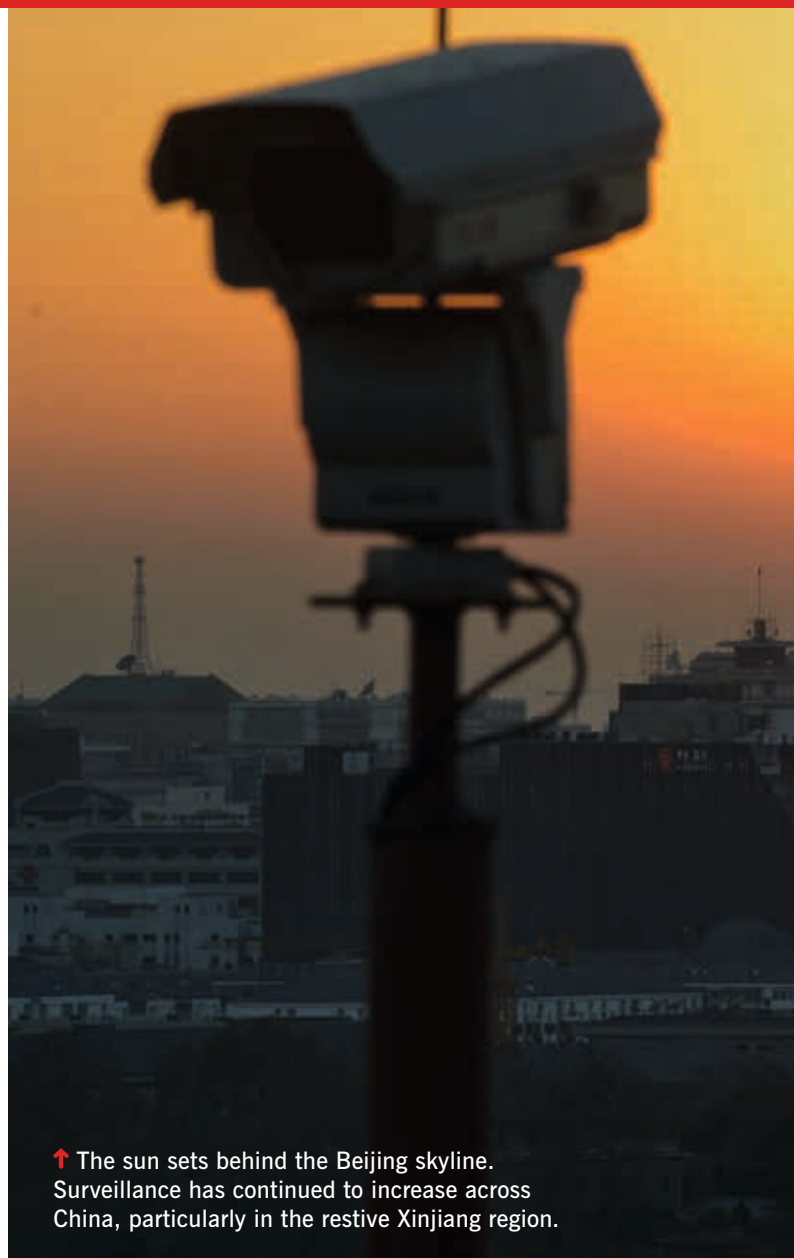
As the new Counter-Terrorism Bill was enacted by representatives of the National Congress in Beijing, the IFJ and other international organisations expressed concern that the bill will extend the powers and control of the Chinese authorities. Under the new law authorities will have more power for intrusive surveillance of individuals, and be able to delete information under the guise of national security. In Xinjiang, an autonomous region of China, authorities have already started increasing their surveillance, with all IT vendors now required to register for police the personal identification details of people who buy cell phones and computers. Vendors are also required to install closed-circuit television surveillance at the entrance to their shops and maintain 24-hour surveillance systems.

On June 26 Shawket and Rehim, two brothers of Xinjiang journalist Shohret Hoshur, were charged with endangering state security. They had been detained by authorities since August 2014 but did not face court until July 1 2015. Shohret Hoshur, who works with Radio Free Asia, said that his two brothers were not politically active and worked on businesses in Urumqi. He said that he believed his brothers were detained due to his work as a journalist and his reporting on sensitive topics in Xinjiang.

On August 27 *Tianshan.net*, a media platform controlled by the Xinjiang government, reported that 45 people were convicted of offences including smuggling to other countries and supporting terrorist organizations either through financing, organising or participating. The 45 people were jailed for terms ranging from four years to life. According to the report, some had been influenced by religious extremism. No journalists were allowed to attend the court hearings to make independent reports.

In late March, a Uighur couple in Kashgar Special Economic Zone in Xinjiang were jailed after the husband refused to shave his beard and his wife refused to remove her veil. According to the local government-controlled newspaper the couple were charged with “picking quarrels and provoking troubles” after they refused to follow instruction from village cadres. Following the trial, the husband was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment and the wife was sentenced to two years. Following the sentencing, the story went viral, with bloggers and social media sites hosting large amounts of commentary. On March 30 Hong Kong-based newspaper *Ming Pao* picked up the story. Mainland authorities then released a restrictive order to all mainland media not to republish the news report.

Tibetan writer Druklo (known under the pen name Shokjang) was arrested by the Qinghai police for posting on his blog about increased restrictions by the local government in the lead-up to the anniversary of the 2008 Tibetan unrest. According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy Druklo disclosed that police in Rebkong County (also known as Tongren County) had increased street patrols before the anniversary on March 14. No mention of this was made when Druklo was arrested. In 2008 at least 10 people died in the protests. Foreign media has said that the number of casualties was much higher.



↑ The sun sets behind the Beijing skyline. Surveillance has continued to increase across China, particularly in the restive Xinjiang region.

## PRINT MEDIA STRUGGLES

With the Chinese economy slowing in 2014, it was reported that more than 30 media outlets closed down, including many industrial magazines and metropolitan newspapers. Newspapers reported a 15 percent decline in print advertising in 2014 as more big advertisers were drawn to the internet, according to a report released in May by Tsinghua University. *China Economic* website reported on July 6 that several state media outlets asked for financial support from the central government during a meeting between management of all media and the officials of Central Propaganda Department in April. Officials refused to provide support on the grounds that there were many newspapers in the country and some of the failing newspapers should be removed by market forces.

On April 2 more than 30 journalists at *San Jin Metropolitan Daily* protested against changes to their job titles and wages arrears outside the headquarters of the parent company Shanxi Media Group. One of the media workers told the IFJ that the title “journalist” was inexplicably removed from the newspaper. Management of the newspaper asked the protesters to come inside and to settle the case following the protest. The protester said: “We requested management to sign a contract promising to give us the



AFP / Ed Jones

same benefits as contractual journalists.” Management rejected the request. The protester, who was working in marketing and asked to remain anonymous, said that some advertisers used their products to pay for advertising. People in his section had received bottles of wines as their “salary” for a long time. Workers were also required to subscribe to their own newspaper in order to ensure that the paper had a certain amount of subscription. He said: “We are hoping to remain in the media outlet. As you know, it is very difficult to find a job after you graduate from college. This is particularly true for people who are living in less-developed provinces and in rural areas.”

The media has been under pressure since President Xi suggested in 2013 that the industry should be consolidated. In August 2014 the central government issued an in-depth directive paper which encouraged media groups to merge and to move towards new technology including big data journalism. Since then, all levels of government and other enterprises have invested a lot of money in the internet. In the media industry, particularly in cities on the eastern coast, many enterprises have merged or reshuffled.

On June 18 the Central Propaganda Department, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television and the State Internet Information Office announced that state-

owned media, including the offices of Xinhua and China Central Television would begin downsizing. The number of offices would be reduced by 50 per cent, from 3160 to 1640, and 1435 jobs would be cut. On September 10 the website of the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television announced that 44 bureaus of media outlets in Guangxi would be closed.

Metropolitan newspapers were the first category of newspapers to be cut. Several mainland analysts said metropolitan newspapers were the first target because their content was poor. Most offered only propaganda rather than genuine news. Furthermore, the cost of running a daily newspaper was high. On July 1 metropolitan newspaper *City Life*, operated under the Yunnan Provincial Disabled Persons Federation, announced the paper would shut down, citing financial difficulties. The notice did not disclose the size of the deficit. However, Caixin, a financial and business news service, said staff salaries had been arrears for four months, which is equivalent to more than 4 million yuan (approximately US\$650,000). Other sources said *City Life* had invested almost 200 million yuan (US\$31.2 million), but it still owed the printing company more than 60 million yuan (US\$9.3 million) and owed the government more than 3 million yuan (US\$467,360) in taxes.



# THE “MYTH” OF DYING PRINT MEDIA

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**T**he growing concern over the survival of print media has once again come under the spotlight, with the suspension of News Evening as well as the 2014 downsizing of International Finance from a daily publication to a weekly. China’s print media industry is under siege from dwindling newspaper circulation and advertisement revenue, following the rise of the internet and the proliferation of new media.

Recent events have brought forth a very real question: “Will print media die?” In China, as elsewhere, there is more than one reason to answer “yes”. First, the affordability and convenience of the internet attracts more users, both audience and advertisers. Second, by making the move from “one-to-one” to “many-to-many” forms of communication, new media users can not only enjoy a multifaceted interpretation of events but can also participate by contributing information and interpretations themselves. This is a whole new experience that cannot be matched by traditional media. Third, with its “user-generated content”, the internet has changed how humans interact with newspapers. Fourth, the virtual space and the freedom the internet affords its users is gratifying.

However, many people, in particular print media practitioners, are of the view that traditional media will not “die” easily in China, because it meets so many different demands from a huge population with diverse expectations. This article exposes the myth of the “death of print” by analyzing the dynamic media environment surrounding print media in China. Several points about this article are worth noting in advance. Rather than covering all forms of print media, this analysis focuses mainly on challenges that Chinese newspapers are facing. As well, “print media” in this report is not limited to the physical format of media, such as newspapers, but rather China’s legacy media organizations, such as the *People’s Daily*. And finally, “dying” refers to financial extinction, such as bankruptcy or suspension of business, rather than other kinds of failure, such as the gradual loss of readers due to changes in reading habits.

When classified according to their political-economic structure, there are basically three types of media in China: official media, which still receive certain State subsidies; semi-official media, which depend exclusively on advertising; and commercial media, which receive both advertising and private investment. According to Professor Colin Sparks, international media expert from Hong Kong Baptist University, all these types of media face three levels of challenge: primarily from the Communist Party, secondly from the market economy, and thirdly from the crisis brought about by the internet. These three challenges are intertwined and none exists independently.

Economically, Chinese newspapers are facing difficulties due to drastic falls in circulation and advertising revenue. Not until 2011 did the internet become an obvious threat. In the

1990s, China was considered fertile soil for the development of the media industry. Newspaper numbers increased sharply, from 186 in 1978 to 1,915 in 2013, according to the *Chinese Journalism Year Book* (1978-2013), which created room for the development of the advertising market as well as circulation. Until the mid-1990s, news organizations were allowed to invest in other businesses, such as property and the stock market, and for a time journalism was one of the top-income jobs in China.

However, since 2004, the growth rate of advertising revenue for print newspapers has fallen below 6 per cent, while advertising revenue from online media grew by 30.8 per cent in 2004. According to the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) the overall growth rate of the media market was more than 16 per cent between 2004 and 2013. Since income generated from circulation barely covers the costs of printing, as was confirmed in an interview with an editor in Guangzhou in 2015, newspapers are on the verge of suffering financial losses. This is largely due to the emergence of the internet and its digital byproducts, such as smartphones and tablet computers, which hit China in 2005, relatively late compared to the West. This was symbolized by Tencent Technology’s launch of its independent online radio. In 2011, internet advertising revenue surpassed newspapers for the first time, by US\$400 million. In 2014, the new communication medium reached more than 45 per cent of the Chinese population.

Politically, the Chinese Communist Party has never loosened its control over the media and related industries. The change is merely in the format. In the West, it took almost two centuries for journalism to shift from serving the elites to serving the masses, whereas in China it took merely 30 years. But the change had different results: one supported democracy and individual autonomy, the other helped the government to stabilize society and control the public mind.

With the introduction of marketization, the Chinese leadership offered the media industry a certain degree of freedom, mostly economic. In 1996, the state categorized media as the Third Industry (Cultural Services) and policy officially stated that media is not an official propaganda tool. After China joined the World Trade Organization in the early 2000s, private and foreign interests were allowed to invest in Chinese media. However, in an authoritarian country, economic development does not necessarily benefit media freedom. The Chinese government controls media through its propaganda tools at all levels (from Central level to province-, city- and town-level), by holding a controlling interest of 51 per cent or more of the capital in an enterprise, and by issuing press passes to journalists. Seen in this way, the Chinese government is not only the administrative authority, but also the biggest stakeholder in all media organizations. The system can best be described as state capitalism.



**WITH THE CHINESE ECONOMY SLOWING IN 2014, IT WAS REPORTED THAT MORE THAN 30 MEDIA OUTLETS CLOSED DOWN, INCLUDING MANY INDUSTRIAL MAGAZINES AND METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPERS.**

Besides the economic challenge it poses, the internet also threatens the interaction between readers and traditional media, and in this way journalists' professionalism is affected (assuming journalism is still considered a profession). Before the internet age, audience involvement was limited to the choice of whether to pick up and read a story or not. All other choices were made by the journalists. On an internet platform, the readers can choose not only what, when and how to read a story, but can also be involved as journalists themselves. Hyperlinks in stories bring the audience all relevant details and connections, weakening the traditional role of the newsroom gatekeeper. What is more, online anonymity gives users the autonomy to express their views. Newspapers and other forms of print media, beyond a certain degree, cannot compete with such advantages.

Central China Television's media market information research team found that the average time citizens spend on reading physical newspapers is decreasing on a yearly basis and the average age of newspaper readers is climbing, reaching 41 in 2006. In 2012, audiences spent 68 per cent of their media usage time on the internet and only 10 per cent on the print media.

The above analysis gives a good indication of the dire situation faced by the print media, but it does not apply to every newspaper in the country. There are several reasons for this.

First, the Web 2.0 era is not the first time that a crisis has hit Chinese newspapers. There were crises in the early 1980s and mid-1990s. The 1980s witnessed the detachment of news organizations from government subsidies. Reactions in this period saw the increase in circulation and the breakdown of the Soviet-style post-office subscription system. The 1990s saw newspaper profits fall, which was caused by the explosion of newspaper numbers. The solution to this crisis was government intervention. The sharp drop in newspaper numbers after 1995, was a result of the policy of "closing

down, stopping operation, conglomerating and transforming" (*guan, ting, bing, zhuan*). Today, research initiated by related government departments has focused on how the press in the West has confronted this problem and converged with digital technologies to give newspaper outlets enough incentive to carry on.

