



CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

Issue 82: March 7, 2013

Headlines

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-  Top investigative reporter forced to quit 'Economic Observer'
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-  Zambia reportedly seeks Chinese help on internet surveillance

PHOTO OF THE WEEK: THRILL OF POWER



Credit: [Reuters](#)

BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS



National People's Congress session opens in typical scripted form

The annual two-week meeting of China's largely ceremonial parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), and a related advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CCPCC), opened on March 5, bringing thousands of delegates from across the country to Beijing. The dual sessions serve mainly to formally approve previously decided proposals and showcase official speeches, though the 2012 meetings had added interest due to a scandal surrounding Chongqing Communist Party leader Bo Xilai, who was ultimately purged (see CMB Nos. [50](#), [79](#)). The 2013 meetings were set to include the confirmation of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leader Xi Jinping as state president and Li Keqiang as premier. Outgoing premier Wen Jiabao gave his last annual "work report" to the NPC on March 5, and the 100-minute speech was aired live on national television. Wen focused on the government's accomplishments over the last five years, including a long list of dry statistics, such as the construction of "31 airports and 602 shipping berths for 10,000-ton ships." (As in past years, photographs that circulated online showed delegates sleeping during the NPC proceedings.) The speech did not mention political reform, in contrast to his remarks to journalists at the previous year's session. Nevertheless, Wen briefly acknowledged daunting challenges including income inequality, pollution, and corruption. Some observers noted that the address reflected the plainer style of speech preferred by Xi, using less ideological jargon like "socialism with Chinese characteristics" than in previous years. According to the *Telegraph*, 5,000 journalists attended the gathering, outnumbering the almost 3,000 NPC delegates. However, effective coverage was hampered by secrecy surrounding basic information like the session's schedule and participants' backgrounds. Leaked directives from the Central Propaganda Department highlighted a wide range of other reporting restrictions, including orders not to cover public calls for officials to disclose their assets, not to republish reports from foreign media, to reduce the number of negative articles on website homepages (especially for social-networking sites), and to limit reporting on interactions among leaders. As a result, some media preferred to focus on celebrity participants in the CCPCC, including film star Jackie Chan and retired basketball player Yao Ming.

- *Telegraph* 3/5/2013: [Wen Jiabao lauds China's progress during final address to National People's Congress](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 3/5/2013: [Catching up on their sleep: Delegates caught snoozing during NPC](#)
- *New York Times* 3/4/2013: [China's Wen warns of inequality and vows to continue military buildup](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 3/6/2013: [Don't hold your breath for major reform plan at NPC meeting](#)
- *China Digital Times* 3/4/2013: [Ministry of Truth: Ten points on two sessions](#)
- *Wall Street Journal* 3/4/2013: [China opens parliament with star-studded cast](#)



Dissidents confined before Congress session

According to Chinese Human Rights Defenders, the Chinese authorities imposed greater restrictions on dissidents as the annual “two sessions” of the National People’s Congress (NPC) and its advisory body, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CCPCC), began in Beijing on March 5. Amid an increased police presence in the capital and elsewhere, prominent artist and blogger Ai Weiwei, writer Lu Gengsong, and online activists Hu Jia and He Depu all faced closer surveillance and restrictions on their movement in the days before the political gatherings. Hubei-based Liu Feiyue, who runs the People’s Livelihood Watch website, was told to stay home and post fewer articles on the site. “I can’t report anything sensitive and I can’t give interviews to the media,” he said. Petitioners have also faced harsh treatment. On March 5 alone, thousands were reportedly dragged away by police stationed in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square. The overseas Chinese news site Boxun reported that on February 27, Zhao Yude was taken from his home in Shenyang, Liaoning Province. He was later given 10 days of administrative detention for publishing an article on his microblog about his personal experience at a labor camp. In a sign that such practices are likely to continue in the coming year, the *New York Times* cited a Ministry of Finance report—apparently produced for the Congress session—that put the 2013 budget for public security at \$125.5 billion, an 8.7 percent increase from 2012 and outpacing the military budget (at \$116 billion for 2013) for the third straight year.

