

# CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

Issue No. 64: July 12, 2012

## Top Headlines

-  State TV mocked for censoring Michelangelo statue
-  Regulators announce new restrictions on online video
-  Bloggers' debate in park ends with scuffle
-  Mainland activists missing after run-in with fake HK reporter
-  Zimbabwe state TV to air Chinese news programs

## PHOTO OF THE WEEK: BLOGGERS DEBATE OFFLINE



Credit: [YouTube](#)

## BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS



### **Print media avoid Shifang protest coverage**

Mass protests in Shifang, Sichuan Province, succeeded in halting construction of a molybdenum copper plant on July 4, but Chinese newspapers generally avoided mentioning the unrest, focusing instead on the fact of the project's cancellation and its business-related fallout (see CMB No. [63](#)). According to the China Media Project in Hong Kong, out of 10 newspapers published on July 5, only *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily* and *Global Times* noted the demonstrations, which included police violence and were widely discussed online. The *Global Times* article offered polite criticism of the local government, and even relayed public demands that all detained protesters be released, though it said their cases had to “be based on facts and be decided by law.” The Communist Party–owned paper also stressed the need to prevent further confrontations, warning that “a local dispute in China can easily turn into a national issue.” Some residents expressed fears that the factory dispute was far from over. A student protest organizer told Reuters, “We’re not only worried they’ll keep building it, we’re also concerned the government will settle its accounts (with the protest organizers) once the dust has settled.” When asked about the cancellation of the project, a farmer in Shifang replied, “They’re liars!... Nobody believes they won’t build it eventually.”

- Reuters 7/8/2012: [China pollution protest ends, but suspicion of government high](#)
- China Media Project 7/5/2012: [In China’s papers, Sichuan unrest is just a business story](#)
- *Global Times* 7/5/2012: [Shifang protest needs law-based conclusion](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 7/4/2012 (in Chinese): [Mainland residents express grave concern to environmental issues](#)



### **Dissident writer allowed to leave for New York**

On July 7, the Chinese authorities allowed dissident writer Gu Chuan and his family to leave for New York, where he will take a position as a visiting scholar at Columbia University. According to Radio Free Asia, he was warned by Chinese police not to give interviews to the media or get involved with overseas activists in the United States. Gu, a cosigner of the prodemocracy manifesto *Charter 08*, had previously been barred from leaving China due to his political writing. After the authorities prevented him from boarding a plane to the United States on April 6, he, his wife, and their two children were placed under de facto house arrest in the capital. Hubei-based writer Liu Yiming said it was unlikely that the Chinese authorities would allow Gu to return to China. His prompt exit was seen as part of a government effort to avoid any political disruptions ahead of the 18th Communist Party Congress scheduled for the fall. Referring to Gu and several other influential Chinese activists, prominent AIDS and environmental advocate Hu Jia said that in the government’s view, “they are an unstable factor, so it’s probably better to let them leave.” Travel restrictions on political and religious dissidents are common in China, and over the past year, some writers have fled clandestinely, while others have been stopped at the border or denied passports (see CMB No. [44](#)). Nevertheless, the regime’s strategy may have begun to change in May, when Beijing allowed

prominent activist Chen Guangcheng to leave for New York. He had escaped from extralegal house arrest in April and took refuge in the U.S. embassy, causing a major scandal. Chen has spoken freely with the media since his arrival, raising doubts about the efficacy of the warnings issued to Gu (see CMB No. [59](#)).

- **Radio Free Asia 7/9/2012: [Dissident writer allowed to go to US](#)**
  - **Frontline Defenders 7/11/2012: [China – update: Human rights defender Mr Gu Chuan and family permitted to leave China](#)**
  - **Scholars at Risk 4/10/2012: [Scholars at Risk calls for letters on behalf of Gu Chuan of China](#)**
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### **State TV mocked for censoring Michelangelo statue**

Italian Renaissance artist Michelangelo’s *David-Apollo* statue, one of 67 works on exhibition at Beijing’s National Museum of China, became the subject of online outrage and mockery after state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) digitally blurred the sculpture’s genitals during its noon newscast on July 9. Without offering a formal explanation, the station aired uncensored footage for its afternoon news program on the same day. In a July 10 article entitled “Art or porn? CCTV is not sure,” state-run *China Daily* said “CCTV adds mosaic to statue” had become one of the top search terms on the popular microblogging platform Sina Weibo. “Without the mosaic, it is art. With the mosaic, it has become porno,” one netizen complained. “Based on such logic, from now on, CCTV should make the statue of Venus put on a bra or bikini every time it appears on television,” joked prominent blogger Wang Xuejin.