The second reason why newspapers still have a future is that traditional media enjoy an advantage with which the internet cannot compete. Topping the list is "accountability". This article will not go into the philosophical approach of discussing "who decides what is credible and right", but simply look at the news-making process. It is true that the "many-to-many" information flow allows for diverse voices on any event. Nevertheless, the time pressure and the "easy to publish" nature of online journalism make it almost impossible for practitioners to double check their information sources. The majority of online journalists choose to publish an unchecked story immediately after it occurs and then modify or update it, if and when necessary, because it is so easy to add and remove information. This, however, greatly weakens the most important core values of journalism: credibility, ethics and reliability.

In response to this point, a growing number of newspapers, such as *Beijing News* and *Shenzhen Special Zone Paper*, adopt the motto: "win the battle with content" (*neirong wei wang*). They are committed to "producing in-depth news that is difficult to find on the internet" (interview with an editor at *Shenzhen Special Zone Paper*, 2015).

Another advantage that traditional media enjoys is the ethical standards that journalists hold. Journalism scholars have come to a consensus that a key difference between professional journalism and citizen/online journalism is ethics. Although journalists, not only in China, may hold various professional beliefs (or no values at all), they generate information that society needs for the greater good. The importance of ethics is highlighted by what can go wrong



when publications do not adhere to them. In another project, this author interviewed 16 journalism practitioners in mainland China about the obstacles they face at work. Three of them said they left their jobs because they felt they were under pressure to abandon their journalistic morals.

The third reason why print media are not doomed is that we are talking here about China. Government intervention in the market and media is the hallmark of the Chinese system. The government's hand helped newspapers overcome the first two crises and it is now reaching towards the new media in a subtle way. "Subtle" because China's international position has changed its forms of government control, in a process that is characterized by political scholarship as "adaptive authoritarianism". As the world's second-largest economy and an active participant in and host of world events, China knows the world is watching. There have been tons of regulations and plans for regulating the internet and online journalism since 2005, including the *2005 Internet Information Regulation*. This required a 10 million yuan (approximately USD 1.542 million) registration fee for setting up a legitimate online news website, which meant many groups could not afford to set up a business.

In 2013, the General Agency of Press and Publication and the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television merged as the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) in order to have more legitimacy and to integrate their powers to supervise all types of information, particularly that produced by new digital platforms. In June 2014, SAPPRFT released a public note warning individual journalists not to publish personal comments on their own social media channels, and called for a national program of Marxism re-education for all journalists. The note discouraged journalists' online interaction with their audience and limited their freedom of expression, especially expression of critical opinions. On November 26, 2014, in Jinan, the former Director of the General Agency of Press, Liu Binjie, said publicly that China is planning to draft a media law with two aims. The first is to prevent fake and random information online by rectifying the unbalanced situation in which only traditional media are under strict regulations. The second is to enforce society's respect for copyright, preventing netizens and internet news portals from "having a free lunch and drinking free milk". There are also many local regulations. All of them have a common feature: they are beneficial for the development of the print media.

Fourth, the decline of print circulation does not mean that the media organization will go bankrupt. Admittedly, according to the *Chinese Journalism Year Book* (1978-2013), there has been a slight fall in newspaper circulation in the recent past (32,542 million copies in 2012 to 31,938 million copies in 2014). There are at least three possible explanations for the decline: political reasons, media convergence and financial failure leading to bankruptcy.

In the past 20 years, the Chinese political environment has undergone great changes. One compelling example that has

great impact on media circulation occurred in 2008. The Chinese government started to implement the "Dabu Gaige" (Super Administrative Departments Reform), aimed at cutting down or merging the central government's administrative departments. The new SAPPPFT formed in 2013 was one of this policy's "achievements". As most Central-level newspapers, or party newspapers, enjoyed the special care of "mandatory circulation" by government departments, this political action caused a decline of Central-level newspaper circulation from 3,766 million in 2008 to 3,055 million in 2009 (*Chinese Journalism Publication Statistic Year Book*).

"Media convergence", as it is described by prominent Chinese media expert Yu Guomin, is a phenomenon that western countries have also experienced. Some print media outlets have evolved into an online platform, and most of them maintain both print and online publications. One point worth noting here is that although Chinese internet penetration rate has reached more than 45 per cent in 2014, only 28.6 per cent of the rural population – which constitutes more than half of China's overall population – has adopted it (*CNNIC*). Traditional media are still the dominant platform used by rural audiences, and these media still have scope to retain and expand this audience.

It is certainly true that some print newspapers have gone bankrupt, but we cannot come to the conclusion that the internet threatens all of them. The political-economic structure of each newspaper determines how much protection it receives. Among the types of newspapers in China mentioned above, the one that the new media most influences is the semi-official media. These semi-official media are most likely to run into crisis because they have generally mediocre products, and rely entirely on advertising, with no government financial support.

Official media are less likely to go bankrupt because they receive government support. Not only do they receive state subsidies, but they are also given other benefits, such as mandatory advertising support from monopoly information resources. For example, *Shanghai Securities News* monopolises the information disclosure of all listed companies and *China Economic Herald* monopolises all bond advertisements as well as public relations fees from lower level government departments to "advertise" their political achievements. What's more, journalists working for official media receive indefinite employment contracts and all necessary assurances that government officials enjoy.

Commercial media are less likely to go bankrupt for several reasons. First, they are relatively liberal. Second, commercial media products are of high quality and unique opinions, which may be the main reason that they receive private investment. They often have several outstanding reputable journalists who enjoy great social respect, which perfectly fits the "individualization" feature of online media (Netizens trust individuals rather than organizations). This is typified by the one media group in the southern coastal area of China, Most of these commercial media outlets have already converged their print operations with their online platforms, making them more ready to survive the rapidly evolving market.



OFFICIAL MEDIA ARE LESS LIKELY TO GO BANKRUPT BECAUSE THEY RECEIVE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT. NOT ONLY DO THEY RECEIVE STATE SUBSIDIES, BUT THEY ARE ALSO GIVEN OTHER BENEFITS, SUCH AS MANDATORY ADVERTISING SUPPORT FROM MONOPOLY INFORMATION RESOURCES.



# JAILED MEDIA WORKERS IN CHINA

The China Press Freedom Project documents for the first time a list of journalists, media workers and bloggers currently jailed or detained in China



Gheytrat Niyaz



Gulmire Imin



Nijat Azat



Kunchok Tsephel  
Gopey Tsang



Liu Xiaobo



Memetjan  
Abdulla



Liu Xianbin



Tursunjan  
Hezim



Guo Zhongxiao



Li Tie

|    | Name                        | Journalist / Blogger / Freelance / Writer | Place               | Incident /accusation                                                                      | Sentence                 | Date detained        | Current status          |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1  | Ekberjan Jamal              | Blogger                                   | Turpan, Xinjiang    | "Splittism" – trying to break away from the nation, and revealing state secrets           | 10 years' jail           | February 28, 2008    | Jailed                  |
| 2  | Niyaz Kahar                 | Reporter / Blogger                        | Urumqi, Xinjiang    | Published illegal news and propagated ideas of ethnic separatism and splitting the nation | 13 years' jail           | July 2009            | Jailed                  |
| 3  | Gulmire Imin                | Blogger                                   | Urumqi, Xinjiang    | Separatism, leaking state secrets, and organizing an illegal demonstration                | Life in prison           | July 14, 2009        | Jailed                  |
| 4  | Nijat Azat                  | Reporter / Blogger                        | Urumqi, Xinjiang    | Endangering state security                                                                | 10 years' jail           | July or August, 2009 | Jailed                  |
| 5  | Gheytrat Niyaz              | Reporter / Blogger                        | Urumqi, Xinjiang    | Endangering state security                                                                | 15 years' jail           | October 1, 2009      | Jailed                  |
| 6  | Kunchok Tsephel Gopey Tsang | Writer / Blogger                          | Gannan, Gansu       | Disclosing state secrets                                                                  | 15 years' jail           | November 2009        | Jailed                  |
| 7  | Liu Xiaobo                  | Writer / Blogger                          | Jinzhou, Liaoning   | Inciting subversion                                                                       | 11 years' jail           | December 25, 2009    | Jailed                  |
| 8  | Memetjan Abdulla            | Journalist / Blogger                      | Urumqi, Xinjiang    | Instigating ethnic rioting                                                                | Life in prison           | April 1, 2010        | Jailed                  |
| 9  | Liu Xianbin                 | Blogger / Writer                          | Sichuan             | Inciting subversion through articles in overseas websites                                 | 10 years' jail           | June 28, 2010        | Jailed                  |
| 10 | Tursunjan Hezim             | Blogger                                   | Aksu, Xinjiang      | Undisclosed                                                                               | 7 years' jail            | July 2010            | Jailed                  |
| 11 | Jin Andi                    | Blogger / Writer                          | Beijing             | Subverting state power                                                                    | 8 years' jail            | September 19, 2010   | Jailed                  |
| 12 | Li Tie                      | Blogger / Writer                          | Wuhan, Hubei        | Inciting subversion through online articles                                               | 10 years' jail           | September 15, 2010   | Jailed                  |
| 13 | Chen Wei                    | Blogger / Writer                          | Suining, Sichuan    | Subverting state power                                                                    | 9 years' jail            | February 20, 2011    | Jailed                  |
| 14 | Qi Chonghuai                | Journalist                                | Tengzhou, Shandong  | Fraud and extortion                                                                       | 8 years' jail            | June 9, 2011         | Jailed                  |
| 15 | Gartse Jigme                | Blogger / Writer                          | Qinghai             | Inciting split the nation                                                                 | 5 years' jail            | January 1, 2013      | Jailed                  |
| 16 | Hu Yazhu                    | Journalist                                | Shaoguan, Guangdong | Accepting bribes while covering events                                                    | 13 years' jail           | January 21, 2013     | Jailed                  |
| 17 | Liu Weian                   | Freelance                                 | Shaoguan, Guangdong | Accepting bribes while covering events                                                    | 14 years' jail           | June 5, 2013         | Jailed                  |
| 18 | Liu Hu                      | Journalist                                | Beijing             | Defamation                                                                                | 346 days' jail           | August 23, 2013      | Released but re-accused |
| 19 | Dong Rubin                  | Blogger / Freelance                       | Kunming, Yunnan     | Illegal business activity and creating a disturbance                                      | 6 years & 6 months' jail | September 12, 2013   | Jailed                  |
| 20 | Chen Yongzhou               | journalist                                |                     | Damaging a business' reputation and accepting bribe                                       | 22 months' jail          | October 17, 2013     | Jailed                  |
| 21 | Yao Wentian                 | Writer / Publisher                        | Shenzhen            | Smuggling ordinary goods                                                                  | 10 years' jail           | October 27, 2013     | Jailed                  |
| 22 | Ilham Tohti                 | Blogger / Founder of Website Uighurbiz    | Beijing             | Separatism                                                                                | Life in prison           | January 15, 2014     | Jailed                  |
| 23 | Perhat Halmur               | Blogger / Founder of Website Uighurbiz    | Beijing             | Separatism                                                                                | Unknown                  | January, 2014        | Unknown                 |
| 24 | Shohret Nijat               | Blogger / Founder of Website Uighurbiz    | Beijing             | Separatism                                                                                | Unknown                  | January, 2014        | Unknown                 |
| 25 | Luo Yuwei                   | Blogger / Founder of Website Uighurbiz    | Beijing             | Separatism                                                                                | Unknown                  | January, 2014        | Unknown                 |
| 26 | Mutellip Imin               | Blogger / Founder of Website Uighurbiz    | Beijing             | Separatism                                                                                | Unknown                  | January, 2014        | Unknown                 |
| 27 | Abduqeyum Ablimit           | Blogger / Founder of Website Uighurbiz    | Beijing             | Separatism                                                                                | Unknown                  | January, 2014        | Unknown                 |
| 28 | Atikem Rozi                 | Blogger / Founder of Website Uighurbiz    | Beijing             | Separatism                                                                                | Unknown                  | January, 2014        | Unknown                 |
| 29 | Akbar Imin                  | Blogger / Founder of Website Uighurbiz    | Beijing             | Separatism                                                                                | Unknown                  | January, 2014        | Unknown                 |



