



CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

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Headlines

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-  In online letter, party veterans urge sacking of officials
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BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS

State media fuel nationalism in China-Philippines standoff

Rhetoric in China and the Philippines has remained heated amid a territorial standoff over the disputed Scarborough Shoal (known in China as Huangyan Island) in the South China Sea (see CMB No. [56](#)). In the past two weeks, Chinese state-run media have aggressively asserted China's sovereignty over the area and issued warnings to the Philippines, though officials also worked to dispel online rumors that the military was preparing for conflict. In an embarrassing slip of the tongue during the news program *24 Hours* on May 7, China Central Television (CCTV) anchorwoman He Jia said twice in one sentence that the Philippines, rather than Huangyan Island, was "part of China." The clip was soon deleted from CCTV's website, but it remained accessible on the domestic video-sharing website Youku, garnering over 700,000 hits and many comments supporting the anchor's statement. Nationalistic sentiment was further fueled by clips of reporter Zhang Fang, of the provincially owned Shanghai Dragon Television, planting China's flag on the shoal's main reef on May 9. The following day, the state-run *China Daily* claimed that the country would not be afraid to fight "when necessary," and the *PLA Daily*, the official military mouthpiece,

warned in a May 11 article that the Philippine government was “in the process of committing a serious mistake.” Separately, a Chinese skincare product manufacturer sought to capitalize on the anti-Philippines sentiment, launching a campaign on its Sina Weibo microblogging account that asked users to post photos of themselves holding a sign that read “Huangyan Island is China’s”; it reportedly attracted over 1,500 submissions in less than a day. Although Chinese state-run media have a history of promoting nationalistic narratives, particularly regarding territorial disputes, some analysts have interpreted the current aggressiveness as an attempt to divert public attention from domestic political uncertainty linked to the recent purge of former Chongqing Communist Party chief Bo Xilai and the upcoming Communist Party Congress in the fall (see below).

- *Time* 5/10/2012: [A Chinese TV anchor claims China owns the Philippines, as spat heats up the South China](#)
- CRI 5/10/2012: [Chinese journalist plants flag on Huangyan Island](#)
- Brand Channel 5/10/2012: [NBA brand partner in China uses anti-Philippines Weibo viral ad](#)
- *Wall Street Journal* 5/13/2012: [China shoots down war-preparation rumors](#)
- *New York Times* 5/15/2012: [Inside the China-Philippines fight in the South China Sea](#)
- *China Daily* 5/10/2012: [A dangerous delusion](#)



Activist cases illustrate police pressure, opaque rulings

The following were among several individual cases reported over the past two weeks. The first two convey some of the unorthodox forms of police pressure faced by online activists and their families in China, while the third shows that decisions to free activists can be just as mysterious as decisions to imprison them.

- **Wedding interrupted:** Chinese democracy advocate Qin Yongmin was harassed by police on his wedding day, May 13, in Wuhan. The police said the gathering was an “unlawful” assembly, and took six guests into custody for questioning. Qin had reportedly been asked by the authorities not to turn his wedding into a “political gathering,” and several of his friends received warnings not to attend. Qin has been closely monitored since November 2010, when he finished serving 12 years in prison for “inciting subversion of state power.” Police warned him in February that he would face immediate detention if he went ahead with plans to launch a political website (see CMB No. [48](#)).
- **Passport invalidated, harassment leads to miscarriage:** Shandong Province netizen Zhao Wei, who had been active in online and offline efforts to end the extralegal house arrest of blind, self-taught lawyer Chen Guangcheng, had his passport invalidated by the Liaocheng City Public Security Bureau on May 4. He was told that he would not be able to apply for a new passport without government approval. Meanwhile, Yang Lanlian, the wife of another Chen supporter, reportedly had a miscarriage on May 12 after days of police questioning and harassment. Chen’s family, associates, and supporters have reportedly faced

varying degrees of police pressure since his escape from custody and flight to the U.S. embassy in late April (see CMB No. [57](#)).