- Chinese Human Rights Defenders 3/7/2013: [China Human Rights Briefing March 1–8, 2013](#)
- Radio Free Asia 3/4/2013: [Sweep targets ‘sensitive’ individuals ahead of NPC](#)
- Boxun 3/1/2013 (in Chinese): [Shenyang: Netizen Zhao Yude detained 10 days for Weibo post](#)
- *New York Times* 3/4/2013: [China’s Wen warns of inequality and vows to continue military buildup](#)



Prominent intellectuals urge ratification of rights treaty

On February 26, more than a hundred Chinese scholars, lawyers, and reporters—including investigative journalist Wang Keqin and human rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang, one of whose clients is dissident artist and blogger Ai Weiwei—signed an open letter to the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC), calling for immediate ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The NPC, China’s rubber-stamp legislature, was set to begin its annual session on March 5. China had signed the ICCPR in 1998, but it had never been ratified. The treaty, which protects rights including the freedoms of expression, belief, and assembly, as well as the right to free elections, would ostensibly conflict with the Chinese Communist Party’s political monopoly and a range of abusive government practices in the country. The party-controlled *Global Times* reported on the circulation of the open letter but downplayed the possibility of any serious political reforms during the NPC session.

- China Media Project 2/26/2013: [Open letter to NPC on human rights](#)

- *Global Times* 3/2/2013: [Observers rule out ‘drastic changes’, administrative reforms more likely](#)
 - BBC 2/27/2013: [China open letter calls for political reforms](#)
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Top investigative reporter forced to quit ‘Economic Observer’

Wang Keqin, one of China’s top investigative journalists, was asked by managers on February 25 to leave the Beijing-based *Economic Observer*. The weekly newspaper is known for its free-market positions on economic issues and relatively outspoken criticism of government policies. Wang cleaned out his desk on February 27. His departure was apparently triggered by pressure from the authorities and coincided with his signing of an open letter calling on Chinese lawmakers to ratify an international human rights treaty (see above). His dismissal was first reported by a colleague on the microblogging platform Sina Weibo; the *Economic Observer* made no formal announcement. Wang previously led the paper’s investigative journalism unit, but it was disbanded in August 2012 following official pressure over in-depth reporting on Beijing floods that killed at least 77 people. Prior to his time at the *Economic Observer*, Wang had served as an editor at the state-run *China Economic Times*. He was removed from that paper in 2011 for an article on tainted vaccines that caused children to fall seriously ill or die in Shanxi Province (see CMB No. [71](#)). His latest setback fit a pattern of increasing pressure on investigative journalists over the past year, prompting Wang Ganlin, head of the in-depth reporting unit at Guangzhou’s *Yangcheng Evening News*, to tell Radio Free Asia that he was not surprised by the dismissal. “It’s normal for a journalist like Wang Keqin, who is known as the No. 1 investigative reporter, to be sidelined. It would be very strange if he was able to survive within the system,” he said.

- Agence France-Presse 2/28/2013: [China journalist ‘quit’ after official pressure](#)
 - Radio Free Asia 3/1/2013: [Top Chinese reporter fired as thugs attack film crew](#)
 - China Media Project 3/1/2013: [Veteran muckraker forced to leave paper](#)
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Germany summons Chinese diplomat over TV crew attack

Continuing a trend from the past year (see CMB No. [81](#)), another incident of violence against foreign journalists occurred on February 28. According to a statement by the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of China, reporter Christine Adelhardt of Germany’s ARD public broadcasting network and her crew were attacked by local thugs in Dayange Zhuang village, Hebei Province. After they finished shooting video footage for a feature on local urbanization, several cars chased their minivan until it was forced to stop on the side of the road. At least five men attempted to break the vehicle’s windows with their fists, and two others shattered the windshield with baseball bats. The ARD team narrowly escaped serious injury and were later told by villagers that one of the attackers’ cars belonged to the local Communist Party secretary. The police said the journalists should have asked for permission to film, but government regulations do not require such prior notice for recording in public spaces. In Berlin, the German government summoned China’s deputy

ambassador on March 1 to protest the assault and urge a proper investigation and punishment of the attackers.