Chen Wei



Qi Chonghui



Gartse Jigme



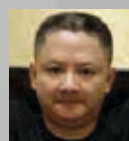
Dong Rubin



Yao Wentian



Ilham Tohti



Ye Xiaozheng



Druklo

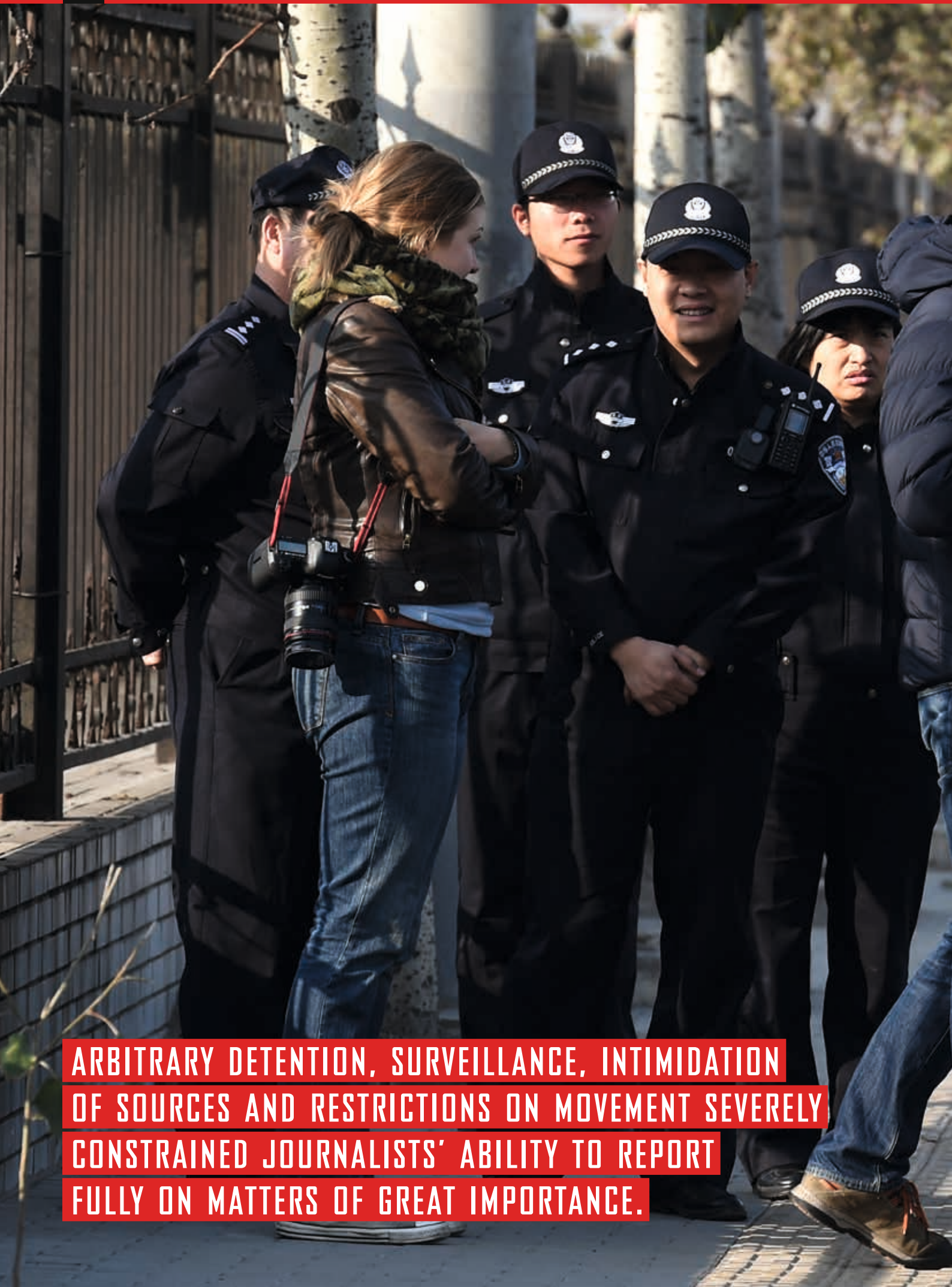


Wang Xiaolu



Jiang Yefei

|    | Name            | Journalist / Blogger / Freelance / Writer                                              | Place                                       | Incident /accusation                                                  | Sentence                                                   | Date detained      | Current status                     |
|----|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| 30 | Gao Yu          | Journalist                                                                             | Beijing                                     | Leaking state secret to overseas media                                | 5 years' jail                                              | April 24, 2014     | Medical parole, under surveillance |
| 31 | Pu Zhiqiang     | Lawyer/Blogger                                                                         | Beijing                                     | Picking quarrels and inciting ethnic hatred                           | Suspended 3 year sentence                                  | May 6, 2014        | Suspended sentence                 |
| 32 | Guo Zhongxiao   | Journalist                                                                             | Shenzhen                                    | Operating an illegal publication and illegal business operations      | Not sentenced yet                                          | May 30, 2014       | In custody                         |
| 33 | Wang Jianmin    | Publisher                                                                              | Shenzhen                                    | Operating an illegal publication and illegal business operations      | Not sentenced yet                                          | May 30, 2014       | In custody                         |
| 34 | Xu Zhongyun     | Wife of Wang Jianmin                                                                   | Shenzhen                                    | Operating an illegal publication and illegal business operations      | Unknown                                                    | May 30, 2014       | In custody                         |
| 35 | Liu Haitao      | Editorial Assistant                                                                    | Shenzhen                                    | Operating an illegal publication and illegal business operations      | Unknown                                                    | May 30, 2014       | In custody                         |
| 36 | Lu Gengsong     | Blogger / Writer                                                                       | Hangzhou, Zhejiang                          | Subversion of state power                                             | Unknown                                                    | July 7, 2014       | In custody                         |
| 37 | Wang Jing       | Blogger                                                                                | Beijing                                     | Report for 64 Tianwang, an independent human rights website           | Unknown                                                    | August 23, 2014    | In custody                         |
| 38 | Dawa Tsomo      | Writer / Blogger                                                                       | Zatoe County in Qinghai's Yushul Prefecture | Blogging on topics considered politically sensitive                   | Unknown                                                    | August 23, 2014    | In custody                         |
| 39 | Fu Zhibun       | Writer                                                                                 | Nanchang, Jiangxi                           | Operating an illegal business                                         | 22 months' jail and 150,000 yuan fine (approx. USD 23,000) | September 10, 2014 | Jailed                             |
| 40 | Chen Shuqing    | Writer/ Blogger                                                                        | Hangzhou, Zhejiang                          | Inciting subversion of state power                                    | Unknown                                                    | September 11, 2014 | In custody                         |
| 41 | Liu Wei         | Journalist                                                                             | Jiangxi                                     | Illegally obtaining state secret                                      | Unknown                                                    | October 9, 2014    | Unknown                            |
| 42 | Ye Xiaozheng    | Blogger                                                                                | Huizhou, Guangdong                          | Picking quarrels and provoking trouble                                | Unknown                                                    | December 2014      | In custody                         |
| 43 | Druklo          | Writer / Blogger                                                                       | Qinghai                                     | Blog post about the deployment of security forces in the Rebkong area | Unknown                                                    | March 19, 2015     | In custody                         |
| 44 | Iomig           | Writer / Blogger                                                                       | Ngaba, Sichuan                              | Blogging on topics considered politically sensitive                   | Unknown                                                    | April 17, 2015     | In custody                         |
| 45 | Wang Xiaolu     | Journalist                                                                             | Beijing                                     | Said to trigger stock market chaos with his reporting.                | Unknown                                                    | August 25, 2015    | In custody                         |
| 46 | Gui Minhai      | Shareholder of Mighty Current publication Ltd. and Causeway Bay bookstore in Hong Kong | Thailand                                    | Unknown                                                               | Unknown                                                    | October 17, 2015   | In custody                         |
| 47 | Lui Bo          | Shareholder and General manager of Mighty Current publication Ltd.                     | Shenzhen                                    | Unknown                                                               | Unknown                                                    | October 24, 2015   | In custody                         |
| 48 | Cheung Chi-ping | Business manager of Mighty Current                                                     | Dongguan, Guangdong                         | Unknown                                                               | Unknown                                                    | October 24, 2015   | In custody                         |
| 49 | Lam Wing-kei    | Manager of Causeway Bay bookstore in Hong Kong                                         | Shenzhen                                    | Unknown                                                               | Unknown                                                    | October 24, 2015   | In custody                         |
| 50 | Jiang Yefei     | Political Cartoonist                                                                   | Thailand.                                   | Crossing the border illegally                                         | Unknown                                                    | November 13, 2015  | In custody                         |
| 51 | Lee Bo          | Shareholder of Mighty Current and Causeway Bay bookstore in Hong Kong                  | Hong Kong                                   | Unknown                                                               | Unknown                                                    | December 30, 2015  | In custody                         |



**ARBITRARY DETENTION, SURVEILLANCE, INTIMIDATION  
OF SOURCES AND RESTRICTIONS ON MOVEMENT SEVERELY  
CONSTRAINED JOURNALISTS' ABILITY TO REPORT  
FULLY ON MATTERS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.**



← Police order foreign journalists to leave the street opposite the Beijing No. 3 Intermediate People's Court where veteran journalist Gao Yu was on trial. Police harassment, detention and interference with coverage is a significant issue for foreign journalists in China according to the Foreign Correspondents Club of China.



# CHAPTER 2: FOREIGN JOURNALISTS IN CHINA

**W**orking conditions for foreign journalists on the mainland grew worse in 2015. Arbitrary detention, surveillance, intimidation of sources and restrictions on movement severely constrained journalists' ability to report fully on matters of great importance. Official harassment, obstruction and intimidation remained serious problems. One of the biggest obstacles is the lengthy delays and time taken to get a working visa. A new issue emerged when journalists were prevented from shipping some of their belongings back to their own countries when they left China because the possessions were deemed to be politically sensitive.

## JOURNALISTS DETAINED AS "SPIES"

The most disturbing case in 2015 was that of Angela Koeckritz, a former journalist with *Die Zeit*, who left China because she was accused of being a "spy". Her news assistant, Chinese national Zhang Miao, was detained for eight months. On September 24, 2014, Koeckritz flew to Hong Kong with Zhang to follow up the series of Hong Kong students protests. The pair reported on the massive Occupy Movement, also known as the Umbrella Revolution, from September 28 onward. Zhang posted photographs of the Hong Kong demonstrators on social media

and briefly wore the yellow ribbon which was a symbol of the movement. In a statement posted on the internet, Koeckritz said she last saw Zhang on October 1, when she flew back to Beijing. Koeckritz was told Zhang had been detained by police because she was involved in a poetry gathering at the artists' colony in Songzhuang, a Beijing suburb, on October 2.

Koeckritz was interrogated several times by officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who accused her of being a "spy". Eventually she returned to Germany and continued to speak out on behalf of Zhang. On July 9, 2015, Zhang was released without charge. Zhang also left China and travelled to Germany. During her detention, police asked her a series of questions about the Occupy Movement in Hong Kong and the events at Songzhuang.

Two Japanese journalists were accused of espionage and detained in May, but no specific information was released during the routine media press conference. The detentions were first revealed on September 30 by the Japanese daily newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*. *Asahi* said one Japanese journalist was detained in Liaoning Province and the other in Zhejiang Province. The following day, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson admitted the report was true, but repeatedly said the two journalists were involved in espionage and that the China authorities had informed the government of Japan.





Tom Phillips / Guardian

## REPORTERS CURTAILED ON SENSITIVE INTERVIEWS

On February 21, two journalists from French daily *Le Monde* were detained by police for four hours when they arrived at the residential compound where a former political prisoner, Hada, is living. One of the journalists, Brice Pedroletti, said they were followed by police as they drove to Hada's residence. Upon their arrival, a number of security agents demanded that they allow their visas to be checked. Shortly afterward, police arrived and they were taken to the local police station. After the interrogation, they were escorted to the airport by officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hada served a 15-year sentence ending in 2010, then was illegally detained for another four years before he was released on December 9, 2014. When Hada heard of the detention of the journalists, he went to the police station and asked to see them, but his request was refused. Hada said: "I'm still under surveillance. When I do some exercise in the outside garden, I notice some people watching me. I can only see my family members, not friends or press."

On October 13, Philip Wen, a journalist with *The Sydney Morning Herald* in Australia, with his assistant and a Japanese journalist, were detained for several hours in Ulanhot City in Inner Mongolia. They were trying to interview Bao Zhuoxuan, the 16-year-old son of human rights lawyer Wang Yu. Wang and her husband were detained in July by Beijing police

↑ Journalists including Fairfax Media China correspondent, Philip Wen, are pushed away from a Beijing court by security officials while reporting on the trial of prominent human rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang in December 2015.

← Zhang Miao was working as an assistant to German publication *Die Zeit* when she was taken into custody and held for nine months. Her colleague Angela Koeckritz left China after being labelled a "spy".

on accusations of "inciting subversion of state power". Bao Zhuoxuan fled to Myanmar with the assistance of a number of US-based Chinese human rights lawyers in early October. He was caught in Myanmar, his passport was confiscated and he was deported to China and confined at his grandmother's home. When Wen's group arrived at the home, they had a brief conversation with the teenager through the door before four plain clothes police officers blocked them from entering and took them back to a police station on the grounds that the journalists' identities needed to be checked. Wen was interrogated by police, who repeatedly asked him to reveal the identities of the people for whom the journalists were supposedly working, and what they planned to do in Ulanhot until their scheduled flight. Wen said police did not search either his phone or his camera.



↑ Top concerns for foreign journalists included bureaucratic delays and political interference in the issue and renewal of journalist visas and press cards.

Flickr / Helen K

## FCCC SURVEY SHOWS CONDITIONS GET WORSE

The Foreign Correspondents Club of China released the results of its annual survey of members, the *FCCC Annual Working Conditions Report 2015*, in March. The report, based on 117 responses to a questionnaire sent to members in January 2015, covered working conditions in 2014. The survey found that 96 per cent of respondents thought reporting conditions in China almost never met international standards, a negligible improvement on 99 per cent the previous year. Eighty per cent said conditions had worsened or remained the same, an increase of 10 percentage points.

The survey found that its members' top concerns included problems with bureaucratic delays and political interference in the issue and renewal of journalist visas and press cards. They were also concerned about harassment and physical violence against foreign media by the authorities in their attempts to prevent and discourage coverage of sensitive subjects. Other problems were intimidation and harassment of sources, surveillance and censorship, and restrictions on journalists' movements in border and ethnic minority regions. One quarter of correspondents had been prohibited or restricted from reporting from Xinjiang and areas with large Tibetan populations. Journalists were also blocked from Inner Mongolia and the China-Myanmar border.

## VISA POWERS USED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES

The FCCC survey identified 10 cases where officials threatened to cancel, or not renew, journalists' visas, reportedly because

of the content of their articles. The FCCC commented in the report: "We are disturbed to find that the Chinese authorities are continuing to abuse 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 has displeased the government."

The FCCC report quoted one journalist as saying: "I had two interviews where I was questioned about my reporting on Xinjiang and told that the Foreign Ministry would need to be satisfied with my attitude in order to approve my press card. In the end they said they were and that my card would be approved." Another reporter, who was detained for several hours by the police in October 2014, was issued a press card valid for only six months, instead of the usual one-year period, in a clear signal that he was "on probation" and that the extension of his press card would depend on his behaviour.

In September 2015, Chris Buckley of *The New York Times* suddenly received his work visa, just before President Xi Jinping visited the United States. Buckley had applied for his working visa in Beijing more than two years before. Two other NYT journalists experienced similar delays in the past. Beijing bureau chief Philip Pan was unable to secure a journalist visa for more than three years and journalist Austin Ramzy was obliged to leave China at the end of January 2014 because the authorities had not processed the visa application which he had filed in June 2013.



## **"THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES ARE CONTINUING TO ABUSE THE PRESS CARD AND VISA RENEWAL PROCESS IN A POLITICAL MANNER, TREATING JOURNALISTIC ACCREDITATION AS A PRIVILEGE RATHER THAN A PROFESSIONAL RIGHT."**

On December 25, French journalist Ursula Gauthier, of French weekly news magazine *L'Obs*, was informed by authorities that her press card would not be renewed unless she made a public apology for an article published on November 18 about human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The authority also demanded she make a statement that she did not support terrorism and that the attacks in Urumqi and Kunming were terrorist attacks. Gauthier told the IFJ that the article merely cited some examples of human rights violations in Xinjiang. Since she refused to admit any wrongdoing or issue a public apology, Gauthier determined to leave China by the end of 2015. The spokesperson of Foreign Ministry insisted Gauthier had hurt Chinese feelings and said she was not fit to work in the country. Gauthier told the IFJ that the pro-government newspaper *Global Times*, which is owned by the People's Daily, published a commentary to criticize her, following which she received a number of death threats sent via her Facebook page.

Journalists using the J-2 visiting journalist visa continued to note problems during the application process. On eight occasions, journalists abandoned reporting trips because of extensive delays in obtaining their visas. One respondent said: "We applied for J-2 visas for two US-based journalists to film about synthetic drug manufacturing/use in China. Lined up expert interviews and submitted supporting documents, but was kicked around by local Waibans (foreign affairs offices) in Beijing and Shaanxi who kept demanding additional documentation. Trip cancelled after months-long delay."

### **VISA DELAYS TRAP PEOPLE IN CHINA**

According to the FCCC survey, more than half of the respondents received their annual press cards from the Foreign Ministry within 12 days, as stipulated by the ministry. Residency and entry/exit visas took longer: 95 per cent were able to renew their residence visas at the Police Bureau within 15 days, while 84.5 per cent had to wait 15 working days or more to receive a visa from the Entry/Exit police.