- **Netizen released:** Fujian Province netizen and rights activist You Minglei was released on May 12 after an eight-day detention for distributing political leaflets against Communist Party rule at universities in Jiangxi Province on April 27. He was detained on May 4 and charged with “inciting subversion of state power,” but the criminal detention was downgraded to administrative detention before his release, with no reported explanation.
- *Ming Pao* 5/14/2012 (in Chinese): [Activist’s wedding clamped down](#)
- Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD): [China human rights briefing May 9–14, 2012](#)
- CHRD 4/12/2012 (in Chinese): [Liaocheng City invalidates Zhao Wei passport for supporting Chen Guangcheng](#)

NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



In online letter, party veterans urge sacking of security, propaganda officials

In an open letter dated May 4, a group of 16 retired Communist Party members from Yunnan Province urged the removal of Zhou Yongkang, China’s internal security chief, and Liu Yunshan, the director of the party’s Propaganda Department working under Politburo Standing Committee member Li Changchun (see CMB No. [55](#)). The bold and unusual letter, which included each signatory’s name and telephone number, circulated on overseas websites and some Chinese social-media sites beginning on May 9; relevant search terms were reportedly blocked almost immediately, however. The letter’s authors said Zhou should be removed for supporting recently purged Chongqing Communist Party leader Bo Xilai and his signature combination of neo-Maoist propaganda, curbs on private enterprise, and extralegal repression of opponents, which they saw as harking back to the traumatic Cultural Revolution period. Wu Zhibo, one of the signatories, told the *New York Times* that in addition to targeting Zhou, they also mentioned Liu because he had directed the censorship of discussions on political change and “such a person should not enter the next Politburo.” Wu said police had visited him and other signatories, urging them not to post the letter, but they decided to do so anyway. Zhou has been under mounting pressure since Bo’s ouster from the Politburo in April. Recent unofficial reports indicate that he has been stripped of day-to-day oversight of China’s massive internal security apparatus, which he has directed since 2007. A full-page feature on “political reform” published on May 14 in the Communist Party mouthpiece *People’s Daily* added to the impression that the more hardline elements in the party leadership were losing ground. But David Bandurski of the China Media Project observed that the featured articles contained contradictory statements and ultimately called for the preservation of the existing political and economic system, suggesting that no substantive changes are under serious consideration.

- Agence France-Presse 5/16/2012: [Communist veterans call for China police czar's ouster](#)
 - Canyu 5/9/2012 (in Chinese): [16 CCP elderly members urge removal of Zhou Yongkang and Liu Yunshan](#)
 - *New York Times* 5/16/2012: [16 retired Chinese Communist Party officials call for 2 top leaders to step down](#)
 - *Financial Times* 5/13/2012: [Bo ally gives up China security roles](#)
 - *Asia Times* 5/18/2012: [Dim prospects for political-legal reform in China](#)
 - China Media Project 5/16/2012: [Protecting rights, checking power ... but how?](#)
 - *People's Daily* 5/16/2012: [China makes significant progress in political reforms](#)
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Microblog service plans restrictive ‘user contract’

The Beijing-based magazine *Caijing* reported on May 9 that popular Chinese web portal Sina has created a “user contract” for its microblogging platform Sina Weibo, which will become effective on May 28. The contract lists several types of banned information, including material that harms China’s “territorial integrity” or “spreads rumors, disrupts social order, and destroys societal stability,” all vague terms that the Chinese government frequently uses to justify online censorship of a wide range of social, political, and religious content. The contract also bans the common practice among Chinese netizens of creating subtle puns and hints to avoid keyword-based censorship, and refers to the creation of a user-based “community committee” to oversee implementation and assess the factual accuracy of posts. Sina admitted in April that it had failed to fully implement a new real-name registration policy imposed by the government (see CMB No. [56](#)), raising doubts about whether the new Weibo contract would be universally enforced or applied only selectively. In recent weeks, Sina has continued to close down or temporarily suspend the accounts of high-profile bloggers when they address politically sensitive topics. It has also intervened to disrupt netizen criticism of the government, blocking searches for “*Beijing Daily*” after the capital’s Communist Party mouthpiece drew heavy ridicule online for its attacks on U.S. ambassador to China Gary Locke. Among other poorly considered jabs, the paper had demanded that Locke publish his assets, even though they had already been posted online under U.S. financial disclosure laws—in sharp contrast to those of Chinese officials (CMB No. [57](#)).

