



# CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

*A biweekly update of press freedom and censorship news  
related to the People's Republic of China*

Issue 105: May 7, 2014

## Headlines

- Journalist, lawyer, and others detained ahead of June 4 anniversary
- Ai Weiwei erased from Shanghai art show
- Sina threatened with loss of licenses amid antipornography campaign
- Popular U.S. TV shows pulled from Chinese streaming sites without explanation
- New Android mobile app relies on Amazon to bypass microblog censorship

## PHOTO OF THE WEEK: A Crab's-Eye View



Credit: [China Digital Times](#)

## BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS



### Journalist, lawyer, and others detained ahead of June 4 anniversary

The Chinese authorities have targeted activists and scholars in the run-up to the 25th anniversary of the June 4, 1989, crackdown on prodemocracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Gao Yu, a prominent dissident journalist, went missing on April 23, a day after she told Australia's Fairfax Media that she had been threatened by the police. Gao had been scheduled to attend a June 4-related gathering in Beijing on April 26 and a news conference in Hong Kong on May 3. On May 8, she appeared in police custody on China Central Television (CCTV), apparently confessing to leaking an unspecified secret document to a foreign website. Based on the timing, the document may have been an internal Communist Party circular on ideological controls that emerged in spring 2013 (see CMB No. [87](#)). Separately, Pu Zhiqiang, an outspoken human rights lawyer whose clients include dissident artist and blogger Ai Weiwei, was summoned and detained by police on May 4, a day after he attended a seminar on the Tiananmen crackdown in Beijing. The police reportedly searched his home and confiscated his computer, phone, and books. At least seven other participants of the event were summoned by the police, including Beijing Film Academy professor Cui Weiping and writer Liu Di, both of whom are well known for their online commentaries. While public discussion of the 1989 events remains off-limits within China, a growing number of universities overseas have organized relevant conferences and courses. Nevertheless, Public Radio International reported on May 2 that many Chinese students studying in the United States avoid such opportunities or ask to remain anonymous for fear of retribution at home.

- IFEX 4/30/2014: [Chinese dissident journalist disappears before Tiananmen anniversary event](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 5/8/2014: [Beijing detains, parades journalist Gao Yu on state TV for 'leaking state secrets'](#)
- CHR 5/6/2014: [Chinese government must stop intimidating citizens seeking truth about June 4, 1989](#)
- *China Digital Times* 5/6/2014: [Rights lawyer among several held after Tiananmen seminar](#)
- *China Change* 5/5/2014: [Scholars and lawyer disappeared after June 4th seminar in Beijing](#)
- PRI 5/2/2014: [Discussing Tiananmen Square is still risky after 25 years, even for Chinese students in the US](#)



### Ai Weiwei erased from Shanghai art show

The Shanghai government has ordered the removal of the name and works of dissident artist and blogger Ai Weiwei from an art exhibition entitled "15 Years Chinese Contemporary Art Award," which consists of works by the award's recipients. According to Uli Sigg, a Swiss art collector and former Swiss ambassador to China who helped establish the annual award in 1998, officials from the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Culture had told organizers just days before the April 26 opening that

Ai's art could not be displayed at the state-owned venue, the Power Station of Art. Ai won the award for lifetime contribution in 2008 and served on the jury for the first three terms. Shortly before the exhibition opened, workers also removed his name from a wall dedicated to the award's past winners and jury members. It was not the first time Ai ran afoul of the Shanghai government, which in January 2011 had ordered the demolition of his studio in the city (see CMB No. [7](#)). Separately, the artist has been engaged in a dispute with the production team of a short film, *The Sandstorm* (see CMB No. [103](#)). The director, Jason Wishnow, had used Ai's name and image in an online fundraising campaign for the movie in April, and Ai said he was upset that the team had used him to raise money despite his minor role. He also pointed out the irony in the two incidents. "I've been very involved in Chinese contemporary art.... And here my name is erased. On the other hand, you have a movie done by a Western person, that I was not so involved in, and they use my name like this. It's funny when you put these things together."

