



# CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

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## Top Headlines

-  People's Daily leads loyalty campaign after Bo Xilai ouster
-  Social media play critical role in Chen Guangcheng affair
-  Sina reports risks of real-name registration failure
-  China-Philippines naval standoff prompts hacker war
-  Freedom House releases *Freedom of the Press 2012*

## BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS

### ***People's Daily* leads loyalty campaign after Bo Xilai ouster**

For several days in mid-April, after the definitive ouster of former Chongqing Communist Party chief Bo Xilai from the Politburo capped weeks of apparent party infighting, Chinese television stations and newspapers were filled with articles affirming loyalty to the party leadership, with most papers publishing a particular set of editorials from the *People's Daily*, the official Chinese Communist Party (CCP) mouthpiece (see CMB No. [54](#)). On April 20, blogger Eric Fish highlighted a series of interviews with “men on the street” from the April 13 evening newscast on China Central Television (CCTV), in which the interviewees’ comments followed the *People's Daily* editorials almost verbatim. Fish concluded that either the interviewees had actually internalized the editorials, which had flooded the country’s media, or CCTV simply told them what to say. The China Media Project at the University of Hong Kong responded to Fish’s post, stating that the interviewees were definitely reading out prepared text as part of a contrived public affirmation of loyalty to the central government, which had not been seen in China since the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square

protests of 1989. On April 27, at an event held at Shanghai's Fudan University, *People's Daily* president Zhang Yannong boasted about the paper's propaganda role, praising it for having "set the tone" for reporting and public opinion on Bo's ouster. In a statement that seemed to sidestep the coercive forces behind the wide dissemination of the paper's editorials and the censorship system that suppresses other viewpoints, Zhang said the affair illustrated "that the *People's Daily* is still the first and foremost representative of mainstream public opinion our country." His remarks came a week after the paper's online unit mounted a highly successful initial public offering on the Shanghai Stock Exchange (see CMB No. [55](#)).

- [China Media Project 4/27/2012: 'Historic' propaganda to be proud of](#)
- [Sino Stand 4/20/2012: The remarkable similarities between CCTV interviews and People's Daily editorials](#)
- [East Day 4/27/2012 \(in Chinese\): Party paper chief: Our paper had witnessed historical development and progressed with time](#)
- [China Digital Times 4/24/2012: CCTV interviewees possibly parrot People's Daily](#)

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## NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



### **Despite censorship, social media play critical role in Chen Guancheng affair**

Although blocked in China, social media applications like the video-sharing site YouTube and the microblogging platform Twitter played a critical role in transmitting information about the dramatic escape from house arrest of blind, self-taught lawyer Chen Guangcheng (see CMB No. [49](#)). News of Chen's escape from house arrest first made international headlines when a video of him speaking from a safehouse in Beijing was posted on YouTube on April 27. In the video, Chen directly appealed to Chinese premier Wen Jiabao to have his family released from house arrest, those who abused them punished, and an investigation launched into how much taxpayer money was spent on keeping the family in detention. By May 4, it had received nearly 250,000 views. Shortly after the release of the video, reports that Chen had taken refuge in the U.S. embassy in Beijing were confirmed. Chen left U.S. custody for a Beijing hospital on May 2, having been guaranteed freedom and safety within China, but he quickly renounced the deal and as of May 3 was asking to travel with his family to the United States. Censors have targeted online information about Chen to some extent for many months, as supporters organized campaigns to free him from his lengthy and onerous house arrest. But amid the current controversy, the *China Digital Times* found a wide range of keywords censored on the Chinese microblogging site Sina Weibo. These included the names of many external news outlets—such as the *Washington Post*, Cable News Network (CNN), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and Hong Kong's *Apple Daily*—whose coverage Chinese users had shared on their Weibo accounts. Also blocked was the name "Shawshank Redemption," a Hollywood film some netizens had used as a code word for Chen's escape. Mentions of key figures involved in the case, including U.S. ambassador to China Gary Locke and several activists and lawyers, were also erased. Even Hu Xijin, chief editor of the Chinese Communist Party-owned *Global Times*, resorted to using an altered version of Chen's name in a May 1 Sina Weibo post to avoid automatic censorship, but that moniker was blocked from Weibo search results as of the next day. Meanwhile, primary information on Chen has been disseminated by the lawyer's friends via

Twitter, which can only be accessed in China via circumvention tools, but a number of his associates have now been detained.

