



CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

Issue No. 76: December 6, 2012 Headlines



- Politburo aims to curb profligacy, fawning coverage of top officials
- New propaganda chief drops from public view
- Nobel winner Mo Yan defends censorship, reporters reach Liu Xia
- TV station suspended over vulgar row on game show
- Tibetans held for mobile-phone Dalai Lama images

PHOTO OF THE WEEK: REBEL OF THE YEAR



Credit: [ChinaAid](#)

BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS



Politburo aims to curb profligacy, fawning coverage of top officials

The official Xinhua news agency on December 4 unveiled a list of “do’s and don’t’s” for top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party. The party’s Politburo had agreed on the code of conduct that day in a meeting chaired by new party leader Xi Jinping, claiming that the objective was to “genuinely win the confidence and support of the people.” Among the array of guidelines were general prudence in spending, controls on the scale of meetings and delegations, bans on extravagant banquets and ribbon-cutting ceremonies without prior approval, and motorcades that are less disruptive of normal traffic. State media were also asked to refrain from copious coverage of official activities, instead reporting events based on their “news value and the effect on society.” In an effort to give the new leadership a more down-to-earth image, state broadcasters had aired footage the previous week of a meeting in which the seven Politburo Standing Committee members were dressed in casual attire. If implemented, Xi’s calls for more humble public behavior by party leaders would complement existing censorship of news about official malfeasance. According to leaked media directives published by *China Digital Times*, for example, the Guangdong Propaganda Department issued a series of instructions from November 26 to November 28 on how local media outlets should suppress or toe the line on various cases of graft and bribery in the province. A separate leaked directive from the Central Propaganda Department sought to control coverage of a new anticorruption law in Vietnam—the sort of measure that might begin to address the root cause of the Chinese leadership’s image problem (see below).

- *Wall Street Journal* 12/5/2012: [Beijing rolls up red carpets](#)
- *Reuters* 12/4/2012: [Roll back red carpets, Xi tells senior leaders](#)
- *Xinhua* 12/4/2012 (in Chinese): [Xi Jinping chaired meeting of Politburo Standing Committee members](#)
- *China Digital Times* 11/29/2012: [Ministry of Truth: Unexpected emergencies](#)



New propaganda chief drops from public view

Liu Qibao, whose appointment as head of the Communist Party’s Central Propaganda Department was announced on November 21, has been missing from public view since November 27. His unexplained absence drew comparisons to a similar disappearance in September by incoming party leader Xi Jinping, who reappeared after about two weeks (see CMB No. [67](#)). State media had reported that Liu would make official visits to North Korea, Laos, and Vietnam from November 29 to December 2, but the delegation was instead led by Li Jianguo, the vice chairman of the National People’s Congress. On December 3, during a conference organized by the China Television Artists Association in Beijing, the deputy chief of the Central Propaganda Department, Luo Shu, said he wanted to pass on Liu’s warm regards to the audience. According to the *Epoch Times*, speculation on the reasons behind the official’s absence included rumors that his mother had died and suggestions that he was being questioned in an antigraft investigation into his former colleagues in Sichuan Province, where he had served as party chief. Searches of the popular microblogging platform Sina Weibo by editors of the *China Media Bulletin* on December 5 found that Liu’s name was not blocked,

but only three results appeared, along with a notice that read, “Due to regulations, most search results cannot be displayed.”

- **China Media Project 12/3/2012: [Where is Liu Qibao?](#)**
 - **Central News Agency 11/30/2012: [Chinese propaganda chief does not make trip as scheduled](#)**
 - **Xinhua 11/28/2012: [Senior CPC official to visit DPRK, Laos, Vietnam](#)**
 - **Xinhua 12/5/2012 (in Chinese): [Liu Qibao’s regards delivered at China Television Artists Association conference](#)**
 - ***Epoch Times* 12/1/2012 (in Chinese): [Liu Qibao missing in Xi’s style, rumor says his mom died](#)**
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Nobel winner Mo Yan defends censorship, reporters reach Liu Xia