While they were waiting, the journalists had to hand in their passports for processing and were therefore unable to leave the country. One respondent said: "I lost the possibility to cover an important story in Myanmar, the election in Japan, the hostage-taking in Sydney and the Peshawar school shooting because I had no passport from November 26 to December 16."

In one extreme case, a journalist who experienced a medical emergency in 2014 was unable to get her passport back to go to Hong Kong for medical treatment due to bureaucratic procedures. Didi Kirsten Tatlow, a journalist with *The New York Times*, suffered a life-threatening illness and needed to travel urgently. By the time she received her passport, she was too ill to travel and had to spend two weeks in a Beijing hospital, where the medicine she needed was not available, before being able to get to Hong Kong and receive the medical care she needed.

### **PERSONAL GOODS CONFISCATED AT BORDER**

In a new trend, numerous journalists complained to the FCCC that their personal property was being checked or confiscated by Chinese customs officials when they were moving out of Beijing. The FCCC said that shipping companies discouraged journalists from sending any potentially "sensitive" books, maps, globes, DVDs or other printed materials. In some cases, the materials were confiscated by customs authorities at the Port of Tianjin, resulting in long delays in reporters' household goods arriving at their destination.

Contacts with various moving companies in Beijing revealed that anyone with a "J" visa is subject to particular scrutiny by customs inspectors. One reporter who shipped personal effects including notebooks suspected that all his notes might have been photocopied or photographed. A *Los Angeles Times* report on October 26 said that the confiscations suggested a growing sensitivity toward any printed or audiovisual material that bears even the slightest whiff of deviation from the party line on territorial issues. Ruth Kirchner, a German journalist who has left China, said one of her books, *The Opium War*, was confiscated by the customs officials, but she was required to sign a form saying she had "voluntarily" abandoned it. Kirchner said she had bought the book in Beijing, but it included a map of Taiwan.

Mark Stone, a correspondent for Sky News, had to part with a globe depicting Taiwan as an independent country. Christine Adelhardt, a reporter for the German broadcaster ARD, was forced to surrender two books seen as being critical of the Chinese government. The books were Chan Koonchung's sci-fi novel *The Fat Years* and Jonathan Fenby's *History of Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power*.



↓ On August 12, 173 people were killed following an explosion at the Port of Tianjin. Local and foreign journalists trying to cover protests following the Tianjin explosions were harassed and detained by police.



## CORRESPONDENTS HARASSED AT TIANJIN BLAST

A deadly explosion occurred in Tianjin in August. Several foreign journalists who attempted to report on the disaster were harassed by police officers and unidentified people. A European journalist and his local news assistant were harassed by unidentified people when they tried to report on the aftermath of the deaths of several firefighters who had been working on a contract basis. When they interviewed the victims' family members, they were followed and overheard by unidentified people. The people conducting the surveillance made themselves very visible, so that the family members decided to end the interview. The journalist eventually decided to take the interviewees back to the hotel where he was staying. When the journalist and news assistant got into their car and started heading back to the hotel, three unidentified people knocked on their windows and asked questions, including whether they were related to the firefighters. They refused to answer and left, but then found they were being followed by a minivan.

Seth Doane of CBS News was harassed when he was

reporting outside the hospital where many of the people injured in the explosion were taken. A local policeman used a soda bottle to cover the camera while another tried to physically drag Doane away.

Will Ripley of CNN and Andrew Jacobs of *The New York Times* suffered verbal abuse from unknown people outside the hospital. According to a video broadcast by CNN, unidentified people suddenly yelled at Ripley when he was doing a live report. A man shouted: "Don't let foreigners report on this!" Others approached Jacobs, who was on the phone with his editor. The man then turned his attention toward Ripley again. Others joined in and interfered with Ripley's filming, some shouting at him to delete his footage. A group of police on the scene prevented a colleague of Ripley's from attempting to come to his aid. It was reported that police near the crowd did not try to stop them from disrupting Ripley's work. CNN's anchor added a comment from the studio that it was not the first time that CNN correspondents in China had suffered some hindrance on the job, and put the blame on "security and officials". This statement



**A EUROPEAN JOURNALIST AND NEWS ASSISTANCE  
SUFFERED INTERFERENCE BY POLICE WHEN THEY WERE  
FILMING A PROTEST ORGANISED BY FAMILY MEMBERS  
OF MISSING FIREFIGHTERS AT THE TIANJIN BLAST SITE.**

he was surrounded by more than 10 uniformed police officers, who tried to take him to the police station. Eventually he was released after presenting his Taiwan identity card. However, a police officer confiscated the memory card from his camera. The reporter demanded it back but the officer replied: "Not unless you kneel down in front of me."

### **REPORTERS THREATENED, ASSAULTED**

A television crew from Al Jazeera was harassed, threatened and assaulted by members of a SWAT team as it covered a large protest in Linshui County, Guang'an City, Sichuan, on May 18. Riot police attempted to stop the protest on its second day when the crew were attacked. Adrian Brown, an Al Jazeera journalist, said four men armed with assault rifles and shotguns came running towards them, shouting orders and demanding they lie down on the ground. An officer forced his colleague Ling Pei to lie face down on the ground, while another colleague, Paul Sutton, was struck on the back and his camera and tripod were confiscated. The team fled the protest following the police attack. The camera was later returned, but all footage from the memory card was gone.

Journalists from CNN and other media were harassed several times by a group of people as they attempted to report on the "Dog Meat Festival" in Yulin, Guangxi, on June 22. According to reports, they were threatened, their cameras were blocked, and equipment was damaged while they were trying to take pictures. A journalist from CNN was also harassed and received similar threats. A butcher held his knife towards the cameraman while he was chopping a dead dog. The IFJ was told that police were around the market, but throughout the incident, no government agents or security personnel attempted to assist the journalists.

Asia correspondent for the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE, Mika Makelainen, and his assistant were harassed by police when they were trying to report on a demonstration held by disappointed investors in Beijing on October 23. When Makelainen and his assistant arrived, there were many police officers separating media and protestors. When they started filming, a police officer suddenly asked them to show a "government permit" before they interviewed protestors. At the same time, the police officers used their hands to block the camera lens and said they had the power to delete their footage if the

was immediately criticised by state-owned news agency Xinhua. It published a comment piece with the heading "Stop inaccurate reporting about China". Xinhua accused CNN of putting on "a pair of coloured glasses", implying it had formed a prejudice against China. CNN later published a correction via its twitter account, saying that its correspondent was interrupted in a live report by "upset friends and relatives of victims killed and injured in the China blasts".

A European journalist and news assistant suffered interference by police when they were filming a protest organized by family members of missing firefighters at the Tianjin blast site. The journalist told the FCCC that plainclothes and uniformed police locked them up in a room where press conferences were held at the hotel in Tianjin. They said police prevented them from speaking to firefighters' families, who were demanding to speak with journalists. The journalist demanded to go to the bathroom, but was refused permission by the police.

A journalist with Taiwan's Eastern Multimedia Group took pictures of the site of the explosion at close range. Suddenly,



filming continued. Makelainen was also dragged away when he tried to film a protestor who was sitting on the ground. The rough handling caused a small bruise on his left arm which lasted for a week.

## SURVEILLANCE RESTRICTS MOVEMENT

A European TV crew drove five activists from an NGO to report on environmental issues at Tangshan in Hebei on January 29, 2014. When they were driving on the G1 highway, they were followed by at least two cars. They stopped at a petrol station and the two suspect cars pulled over as well. At least one of the four men in the cars attempted to cover his face with a red hoodie. When they interviewed their NGO contacts behind the Guofong Steel plant, two unidentified men approached and spoke loudly in their mobile phone. They said in Chinese: “They are by the river, at the back of the plant. We have found them.” The journalists and activists decided to go to a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant in Tangshan town for lunch. When they entered the restaurant, they noticed they were being followed by at least six undercover agents. The plainclothes officers came quite close and took several pictures with their mobile phones of the group in a fairly obvious fashion. When they queued up for food, one of the unidentified people stood behind them and eavesdropped on their conversations. He then stepped away and took several pictures of them with his mobile phone.

Matt Sheehan of *Huffington Post* was placed under heavy surveillance by police in March, and intimidated by several members of the village committee of Tianmu Village, near Tianjin, where people were holding an anti-graft protest against the secretary of the village. When Sheehan walked out the train station in Tianjin, he noticed that a plainclothes officer was trying to take his picture discreetly with his cell phone. He then found he was being followed by four men. After changing direction several times and going back into the station, he eventually took a taxi to Tianmu Village. When he alighted, he was immediately surrounded by several men who grabbed his jacket and pushed him backwards. During the scuffles, one of the men claimed he was a member of the village committee but refused to give his name and identification. When Sheehan regained his freedom, and began to take pictures with some assistance from the local protestors, a policeman warned him not to “cause any disturbance”. A uniformed police officer then insisted Sheehan go with him to a police station so that authorities could “verify his press accreditation”. In the police station, policemen noted down all the information from his passport and accreditation. When he asked to go back to the village, police insisted on taking him directly to the train station, on the grounds that it was “not in my interest” and was “too dangerous to go back to the protest”.

Simon Denyer, a journalist at *The Washington Post*, was prevented from interviewing traders when he was reporting in a new Horgos free trade zone, on the border of China and Kazakhstan, in September. Denyer and his colleagues were held for two hours. When they left the trade zone, they were taken away in a police car and their passports and press cards were repeatedly checked. Another journalist, John Sudworth of the BBC, and his crew members were detained by officials in

Yarkand County, Kashgar, after they interviewed local people in Yarkand on September 15. In addition, they were escorted by police. When one of the police officers pushed away the crowd, the journalists turned the camera on him. The officer lunged in fury and demanded that the crew delete the footage.

## FOREIGNERS DEPORTED

Twenty foreigners were deported from China on July 19, allegedly for “watching video clips that advocate terrorism and religious extremism” when they were in a hotel in Erdos City, in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The foreigners came from the UK, South Africa and India and the trip had been organised by several groups. South Africa-based charity Gift of the Givers told the BBC: “No reasons were given for the arrest. Cell phones were confiscated; there was no access to the embassies or to their families. The Chinese, now trying to find reasons for the detention, suggested that some members were linked to a terror group, to a banned organisation, to watching propaganda videos in their hotel room.” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not release the relevant information until some colleagues of members of the group spoke about it to journalists who were working outside China.

## FAREWELL SEEN AS “ANTI-GOVERNMENT EVENT”

Christine Adelhardt of ARD German TV was due to leave China in May, after being stationed in Beijing for five years. Before she left, she organized a farewell party to introduce her successor, and invited officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German ambassador and others. A day before the reception, police threatened the manager of the venue, saying the party would be “an anti-government-event”. Police told two of Adelhardt’s guests not to participate in the reception, and stationed officers outside their apartments to make sure they were unable to leave their homes. Two other guests never received their invitation cards, although their addresses were correct.

## PEN AMERICA ISSUES TRANSLATIONS GUIDE

PEN America issued a set of guidelines for writers on how to prevent censorship occurring when books are translated for Chinese publishers. The guidelines grew out of the PEN America report *Censorship and Conscience: Foreign Authors and the Challenge of Chinese Censorship*, which revealed that many Western authors, agents, and publishers have not paid close attention to what happens to their books when they are published in China. Many authors are not even aware that the books have been censored. The new guidelines advise authors and agents on how to negotiate proposed cuts or changes with Chinese publishers, and how to vet the final translation to identify any unauthorized changes.

PEN said that 12 US publishers had signed the PEN America pledge to monitor and address incidents of censorship. By signing the pledge, publishers commit to assessing whether any book for which the publisher controls Chinese publication rights includes political or historical content known to be censored in China. They also promise to work with authors and trusted Chinese editors to minimize excisions and changes in the translation.



**POLICE OFFICERS USED THEIR HANDS  
TO BLOCK THE CAMERA LENS AND SAID  
THEY HAD THE POWER TO DELETE THEIR  
FOOTAGE IF THE FILMING CONTINUED.**

↑ Police order foreign journalists to leave the street opposite the Beijing No.3 Intermediate People's Court where veteran journalist Gao Yu was on trial. Police harassment, detention and interference with coverage is a significant issue for foreign journalists in China.



→ A man uses a mobile phone and a microphone to report from the explosion site in Binhai new district in Tianjin, China on August 13, 2015. The death toll from two huge explosions in the industrial area in the northeastern Chinese port of Tianjin was reported to be at least 173. Citizen reporting of sensitive topics like the Tianjin explosion was targeted by authorities cracking down on the distribution of “false” news.





**ALTHOUGH CHINA HAS 642 MILLION INTERNET USERS,  
THEY MUST EMPLOY A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TACTICS,  
SUCH AS INSTALLING VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORKS (VPN),  
TO GET AROUND THE FIREWALL.**





↓ Critics say freedom of expression online will be severely limited by China's proposed cyber security bill.

## CHAPTER 3: ONLINE JOURNALISM

Online media has been a significant target for monitoring since Xi Jinping became the President of China, with cyber space becoming enmeshed with state security. Under national security law, cyber space is defined as one of the areas to be “protected”. In turn, the draft Cyber Security Law, if passed, will strip individuals of their right to privacy by making it a punishable offence to use encryption or anonymity in the online world.

### ONLINE RIGHTS THREATENED

On July 6, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress released the draft Cyber Security Law for a month of public consultation. The IFJ disagreed with the proposed legislation in its submission to the National People's Congress. The IFJ noted that several sections of the draft were subject to argument because they clearly violated universal human rights, including the right to free speech and a free press. The proposed law will deprive people of their right to use encryption to protect their privacy. As well, they will be punished if they express an opinion under the cover of anonymity.

The IFJ and many international organizations are concerned that the media will face serious challenges under the proposed law, as it will impede the development of a free press. The United Nations special rapporteur on freedom of expression, David Kaye, recognised encryption and anonymity as leading techniques for online security in his annual report to the UN

Human Rights Council in May (A/HRC/29/32). The annual report said encryption and anonymity enable people to exercise their rights to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to privacy in the digital age. It urged all countries to ensure that people are free to protect the privacy of digital communications by using strong encryption and anonymity tools.

The authorities continued to use administrative regulations, such as the usual tactic of “anti-pornography campaign”, to censor materials on the internet. On February 4, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) issued a 10-clause regulation, stipulating that all online users must use their real names to register. This extends the reach of the real-name registration requirements that China has imposed on social media and spontaneous communication tools such as WeChat for many years. The CAC also signed an agreement with service providers that no information should violate the constitution, subvert state power or damage the country's reputation. If this occurred, the ISPs would be subject to punishment by relevant laws. The regulation also allows service providers to delete and suspend users' accounts when the content violates the regulations.

### INTERNET CENSORSHIP ENTRENCHED

Another administrative department, the State Council Information Office, used a different method to achieve the goal of censorship. The office established a service where members of the public can lodge complaints against any internet content. On April 10, the office threatened to shut down online news



↓ Virtual private networks used to get around the “Great Fire Wall” have become a new target for authorities.