- *New York Times* 4/29/2014: [Censors remove Ai Weiwei from Shanghai show, leaving Uli Sigg powerless](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 4/29/2014: [Ai Weiwei locked in spat with director over crowdfunded sci-fi debut](#)

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## NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



### **Sina threatened with loss of licenses amid antipornography campaign**

In an unexpected development related to the Chinese government's latest antipornography campaign (see CMB No. [104](#)), regulators announced on April 24 that internet giant Sina Corporation could have two crucial licenses revoked due to lewd content posted on its site. The official news agency Xinhua reported that the National Office against Pornographic and Illegal Publications had found 20 articles and four videos on Sina.com that contained pornographic content, including some that had received millions of hits. As a result, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television decided to revoke its licenses for internet publication and audio/video dissemination and impose high fines. The decision did not take immediate effect, however, and according to one official cited by Xinhua, Sina would have a chance to appeal. The company quickly became the subject of embarrassing coverage on state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) and the front page of the Communist Party mouthpiece *People's Daily*. Sina responded later on April 24 by "offering the most sincere apology to all netizens and the public." Shortly after Xinhua published news of the regulator's decision, Sina's stock dropped to a one-year low on the New York Stock Exchange, less than two weeks after its subsidiary microblogging service Sina Weibo held an initial public offering (see CMB No. [104](#)). The move to punish Sina is unusual and sends a warning to other internet content providers to enhance their online monitoring and censorship systems, especially since Sina has one of the most robust such systems but is being punished harshly for its apparent neglect of only 24 pieces of content.

- *Financial Times* 4/25/2014: [China threatens to withdraw Sina licences](#)
- Xinhua 4/24/2014: [China's Sina.com hit by ban after porn offense](#)
- Bloomberg 4/25/2014: [Sina stock falls on anti-porn crackdown: China Overnight](#)

- [The Sinocism China Newsletter 4/25/2014](#)
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## U.S. TV shows pulled from Chinese streaming sites without explanation

The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) on April 25 ordered leading video-streaming sites, including Youku and Sohu, to remove four U.S. television shows from their services. The four programs—*The Big Bang Theory*, *The Practice*, *The Good Wife*, and *NCIS*—were all popular in China. *The Big Bang Theory* had reportedly scored more than a billion views by users in China before it was removed. The SAPPRFT did not provide any reason for its order. Some observers speculated that the authorities are concerned about such programs drawing viewers away from the national broadcaster, China Central Television (CCTV). On April 27, the *Beijing News* reported that CCTV is planning to air *The Big Bang Theory* soon, but that the program will be dubbed in Chinese and any “excessive content” will be removed. On the same day, in an apparent attempt to defend and legitimize the regulator’s order, the Communist Party mouthpiece *People’s Daily* ran an opinion article emphasizing that there can be no internet freedom without order. Meanwhile, disgruntled fans went online to express their anger at the decision, reportedly making it the most popular topic of the day. Many posted icons of candles to show their grief or indignation, while others shared a subtitled screenshot from a *Big Bang Theory* episode in which the character Sheldon Cooper says, “I like China. See, they know how to keep people in line.” The order came amid a broader government effort to exert tighter control over online content, including a new set of regulations for video-streaming services issued in March (see CMB No. [102](#)).

- [Associated Press 4/27/2014: 4 US TV shows ordered off Chinese websites](#)
- [South China Morning Post 4/27/2014: China’s video websites forced to adjust to tighter regulations](#)
- [Reuters 4/28/2014: China party mouthpiece says no internet freedom without order, as U.S. TV shows pulled](#)
- [People’s Daily 4/28/2014: 钟声：互联网治理，规范和标准是关键 \[Zhong Sheng: Rules and standards are keys to internet management\]](#)
- [China Digital Times 4/29/2014: State media defends ‘internet management’ as U.S. TV shows are kicked offline](#)
- [New York Times 4/28/2014: Fans paint U.S. shows as friendly to the party](#)
- [South China Morning Post 4/28/2014: Confusion as CCTV airs ‘Game of Thrones’ amid ban on other US shows](#)

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## HONG KONG



## Tiananmen Square crackdown museum opens

The June 4 Memorial Museum, the world’s first museum dedicated to documenting the 1989 prodemocracy protests in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square and the crackdown that ended them, opened

in Hong Kong on April 26. Hong Kong is the only Chinese city where commemorative activities for the brutal crackdown are tolerated by the Chinese authorities. The museum was sponsored by the Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, a local rights group that also organizes the territory's annual June 4 vigil, attracting tens of thousands of participants every year. The museum's opening ceremony was interrupted by more than a dozen pro-Beijing protesters who called themselves the "6.4 Truth Group." They held photographs of police officers who were allegedly injured in Tiananmen Square during the crackdown, and accused the museum of presenting a skewed account of the incident (see CMB Nos. [17](#), [73](#)). In addition, according to the *South China Morning Post*, property owners in the building where the museum is located recently submitted a writ asking a court to bar the alliance from using the fifth-floor space—which it had bought for more than HK\$9.7 million (US\$1.3 million)—for exhibition purposes. Despite the opposition, the museum attracted many Chinese visitors. The souvenir shop reportedly sells USB sticks with historical documents about the crackdown, enabling mainland tourists to sneak them through customs when they return home.