- *New York Times* 5/2/2012: [Chinese dissident is released from embassy, causing turmoil for U.S.](#)
- *Guardian* 4/27/2012: [Arrest fears over Chinese activist who helped Chen Guangcheng escape](#)
- YouTube 4/27/2012: [Chen Guangcheng's three three requests to Premier Wen](#)
- *China Digital Times* 5/2/2012: [Global Times' Hu on Chen Guangcheng](#)
- *China Digital Times* 4/29/2012: [Sensitive words: Chen Guangcheng \(updated\)](#)
- *China Digital Times* 5/3/2012: [Sensitive words: Chen Guangcheng \(4\)](#)



### Sina reports risks of real-name registration failure

Amid increased content cleansing on Chinese microblogging sites (see CMB No. [53](#)), the popular web portal Sina admitted in an April report to investors that it had not yet fully implemented a government-imposed real-name registration system whose deadline for compliance was March 16 (see CMB No. [51](#)). Sina filed the annual report with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), as its shares trade on the U.S.-based NASDAQ stock exchange. The company confirmed that many users of its Weibo microblogging platform who had not registered with their real names could still post messages, and warned that if the Chinese government insisted on full compliance in the near term, its traffic and usage would decline dramatically. It also noted that its ongoing failure to conform to the rules exposes it to potentially “severe punishment” by Beijing, ranging from the disabling of certain services to the “termination of Weibo operations.” Bill Bishop, a Beijing-based expert on the Chinese internet, said investors should not assume that real-name registration is an expired issue or that the government would not shut down or severely curtail microblogging services. Such a shutdown would generate a major public backlash, but in the current political environment, he argued, “nothing is impossible.” Although Sina has been pursuing an aggressive crackdown on users accused of disseminating rumors, with several high-profile detentions and account closures reported in recent weeks, the company is still the most popular microblogging site in China, according to an April 25 report by the U.S. consulting firm McKinsey.

- *Wall Street Journal* 4/30/2012: [Microblogs survive real-name rules—so far](#)
- *Tech in Asia* 4/30/2012: [Sina admits to investors it has failed to implement real name policy on Weibo](#)
- *Wall Street Journal* 4/26/2012: [Despite crackdowns, Weibo still winning the Weibo game](#)
- McKinsey & Company 4/25/2012: [China's social-media boom](#)



### Liberal economic think tank's website shut down

On April 28, the Chinese authorities shut down the website of the Unirule Institute of Economics, a prominent liberal research organization based in Beijing. The sudden decision came three days after *Forbes* magazine published an interview in which Unirule founder Mao Yushi, an economist and an

outspoken critic of one-party rule in China, called for freedom of speech that would allow the people to “supervise and oversee the government.” He also urged an end to the inequality and economic distortions caused by “political privilege power.” Mao was among several leading Chinese scholars who were prevented by Beijing from traveling to Oslo in 2010 to attend the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony for jailed democracy advocate Liu Xiaobo, but he was reportedly able to leave for the United States this week to receive the Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty from the Cato Institute on May 4.

- *South China Morning Post* 5/1/2012: [Cyberpolice silence high-profile think tank](#)
- *Radio Free Asia* 5/1/2012: [China closes Unirule website](#)
- *Forbes* 4/25/2012: [China’s ‘privilege powers’: An interview with Mao Yushi](#)
- [Mao Yushi’s Weibo](#)

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## TIBET



### **Report cites dangers of ‘cultural genocide’**

The Washington-based Tibetan rights group International Campaign for Tibet released a report on April 25 that describes elements of state-imposed “cultural genocide” in Tibet as “risk factors” for potential outbreaks of actual genocide in the region. The study lists various government policies designed to provoke prejudice and hatred against ethnic Tibetans. Apart from the ongoing persecution of artists, writers, and musicians who promote Tibetan culture, the report notes an expansion of damaging coverage in Chinese state-run media. “Even the most positive portrayals of Tibetans in the Chinese media tend to be patronizing images of ‘model’ ethnic minorities, grateful to the [Chinese Communist Party] for ‘liberating’ Tibet from ‘dark feudalism,’” the report said. On the more overtly negative side, some state media attacks on Tibet’s exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, have gone so far as to compare him to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and accuse him of seeking the ethnic cleansing of Chinese from Tibet (see CMB No. [52](#)).