## THE AUTHORITIES CONTINUED TO USE ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS, SUCH AS THE USUAL TACTIC OF “ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY CAMPAIGN”, TO CENSOR MATERIALS ON THE INTERNET.

service and US-listed company *Sina* on the grounds that the complaints office had received 6038 complaints against *Sina* since the beginning of 2015. The office claimed that *Sina* “distorted facts, violated public morality and posted vulgar information”. The State Council Information Office said that *Sina* had violated the Regulation on Internet Information Service of China and the Administration of Internet News Information Services Provisions. However, it did not specify which regulations and provisions had been violated or which news reports had been the subject of the complaints. On April 28, the internet regulator announced a new system that demands website administrators must remove “illegal content” within a reasonable time after they receive a direction from the office. The regulator said that if the administrators failed to do so, they would be punished with penalties including fines and the cancellation of their internet license.

### SURVEILLANCE RESTRICTS DISCUSSION

The Public Security Bureau and the State Information Internet Office issued a number of restrictive orders in May aimed at controlling discussion of sensitive issues on the internet. The Public Security Bureau said the new wave of policies would focus on four areas. These included political rumours, for example defamatory attacks aimed at senior leaders such as President Xi Jinping and former Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong, and any attacks on the Communist Party’s propaganda strategy, the Communist system or the

party’s ideology. The State Information Internet Office said all “harmful” information, including publications from Hong Kong and Taiwan, would be blocked for the whole of 2015.

The Police Bureau announced on August 4 that it would establish “internet police stations” for major websites and internet companies as part of the nation’s efforts to strengthen online security. According to reports by state-owned news agency Xinhua, companies will be responsible for collecting and reporting information on suspected illegal activities and, in turn, police will help companies to improve their security management.

The Chinese Communist Youth League recruited students as online monitors across the nation. According to a report by Hong Kong-based *Apple Daily*, the Youth League successfully recruited more than 10 million students from schools, but the authorities did not confirm the report.

### MEDIA PROMOTES GOVERNMENT LINE

In May, 31 online media outlets formed an alliance and signed a “local online media cooperation agreement” in which they promised to promote the core values of the Central Government. In addition, the media promised to take up the role of guiding public opinion. According to a report in online media outlet *Eastern*, the 31 media outlets formed the alliance because they wanted to disseminate positive information to society in order to respond to the demands of the Central authorities.

In another initiative to control use of the internet, the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of



**ON MAY 28, IT WAS REPORTED THAT A LITTLE KNOWN CHINESE ARTIST, DAI JIANYONG, WAS DETAINED BY SHANGHAI POLICE FOR THREE DAYS AFTER HE POSTED DEPICTIONS OF CONTORTED FACES OF THE LEADER XI JINPING ONLINE.**

the Communist Party organized various types of cyberspace study courses. The department's function is to manage the Party's relations with the non-Party elite, including individuals and organizations holding social, commercial, or academic influence, or who represent important interest groups, both inside and outside China. Although no information was made available about the content of the courses, many senior managers from online media outlets or enterprises attended it.

### **VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORKS BLOCKED**

China's "Great Fire Wall", its network of internet controls, is notorious. Although China has 642 million internet users, they must employ a number of different tactics, such as installing Virtual Private Networks (VPN), to get around the firewall. On January 25, three VPN providers, Astrill, Strong VPN and Golden Frog, reported that their services had been blocked by the "Great Fire Wall". On the same day, the State Council Information Office issued an order to all online media that they must not quote from reports about "China starting to block foreign VPN services".

On January 27, Wen Ku, a director with China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said: "As the internet develops, and new circumstances arise, we will take new regulatory measures to keep up." He refused to directly answer questions about the blocking of VPN services.

Evidence emerged for the first time to support accusations that the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) had orchestrated a cyber attack. International cyber-monitoring organisation GreatFire.org reported that between March 17 and March 31, its website and partner website GitHub came

under a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack. Before the attack, GitHub offered a free download of a Virtual Private Network (VPN) service. During the attack, the website received 2.6 billion visit requests an hour, which is 2,500 times more than normal levels. GreatFire.org said: "Based on the technical forensic evidence provided and the detailed research that was conducted on the GitHub attack, we can now confidently conclude that the CAC is responsible for both of these attacks. Based on reports we've received, we believe the intent of this attack is to convince us to remove a specific class of content. We believe that the content refers to GreatFire.org's GitHub page." The CAC denied the allegation.

On August 18, more VPN providers, including Red Apricot, announced that they had come under a huge cyber-attack, which had stopped them from accepting new memberships. Following the attack, a VPN programmer, known as Shadowsocks, said that he had been told by police that he had to stop providing information to Github, and delete all online information by August 20. Many internet users said that even they paid for a VPN, they could not use it throughout the entire year of 2015.

### **EMAIL ACCOUNTS TARGETED IN CYBER ATTACKS**

Another long-term problem was the difficulties many users encountered in trying to access overseas email accounts. On January 17, Greatfire.org reported that Microsoft's email system, Outlook, was subjected to a "man in the middle" (MITM) attack, whereby an attacker can both monitor and alter or inject messages into a communication channel. The attack lasted for about one day. Greatfire.org reported MITM attacks were also



AFP / Fred Dufour

↑ Supporters of human rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang clashed with police outside his trial in Beijing in December 2015. Zhiqiang was indicted for 'inciting ethnic hatred' and 'causing a disturbance and provoking trouble'.

launched against Google, Yahoo and Apple in China.

The Cyberspace Administration of China and its director, Lu Wei, were suspected of orchestrating the attack or willingly allowing it to happen. The CAC rejected the allegation on January 22. Spokesman Jiang Jun said it was "unsupported speculation, a pure slanderous act by overseas anti-China forces". He also described Greatfire.org as being run by "foreign anti-China organizations", but did not provide any evidence to support his claim. Since December 26, 2014, Google's mail service Gmail has been partially blocked and gmail users are still unable to easily access their accounts in China.

## INDIVIDUALS PUNISHED FOR ONLINE OPINIONS

Several prominent and outspoken Chinese bloggers were charged and punished in May after expressing their opinions online. On May 15, human rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang was indicted for "inciting ethnic hatred" and "causing a disturbance and provoking trouble" after being detained for more than a year. The indictment relates to messages Pu posted on Sina Weibo that were considered critical of government policy, especially in Xinjiang. Pu was originally facing two more charges, including "inciting separatism" and "illegally obtaining personal information", but these were subsequently dropped by the authorities. His trial began in Beijing on December 14. Protests in front of the courthouse were shut down by police and at least two reporters, *The Sydney Morning Herald's* Philip Wen and the BBC's John Sudworth, were prevented from reporting. On December 22, Pu was sentenced to three years on a suspended sentence. Only state media was allowed in the court room during the sentencing.

On May 20, Wu Gan, nicknamed "super butcher", was punished with 10 days of administrative detention after he protested in front of Jiangxi's high court building on May 18. Wu's detention sparked a public outcry. China Central Television reported the case twice in detail but its reports were accused of bias, of infringing Wu's privacy and of containing reporting inaccuracies.

On May 28, it was reported that a little known Chinese artist, Dai Jianyong, was detained by Shanghai police for three days after he posted depictions of contorted faces of the leader Xi Jinping online. He had previously created similar images of Hu Jintao, former President of China.

The longest known sentence for someone accused of "spreading rumours" or "disseminating false information" was issued in 2015. On July 15, IT technician Wang Yibo, was sentenced to 12 years in jail. Yibo was found guilty of sabotaging the computer system of the China Broadcasting Corporation in Wenzhou and making false accusations. According to the judgement, after sabotaging the computer system, he broadcast subversive messages. The court said that 159,800 households received the message, but no further information was published by other mainland media.

## ELITE SNARED IN TAX-EVASION REVELATIONS

On February 8, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), citing thousands of leaked documents, revealed how global banking giant HSBC used the secretive Swiss banking system to conceal the identities of account holders in order to help depositors avoid paying taxes in their home countries. Clients included former and



↓ A woman walks past the China Central Television Building in Beijing on a smoggy December day. Though initially praised by the government, Chai Jing's air pollution documentary *Under the Dome* was subjected to censorship within a week of release.



AFP / Goh Chai Hin

current politicians, tycoons, lawyers, judges, and celebrities from Britain, Russia, China and Hong Kong, to name just a few. According to Hong Kong media and overseas media, the clients on the list included former Premier of China Li Peng's only daughter Li Xiaolin; the former CEO of the listed company China Power International Development; Russian billionaire Gennady Nikolayevich Timchenko; Egypt's former president, Hosni Mubarak; Tunisia's former president Ben Ali; and Syria's exiled former ruler, Bashar al-Assad.

On February 9, the Cyberspace Administration Office and the Central Propaganda Department ordered all media to delete any information about the Minister of the Education Bureau, Yuan Guiren, as well as Zhu Jidong, a scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. On January 29, Guiren urged that education institutions should exert tighter control over the use of imported textbooks "that spread Western values". He went on to say that classrooms should be cleared of "defaming the rule of the Communist Party, smearing socialism or violating the constitution and laws". Zhu Jidong, a scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, known as a think tank of the authorities, urged punishment for those who opposed Yuan's decision.

## DOCUMENTARY REMOVED FROM WEB

On February 28, the documentary *Under the Dome*, which deals with China's air pollution problem, was released. Within its first 24 hours online, the documentary attracted over 155 million views. The documentary was made by Chai Jing, a former anchor with state-owned broadcaster China Central Television. On March 3, the Beijing Internet Management Office and Shanghai Propaganda Department issued an order demanding that all media remove the documentary from their websites immediately. The authorities demanded that website administrators monitor all media and delete any messages or commentaries that attacked or cast doubt on the government. The Management Office also demanded that the order be kept secret.

## CYBER AUTHORITIES "CLEAN UP" THE WEB

The Cyberspace Administrative Office and the Central Propaganda Department conducted their usual "clean up" of "sensitive topics" in the media, starting in the lead-up to the meeting of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and National Congress in Beijing on March 5.



## ON JANUARY 18, STATE-OWNED NEWS AGENCY XINHUA REPORTED THAT 2,200 WEBSITES WERE FORCED TO SHUT DOWN AND AN ADDITIONAL 300 VIDEO CHANNELS WERE FORCED OFFLINE.

On January 18, state-owned news agency Xinhua reported that 2,200 websites were forced to shut down and an additional 300 video channels were forced offline. On social platforms such as WeChat, at least 20 million messages were deleted. Online businesses and media also voluntarily deleted more than one billion “harmful” messages. The authorities did not provide statements on why this occurred.

According to *China Digital Times*, the State Council Information Office demanded that all media outlets cease independent reporting, and stop republishing non-mainland news stories and commentaries until after official versions of the stories are published by state-owned media.

On March 4, the Cyberspace Administrative Office announced that 32 websites had been shut down because they had not followed relevant regulations, disseminated negative information and fabricated fake news. No evidence was given to prove the allegations.

In April, the State Internet Information Office announced new guidelines, entitled “Provisions on the Interview of Entities Providing Internet News Information Services”, that would come into effect in June. All bureaus across China had strong criticisms of the guidelines, but many online outlets were either told to rectify the information, or to abide by the guidelines or be shut down.

On June 3 and July 4, the State Internet Information Office regional bureau in Hunan announced that 15 websites would be forced to shut down because they had illegally provided news that violated the “Administration of Internet News Information Services Provisions”.

On June 9, the State Internet Information Office’s website announced that over 200,000 online messages were deleted in line with the “Compete Against Online Extortion and Paid Post Deletions” campaign that began earlier in 2015. Under the campaign, 50 websites were forced to shut down.

On July 1, a Hong Kong-based Christian website, *International Tin Lang Ministry*, was hacked after the Chief

Executive, Philip Woo, received a complaint notice from the State Administration for Religious Affairs in Shenzhen. The notice alleged that the website had violated several laws by disseminating information to mainland members preparing to participate in a Hong Kong leadership training.

On July 2, 28 websites were told to amend their content after they were ordered to attend a meeting with the regional State Internet Information Office (SIIO). The meeting was called under the guise of discussing the “Provisions on the Interview of Entities Providing Internet News Information Services” after the SIIO said it wanted to make the websites legal.

On August 5, the State Internet Information Centre ordered *Phoenix New Media*, a new media company, to amend their website after the Centre had received over 1,300 complaints regarding harmful messages since January 2015. The Centre said that 16 per cent of the complaints involved politically harmful messages and 38 per cent involved pornography. The Centre did not explicitly state how the website had violated regulations.

On August 26, Al Jazeera announced that its *Sina* micro blog account had suddenly been suspended by *Sina*. Al Jazeera admitted that they were voluntarily self-censoring the content on their account to ensure they met China’s regulations.

On October 19, Chinese communist party-owned newspaper *People’s Daily* reported that authorities had confiscated 518,000 publications on the ground that they included harmful or illegal information. Over 1 million “harmful” messages were removed from the internet and 24,000 websites were shut down. On October 22, the Cyber Administration Office announced that the office received over 3 million complaints relating to internet content in September, which was an increase of 34.4 per cent from August. Among those cases, over 30 per cent of complaints related to pornographic material, while 3.2 per cent related to violent information.



The SCMP logo, consisting of the letters "SCMP" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, enclosed within a rounded rectangular border.

The words "South China Morning Post" in a large, white, serif font, partially visible on a red background.

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The words "South China Morning Post" in a large, white, serif font, partially visible on a red background.

**ON DECEMBER 11, 2015, ALIBABA GROUP ANNOUNCED  
IT PAID 20.5 BILLION HONG KONG DOLLAR (US\$266 MILLION)  
TO BUY THE SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST GROUP.**

The words "South China Morning Post" in a large, white, serif font, partially visible on a red background.



# China Morning Post

## China Morning Post

← In December 2015, Alibaba Group bought the South China Morning Post Group.

## Mo g Post





↓ Chief Executive of Hong Kong Leung Chun-Ying addresses the media. Accountability of the government of Hong Kong declined in 2015, particularly through delayed announcements and a failure to inform the media of events.

AFP / Philippe Lopez

## CHAPTER 4: JOURNALISTS IN HONG KONG AND MACAU

The challenges to press freedom in Hong Kong increased in 2015, with the IFJ noting that more than 30 journalists were assaulted, harassed, intimidated and charged during the 79 days of the Occupy Movement from September to December 2014. Unfortunately, the trend continues in 2015. In late 2015, five publishing workers were reported missing in Thailand, Shenzhen and Hong Kong. The Government of China did not respond to local and international appeals. On January 18, the public security bureau of Guangdong province admitted that the missing person Lee Bo was on the Mainland, and that he had disappeared from Hong Kong, there has been strong outcry from the Hong Kong people, with many concerned about their personal safety and freedom of speech. Incidentally, the press freedom index ranking of Hong Kong declined from 61 to 70, according to Reporters Without Borders press freedom index 2015. IFJ affiliate the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) made the same comment in its annual report on July 12, 2015. However the report also highlighted there was a

growing trend of self-censorship within Hong Kong's media. The report revealed that *Ming Pao Newspaper*, *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, *South China Morning Post* and *Hong Kong Television Broadcasting* have been practising self-censorship.