Speaking at a news conference in Stockholm on December 6, Chinese novelist Mo Yan, the winner of the 2012 Nobel Prize in literature, said censorship is as necessary as security checks at airports. Mo, a Communist Party member and the vice president of China’s party-backed writers’ association, has been criticized for his close ties to the Chinese authorities. The 2009 literature laureate, Herta Mueller, described the Nobel jury’s decision to award Mo the prize as a “catastrophe.” At the news conference, Mo refused to answer journalists’ questions related to jailed 2010 Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo. “On the same evening of my winning the prize, I already expressed my opinion, and you can get online to make a search,” the writer said, although the fact that Liu’s name is censored on the Chinese internet could inhibit such searches by his countrymen (see CMB No. [72](#)). Stating that he preferred to remain “independent,” Mo declined to join 134 Nobel laureates who had signed a petition calling on new Communist Party leader Xi Jinping to release Liu and his wife, Liu Xia. The novelist explained, “When someone forces me to do something I don’t do it.” On the same day as the conference, Liu Xia—who has been under illegal house arrest in Beijing for more than two years, without access to the internet or a telephone—was visited by journalists from the Associated Press. The reporters managed to enter her apartment when security guards left for a lunch break. Stunned by the unexpected visit, Liu trembled uncontrollably and cried, remarking, “We live in such an absurd place.” In her first interview in 26 months, Liu said her situation was in sharp contrast to Beijing’s celebratory response to Mo’s literature prize. Mo is scheduled to receive the award at a ceremony on December 10.

- **Associated Press 12/6/2012: [Mo Yan, Nobel literature prize winner, says censorship is necessary](#)**
 - **Reuters 12/6/2012: [Chinese Nobel winner dodges call for laureate’s freedom](#)**
 - **Reporters Without Borders 12/4/2012: [134 Nobel laureates urge incoming Chinese president Xi Jinping to release Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo and wife Liu Xia](#)**
 - ***Guardian* 11/26/2012: [Mo Yan’s Nobel nod a ‘catastrophe’, says fellow laureate Herta Müller](#)**
 - **Associated Press 12/6/2012: [AP exclusive: Detained China Nobel wife speaks out](#)**
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TV station suspended over vulgar row on game show

The State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) suspended all programming on regional broadcaster Jiangsu Educational Television as of November 30 after an unaired segment of its quiz show *Bang Bang Bang* was leaked online, showing a profanity-laden shouting match between guests and the audience. The clip featured Chinese auto show model Gan Lulu, who earned fame after her mother posted a nude video of her on the internet. The argument was triggered by a spectator who asked whether Gan had undermined China's morality. Gan and her younger sister responded angrily, and their mother, who was in the crowd, joined the fray, hurling taunts such as "Can your mom make you the sexy goddess of China?" and "Can your mom make billions of people like you? Gan's mom can!" SARFT had first canceled the show on November 28, finding that the incident would have a "negative influence on society." It issued a second directive the next day, suspending all programming on the grounds that the station had violated state regulations by airing entertainment content while registered as an education channel. The *Bang Bang Bang* editor was subsequently sacked, and the station's distance-learning programs were disrupted by the suspension. State media hailed the decision. A *Global Times* editorial read, "For an educational channel tasked with providing good content for young people, it is inexcusable for three shrews to cause a scene like this on its program." SARFT has taken a number of steps to restrict entertainment programming by regional broadcasters since 2011 (see CMB No. [67](#)).