- **Associated Press 3/1/2013:** [Germany protests attack on TV team in China](#)
 - **FCCC 2/28/2013:** [Brutal assault on German TV crew](#)
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Foreign broadcasters report new jamming in China

In a statement on February 25, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that its World Service English shortwave radio frequencies were being jammed in China through “extensive and coordinated efforts.” The broadcaster was unable to identify those behind the jamming, which it criticized for disrupting audiences’ free access to news and information. The BBC had experienced signal jamming and website blocking in China on a number of occasions in recent years (see CMB No. [7](#)). On February 26, the U.S. government-funded radio service Voice of America (VOA) also reported jamming of its English-language programs in China; its Chinese broadcasts had been routinely blocked (see CMB No. [81](#)). VOA said it noticed the disruption in January, and described the apparent use of a new jamming technology. The service’s engineers reported that Radio Australia was also being jammed. Because domestic media outlets are required to follow Beijing’s censorship rules, foreign broadcasters are a crucial source of uncensored news on sensitive topics.

- **BBC 2/25/2013:** [BBC World Service shortwave radio blocked in China](#)
 - **Voice of America 2/26/2013:** [VOA, BBC protest China broadcast jamming](#)
 - **Associated Press 2/25/2013:** [BBC: World Service frequencies jammed in China](#)
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Regulator announces prior censorship for TV documentaries

On February 22, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) announced that all televised documentaries would henceforth be required to submit a content summary, cast list, and shooting plans for official approval prior to production. According to state media, the new policy applies to television stations, commercial studios, and social organizations. Filmmakers would have to submit the documentation by April 20 for films set to shoot during the first half of 2013 and July 1 for the second half. Despite official claims that the purpose is to avoid overlapping topics and wasted resources, many local filmmakers expressed fears that the rules would render the environment for filmmaking more restrictive, with reviewers rejecting sensitive subjects. Others questioned whether the SARFT had the resources to implement such a broad policy.

- **Global Times 2/23/2013:** [SARFT to approve documentaries](#)
 - **Bloomberg 2/26/2013:** [What Lee’s ‘Life of Pi’ Oscar says of Chinese film](#)
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NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



Tech company leaders join legislative, advisory bodies

In an unprecedented step, the Chinese government has included executives from the country's technology industry in the annual 13-day legislative conferences in Beijing, which began on March 5. Lei Jun, chief executive of the smartphone manufacturer Xiaomi, and Pony Ma, chief executive of the internet giant Tencent, are both attending as members of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's rubber-stamp legislature. The concurrent meeting of the NPC's advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), includes new member Robin Li, chief executive of the popular Chinese search engine Baidu. While the NPC and CPPCC have little real power, membership could allow these business leaders to raise key technology-related issues with the top tier of the ruling Chinese Communist Party, while also tightening their already close relationship with the government. Sina Tech reported on March 3 that Li had submitted recommendations on the public Wi-Fi system. He urged the government to abandon real-name registration for public Wi-Fi, which makes it more difficult for users to log in. On March 4, both Lei and Ma sent in proposals on improving the environment for Chinese startups. While Lei focused on simplifying the procedural steps for setting up a company, Ma sought better government support mechanisms, including the establishment of "internet commissioners" in Chinese embassies abroad to assist overseas branches of Chinese technology companies. The executives did not appear to address the issue of online censorship. Beijing's censorship apparatus has helped protect domestic internet firms from foreign competition, but it has also imposed serious burdens that hamper their growth at home and abroad.

- *Wall Street Journal* 3/4/2013: [China internet executives get a seat at the table in Beijing](#)
- *Bloomberg News* 2/3/2013: [Baidu founder Li and politburo's Yu join top China advisory body](#)
- *Tech in Asia* 3/5/2013: [Baidu, Tencent, Xiaomi CEOs propose new legislature to strengthen China's tech sector](#)
- *Sina Tech* 3/4/2013 (in Chinese): [Robin Li: Cancel online ID authentication requirement for public Wi-Fi](#)



Official report says Google improperly dominates smartphone market

An official white paper released on March 1 by a research arm of China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said U.S. technology giant Google has too much control over the country's smartphone industry. The report claimed that Google had been discriminating against Chinese firms by delaying the sharing of codes for its Android mobile operating system, which by 2012 had a market share of 86.4 percent in China. The white paper also alleged that the company had used commercial agreements to restrain the business development of Chinese firms' mobile devices.