### PRESS FREEDOM CONTINUES DOWNWARD TREND

Press freedom in Hong Kong declined in 2015, even though the controversial Occupy Movement had come to an end. The HKJA press freedom index, released in March 2015, revealed that perceptions of press freedom fell 0.6 points to 48.8 in the view of the general public and a more significant 3.1 points to 38.9 in the view of journalists. The index was based on a survey of both the general public and working journalists which drew 537 responses. Journalist respondents said they faced difficulties in obtaining the information they needed for reporting, and that government manipulation of the media in reporting news had become very common. HKJA chairperson Sham Yee-Lan described the result as worrying.



↓ The Hong Kong Journalists Association chairperson, Sham Yee-Lan said censorship and declining government accountability pushed press freedom on a downward trend in 2015.

AFP / Anthony Wallace

## THE MOST WORRYING THING FOR JOURNALISTS TO DO WAS TO CRITICISE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN CHINA, FOLLOWED BY CRITICISING BUSINESS TYCOONS AND THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT.

The report said the number of violent incidents towards journalists and cases of self-censorship had contributed to the decline of the index in 2014. A total of 51 per cent of respondents from the general public believed that press freedom had worsened, while 35 per cent believed there had been no change. However, the figures for journalist respondents were much more worrying. A total of 90 per cent believed that press freedom had worsened, including 48 per cent who thought it had suffered a substantial setback. Just 1 per cent believed that press freedom had improved in the year. Journalists were more concerned than the general public about self-censorship. The two groups agreed that the most worrying thing for journalists to do was to criticise the Central Government in China, followed by criticising business tycoons and the Hong Kong government.

A report by *Stand News*, an online media outlet, in March revealed several common methods of self-censorship. These included the supervisor giving unclear instructions, and using

“professional and technical reasons” as an excuse to make a news judgments and reassign resources.

The press freedom survey also revealed that the general public and journalists believed that diversity and the effectiveness of the media as a watchdog had declined. There was no improvement in the respondents’ opinions on whether existing laws were sufficient to allow journalists to obtain the information they needed for reporting.

The survey asked respondents to rate the truthfulness of government officials on a scale of 10 to 0, with 10 meaning that officials were very truthful and 0 meaning they absolutely avoided inquiries. The survey found that on this scale, the accountability of the Hong Kong government, including the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, declined from 3.1 to 2.6. A total of 83 per cent of the journalist respondents gave the government scores of 4 or below. Seventy-one per cent agreed with the statement that the Hong Kong government was one of the sources of the suppression of press freedom. Only 6 per cent disagreed.



## IN LATE 2015 A NUMBER OF HONG KONG JOURNALISTS AND PUBLISHING WORKERS WERE PROSECUTED OR DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE ON THE MAINLAND.

### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY DECLINES

The Hong Kong Government's accountability clearly declined on very important issues. On April 22, Hong Kong's chief executive, Leung Chun-Ying, and other politicians, went to the community to promote Hong Kong's actions on political reform following the announcement of the plan to the Legislative Council. However, the government failed to inform the media of this event, raising questions about the government's intentions and immediately drawing strong criticism.

On November 25, the Highways Department said there would be a delay of a year in the construction of the local portion of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, which was originally planned for completion in 2016. However, this important announcement was made in a Chinese-language statement at 10.59pm on November 25 and in English at about 3.30am on November 26. Yau Shing-Mu, the undersecretary of the Transport and Housing Bureau, which monitors the Highways Department, defended the late announcement, saying the Bureau became aware of "speculation" about the project late in the evening of November 25, so it decided to issue the statement to clarify the matter. However, this did not ease the concerns of the HKJA and some legislators.

The HKJA cited several other cases of delayed announcements, including the salary increases awarded to all top management, including the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, which was announced at 11pm on January 16, 2015, just a few days before the Chinese New Year holidays. The HKJA threatened to complain to the Office of the Ombudsman of Hong Kong in order to ensure the accountability of Hong Kong Government would not be affected by bureaucratic habits.

### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION SUFFERS SETBACKS

The HKJA repeated its call for the government to enact freedom of information legislation to ensure the public and journalists can exercise their right of access to information held by the government and public bodies. The HKJA chairperson, Sham Yee-Lan, pointed out that if the Hong Kong government truly respects press freedom, such legislation is an absolute necessity. She also urged citizens to fight together with the HKJA to defend press freedom and other core values cherished by Hong Kong people.

On July 28, the Commissioner of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data, Allen Chiang, suggested in an official press conference that the Hong Kong Government should tighten restrictions on searches for public information in the 10 most commonly used public

registers. Chiang said that a recent survey which highlighted the most commonly searched registers showed that most registers do not have safeguards to protect personal data being misused. The only two registers with safeguards were the electoral registry and the vehicle registry. Chiang said that restrictions and safeguards were needed to prevent the "malicious use" of personal data and information online as society entered the "big data" era. The HKJA strongly disagrees with the statements made by Chiang, and argues that such statements contradict Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### PROSECUTIONS & DISAPPEARANCES

Individual journalists were targeted in several worrying cases. One involved an unwitting violation of a little-known Thai law. The others were more sinister, with Hong Kong journalists and publishing workers being prosecuted or disappeared on the Mainland.

On August 23, Anthony Hok-Chun Kwan, a journalist with Initium Media, was arrested at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport. Kwan was working in Thailand following the bombing of the Erawan Shrine. He was arrested as he was about to board a flight back to Hong Kong for carrying a bullet-proof vest, which is classified as an illegal weapon under Thai law. Thailand's Arms Control Act (1987), prohibits the possession of military equipment without a license. The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand has been urging the government to amend the laws for a number of years. Following his arrest, Kwan was brought before a civilian court and given bail. His employer, Initium Media, said that the vest was theirs and that they had ordered Kwan take the vest with him to Thailand. Both Kwan and Initium Media said they were not aware they had broken Thai laws. Even though they said they were ignorant of the relevant laws and asked for pardon, the Government of Thailand formally charged Kwan with illegal possession of military equipment on October 12. IFJ Asia Pacific, Initium Media and HKJA protested to the government of Thailand, and also asked the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong and the Security Bureau of Hong Kong to persuade Thai Government to drop the case. Their efforts were unsuccessful. Kwan is currently on bail in Hong Kong and the case will go to trial on April 5, 2016.

On November 5, Wang Jianmin, publisher of two Chinese-language magazines in Hong Kong, *New-Way Monthly* and *Multiple Face*, and Guo Zhongxiao, a journalist for the magazines, pleaded guilty to "operating an illegal publication"



→ Protestors hold up missing person notices of Mighty Current publisher of books critical of China as they walk towards China's Liaison Office in Hong Kong on January 3, 2016.



in Mainland China. Wang and Guo were detained by police in the southern city of Shenzhen on May 30, 2014. Their families have been denied permission to visit them since then. The prosecution accused Wang and Guo of earning more than HK\$7 million from the publications. Their defense lawyer argued unsuccessfully that the court had no jurisdiction because the two magazines were registered and operated in Hong Kong. The two magazines have touched on some sensitive issues, such as internal conflict in the Communist Party.

According to overseas media reports, Gui Minhai, owner of Causeway Bay Bookstore and publisher Mighty Current Media Company Ltd, was taken away by a Chinese-speaking person from his holiday home in Thailand on October 17. According to reports, Gui, a Swedish citizen, wrote to his wife in Germany on October 23. In the letter, he claimed he was staying with some friends and would fly back to Hong Kong by the end of October. However Gui did not go back to Hong Kong and there has been no sign of him from that day onwards. Gui has published a number of gossip books about the top management of Communist Party, but was not involved in any pro-democracy campaigns.

As well as Gui Minhai, Three more people connected with Mighty Current Media Company Ltd and Causeway Bay Bookstore disappeared on October 24. Two of them were living

in Shenzhen in mainland China and the third was making a visit to the mainland city. They are believed to have been detained in Shenzhen. They were Lui Bo, the general manager and shareholder of Mighty Current Media Company Ltd; Li Rongji, the store manager of Causeway Bay Bookstore; and Zhang Zhiping, a staff member of Mighty Current Media Company Ltd. Their families, the Hong Kong Government, the Thai Government and the Mainland Government have not revealed any information about their whereabouts or wellbeing. On December 30, Lee Bo, a shareholder of Mighty Current Media Company Ltd, disappeared in Hong Kong as he was preparing over a dozen political books for a buyer. According to Lee Bo's wife, Choi Ka Ping, on the same day she received a call from Lee claiming "I can't come back for a while, I have to assist the investigation" and "don't make a fuss of this case". Choi eventually lodged a report to Hong Kong Police Department and ask for help. Choi said that Lee was using a Shenzhen cell phone number to call her and spoke Mandarin which he seldom did in their daily life.

The Hong Kong public immediately demanded answers from the Hong Kong Government and Police, however no responses were given. On January 4, 2016, Lee Bo's wife suddenly withdrew her request for police assistance, saying she had received a faxed letter from Lee which claimed that Lee "chose my own way back



Instagram / Anthony Kwan

↑ Anthony Kwan, a journalist with Hong Kong's Initium Media, was arrested in Thailand in August 2015 for carrying bulletproof vest. Despite a group effort to persuade the government to drop the case, Kwan goes to trial April 2016.

to Mainland”, although Lee’s travel documents remain at their house in Hong Kong. Lee remains missing.

Since Lee’s disappearance, the *Global Times*, the sister newspaper of pro-Government newspaper, the *People’s Daily*, has published a series of editorials criticizing the reactions of the Hong Kong people, particularly of linking the case to the ‘one country, two systems’. The January 6 editorial said: “A powerful unit normally can get rid of law to make an investigated target assist the investigation in order to achieve the goal and would not cross the bottom line” and “don’t imagine ‘Two systems’ is above ‘One Country’”, which is the Communist Party’s party line.

According to IFJ research, the circumstances surrounding Lee’s disappearance were suspicious. On one occasion, a shareholder offered a favorable offer to help the bookstore, but on the condition that it stops selling political and sensitive books. Lee told a friend that he believed a Communist Party member was behind the offer. Before Lee disappeared, a retired member of the military administrative region of Guangzhou visited the bookstore on three occasions and bought a number of sensitive books.

According to Chinese expert Ching Chong, (DELETE FIRST COMMA) the hand of the Mainland Government has already extended to Hong Kong, in particular after the enactment of the National Security Law. Ching said since Xi Jinping became the President of .... etc ... has been shrinking. However, President Xi did not take any explicit action in Hong Kong until the enactment of the National Security

Law in July 2015. “Hong Kong is the only place within the territory of China can enjoy the freedom of speech therefore a lot of different information can be published in Hong Kong however this situation will change in the future.”

On January 10, 2016, just before a demonstration was organized by Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movement of China, *Sing Tao Newspaper*, the owner of which is a National Committee Member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, published an exclusive report, which claimed that a video and a letter which it claimed was written by Lee Bo were sent to his wife. In the letter, Lee repeatedly said he voluntarily chose to go back to China and asked people not to participate in the demonstration. Lee’s wife in the report said that she hoped people would respect her husband’s decision and people should not join the rally. Though the news report was republished by the rest of the media, about 6,000 people still joined the demonstration and marched from the Hong Kong Government headquarters to the Chinese Liaison Office, an agency of the Central Government of China in Hong Kong. They demanded an explanation from the Central Government about whether there is any law enforcement, who had exercised their duties in Hong Kong and demanded the release of the five publishing employees. Since the disappearance, only a few newspapers have reported the case extensively. The remaining media, including the English-language media, have given minimal space to the story.



## ATV GOES OFF AIR

Troubled Hong Kong Asia Television (ATV) will cease broadcasting after losing its licence following a series of financial problems. The free-to-air broadcaster was charged on December 31, 2014, by the Hong Kong Labour Department with failing to pay salaries on time to around 700 staff between July and September. The Hong Kong Government did not exercise its power to terminate ATV's operations on the basis of this breach of its licensee contract. However, on April 1, 2015, the Executive Council of Hong Kong with the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Leung Chun-Ying, suddenly announced that ATV's broadcasting license would not be renewed and gave it 12 months' notice to cease operations. The decision stated that ATV did not give the Executive Council a detailed proposal for restructuring. As a result, the cash-strapped ATV will become the first Hong Kong television station not to renew its license. It will cease broadcasting in April 2016.

In 2011, ATV mistakenly reported the death of former Chinese President, Jiang Zemin. An investigation by the Communications Authority of Hong Kong found that ATV's major shareholder, Wang Zheng, who is a Mainland businessman, had breached broadcasting regulations by heavily interfering with internal management. In recent years, ATV has faced multiple legal issues including arrears of wages and licence fees. ATV eventually rectified the arrears, but it has only been in recent months that management admitted the station's financial challenges. A number of pro-democracy legislators and scholars have criticised the Hong Kong government for not developing a comprehensive plan to deal with the aftermath of ATV's failure.

## NEWS UNIT LEANS TOWARD MAINLAND

Free-to-air television station Broadcasting Television of Hong Kong (TVB) continued to be queried about declining political impartiality. On March 2, TVB appointed a director-general of Hong Kong's largest and oldest pro-Beijing political party to the position of managing editor. Luk Hong-Tak, who has been working the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) for 10 years, will focus on editing Hong Kong political news. The head of TVB's news department, Kenneth Yuen, denied the appointment involved any political considerations. However, the move triggered an internal and external backlash. A number of TVB employees were deeply worried that the station's current political inclination towards the establishment would further erode the independence of the news department. On November 22, for the first time, direct elections were held for the 431 members of District Councils across the city of Hong Kong. Numerous bloggers complained that TVB kept reporting on pro-establishment candidates but downplayed pro-democracy candidates. Radical political parties and their candidates were completely missing from the coverage.

In February, several veteran journalists at TVB tendered their resignations. They were Lam Tsz-Ho, Tiffany Lau, Tsz-Yan, Stella Lam Chiu-Yee, Maggie Tam Mei-Kei, Julia Chiu Pui-Yu, Ho Wing-Hong and Peri Chow, who had been working for TVB for almost 20 years. TVB journalists who wished to remain anonymous told IFJ that morale in the news department was

very low. Mid-level management repeatedly told staff that if they were unhappy they could leave.

Staff remained unhappy about the news treatment of an incident during the pro-democracy Occupy Movement. On October 15, 2014, a TVB camera crew captured footage of police assaulting a Civic Party member. The video was broadcast but the script for the news item downplayed the actions of the police. One journalist said: "Journalists were alarmed and felt deeply disappointed after the incident on October 15, 2014. Although many journalists signed a joint letter to express their disappointment with the head of the news department, and the description of the police assault was deleted from the original script, it did not improve the situation. Every day we have to find different methods to carry news that the public did not know. Journalists who were covering the protests were told by management not to criticize the police because 'police are the weakest sector in the society and the press has a duty to protect them.'"