- **Associated Press 11/30/2012:** [China bans rowdy game show for 'wanton' content](#)
- **SARFT 11/28/2012 (in Chinese):** [SARFT to cancel Bang Bang Bang to get 'scandalous ones' off the screen](#)
- **People's Daily 11/29/2012 (in Chinese):** [SARFT to suspend Jiangsu Educational Television](#)
- **South China Morning Post 12/1/2012:** [Lewd tirade involving Gan Lulu and mum gets game show canceled](#)
- **Global Times 12/2/2012:** [Get Gan Lulu's breasts off our screens](#)



Red song concert canceled in Beijing

In a last-minute decision, Beijing authorities canceled a mass concert planned for December 1 at the Great Hall of the People that would have featured revolutionary anthems from the Mao Zedong era. Such "red song" recitals have fallen out of favor due to their association with purged Chongqing Communist Party chief Bo Xilai and his neo-Maoist supporters (see CMB Nos. [71](#), [75](#)). The canceled event, titled the "China Golden Age of Song Cultural Festival for Older People," was organized by two entities affiliated with the Ministry of Culture. Participants had been told that it would be attended by senior party members, including new leader Xi Jinping and premier-in-waiting Li Keqiang. Thousands of performers, most of them elderly, had paid their own travel expenses and a fee of 2,000 yuan (\$320); the latter was repaid by organizers only after the disappointed participants protested. Amid heated discussion on the popular microblogging platform Sina Weibo, one user said his company had helped sponsor the event but received nothing in return. Others expressed sympathy for the elderly choir members, three of whom reportedly fainted and one of whom was sent to a hospital after arguing over the refund.

- *Epoch Times* 12/4/2012 (in Chinese): [Red song singers tricked to the Great Hall from elsewhere starved and argued for one night](#)
 - Radio Free Asia 12/4/2012: [Beijing bans 'red song' concert](#)
 - *Sintao Daily* 12/3/2012: [A split China as reflected by local sing-red activists frustrated in Beijing](#)
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Exiled activist Chen Guangcheng demands rule of law, nephew sentenced

In a speech recorded on November 25 and released in advance of UN-designated Human Rights Day on December 10, blind, self-taught activist lawyer Chen Guangcheng demanded that China's new Communist Party leader, Xi Jinping, defend human rights and uphold the rule of law in the country, warning that his decisions would determine "whether China will have the transition in a peaceful way or a violent way." Chen, who has lived in New York since May after escaping from illegal house arrest in Shandong Province (see CMB No. [59](#)), also urged the Chinese people to fight for their own rights. In the 10-minute speech, he listed Chinese activists who remained in jail or had gone missing, including 2010 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo and human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng. Chen was recently named as one of the "Top 100 Global Thinkers" by *Foreign Policy* magazine, as well as "Rebel of the Year" by *GQ* magazine. Meanwhile, his family has continued to suffer persecution in China. On November 30, Chen's nephew, Chen Kegui, received a 39-month jail term for injuring officials with a kitchen knife when they broke into his house and beat him in April while searching for the activist, who had escaped to the U.S. embassy in Beijing. Chen Kegui's relatives were not allowed to hire a lawyer for him, and he reportedly promised not to appeal the verdict and to pay compensation to one of the injured officials, raising suspicions that he was being coerced.

- ChinaAid 12/2/2012: [ChinaAid Exclusive: Blind Chinese legal activist Chen Guangcheng to Xi Jinping: reform now or risk violent transition](#)
 - *Foreign Policy* 11/26/2012: [The FP top 100 global thinkers: Chen Guangcheng](#)
 - *GQ* 11/23/2012: [Chen Guangcheng: Rebel of the year 2012](#)
 - Reuters 12/4/2012: [Blind China dissident says jailed nephew acted in self-defense](#)
 - *Washington Post* 11/30/2012: [Chen Guangcheng's nephew found guilty of assault in China; sentenced to 39 months](#)
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NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



Netizens find humor, workarounds as propaganda machine churns on

- **Media directives:** In leaked media directives reportedly issued on November 26, the Central Propaganda Department instructed editors on how to cover various news stories, including the North Korean government's denunciation of former army chief Ri Yong-ho as a "counterrevolutionary," Vietnam's passing of an anticorruption bill, and a new legal case

involving former millionaire businesswoman Wu Ying (see CMB No. [55](#)). All news outlets were ordered to use only articles distributed by the official Xinhua news agency on these topics. On November 27, the Central Propaganda Department banned coverage of Heilongjiang-based television anchorwoman Wang Dechun's sexual assault allegations against a National People's Congress member, a mine explosion in Guizhou Province, and a giant slogan carved into a North Korean mountainside to praise the country's leader, Kim Jong-un. Traditional media were ordered on November 28 not to report or comment on a list of Chinese Communist Party Central Committee members that had been circulated online. All news outlets were also banned from reprinting an economist's critique of China's structural weaknesses, and online rumors that the State Council would initiate an internal reform.