“While the Android system is open source, the core technology and technology roadmap is strictly controlled by Google,” it said. According to analysts cited by Reuters, the report’s critical stance signaled that regulations aimed at limiting Google’s market share could be on the way. Meanwhile, TechCrunch pointed out that due to the government’s blocking of the Google Play applications store, “Google itself may have far less influence than Android’s spread suggests because such a large swathe of locally made Androids are cut off from its services and thus can’t generate advertising sales for Mountain View.” The California-based company has a history of tension with the Chinese authorities (see CMB No. [69](#)). In January 2010, after a disagreement over censorship requirements and a series of cyberattacks originating in China, Google began redirecting mainland-based users of its flagship search engine to an uncensored version located in Hong Kong.

- Reuters 3/5/2013: [Google controls too much of China’s smartphone sector: ministry](#)
- Tech Crunch 3/5/2013: [Chinese ministry critical of Android’s dominance—but how much power does Google really have in China?](#)
- Ministry of Industry and Information Technology 2013/2/1 (in Chinese): [Mobile internet white paper](#)



Netizens respond to Taiwanese director’s Oscar win

After Taiwanese director Ang Lee won Hollywood’s Academy Award for best director on February 24 for his dramatic adventure film *Life of Pi*, heated discussion emerged on the popular Chinese microblogging platform Sina Weibo. Searches for Lee’s name generated more than 70,000 results and four million discussion threads, making it the second-most-searched term on Weibo. As part of his acceptance speech, Lee said, “I cannot make this movie without the help of Taiwan. We shot there. I want to thank everybody there helped us. Especially the city of Taichung.” Chinese state media omitted that portion of the speech from their coverage, as Beijing considers Taiwan a Chinese province. Many netizens attributed Lee’s success to the freedom of cultural expression in Taiwan and the United States. A user nicknamed Keguan Nvjia Yunchuang said, “If he were to live in mainland, he wouldn’t have made it!” Reflecting on China’s strict film censorship rules (see above), another user wrote, “There is no lack of good directors in China, but the system decides what movies you make!” Lee’s films have been censored by Chinese authorities in the past for reasons including sexual content (see CMB No. [24](#)).

- *Want China Times* 2/28/2013: [China ‘censors’ Taiwan in Ang Lee’s Oscar speech](#)
- Global Voices 2/24/2012: [After Ang Lee’s Oscar win, China imagines cinema beyond censors](#)
- Bloomberg 2/26/2013: [What Lee’s ‘Life of Pi’ Oscar says of Chinese film](#)

TIBET



Writer Tsering Woeser honored by U.S. State Department

On March 4, Beijing-based Tibetan writer Tsering Woeser was announced as one of the 10 recipients of the U.S. State Department's 2013 International Women of Courage Award, which recognizes women around the world who have helped advance women's rights despite personal risks. In a statement issued by the State Department, Woeser was described as the most prominent activist in mainland China advocating for the human rights of Tibetans. The statement also noted her blog and use of social-media platforms, which it said had "given voice to millions of ethnic Tibetans who are prevented from expressing themselves to the outside world due to government efforts to curtail the flow of information." Writing to the overseas Tibetan news site Phayul, Woeser said she would not be able to travel to the United States to attend the award ceremony on March 8, as she is currently under house arrest (see CMB No. [73](#)). In reference to the self-immolation protests against Chinese rule in Tibet, Woeser added, "I want to dedicate this award to the more than one hundred people, who have bathed their bodies in fire and their families" (see CMB No. [81](#)). The other award recipients, including jailed Vietnamese blogger Ta Phong Tan and Russian journalist Elena Milashina, also operate in difficult media environments. None of their countries were rated Free in the 2012 edition of Freedom House's *Freedom of the Press* index.