- *International Campaign for Tibet* 4/25/2012: [60 years of Chinese misrule: Arguing cultural genocide in Tibet](#)
- *Phayul* 4/26/2012: [Report says ‘elements of cultural genocide’ could lead to ‘conventional genocide’ in Tibet](#)

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## HONG KONG / MACAU



### **Poll shows perception of self-censorship in Hong Kong media**

Half of the respondents to a recent opinion survey on the media said they believed that news outlets in Hong Kong practice self-censorship. The territory’s media were seen as avoiding criticism of the central government in Beijing, even if they were more prepared to take on the Hong Kong authorities (see CMB No. [54](#)). The survey was conducted by the University of Hong Kong’s Public Opinion Programme from April 10 to 18, and questioned 1,012 local residents. Despite the

concerns about self-censorship and other matters, the rate of satisfaction with local media has increased by 11 percent since September 2011, when the last poll was conducted. While people were most satisfied with television stations (68 percent), magazines received the poorest rating (-45 percent), followed by newspapers (16 percent) and the internet (19 percent). Only about 40 percent considered news reporting in Hong Kong to be responsible. In a separate development, Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post* reported that its photographer, Felix Wong Chi-keung, was denied entry to Macau on May 1. Authorities in Macau claimed that his presence on the Workers' Day holiday would "jeopardize public safety." The photographer had entered Macau several times previously, and although he was barred twice in February 2009, officials had said those incidents were errors.

- *South China Morning Post* 4/25/2012: [Poll shows half think media self-censors](#)
- *Ming Pao* 4/24/2012 (in Chinese): [More HKers satisfied with press freedom in HK](#)
- University of Hong Kong 4/24/2012 (in Chinese): [Hong Kong residents' evaluation on Hong Kong media](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 5/1/2012: [SCMP photographer barred from Macau](#)

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## BEYOND CHINA



### **China-Philippines naval standoff prompts hacker war**

The Philippine government's information technology office spokesman, Roy Espiritu, confirmed on April 26 that several government and university websites were being attacked by hackers who were apparently based in China. Sites belonging to the president, the budget office, and the University of the Philippines were among those that had suffered defacement or crippling denial-of-service attacks. The assault began after Philippine warships were confronted by Chinese patrol vessels on April 8 in a standoff over the disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea. Despite government appeals to refrain from raising tensions any further, Filipino hackers then launched a retaliatory campaign, in some cases defacing Chinese government or university websites with jingoistic messages.

- Agence France-Presse 4/27/2012: [Hackers hit Philippines websites amid China dispute](#)
- *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 4/23/2012: [Hackers bring Philippines-China dispute to cyberspace](#)
- ABS-CBN News 4/30/2012: [Hackers continue attacks on China websites](#)



### **Hollywood-China courtship continues despite obstacles**

After Reuters reported on April 24 that the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) was investigating possible bribery by American movie studios as they seek greater access to the Chinese

market (CMB No. [55](#)), much attention has been focused on the state-run China Film Group, which is the country's largest studio as well as the official gatekeeper for imported films and coproductions with foreign companies. In an interview with the *New York Times*, the group's chief executive, Han Sanping, denied any knowledge of improper payments involving U.S. companies. Beijing-based Bona Film Group founder Yu Dong said one challenge of coproductions was making American studios understand the need to alter scripts to satisfy Chinese censors. He also cited friction over the Chinese government's ability to bar distribution of coproductions outside China without its approval. Despite such obstacles, announcements of deals between Chinese and U.S. studios have continued apace. Bona Film is reportedly in talks with American companies including Universal, Fox, and Paramount, and aims to collaborate on at least two major films each year. Chinese entrepreneur Bruno Wu recently joined the Tianjin city government in unveiling plans to launch "Chinawood," a \$1.27 billion film and media hub near Beijing, in October this year. The sprawling complex will provide foreign coproductions with services ranging from financing to marketing and distribution (see CMB No. [46](#)).