- *Caijing* 5/9/2012: [Sina Weibo introduces ‘user contract’](#)
 - Committee to Protect Journalists 5/10/2012: [Chinese microblog regulates, suspends users—again](#)
 - China Media Project 5/15/2012: [Media potshot on U.S. ambassador backfires](#)
 - China Media Project 5/9/2012: [The cost and limitations of control](#)
 - *South China Morning Post* 5/9/2012: [Net police in fresh assault on blogs](#)
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U.S. consulate in Shanghai begins air-quality reporting

On May 14, the U.S. consulate in Shanghai launched a Twitter microblog that provides hourly monitoring of air quality in the city. Because it uses an index developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and tracks smaller air particles than do the local authorities, the consulate's initial assessments rated the city's air quality as "unhealthy," while the Shanghai Environmental Protection Bureau rated it as "good." Twitter is blocked for Chinese users, but many access it via circumvention tools. Widespread distrust of official air-quality assessments has led netizens in a number of cities to purchase their own monitoring devices and post the readings online. A long-standing air-quality report from the U.S. embassy in Beijing has also shown disparities with the monitoring provided by city authorities, and in February public pressure over the issue led Beijing officials to promise a more comprehensive monitoring system by the end of 2012 (see CMB No. 45). The *Shanghai Daily* reported on May 15 that Shanghai officials would begin releasing their own readings on smaller particles in June. However, the paper quoted a Shanghai-based environmental professor as saying that China should not use U.S. standards for air quality, since "the two countries have different demographic situations and are at different steps of development." Searches by *China Media Bulletin* editors found several sarcastic remarks on the topic by Chinese netizens. One wrote on the Chinese search engine Baidu's discussion forum, "The consulate is considered part of the U.S. according to international norms, so it is too bad that air quality of the United States is not as good as Shanghai's."

- *Wall Street Journal* 5/14/2012: [U.S. consulate in Shanghai starts monitoring the air](#)
- *Shanghai Daily* 5/15/2012: [City's air 'good' or 'unhealthy?'](#)
- Agence France-Presse 5/15/2012: [US launches air pollution data in Shanghai](#)



Video of alleged sex crime spurs xenophobia online

A video recording of a British tourist who had apparently sexually assaulted a Chinese woman near Tiananmen Square in Beijing sparked public outrage after it was posted on the Chinese video-sharing website Youku on May 9. The video shows the man standing over the distraught woman, then being beaten by Chinese bystanders before police arrive. The recording was viewed more than 2.6 million times in less than two days, and prompted xenophobic comments about foreigners in China as well as criticism of the police. Censors took no obvious action to remove the video or block the response from netizens, in contrast to past instances of images that threatened to stir public anger over issues like corruption, police brutality, or social inequality. The incident notably comes at a time when the government is attempting to promote national unity after a period of high-level Communist Party infighting (see above). On May 15, the Beijing Public Security Bureau launched a 100-day campaign urging Chinese citizens to report on foreigners with no legal residency or employment status in the capital. Netizens broadly welcomed the crackdown. One wrote, "Leaving aside whether they act violently without any consideration, those (foreigners) who should leave must leave. Not only in Beijing but in the whole country." The campaign was ranked as the fourth-most-searched topic on May 15 on Baidu Beat, a webpage that shows the Chinese search engine Baidu's top 10 trending topics.

- *International Business Times* 5/14/2012: [Xenophobia among Chinese netizens high after alleged attempted rape](#)
 - *Atlantic* 5/14/2012: What China's talking about today: [British man beaten after sexually assaulting a Chinese woman](#)
 - Agence France-Presse 5/15/2012: [Police crack down on illegal foreigners in China](#)
 - Baidu Beat 5/15/2012: [Top ten search list \(May 15\)](#)
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INNER MONGOLIA



Mongolian dissident taken to 'resort,' family under house arrest

Ethnic Mongolian journalist Hada, who had been held in secret detention by the Chinese police since his release from prison in December 2010 (see CMB No. [35](#)), was reportedly sent to a “luxury resort” in Ulaanhad Municipality in eastern Inner Mongolia on April 20. As the founder of the newspaper *Voice of Southern Mongolia*, Hada was jailed for 15 years on charges of “separatism.” According to his uncle, Haschuluu, who visited him on the day he arrived in Ulaanhad, Hada was in poor health, suffering from kidney problems and deteriorating vision. The authorities have tried to pressure him into signing an admission of guilt in exchange for his and his family’s freedom, but he has refused. The New York-based Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC) also reported that his wife Xinna, who had been held at a local detention center, was transferred last month to house arrest in Hohhot with the couple’s son, Uiles. In early April, she was sentenced to three years in prison with five years of reprieve for allegedly “engaging in illegal business.” Hada’s uncle said the Chinese authorities had offered Xinna and Uiles jobs, cars, a luxury home, and a “beautiful girlfriend” for Uiles if they cooperated with the government’s demands. The pair were said to have rejected the enticements and asserted their determination to sue the government for arbitrary detention and torture.