A second journalist told the IFJ: "Some of the journalists asked our senior manager for the reason as to why so many journalists were forbidden to cover the protests or political news. However no reason was provided. We do not share the same views as management. Eventually a few journalists were labelled 'unreliable' because they are experienced and outspoken. Many demanded to continue covering the stories and offered to help other staff write their stories in front of management, but it was in vain." Another journalist said: "You may notice the management eager to assign relatively inexperienced journalists to cover political news instead of assigning veteran journalists."

## HIGH COURT BID TO SUPPRESS REPORTS

On October 30, Hong Kong University (HKU) successfully filed a request for an interim court order to prevent Hong Kong-based Commercial Radio continuing to air leaked audio of speeches made at a controversial session of the university's council. The audio was secretly recorded at a closed meeting of the HKU Council on September 29, which rejected the appointment of liberal law scholar Johannes Chan Man-Mun as one of the university's five pro-vice-chancellors. The leaked audio featured speeches against Chan's appointment by council members Arthur Li Kwok-Cheung and Leonie Ki Man-Fung. HKU Council chairman Edward Leong Che-Hung said the injunction was intended to "protect the dignity of HKU".

Johannes Chan Man-Mun, who was dean of the Law Faculty from 2002 to 2014, had been unanimously recommended for the post by a selection committee headed by university president Peter Mathieson. He was expected to be appointed by the end of December 2014, but the council delayed making a decision for nine months, until rejecting Chan's appointment through a secret ballot at the September 29 meeting. This was the first time that a candidate selected by the committee had been rejected. The HKU Council's move was widely viewed as political retaliation for Chan's involvement with pro-democracy figures including his academic colleague Benny Tai, who was the key instigator of the Occupy Movement in 2014.



## ON OCTOBER 30, HONG KONG UNIVERSITY (HKU) SUCCESSFULLY FILED A REQUEST FOR AN INTERIM COURT ORDER TO PREVENT HONG KONG-BASED COMMERCIAL RADIO CONTINUING TO AIR LEAKED AUDIO OF SPEECHES MADE AT A CONTROVERSIAL SESSION OF THE UNIVERSITY'S COUNCIL.

HKU's application for the court order immediately provoked an outcry. A joint statement criticizing the application was issued on November 2 by the HKJA, Hong Kong Press Photographers Association, RTHK Programme Staff Union, Next Media Trade Union, Ming Pao Staff Association, Independent Commentators Association and Journalism Educators for Press Freedom. The statement said: "Seeking an unprecedented wide coverage, the injunction will not only restrict journalistic works on the council events of HKU but also set a daunting precedent on the protection of press freedom, which is enshrined in the Basic Law."

HKU responded: "The University of Hong Kong is, has been, and will continue to be, a place where freedom of expression, opinion and thought are respected, valued and promoted ... The legal action has been brought to protect those freedoms."

This refutation did not stop HKJA and another media outlet, Hong Kong-based *Apple Daily*, filing an application to the High Court to become parties to the hearing. HKJA was granted to be an 'intervener' in the case during the trial in 2016. On November 5, Commercial Radio reached a settlement with HKU in which it promised not to publish any information about council meetings. Commercial Radio declined to elaborate on the terms of the settlement, but the presiding judge expressed concern that the agreement was equivalent to a "perpetual injunction on all meetings, future, past, and present".

On November 6, the High Court extended the order to November 24 but reduced its scope. It forbade media to report on the HKU Council meetings from June 30 to November 6 unless information was already in the public domain, and lifted the blanket ban on recordings of future meetings. After the hearing, a Taiwan-based online media outlet posted transcripts of speeches against Chan by council member Rosanna Wong.

### TIANANMEN REVELATIONS DOWNPLAYED

On February 2, 2015, Chong Tien-siong, the editor-in-chief of the Hong Kong-based *Ming Pao* newspaper, moved the front page exclusive headline story "June 4 Tiananmen Square Massacre" to page 2, without consulting the editorial board. Two days later he explained his actions by stating that the "Editor-in-Chief has the power and duty to alter pagination". The Ming Pao Staff Association (MPSA) was furious and did not accept that Chong had not exercised self-censorship. The MPSA statement said the paper's editorial board decided unanimously on February 1 to run the story about the

crackdown on the 1989 student protests, which was based on newly-released confidential documents from the national archive in Canada. Chong did not vote against the unanimous decision. However, at around 11pm the same day, Chong suddenly quashed the decision and replaced the story with another: "Alibaba planning a venture to help Hong Kong young entrepreneurs." Alibaba is a leading internet trading company. The following day, 100 staff members protested for an hour in front of the office building. On February 4, Chong issued an 80-word explanation. In the statement, he said he had the power to make changes. He did not make any changes to the report "June 4" itself, and still put it in a prominent area. He said: "Based on the news logic, I decided to exercise the power to use 'Alibaba' as the headline." He gave no further explanation.

### SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST STUMBLES

In mid-May, *The South China Morning Post* issued letters to four prominent columnists Philip Bowring, Kevin Rafferty, Stephen Vines and Frank Ching, informing them that their regular columns would be reduced, without specifying the lengths. Stephen Vines told the IFJ that the letter he received offered no explanation, but that he would now write on economic issues. He added that the column size and frequency had been frequently reduced in the past. The changes came after two pro-democracy columnists reported similar experiences back in September 2014, just before the commencement of the Occupy Movement. One columnist, Edward Chin, had his column removed.

Tammy Tam, who was involved in the mistaken report of the death of former Chinese President Jiang Zemin in 2011 at ATV, was promoted from deputy Editor-in-Chief to Editor-in-Chief of the 112-year-old *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), commencing in 2016. On December 11, Alibaba Group announced it paid 20.6 billion of Hong Kong dollar (US \$266 million) to buy the SCMP Group. Jack Ma Yun, founder of Alibaba Group Holdings Ltd, a Mainland-based e-commerce company, has been expanding his stake in several media businesses in the Mainland since 2013. These include sina.com, China Business network and Taobao.com. Although Ma said the newspaper will preserve its editorial independence, Alibaba Executive Vice Chairman Joe Tsai said, "China's rise as an economic power and its importance to world stability is too important for there to be a singular thesis." Many commentators were concerned that Ma intends to extend his reach into traditional media in Hong Kong and may try to influence coverage in Hong Kong's media. Ma has been described



as following in the footsteps of Amazon.com Inc's Jeff Bezos, who bought *The Washington Post* in 2013. This would place Ma among the internet tycoons snapping up venerable brands at a time when print media struggles to compete with web-based competitors for advertising. SCMP Group, a Hong Kong listed company, has posted three years of profit declines.

## PRINT MEDIA STRUGGLES

While online media has become very popular globally, many traditional media outlets are struggling to survive. Two publications, including the *Hong Kong Daily News*, a long-established media outlet, and *Sudden Weekly*, published by the Next Media Group, announced they would shut down.

*Hong Kong Daily News* announced on July 12 that the newspaper was to shut down due to financial deficits. In accordance with the Labour Ordinance, 130 employees received one month's wages as compensation. Following the announcement, the Next Group announced that *Sudden* magazine would be shut down on August 7. Seventy staff members were laid off with compensation of more than the legally required one month of salary. Staff at *Next*, another magazine in the Next Media Group, were also laid off with more than a month's salary. It was widely reported that about 110 staff members of Next Media Group were sacked.

## LEUNG APPOINTMENT WELCOMED

On August 7, Leung Ka-wing, a veteran journalist, took over from Roy Tang Yun-Kwong as the head of public broadcaster

↑ The Hong Kong Journalists Association, together with Hong Kong Press Photographers Association, RTHK Programme Staff Union, Next Media Trade Union, Ming Pao Staff Association, Independent Commentators Association and Journalism Educators for Press Freedom protest against the University of Hong Kong's decision to apply for an injunction on the publication of its council meeting materials.

RTHK. Leung has been working as a journalist in Hong Kong for more than 40 years, in television, internet broadcasting and publishing. Since leaving his position as news chief at ATV in July 2011, he has been teaching journalism at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Leung resigned from ATV after its news show aired an erroneous report that former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin had died. Despite the scandal, both the RTHK Programme Staff Union and the HKJA welcomed Leung's appointment. The Union said that Leung was a more desirable candidate than Tang, who was a civil servant in the government with little experience in media. The HKJA urged Leung to revisit the issue of RTHK's proposed new headquarters. The proposal for the new Broadcasting House, estimated to cost HK\$6 billion, was thrown out in January 2014 by the Legislative Council's Public Works Subcommittee.



↑ A police officer is filmed threatening a protester with pepper spray. In Hong Kong in March at least four journalists were sprayed while covering an anti-parallel trading protest.

## PRO-DEMOCRACY OUTLET ATTACKED

In the early hours of January 12, assailants used small hand-made bombs to attack the *Apple Daily* building at Tsang Kwan O and the home of Jimmy Lai Chee Ying, who owns *Apple Daily*'s publisher, Next Media Group, at Ho Man Tin, Kowloon. Two cars were set alight. No-one was hurt in the attacks. A few hours later, two thieves stole a number of *Apple Daily* newspapers from a vendor and drove away at Hung Hom, Kowloon. *Apple Daily* is an outspoken pro-democracy newspaper. Ip Yat-Kin, the publisher of *Apple Daily*, said: "It is so horrific and flagrant. The assailants targeted Next Media Group. It may be related to the Group's support of democracy." The chairperson of the HKJA, Sham Yee-Lan, said the situation was worsening. She urged Hong Kong police to conduct an in-depth investigation into the series of threats against the media.

## POLICE BLOCK MEDIA AT PROTESTS

The Hong Kong police continued to block journalists covering protests in Hong Kong. On February 8, Richard Scotford, a reporter for Hong Kong entertainment magazine BC Magazine, was at a shopping mall in Tuen Mun covering a protest against multi-entry permits into Hong Kong. The permits allow Mainland Chinese to conduct parallel trading, by which they travel into Hong Kong every day and import goods into Shenzhen, just over the border, causing congestion and shortages in Hong Kong. According to an online video,

Scotford was standing at the top of an escalator when a police officer asked him to get down, accusing him of crossing the police cordon. Scotford ignored the request, instead showing his press card. The police officer ignored this and claimed he did not understand English.

On March 1, at least four journalists from Hong Kong Asia Television, Cable Television and *Ming Pao* newspaper were hit with pepper spray by police as they were covering a protest by 100 people against parallel trading in Yuen Long. Kwong Chu, a journalist with Hong Kong Asia Television, was hit with pepper spray by police, even though he identified himself as a journalist. Hong Kong Asia Television issued a statement criticizing the incident. The Hong Kong Police said that the use of pepper spray against the journalists was an accident. The IFJ Asia Pacific Office said: "The reasoning given by the police is hardly convincing given there is footage showing Kwong being sprayed by one officer as he spoke to another. It is clear that the Police violated Charter 39 of the Police General Orders, which states that police have a duty to assist press to exercise their duties when they are reporting. We understand the duty of the police when monitoring protests and public demonstrations; however, it is not in their power to overrule the rights of press freedom which are enshrined in the Basic Law of Hong Kong as well as the Constitution."

On March 29, Lam Sair-ping, a journalist from the Hong Kong-based, pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily*, was asked for identification and his press card while covering a protest



## ASSAILANTS USED SMALL HAND-MADE BOMBS TO ATTACK THE APPLE DAILY BUILDING AT TSANG KWAN O AND THE HOME OF JIMMY LAI CHEE YING, WHO OWNS APPLE DAILY'S PUBLISHER, NEXT MEDIA GROUP.

against parallel trading at Sheung Shui in the New Territories. When Lam asked why his identification was needed, the officer recorded his details and refused to answer. At the same protest, another two journalists were checked by police without cause. One of the journalists asked the officer for his identity card, but was refused. Lam told the IFJ: "I questioned police about abusing their power, but they didn't answer me. I personally felt that the police attitude towards the media is much more hostile after the Occupy Movement protests last year. They treat the media as the protester." A few days prior, a television crew received similar treatment by police at Sheung Shui. Police demanded to record the journalist's personal details, including his residential address, yet no reason was given. The television crew have not reported the case, nor will they identify themselves due to fears of further harassment. According to Section 54 of the Police Force Ordinance of Hong Kong, police have the power to stop, detain and search only when the suspect acts in a suspicious manner or is suspected of committing a crime.

On April 27, Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) criticised the attacks on several journalists as well as a broadcast van belonging to Hong Kong broadcaster TVB. According to HKJA, TVB journalists were covering a protest outside the Mong Kok police station when a number of protesters became aggravated following the detention of some protest group members. When the TVB van arrived to cover the incident, the group started attacking the van and verbal assaulting the journalists.

### OCCUPY COMMEMORATIONS BLOCKED

A pattern of suppression emerged around events and organisations associated with the 2014 Occupy Movement, also known as the Umbrella Revolution. Kubrick, a Hong Kong book store, cancelled an Occupy Movement photo exhibition on March 31 after receiving anonymous threats and harassing calls.

On April 1, the student-based online platform Dash said its Facebook account had been suspended for two days. Dash did not know why the account was suspended but it was suspected that the reason was related to Scholarism, one of the key organisations that supported the Occupy Movement in 2014. Hong Kong-based newspaper *Ming Pao* has reported that Facebook demands that all account holders provide their real names if they want to continue to have access to their accounts,

although this policy has not been officially announced by Facebook. In Mainland China, all bloggers have to use their real names to open an account on a social media platform.

Up Publications of Hong Kong revealed that hundreds of books, including those on the 2014 Occupy Movement protest, were banned by the distributor, Sino United Publishing (Holdings) Ltd, known as SUP, which owns a chain of bookstores, in December 2014. Sino is known to have strong links with the Mainland Government. Media reported that some SUP book stores continued to carry certain books published by other publishers but the information in the books about the anti-Occupy Movement was factually incorrect. According to several Hong Kong media reports, Up Publications was deeply suspicious that SUP took the action because the Occupy Movement protest has been labelled an illegal protest by the Hong Kong and Mainland governments. On April 6, it was reported that two SUP bookstores filed a police complaint that their stock was "damaged" because a paper slip with words of "We Want Genuine Universal Suffrage" was stapled into some of the books.

On October 2, the Hong Kong Press Photographers Association announced the annual press photo exhibition would be relocated to a new venue instead of continuing to be staged at Times Square in Causeway Bay. It was widely reported that the move was made because quite a number of photos were related to the Occupy Movement in 2014. Time Square spokesperson denied the reports, saying the venue was tightly booked for the whole year.

### COLUMNIST GETS DEATH THREATS

In May, Chris Wat, a pro-government columnist at *Ming Pao* newspaper, said her family received death threats after she defended Hong Kong police in her column. The threats came after Wat wrote an article defending the actions of police after they arrested a disabled man. Police were accused of not following due process and disregarding important evidence in favour of the disabled man. In Wat's column, she was not critical of the police's failure to follow due process and said that the suspect was only detained for 72 hours at most. Wat drew strong criticism from disability groups and her home address was posted online by an unknown group. A death threat against her and family followed. A suspect was arrested by Hong Kong police afterwards.