- ***Telegraph* 7/10/2012: [Michelangelo becomes latest victim of Chinese censorship](#)**
  - ***Atlantic Wire* 7/10/2012: [China turned Michelangelo’s David into porn](#)**
  - ***China Daily* 7/10/2012: [Art or porn? CCTV is not sure](#)**
  - **Sichuan Online 7/11/2012 (in Chinese): [CCTV must be enlightened](#)**
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## **NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS**



### **Regulators announce new restrictions on online video**

In recent months, social media networks have emerged as a new space for disseminating uncensored video content, including short documentaries about breaking news events. Two government-run regulators—the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) and the State Internet Information Office—responded on July 9, announcing that they had issued a joint notice regarding new rules for “micro films,” “online dramas,” and other online video content (see CMB No. [48](#)). The notice, which was not made public, was sent to online video service providers, their industry association, and relevant government agencies. It requires the providers to follow government content controls, warns that they will be held responsible for violations, urges the association to provide training to human censors on what is “healthy” programming, and tells government bodies

to reward or demerit providers based on their implementation of the rules. Although the regulations reportedly cite vulgar and distasteful content as the justification, David Bandurski of the China Media Project in Hong Kong points out that a SARFT spokesperson said online videos reaching mass audiences had to adhere to “correct guidance,” a common euphemism for politically motivated propaganda controls. Many journalists and netizens criticized the new regulations, with some questioning whether SARFT has the capacity to enforce such far-reaching rules. The Communist Party may simply enforce the rules selectively, focusing on its critics, while pressuring online providers to step up their in-house monitoring and deletions. Meanwhile, a New York–based firm, Star P2P, has reportedly designed a video-streaming technology based on peer-to-peer sharing that enables Chinese users with a broadband internet connection to view and post television programming or videos that are otherwise blocked in China. The firm formally launched a streamed online television network called IPPOTV this month, and says its software encrypts the transmitted data, protecting the identity of users who view politically sensitive content.

- *China Digital Times* 7/10/2012: [China’s censors turn on ‘micro films’](#)
- TheNextWeb 7/10/2012: [Chinese authorities warn web video services over content, reinforce need to censor](#)
- SARFT 7/9/2012 (in Chinese): [SARFT and SIIO jointly announce guidelines on healthy development of online series and microfilms](#)
- *Epoch Times* 7/18/2012: [Internet TV company helps break Beijing’s censorship](#)
- IPPOTV: [What is IPPOTV?](#)



## **Bloggers’ debate in park ends with scuffle**

A recent public debate among several well-known Chinese bloggers degenerated into a heated fracas. The confrontation took place on July 6 in Beijing’s Chaoyang Park, initially pitting China University of Political Science and Law assistant professor Wu Danhong (also known by his penname Wu Fatian), whom activists have accused of being a paid commentator given the consistently progovernment slant of his posts, against Zhou Yan, a reporter at Sichuan Television Station who had covered the recent protests in Shifang (see above, CMB No. [63](#)). The two had agreed to have an offline debate after Wu wrote a controversial post on his Sina Weibo microblogging account on July 3, arguing that a proposed molybdenum copper plant in Shifang—since canceled in response to the protesters’ demands—would not have been harmful to the environment, because molybdenum and copper were “necessary elements for the human body.” A video of the incident posted online shows a crowd gathered around Wu, people arguing back and forth, and occasional shoving. After about 10 minutes, prominent artist and blogger Ai Weiwei makes a surprise appearance, aggressively approaching Wu to cheers from the crowd. Wu told the Communist Party–owned newspaper *Global Times* that he was attacked by Zhou, Ai, and Yao Bo, a writer and democracy activist. According to the paper, Zhou wrote on Weibo that she threw eggs at Wu and kicked him, though it said the post was quickly deleted. Ai denied attacking the professor, but admitted to pulling his ear “for less than a second.” The *Global Times* said the confrontation “shames all Weibo intellectuals.”