- Agence France-Press 4/27/2014: [World's first Tiananmen museum opens in Hong Kong](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 4/29/2014: [Property owners seek injunction to block June 4 memorial museum](#)
- Al-Jazeera 4/28/2014: [Tiananmen museum revives ghosts of a massacre](#)



## Journalists' group releases first Hong Kong press freedom index

On April 23, the University of Hong Kong's Public Opinion Programme released the first Hong Kong Press Freedom Index, a project commissioned by the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA). The index is based on survey respondents' answers to 10 questions on press freedom issues, such as legal protection for journalists' work and obstacles to their duties. Participants consisted of 422 journalists, interviewed from December 2013 to February 2014, and 1,018 members of the public, interviewed in late December. The results indicated that compared with ordinary citizens, media professionals held a more pessimistic view of the situation, giving worse scores on topics like self-censorship and editorial pressure. When asked to rate their satisfaction with press freedom in Hong Kong on a scale of 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied), journalists gave a 4.8, while the general public gave a 6.3. In terms of the Hong Kong government's performance in releasing information, media professionals also produced a lower score on average (3.7) than the public (5.0). Scholars involved in the research noted that the data were collected before two February events—a brutal attack on *Ming Pao* newspaper's former chief editor, Kevin Lau Chun-to, and the abrupt dismissal of Commercial Radio host Li Wei-ling—that might otherwise have resulted in much lower ratings (see CMB Nos. [100](#), [101](#)). In a column published by the *South China Morning Post* on May 1, political commentator Albert Cheng cited a recent example of self-censorship and pressure on the media from Beijing. He described how two senior Chinese officials had invited a delegation of Hong Kong editors and media executives to Beijing in late April, conspicuously excluding representatives from the liberal *Apple Daily*, the *Oriental Daily News*, and the HKJA. None of the participants addressed press freedom issues at the meeting. Instead, the media delegation was

told to report on the benefits of Chinese rule and discourage a growing movement for universal suffrage in the territory.

- IFEX 5/5/2014: [First Hong Kong press freedom index announced](#)
  - *South China Morning Post* 4/23/2014: [Self-censorship ‘common’ in Hong Kong newspapers, say journalists](#)
  - *South China Morning Post* 5/2/2014: [Hong Kong’s media bosses acting more like lapdogs than watchdogs](#)
  - HKU Public Opinion Programme 4/22/2014: [新聞自由指數調查 \[Hong Kong Press Freedom Index\]](#)
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## XINJIANG



### State media, censors work to guide news on Urumqi explosion

On April 30, the official Xinhua news agency reported that a deadly explosion had occurred at the largest train station in Xinjiang’s capital, Urumqi. The explosion took place shortly after President Xi Jinping concluded his first official trip to the region, during which he called for a crackdown on terrorism. According to Xinhua, two assailants and one bystander were killed, and 79 people were injured. The apparent suicide bombing followed another alleged terrorist attack at the Kunming train station in March, in which at least 29 people were stabbed to death (see CMB No. [101](#)). As with past incidents of violence in Xinjiang, the authorities exerted tight control over news coverage of the Urumqi bombing. Xinhua and the Communist Party mouthpiece *People’s Daily* broke the news, and Xinhua also translated its report into English and posted it on its website. However, censors then deleted the Chinese version of the reports by both outlets, as well as any reposts or mentions on other websites, indicating that the authorities had not yet decided on how to best frame the story. Oddly, the English version was left online, leading other outlets to cite it. The search term “Xi + explosion” was reportedly blocked on the Sina Weibo microblogging service as of May 1. A leaked May 3 censorship directive instructed media outlets not to cite the early English-language Xinhua story, to wait for authorized Chinese-language wire copy, and to focus any commentary on “reverence for casualties and those injured; condemnation of violent behavior; the conscientious maintenance of ethnic cooperation and social stability.” On May 5, the Communist Party–owned *Global Times* identified one of the alleged bombers as Sedirdin Sawut, a 39-year-old Uighur man from a county south of Urumqi. Calling the attack the work of a “crime family deeply influenced by extremist ideology,” the paper stated that the authorities had put out an alert for the arrest of 10 of Sawut’s family members.