- *New York Times* 4/29/2012: [In China, foreign films meet a powerful gatekeeper](#)
- *Bloomberg* 4/23/2012: [China's Bona Film sees Hollywood deals amid new rules](#)
- *Los Angeles Times* 4/21/2012: [Beijing film festival opens amid China's movie industry boom](#)
- *Variety* 4/30/2012: [China plans \\$1.27 billion production hub](#)



## Dissident writers seek U.S. judgment over Baidu censorship

On April 25, a group of New York-based Chinese dissident writers asked the U.S. District Court in Manhattan for a \$17.4 million default judgment against the Chinese government and Baidu, a leading Chinese internet search engine. The eight writers had filed a lawsuit in May 2011 (see CMB No. [23](#)), seeking \$16 million in compensation. They accused Baidu of enforcing the Chinese Communist Party's censorship policies abroad by filtering out their prodemocracy writings in its search results, even for users in the United States. The new request for a finding of default came after China's Justice Ministry refused to serve the legal papers pertaining to the suit on the Chinese government or Baidu. The ministry argued in a January 29 statement that the lawsuit would infringe China's sovereignty.

- *Bloomberg* 4/25/2012: [Chinese writers seek \\$17 million censorship suit default](#)
- *Reuters* 4/25/2012: [Plaintiffs seek \\$17.4 million in NYC vs China, Baidu lawsuit](#)
- *Wall Street Journal* 5/19/2011: [Baidu accused of aiding Chinese censorship in U.S. suit](#)



## Artist accepts U.S. award via Skype, poet publishes book on exile

On April 25, prominent Beijing-based artist and blogger Ai Weiwei defied government-imposed travel restrictions by appearing at an award ceremony in New York via the online chat service Skype (see CMB No. [55](#)). He received, virtually, the first Richard J. Massey Foundation Arts and Humanity Award at the nonprofit White Box gallery from presenters including New York University law

professor and human rights advocate Jerome Cohen. Separately, exiled Chinese dissident writer Bei Ling held a release event for his autobiography, *Exiled: On China*, in Berlin on April 19. He told Deutsche Welle that the book was originally to be published by a Taiwanese company, but the firm canceled the contract, possibly to avoid repercussions for its business dealings in China (see CMB No. [51](#)).

- *Wall Street Journal* 4/27/2012: [An artist's gratitude by Skype](#)
- Deutsche Welle 4/23/2012: [Chinese poet in exile on the power of words](#)
- Radio Free Asia 4/30/2012 (in Chinese): [Bei Ling discusses exile writers' literary pursuit at German book release](#)

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## NOTABLE ANALYSIS



### Freedom House releases *Freedom of the Press 2012*

On May 1, Freedom House released its annual index of global media freedom, *Freedom of the Press 2012*, which covers developments in calendar 2011. Among the key findings were dramatic gains in Tunisia, Libya, and to a lesser extent Egypt, which contributed to the fact that for the first time in eight years, media freedom worldwide did not experience an overall decline. Nevertheless, only 14.5 percent of the world's inhabitants lived in countries with a Free press, and the prodemocracy uprisings in Arab countries had a negative indirect effect on China, which remained the world's largest Not Free media environment. During the year, Chinese authorities sharply curbed coverage of the Arab revolts, retained blocks on international social-media platforms like Twitter, and tightened controls on investigative reporting and entertainment programming. Several dozen writers, bloggers, and online activists were detained, forcibly disappeared, abused in custody, and in select cases sentenced to long prison terms after calls for a Tunisian-style Jasmine Revolution in China circulated on the internet. At the same time, Chinese journalists and millions of netizens continued to defy censorship orders and push the limits of permissible coverage, drawing public attention to incipient scandals and campaigning for political or social change. The situation in Hong Kong (Partly Free) worsened slightly, and the press freedom score for Taiwan (Free) remained constant. At the link below, Freedom House has provided a short summary of the report's findings for China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Full country narratives will be published on the organization's website in the coming months.

- Freedom House 5/1/2012: [Freedom of the Press 2012: Breakthroughs and Pushback in the Middle East](#)
- Freedom House 5/3/2012: [Summary of Freedom House's Freedom of the Press 2012 findings—China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan](#)

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

[Freedom on the Net 2011](#)  
[Freedom of the Press 2011](#)  
[Freedom of the World 2012](#)

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