- *Telegraph* 7/9/2012: [Chinese bloggers embroiled in park brawl](#)
- *Financial Times* 7/9/2012: [When the virtual world enters the real realm—Chinese style](#)

- *Global Times* 7/6/2012: [Weibo blogger allegedly beaten](#)
  - *China Digital Times* 7/7/2012: [Mixed views & fisticuffs over Shifang protests \(updated\)](#)
  - YouTube 7/6/2012: [Wu Fatian beaten](#)
  - Beijing Cream 7/8/2012: [Playground blogger fight attracts Ai Weiwei, Cops, censors](#)
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## Orphanage abuses exposed after photos leaked online

An orphanage in Cangnan County, Zhejiang Province, was investigated by local authorities after photographs showing two of its orphans in chains began circulating online on June 29. The images show two boys shackled with restraints that include bicycle locks. In response to the ensuing netizen uproar, Cangnan authorities sacked the orphanage director, Lin Shouguo. Of the facility's 21 children, 19 apparently had disabilities, but they were cared for by just four elderly women who lacked any special training. State-run Xinhua news agency reported on July 5 that volunteers had “rushed to help out” at the orphanage, with a group of doctors offering health check-ups for the children. Local officials vowed to launch a thorough inspection of welfare institutions in the county to prevent “such things from happening again.” Because they circumvent local authorities and state-run media, the internet and microblogs in particular have increasingly been used to expose cases of abuse or injustice in China. Censors are often unable to react quickly enough to block such information, and appear willing to let some localized scandals play out until the authorities step in with a putative solution. But online discussions tend to be shut down if they become overtly political or snowball into offline activism (see CMB No. [61](#)).

- *Telegraph* 7/6/2012: [Orphans pictured chained up in China](#)
  - *Xinhua* 7/5/2012: [Orphans brutally abused get a flood of offers to help](#)
  - *Epoch Times* 7/10/2012: [Photo shows Chinese orphans chained; netizens incensed](#)
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## Territorial dispute with Japan inspires popular iPad game

A computer game called *Defend the Diaoyu Islands* recently became one of the top 10 downloads from Apple's online store in China, but by July 9 it had been taken down, apparently for violating Apple's terms of use. Launched on June 21 by Shenzhen-based ZQGame for Apple's iPad tablet computer, *Defend the Diaoyu Islands* focuses on the real-world dispute between China and Japan over a Japanese-held island group, also known as the Senkaku Islands, in the East China Sea—one of several maritime territorial claims that have recently caused friction between China and its neighbors (see CMB No. [58](#)). The game challenges players to accumulate “rage” used to destroy waves of cartoonish, stereotypical Japanese attackers. The introduction to the game reads in part, “Let us annihilate any attempt by the Japanese devils to come ashore our islands.” The hateful and violent anti-Japanese nature of the game likely triggered its removal by Apple, which forbids the simulated targeting of a specific race, culture, government, corporation, or any other real entity. ZQGame has developed other jingoistic games, including one set in wartime Nanjing that urges players to fight off

Japanese invaders and “pay back blood with blood” (see CMB No. [43](#)). Despite the new game’s popularity, many netizens were dismissive. One wrote on the Chinese web portal NetEase, “They have no guts for the real deal, so playing a game is the most they can do. Sigh.”

- *Wall Street Journal* 7/4/2012: [All the rage: China-Japan Diaoyu dispute, now an iPad game](#)
  - Ministry of Tofu 7/8/2012: [War between Japan and China over Diaoyu/Senkaku islands is waged on iPad](#)
  - *Wired* 7/6/2012: [Chinese iPad game depicts slaughter of stereotypical Japanese](#)
  - *China Daily* 7/11/2012: [Diaoyu Islands game pulled from app site](#)
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## HONG KONG