- **People's Daily gaffe:** Chinese netizens posted a series of sarcastic comments on the microblogging service Sina Weibo after People's Daily Online, the web version of the Communist Party's main print outlet, on November 27 apparently mistook an article in the U.S.-based satirical newspaper the *Onion* for an actual news item (see CMB No. [75](#)). The piece had declared North Korean leader Kim Jong-un the "sexiest man alive" for 2012. One user wrote, "You really don't get it. The People's Daily Online is also a parody site!" Another remarked that it was hard to blame the site's editors for their error, since "nowadays it's harder and harder to find great, glorious, and correct events." A user nicknamed GeLeixia simply concluded, "If the Party says he's sexy, he's sexy."
- **Hong Kong papers on Weibo:** On December 2, a Weibo post that included photographs of several articles from Hong Kong newspapers was removed from the account of Chinese journalist Song Yangbiao, which has 17,000 followers. Unlike in mainland China, media in Hong Kong are largely uncensored. The articles included a summary of the *New York Times*' latest revelation about Chinese premier Wen Jiabao's family assets (see CMB No. [73](#)), as well as a car accident in Shandong Province that killed at least seven people and the reported use of scrap steel for making false teeth in Beijing. The text accompanying the images read in part, "What is China coming to?"
- *China Digital Times* 11/28/2012: [Netizens revel in People's Daily-Onion gaff](#)
- *China Digital Times* 11/29/2012: [Ministry of Truth: Paeans to Kim Jong-Un and more](#)
- China Media Project 12/3/2012: [Post on Wen Jiabao deleted from Weibo](#)

TIBET & XINJIANG



Uighur scholar removed from Beijing, Hunan cake fracas debated online

Ilham Tohti, a prominent Beijing-based Uighur economics professor and founder of the minority rights website Uyghur Online, has said in an interview with Radio Free Asia that he was harassed by the Chinese authorities ahead of the November 8–14 Communist Party Congress (see CMB Nos. [10](#), [73](#)). In October he was informed that he would have to leave Beijing during the congress, and police initially took him to Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi. However, he was later taken to his hometown, Atush, where he was put under surveillance and his visitors were interrogated by the authorities before seeing him. Tohti said his family members in Atush distanced themselves from him, encouraging

him to return to Beijing after the congress. Separately, on December 3, an incident between a Uighur cake vendor and a resident of Yueyang, Hunan Province, became a focus of debate on the popular microblogging platform Sina Weibo. According to a posting on the Yueyang police's Weibo account, the verbal dispute escalated into a larger disturbance in which nut cakes worth 160,000 yuan (\$25,000) were destroyed, a motorcycle was damaged, and two people were injured. The local resident was detained by police, and 16 Uighur vendors were compensated before being sent back to Xinjiang. Although the police posting was subsequently removed, netizens quickly seized on the apparently exorbitant appraisal of the cake's value, suggesting in series of jokes that the police had been swindled. However, the details of the incident remained unclear, and many comments were colored by common racial stereotyping in which Uighurs are seen as deceitful or criminals.