- *China Digital Times* 3/5/2013: [Tibetan writer honored by U.S. State Department](#)
- Phayul 3/5/2013: [Woeser dedicates 'courage' award to Tibetan self-immolators](#)
- Central Tibetan Administration 3/5/2013: [Sikyong congratulates Woeser for winning International Woman of Courage Award](#)
- U.S. State Department 3/4/2013: [2013 International Women of Courage Award winners](#)

BEYOND CHINA



Petition for release of Liu Xiaobo and wife garners 450,000 signatures

A petition urging Chinese Communist Party leader Xi Jinping to release 2010 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo and his wife Liu Xia was delivered to Chinese diplomatic missions on February 27. In a statement, Paris-based Reporters Without Borders said more than 450,000 people from 130 countries had signed the petition. The appeal was initiated on the activism website Change.org, alongside a letter signed by retired archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa and 134 other Nobel laureates, in December 2012 (see CMB No. [76](#)). Lawmakers in Hong Kong took pictures of themselves posing next to a portrait of Liu placed on a chair—an object that has come to symbolize his absence at the 2010 Nobel Prize award ceremony. In Taiwan, former Tiananmen Square student leader Wuer Kaixi urged Taiwanese president Ma Ying-jeou to raise the issue with the Chinese authorities. The petition is part of a broader campaign by human rights groups around the world to gain Liu's release. He has been jailed since December 2009 for his role in launching the

prodemocracy manifesto Charter 08. Liu Xia has been under illegal house arrest in Beijing since her husband was announced as the Nobel winner in October 2010.

- IFEX 2/28/2013: [Massive global effort to free Chinese Nobel laureate and his wife](#)
- Reporters Without Borders 2/27/2013: [450.000 citizens in 130 countries join 135 Nobel laureates to demand release](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 2/28/2013: [Free Liu Xiaobo campaign hots up in Hong Kong](#)
- Change.org: [Chinese Leader Xi Jinping: Release imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo and wife Liu Xia](#)



Zambia reportedly seeks Chinese help on internet surveillance

Recent news reports citing anonymous sources indicate that the Zambian government has engaged Chinese experts to assist in the development and installation of internet surveillance and censorship equipment, though the precise details are difficult to confirm. The story emerged after President Michael Sata reportedly signed an order earlier this month authorizing the Office of the President Special Division to intercept telephone and internet communications. According to a February 18 report on Zambia Watchdog, an online news site that is critical of the government, the country's Information and Communication Technology Authority had told telephone and internet service providers to expect site visits by Zambian and Chinese technicians. Representatives of local telecommunications operators including MTN, Airtel, and Zamtel confirmed that they had contact with members of the Office of the President, which attempted to facilitate monitoring of e-mail and voice communications. Both the Zambian authorities and the Chinese embassy refused to comment. According to Zambia Watchdog and Computerworld Zambia, Chinese experts had been called in to study the network architecture, identify points for interception, and possibly assist with installation of "deep packet inspection" (DPI) equipment, which can enable data mining, interception of private online communications, and website blocking. In an interview with Computerworld on February 19, opposition National Restoration Party president Elias Chipimo warned that the introduction of DPI would undermine the country's civil liberties. Since President Sata's election in September 2011, the government has increased intimidation and legal harassment of news websites like Zambia Watchdog. Zambia is rated Partly Free on Freedom House's 2012 *Freedom of the Press* index, but its numerical score puts it close to the Not Free category.

- Global Voices 2/23/2013: [Zambia: Chinese experts to monitor internet?](#)
- PC Advisor 2/19/2013: [China reportedly helping Zambia with eavesdropping technology](#)
- Zambia Watchdog 2/18/2013: [Sata signs order for OP to tap phones, emails](#)
- *Freedom of the Press 2012*: [Zambia](#)

For additional information on human rights and free expression in China, see:
[Freedom in the World 2013](#)
[Freedom on the Net 2012](#)
[Freedom of the Press 2012](#)

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