### **Mainland activists missing after run-in with fake reporter**

Two mainland Chinese activists, Song Ningsheng and Zeng Jiuzi, reportedly went missing two days after joining a mass protest in Hong Kong on July 1, the 15th anniversary of the territory’s handover to China. According to the Chinese Citizens’ Rights Protection Alliance, the group that organized Song and Zeng’s visit to Hong Kong, the pair have not been heard from since they returned home to Jiangxi Province on July 3. Hong Kong’s *Apple Daily* reported that their disappearance was linked to an encounter with a Chinese security officer who pretended to be a reporter with the paper. The man showed up at the protest with a camera and computer, and approached the two activists and others from their group to ask questions. The following day, the fake journalist asked Song to meet again regarding “interview materials.” When they met, the man reportedly said he had been sent by the Jiangxi Public Security Bureau. Song called the police, but the man told them he was a travel agent, so the officers decided not to detain him due to “lack of evidence.” According to *Apple Daily*, Song received threatening telephone calls from Jiangxi officials prior to the protest. The rights alliance had arranged for 200 Chinese activists to join the demonstration, but about half were stopped at the border. The group reports that besides Song and Zeng, it has lost contact with five or six other marchers from the mainland. Hong Kong lawmakers said that it is an open secret that Chinese security agents monitor activists in the semiautonomous territory, but that the latest example shows they are becoming bolder. Separately, *Apple Daily* reporter Hon Yiuting, who was briefly detained on June 30 after he openly asked Chinese president Hu Jintao about the June 4, 1989, Tiananmen Square crackdown (see CMB No. [63](#)), filed a lawsuit on July 6 against the Hong Kong police for “unlawful detention.” Five officers, including police chief Andy Tsang, were named as defendants in the case.

- *South China Morning Post* 7/7/2012: [Mainland activists go missing after march](#)
  - Media Mobserver 7/3/2012 (in Chinese): [Policeman poses as Apple Daily reporter to collect information from Mainland activists marching in Hong Kong](#)
  - Agence France-Presse 7/8/2012: [HK paper sues over reporter held after querying Hu over Tiananmen](#)
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## BEYOND CHINA



### **Zimbabwe state TV to air Chinese news programs**

State-run Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and China Central Television (CCTV) announced a three-year agreement on July 2 that will allow the African station to air CCTV news programs. ZBC will also reportedly receive equipment needed to receive the Chinese transmissions. As its ratings continue to tumble, ZBC has been criticized for becoming a party mouthpiece for President Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) (see CMB No. [5](#)). According to state-run Xinhua news agency, ZANU-PF chairman Simon Khaya Moyo said the two countries should work together to “restore Zimbabwe’s good image which has been tarnished by Western propaganda.” In recent years, Beijing has increasingly provided African leaders with generous support for media and information infrastructure, allowing them to enhance progovernment news outlets and possibly to block critical websites. China has also sought to promote its own image and view of world affairs by expanding its state-run outlets’ presence in Africa (see CMB Nos. [58](#), [62](#)). Both China and Zimbabwe were rated Not Free in Freedom House’s *Freedom of the Press 2012* report.

- SW Radio Africa 7/4/2012: [Zimbabwe: ZBC to broadcast Chinese news programmes](#)
- Xinhua 7/3/2012: [China, Zimbabwe sign MoU on exchange of TV programs](#)



### **Vietnamese authorities probe unlicensed Baidu website**

Vietnam’s Department of Broadcast, Television, and E-Information reported on July 3 that the social-networking platform Baidu Tra Da Quan, the latest Vietnamese-language website from Chinese search engine giant Baidu, had not attempted to register with the Vietnamese authorities before its launch on July 1, though it was not yet fully operational. Department official Dao Kin Phu said that the relevant government agencies would investigate the case, as all social-networking websites operating in the country are required to obtain a license from the Ministry of Information and Communications. Local media reported that Baidu currently had two other websites targeting Vietnamese internet users: Hoidap, a question-and-answer service, and Hao123, a search engine. Neither of them are licensed, and both rely on servers located in China to avoid supervision by the Vietnamese authorities. Speaking anonymously, a Baidu staff member told the British Broadcasting Corporation that the company’s services were not popular in Vietnam due to its worsening relations with China in recent years (see CMB No. [25](#)). Both China and Vietnam were rated Not Free in Freedom House’s *Freedom on the Net 2011* report.

- Tech in Asia 7/4/2012: [Vietnamese authorities keeping close eye on upcoming Baidu social site](#)
- Tuoi Tre News 7/4/2012: [Agency to probe unlicensed Chinese social website](#)
- BBC Vietnam 7/6/2012 (in Vietnamese): [Baidu is ‘surprised’ by opposition](#)