## HONG KONG JOURNALISTS WERE DIRECTLY TARGETED WHEN COVERING THE QUALIFYING GAME BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND HONG KONG FOR THE 2018 FIFA WORLD CUP.

### REPORTERS HARASSED AT FIFA GAME

Hong Kong journalists were directly targeted when covering the qualifying game between the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong for the 2018 FIFA World Cup. Several journalists were prevented from reporting on the match in Shenzhen, on the Mainland, on September 3. According to *Apple Daily*, journalists were detained by police for three hours and accused of doing "illegal reporting". The police also demanded that they write a letter of repentance. Other journalists complained they were identified and taken away by police as soon as they arrived at the Shenzhen stadium.

### REPORTING CONSTRAINED IN MACAU

On March 15, a journalist with a daily newspaper was restrained by security at international casino MGM when he attempted to leave the premises following an official event. The journalist was at the resort covering an official ceremony involving the chief executive of Macau, Fernando Chui. According to a statement by the Macau Journalists Association (MJA), the journalist followed the orders of the MGM, displaying his press card and remaining within the press zone. However, when the ceremony ended he left the press zone and followed Chui and other senior government officials. The journalist was trying to interview the officials as they were leaving the hotel, but was blocked and restrained by security officers. A public relations officer told security: "Shut the door. Do not allow journalists to leave." Following the incident, MGM issued an apology and said the security officers had the role of maintaining order within the complex. The journalist told the IFJ: "There is no reason for the security agents to restrain the press movements following the ceremony." He emphasized that "order" was not disturbed and he was following the directions of the security officers after the ceremony was completed.

On April 23, independent footage showed Macau University trying to suppress freedom press when a fire broke out. According to *All about Macau*, an independent Macau-based media outlet, a journalist and crew member of MSTV Satellite TV Company were blocked by unidentified people in the dormitory of Macau University after they attempted to cover the fire. It was also reported that one of

the group damaged the camera's light. Macau University said the action was necessary because it had to protect students' privacy, as they were not dressed well during evacuation. But an independent film later revealed that all students were dressed well when they fled. The Macau Journalists Association (MJA) issued statements demanding a full investigation and explanation of the incident.

On May 21, as many as 1000 books were confiscated by the Mainland authorities because the content allegedly contained "sensitive issues". Sulu Sou Ka-Hou, one of the authors of the book *Withdraw: Do you still remember?* admitted they had planned to launch the new book on May 25 to commemorate the largest demonstration in Macau in 2014. Sulu said he was surprised by the confiscation and did not know why it had happened. In 2014, a series of protests and advocacy campaigns were held against a controversial bill which granted the chief executive of Macau and major senior government officials compensation when they left their positions. Additionally, the bill granted the Chief Executive of Macau immunity from prosecution during his tenure. After the protests, the Chief Executive of Macau, Chui Sai-on, withdrew the bill.

On October 31, Lai Man Wa, the director-general of the Customs Service in Macau, was found dead in a public toilet in Ocean Gardens in Taipa. However the news of her death was withheld for a number of hours. Police were initially informed of Lai's death at 3.30pm, but it was not announced by the chief executive of Macau, Chui Sai On until 7.30pm. Local media queried the Security Departments delay in releasing the information, but the Secretary of Security denied there had been any delay. A local journalist said: "Actually there is no written pledge provided by the department about how long after an accident they should reveal the information to the press. Apart from Lai's case, police often reveal very simplified information to media when an accident happens. Based on that information, the media is actually unable to understand what exactly it was. But in the case Lai's death, not a single word was revealed by the department." Media suspected the delay was due to Lai being one of the top government officials in Macau. Macau Journalists Association issued a statement criticizing the local Government.



↑ After Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, pro-Mainland new media platforms emerged like mushrooms after rain. Harassment and intimidation of supporters and of journalists covering Hong Kong's pro-democracy Umbrella Revolution continued in 2015.

## HONG KONG MEDIA MADE INCREASINGLY "RED" – RIVER WATER INTERFERES WITH WELL WATER

BY LAM YUET-HEI

The year 2015 was a very weird one for Hong Kong's as a very weird year for Hong Kong's media industry. As traditional media struggled in their transition to meet the challenges posed by the rise of new media, advertising revenue shrank and it became increasingly difficult to operate a business, resulting in closure of many publications and many layoffs. All these difficulties emerged suddenly, resulting in a dire situation that had not been seen for years. At the same time there emerged a number of new media company with one thing in common – mysterious funding that some suspect is "Red" capital from the Mainland. If 2014 was year that Hong Kong media faced the worst intervention from the Mainland, then 2015 was the year that marked the Mainland's marching in. My understanding is that Mainland authorities not only put pressure on the existing Hong Kong media, but now literally roll up their sleeves and do it themselves. They are both moving the Mainland model into Hong Kong and invading into the territory of public opinion. One can only expect that Hong Kong media will become more and more "Red", traditional and new media included.

The operating environment for traditional media was

exceptionally difficult in 2015. The three most profitable Chinese media organizations in Hong Kong downsized their businesses. Next Media Group closed *Sudden Weekly* and let go all its staff, including some from *Next Magazine*. Oriental Press Group shut down its Taipei office and let go more than 20 staff, while restructuring its Hong Kong headquarters and letting go more than 10. The group also announced its intention to sell an unnamed publication: many believe this will be *The Sun*. Sing Tao News Corporation streamlined its *East Week* and offered voluntary exit packages to more than 10 staff. A less profitable paper, *Hong Kong Daily News*, announced it would close entirely.

While the media industry appeared to be depressingly lethargic, a weird phenomenon happened: "Some choose to resign and retire, some opt to enter and barge in." A number of new media organizations emerged after the 2014 Umbrella Movement, including the ambitious "Hong Kong 01", which went on a massive recruitment drive and is reportedly planning to launch a refreshing form of reporting. There was also the mysteriously-funded, Web-based "Initium Media", as well as "E+", a comprehensive, catch-all magazine and numerous Web-based



## IF 2014 WAS THE YEAR THAT HONG KONG MEDIA FACED THE WORST INTERVENTION FROM THE MAINLAND, THEN 2015 WAS THE YEAR THAT MARKED THE MAINLAND'S MARCH IN.

media, such as “HKG Pao”, “Orange News” and “Kinliu.HK” etc. A new addition emerged almost every two months, though these new media outlets’ existence relied mainly on facebook.

As I understand the situation, the Mainland authorities reviewed their public opinion management strategy after the Umbrella Movement and concluded that their current intervention in the Hong Kong media was just not enough. Instead, they decided they must have their own mouthpieces. This is why, after the Movement, pro-Mainland new media platforms emerged like mushrooms after rain. It is understood that the Mainland’s new media engagement strategy is two-pronged: the first is to order local pro-China media to do it at their own expense; the second is to create influential media organizations with direct funding from the Mainland.

The first strategy focuses on small media outlets, which is in line with the trend of media fragmentation. The strategy adopts a crowd approach resembling “a million ants to attack an elephant”. The idea is to stifle independent media and local media online. The web media has been tasked to seize the public opinion front, accumulate their influence and follow instructions from “the powers that be” as and when their services are needed. For example, they were in play for the District Elections in November 2015 to rally support for the pro-establishment candidates and fight candidates from the opposition.

The purpose of the pro-establishment groups behind these web media outlets is primarily to influence public opinion in the lead-up to the 2016 Legislation Council Election and the 2017 Chief Executive Election. Needless to say, the Central government’s Liaison Office has granted permission for these efforts, although the Office does not need to provide any direct funding because the pro-establishment organizations are very wealthy. Many in the organizations are rich merchants, and obviously their purpose is to enhance their influence in Hong Kong, thereby upgrading their status not only with the Liaison Office but also in the eyes of the leaders of the Central government, in order to increase their political influence more broadly.

A managerial person from a pro-China new media outlet admitted to me that its funding is from a local pro-establishment organization and its operation is no different from any media in town. They report on local, two-Strait and international news, just like any other comprehensive, catch-all news network online. The only difference is that they must support the Central and SAR governments. The person also disclosed that the funding party does not require them to post a profit, but only to control costs.

The second strategy is to create influential media organizations with direct funding from the Mainland. It is clear the Chinese authorities reckon that, given the impact from new media,

the oligopoly that has controlled Hong Kong’s traditional media industry is facing a reshuffle and this naturally creates an opportune moment for them. These new Mainland media organizations are characterized by their carefully hidden “Red” identity, which is often disguised through the pretence of local or even foreign funds. It is said that they recruit Hong Kong people or foreign investment companies as shareholders, so to package themselves in “White Skin” to embed their “Red Heart”. They understand clearly that if their true identity is exposed, their campaign to conquer the public opinion front will quickly be weakened, and all their efforts, including money invested, will go down the drain.

A media manager told me that he has been approached by Mainland officials in charge of Hong Kong affairs who asked about setting up media organizations in Hong Kong. He was asked about issues including funding estimates and operational matters. The manager said the officials focus on new media, hoping to grab a place in the market in Hong Kong; and they frankly said that they would hide their “Red” identity for fear of lessening the operation’s effectiveness.

It is understood that, as well as departments that belong to National Security and the State Security system, there are provincial-level and municipal-level departments that are responsible for Hong Kong affairs. Their duty is to collect intelligence concerning Hong Kong, to grasp its social trends, and to help intervene in Hong Kong affairs when ordered to do so by the Central government. Seizing public opinion frontiers is an important means to this end. It is understood that Mainland authorities tried various methods in 2015. Some chose to solicit support for setting up online media platforms from wealthy individuals through their provincial associations or townsmen fellowships. Needless to say, more and more pro-establishment media networks will be seen in Hong Kong in the near future.

In fact, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) members, including the National-level and provincial-level allocation system, has also developed in that direction. The CPPCC is China’s united patriotic front organisation, a massive body including representatives of the Communist Party of China, people’s organizations and ethnic minorities, and delegates Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and returned overseas Chinese. In the past, it was simply a matter of money for any Hongkongers who wanted to be awarded a CPPCC title. Nowadays they must have influence, and the most important variety is influence over public opinion, or in the youth sector and teenager groups. The Mainland authorities have already ignited their machine to ensure full control of Hong Kong, and of public opinion as their most important step forward.



↑ A columnist at Ming Pao Chris Wat said in May that her family received death threats after defending police in a column.

The 50 Cent Party, also known as the 50 Cent Army, is a must-have for the new media. This is a network of internet commentators said to be hired by the Chinese government to create favorable comments about party policies in an attempt to shape and sway public opinion on various Internet platforms. The name derives from a popular theory that the commentators get paid 50 Cents RMB for each post.

Personal observation indicates that there was large-scale deployment of 50 Cent Party in Hong Kong during the Umbrella Movement in 2014. It did not retreat after the Movement and seems to have become formally established, intervening in Hong Kong's online public opinion front every day. One can see their footprints on many media organizations' facebook pages; for instance, they will offer praise profusely to any posts that favour the government, and criticize violently those opposed to the government, even accusing the network editors for having an ulterior motive to deliberately bad-mouth Hong Kong and to provoke China-Hong Kong conflict. In short, such criticism is so extreme that it aims at influencing editorial policy.

A network editor friend told me that these messages do have an effect on his choice of posts as he must take into consideration readers' reactions as part of his duty to balance views and be editorially responsible. The friend said that most of those messages are written in Simplified Chinese, as used on the Mainland, but some pretend to be Hongkongers by writing in Traditional Chinese, which often results in inexplicably foolish remarks that are totally lost in translation. A random check on the posters' information (such as their IP addresses) reveals that they most live over the border in China's Guangdong Province, in cities such as Foshan, Maoming and Dongguan.

As well as the 50 Cents Party, there is the notorious National Internet Information Office, also known as the Network Information Office, which is much hated by Netizens. The Office has decided to set up a unit silently within the Central government's Liaison Office in Hong Kong and to deploy staff

here as early as 2016. The National Internet Information Office reports to the Central Leading Group for Internet Security and Informatization. The Group is a policy formulation and implementation body set up under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, as announced at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Session of the 18<sup>th</sup> Central Committee in November 2013, with the sole purpose of managing internet-related issues, including the expansion of online services and internet security concerns. As well, it has broad jurisdiction over internet censorship policy.

Hong Kong's new media and cyberspace is bound to face more and more serious intervention. It is undoubtedly worrying for Hong Kong people when faced with such gigantic State machinery.

Besides new media, traditional media such as the half-dead ATV are also increasingly seen as being flooded with "Red" capital. *The South China Morning Post* has been acquired by wealthy Mainland entrepreneur Jack Ma and his Alibaba Group. TVB's 26 per cent shareholder Young Lion Holdings Limited has transferred part of its stake to the Chinese Cultural Industry Investment Fund (CMC), whose well known founder, Li Ruigang, once served as Shanghai Municipal Government's Deputy Secretary-General. Li also serves as chairman of Caixin Media and many other companies. *Sing Pao Daily News* has also changed hands several times, with its new boss Ju Zhuoheng inextricably linked to the Mainland business circle.

In difficult times like today, intervening in media industry is easy, as an average advertising contract is enough to do the trick. The Mainland has plenty of money, and with that money power, I believe both traditional media and new media in Hong Kong will soon go "Red". In the Hong Kong media industry's history, 2015 will be seen as the year that sees river water beginning to rush into our well. Whether Hong Kong media's can continue to stay clear of such pollution remains to be seen. So is the future, as it relies on the efforts and perseverance of the media practitioners here.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### MAINLAND CHINA

- 1 The Central Government should adopt reports A/HRC/23/40 in 2013, A/HRC/17/27 and A/66/290 in 2011 of United Nations Special Rapporteur Frank La Rue on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression on the internet and study the modalities of surveillance communications by the UN Human Rights Council.
- 2 The Central Government should fully implemented the Regulations on Open Government Information across the nation and ensure that all levels of government, including in all Autonomous Regions, such as Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia, stop delaying reports on issues of great concern cases to the public.
- 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 detentions, punishments and unexplained employment terminations of journalists. It should also 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 rule that the confiscation of journalistic materials is forbidden.
- 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 Olympics remain in force.
- 9 In line with the above regulations, 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.
- 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 thoughtful consultation with the public before establishing further rules for 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

- 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 Regarding the Occupy Movement in Hong Kong in 2014, the Hong Kong Government should set up an independent committee led by a retired judge to investigate whether the Hong Kong police breached the Chapter of 39 of the Police General Orders, which sets out 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 A confidential and independent complaints bureau should be established 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, and all heads of bureaus, departments and institutions to uphold press freedom. They should directly answer the media's questions 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 Bureau should ensure all free-to-air television media exhibit plurality and impartiality, and have sufficient investment to ensure the outlet runs smoothly.
- 9 The Chief Executive of Hong Kong should initiate a dialogue with the Central Government to quash the entrance 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 in place of closed-door briefings.