- SMHRIC 5/9/2012: [Hada held in 'luxury resort,' Xinna sentenced to 3 year years, Uiles kept under house arrest](#)
 - Reuters 5/10/2012: [China moves long-missing Mongolian dissident to 'luxury resort'](#)
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BEYOND CHINA



Chinese state-owned paper to launch African edition

Britain’s *Guardian* newspaper reported on May 14 that the Chinese state-run, English-language paper *China Daily* plans to publish a weekly edition for Africa. The decision reflects the Chinese government’s growing interests in the region, particularly its involvement in extractive industries.

The African edition, which will initially aim to sell 10,000 copies a day across the continent, is to be produced from a Johannesburg bureau, with another office planned for Nairobi, Kenya. *China Daily* deputy chief editor Gao Anming insisted that the paper has an independent editorial policy despite its state ownership. However, in practice it frequently relies on reporting from the official Xinhua news agency, and its own content clearly toes the Chinese Communist Party line, especially on sensitive issues like unrest in Tibet. On May 9, the newspaper published a response to an April 15 *New York Times* op-ed article (see CMB No. 54), which it said had “demonized” China’s rising media presence in Africa. The *Times* article warned that China was helping African governments to curb press freedom in their countries. But the *China Daily* opinion piece argued that China took a “pragmatic” approach to media assistance, in which “governments, the media and the people consider each other partners in development.” Far from denying the threats to press freedom, it said African governments had good reason to “elevate unity and stability over the freedom of the oftentimes irresponsible, sensational and inflammatory press.”

- *Guardian* 5/14/2012: [China Daily to publish African edition as Beijing strengthens voice abroad](#)
 - *China Daily* 5/9/2012: [An alternative approach for African media](#)
 - *China Daily* 5/16/2012: [Conspiracy behind self-immolations](#)
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Chinese blogger makes cross-strait comparisons after Taiwan visit

A microblog post on Taiwan written by prominent Chinese blogger and novelist Han Han, who began his first visit to the country on May 1, was widely circulated by Chinese speakers online. Han Han was in Taipei for a four-day business and cultural forum organized by the Taipei-based magazine *Global Views Monthly*. He wrote on May 10 that his encounters with “really nice” Taiwanese people made him feel a sense of loss, as his parents’ generation in China had “destroyed our culture,” leaving a society focused on “self-survival and competition.” He wrote that in China, “I have to constantly worry about whether my words will step on some line somewhere. I assume people have ulterior motives when they treat me with warmth.” He went on to thank Hong Kong and Taiwan for “protecting Chinese civilization.” In an interview with the *Financial Times* published on April 21, Han Han was asked what kind of country he would like his daughter to grow up in. He answered, “When you come to China to interview me again, we shouldn’t need to talk about politics, we shouldn’t need to talk about freedom of expression. Because those things will be a given. Instead, we’ll just talk about football and food and music—and movies.”

- *Financial Times* 4/21/2012: [Lunch with the FT: Han Han](#)
 - Central News Agency 5/4/2012: [Popular Chinese blogger makes low-profile visit to Taiwan](#)
 - *Tea Leaf Nation* 5/11/2012: [Translation: Han Han says Hong Kong, Taiwan ‘protecting Chinese civilization’](#)
 - [Han Han’s blog](#)
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NOTABLE ANALYSIS



Perry Link, Freedom House blog warn against assumptions of regime stability

On May 10, the *Washington Post* published an article by prominent China expert Perry Link, who argued that the U.S. government should move away from the identification of China with the Communist Party leadership. He said the conflation dated to the early 1970s, when “the regime’s rulers were indeed the only Chinese whom Americans could reasonably approach.” According to Link, this understanding is now “obtuse, even dangerous,” because it ignores other voices and influential actors in Chinese society and wrongly assumes that the current regime will continue indefinitely. In a May 16 posting on Freedom House’s *Freedom at Issue* blog, staff editor Tyler Roylance also warned against assumptions of regime stability. He said that the recent abnormal surge in the share price of the People’s Daily Online was indicative of China’s broader array of politically imposed economic distortions. He argued that these distortions, given the regime’s tendency to suppress problems and resist substantive reforms, could ultimately get out of control and cause a serious economic or political disruption.

- *Washington Post* 5/10/2012: [America’s outdated view of China](#)
- *Freedom at Issue* 5/16/2012: [The pigs are flying in China](#)

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

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

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