- *Los Angeles Times* 5/5/2014: [Chinese police ID Uighur man as suspect in Urumqi bombing](#)
- *Diplomat* 5/2/2014: [Chinese media and the Urumqi bombing: Censorship in action](#)
- *China Digital Times* 5/1/2014: [3 dead and 79 injured in Urumqi explosion \(updated\)](#)
- *China Digital Times* 4/25/2014: [Sensitive words: explosion, witch hunts, Lin Zhao](#)

- *China Digital Times* 5/4/2014: [Minitrue: Condemn violence, stress ethnic cooperation](#)
  - *China Digital Times* 5/1/2014: [Minitrue: Attack on Xinjiang train station](#)
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## **BEYOND CHINA**



### **Chinese spies reportedly hacked Australian MPs' e-mails for a year**

According to a report by the *Australian Financial Review* on April 28, the Chinese intelligence agencies that penetrated Australia's parliamentary computer network in 2011 may have gained access to lawmakers' documents and e-mails for an entire year. The newspaper, citing multiple unnamed sources, said the breach was more extensive than previously thought, with new information showing that Chinese agencies had obtained system administrator access to the network, which "effectively gave them control" of the entire system. Observers said the Chinese authorities could have used such access to acquire a sophisticated understanding of the political and social links of the Australian leadership, as well as sensitive conversations or embarrassing gossip about the country's senior officials. Vulnerability testing conducted in 2010 reportedly found that the parliamentary computer network had very weak security. A member of the Australian cabinet said politicians from both governing and opposition parties were shocked and angry about the breach, and dissatisfied with the vulnerability of the network.

- *Financial Review* 4/28/2014: [Chinese spies may have read all MPs' emails for a year](#)
  - *Reuters* 4/28/2014: [Chinese spies read Australian MPs' emails for a year—report](#)
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### **New Android mobile app relies on Amazon to bypass microblog censorship**

The team of circumvention-software developers who founded the freedom of expression group GreatFire.org has launched an application for mobile devices that provides access to content that has been censored on the Chinese microblogging service Sina Weibo. The group had created a FreeWeibo website in 2012, but it was quickly blocked in China. In 2013, GreatFire developed a mobile app version for Apple's iOS operating system, but the U.S. technology giant removed it from its Chinese online store in December on the grounds that it violated local laws (see CMB No. [98](#)). The latest app is designed for Google's Android operating system. Android has by far the most users in China, almost 300 million, and its applications are accessed through a variety of third-party app stores, rather than a single official outlet, as with Apple. Most importantly, the new app employs a strategy called "collateral freedom," which should make it very difficult for Chinese censors to block. FreeWeibo will be hosted on the Amazon Web Services (AWS) S3, which encrypts all of its data, making it impossible for Chinese censors to discern the content users are accessing. And the censors cannot block a selected service without blocking the entire platform, which the Chinese government would be unlikely to do, as thousands of businesses rely on Amazon's cloud services in

China. In a demonstration of the “collateral freedom” concept, Beijing was forced to abandon its attempt to block the popular coding site GitHub in early 2013, after facing a huge backlash from Chinese software developers. According to the FreeWeibo developers, the new app has been downloaded more than 2,000 times since it was released in mid-April without publicity. They are confident that it will survive and reach many more users, so long as Amazon does not bend to Chinese government pressure and remove the app from its hosting service. Experts are not ruling out that possibility, however, since Amazon is seeking to expand its business in China, where it launched a localized version of AWS in December.

- **Mashable 4/28/2014:** [Can an Android app defeat China’s internet censors?](#)
- **Register 4/29/2014:** [Great-firewall-busting microblog app puts AWS in China’s firing line](#)

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## **NOTABLE ANALYSIS**



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For additional information on human rights and free expression in China, see:

[\*Freedom in the World 2014\*](#)  
[\*Freedom of the Press 2014\*](#)  
[\*Freedom on the Net 2013\*](#)

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