- **Radio Free Asia 12/4/2012: [Uyghur scholar harassed](#)**
 - ***South China Morning Post* 12/5/2012: [World's most expensive baklava: US\\$25,000 cake goes viral on Chinese social media](#)**
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Tibetans held for mobile-phone Dalai Lama images

The overseas Tibetan news site Phayul reported on December 4 that four Tibetans had been detained in Rebkong (Tongren), Qinghai Province, for possession of pictures of the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader. The four men were held after the police found images of the Dalai Lama on their mobile telephones. Following a series of self-immolations in the area, officials had stepped up inspection of local Tibetan people's electronic devices to prevent them from making contact outside the region. Separately, Phayul reported on November 30 that the authorities in Kanlho (Gannan), Gansu Province, had made a public announcement offering 200,000 yuan (\$32,000) for information on Golog Jigme Gyatso, a Tibetan monk who assisted filmmaker Dhondup Wangchen in shooting the documentary *Leaving Fear Behind* in 2008. The announcement accused Jigme of murder, but local Tibetans reportedly view the claim as an attempt to deflect suspicions that the monk had died in custody after being detained in September (see CMB No. [73](#)). An estimated 90 Tibetans have set themselves on fire since 2009 to protest Chinese rule, and the ensuing security and communications clampdowns have added to public frustration (see CMB No. [75](#)). The U.S. State Department on November 30 confirmed reports that U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Michael Posner had met in Washington on November 29 with families of three of the Tibetans who have self-immolated, saying the United States remained very concerned about "counterproductive" Chinese policies that "threaten the distinct religious, cultural and linguistic identity of the Tibetan people." U.S. ambassador to China Gary Locke had visited Tibetan areas in late September (see CMB No. [74](#)).

- **Phayul 12/4/2012: [Arrests in Tibet over the Dalai Lama's photos, self-immolations](#)**
 - **Phayul 11/30/2012: [Concern over Tibetan filmmaker's well being following murder charges](#)**
 - ***Tibet Post* 12/1/2012: [US official visits families of Tibetan self-immolators](#)**
 - **U.S. State Department 11/30/2012: [Daily press briefing](#)**
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BEYOND CHINA



Chinese studios shop for film ideas in Canada

The inaugural China Canada Gateway for Film script competition, part of the annual Whistler Film Festival (WFF) in Whistler, British Columbia, facilitated a set of coproduction deals that will help Canadian filmmakers penetrate the fast-growing Chinese market. Such creative partnerships are also seen as a way for the Chinese film industry to build goodwill abroad and produce higher-quality films that can compete with popular Hollywood movies (see CMB No. [74](#)). During the event, which ran from November 28 to December 2, three Chinese production companies selected three projects for development, offering a total of \$15 million in initial financing. The state-run China Film Group and three international observers sat in on the process, in which 13 Canadian teams—chosen from 109 applicants—were given a chance to pitch their ideas. One Chinese company, Wuxi Studios, picked an animated romance called *Butterfly Tale*, while Galloping Horse chose the romantic comedy *Blush*. The third project, selected by Beijing Hairun Pictures, was *The Eddie Zhao Story*, about a real-life Chinese private detective in Los Angeles. The winning filmmakers reportedly tailored their movie concepts to the Chinese market and steered clear of topics that might draw government objections. When asked before the event whether China’s film censorship would play a role in the competition, WFF managing director Jane Milner responded, “No, there are no topics off-limits, but there are certain topics that these companies have no interest in, such as ancient Chinese legends,” since they could produce such films without Canadian input. Yung Chang, a Montreal-based director who was at the event to pitch ideas, argued that even filmmakers who were banned in China for making movies on politically sensitive topics could eventually return to the fold by working on state-approved films. “They seem to be more and more forgiving for these kinds of issues,” he said.

- *Globe and Mail* 11/29/2012: [China’s Canadian casting call: They’ve got the money, we’ve got the talent](#)
- *Hollywood Reporter* 11/30/2012: [Chinese studios select Canadian co-production partners at Whistler Film Festival](#)
- *Vancouver Sun* 12/2/2012: [China and Canada make film connection](#)
- Whistler Film Festival 11/29/2012: [Whistler Film Festival announced winners of the China Canada Gateway for Film script competition](#)

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

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

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