



# CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

Issue 87: May 17, 2013

## Headlines

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- 👉 Official investigated for misdeeds after reporter's online exposé
- 👉 Magazine production halted after labor camp revelations
- 👉 Protest over migrant worker's death spurs online censorship
- 👉 Chinese netizens flood White House petition site

## PHOTO OF THE WEEK: THE EMPEROR IS FAR AWAY



Credit: [China Media Project](#)

## BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS



### **New party directives call for more rigid ideological controls**

In recent weeks, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee directives ordering intensified ideological controls have reportedly circulated among universities and party committees throughout China. Given the party's tendency toward secrecy, the directives have not been made public, and their full details remain unconfirmed. Beginning on May 10, online rumors indicated that a CCP directive had been handed down to some college campuses, barring seven topics from class discussions, including press freedom, judicial independence, civil rights, civil society, and the party's historical mistakes. While the historical issues have been a long-standing taboo at Chinese academic institutions, the party has traditionally been less sensitive to instruction that touches on broader topics related to democratic governance. The alleged list of banned topics were quickly nicknamed the "Seven Don't Mentions," and the term was blocked on the search function of the Sina Weibo microblogging platform. Two scholars who wished to remain anonymous told Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post* that they had been briefed on the taboo topics and were told they came from the Central Committee. Other academics told foreign media that they had not seen such directives or been contacted about them by university administrators. The Central Committee has also reportedly issued a confidential internal circular "concerning the present situation in the ideological area," urging officials to strengthen ideological controls and guidance of public opinion. Again, this document has not been made public, and blog posts referring to it have been deleted, but some local newspapers have published reports on official study sessions that were apparently related to its implementation. Though the precise connection is unclear, an article from Chongqing also mentions seven key areas that propaganda officials should tackle. The topics are not listed individually, but the report refers to "fully understanding the harm of viewpoints and theories propagated by the West," terminology often used for concepts such as multiparty democracy, constitutionalism, and civil society. It also emphasizes the importance of strengthening "management of the internet" and "cutting off at the source channels for disseminating erroneous currents of thought." Several analysts and political commentators expressed some alarm at the new controls, with Li Cheng at the Washington-based Brookings Institution remarking that they were "tighter than ever," and Chen Ziming from Beijing calling them "regressive."

- *Washington Post* 5/14/2013: [China clamps down on discourse, ideology, in face of pressure for change](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 5/11/2013: [Seven subjects off limits for teaching](#)
- *Epoch Times* 5/10/2013: [Chinese professors given 7-point gag order](#)
- DW News 5/13/2013 (in Chinese): [Central committee 7-point gag order needs to be verified](#)
- *China Copyright and Media* 5/14/2013: [Secret Central Committee document calls for loyalty, warns for Western influence](#)
- *New York Times* 5/13/2013: [China warns officials against 'dangerous' Western values](#)
- *China Digital Times* 5/11/2013: Sensitive words: [Seven Don't Mentions and more](#)



## Official investigated for misdeeds after reporter's online exposé

The state-run Xinhua news agency issued a short announcement on May 12, stating that Liu Tienan, a vice chairman of China's economic planning agency, had been put under investigation by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection on suspicion of "serious discipline violations." Liu is the latest high-level official targeted in the anticorruption drive promoted by the Chinese Communist Party's new leadership. However, the case was first uncovered by Luo Changping, a deputy editor at *Caijing*, a Beijing-based newsmagazine known for its liberal and investigative reporting. In December 2012, Luo wrote on his microblog account that the official had fabricated his academic credentials, threatened to kill his mistress, and engaged in improper business dealings. The journalist said he had first been tipped off to the story by a telephone call from the mistress. A spokesperson at the National Energy Administration, which Liu headed until March, denied the accusations at the time, adding that complaints against the reporter's "groundless" claims would be filed with the police and internet authorities. However, Luo's exposé was not deleted by online censors, and the official was reportedly barred from attending external events. In a May 13 posting, Luo said he had spent a year verifying details of the scandal through multiple sources. In a May 14 commentary, Xinhua stressed that "real-name reporting"—in which whistleblowers publicly stand behind their claims and use official channels—is a strong basis for online anticorruption efforts (see CMB No. [86](#)). Luo recently published a book that chronicles 120 corruption cases against senior government officials in China. Most of the cases had appeared in *Caijing*, but the book came with a joint preface written by antigraft officials from the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the Supreme People's Court.

- *New York Times* 5/13/2013: [After a journalist's prodding, China investigates a top official](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 5/13/2013: [Top planning official Liu Tienan probed by anti-corruption committee](#)
- Bloomberg 5/12/2013: [China anti-graft agency probes top planning official](#)
- Xinhua 5/12/2013 (in Chinese): [Liu Tienan under investigation for serious discipline violations](#)
- Xinhua 5/14/2013: Xinhua Insight: [Real-name whistleblowing fuels China's online anti-corruption efforts](#)
- Amazon China (in Chinese): [The chronicle of anticorruption cases against high-level officials](#)
- *Epoch Times* 5/13/2013 (in Chinese): [Photograph of Liu Tienan and mistress widely circulated among foreign media](#)



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## Magazine production halted after labor camp revelations

The May edition of *Lens Magazine*, a small publication from the same media group as the better-known *Caijing*, has reportedly been put on hold in response to a hard-hitting cover story in April that

exposed torture at the Masanjia Women's Labor Camp in Liaoning Province and stirred widespread debate online (see CMB No. [85](#)). According to a May 6 report from Radio Free Asia, a magazine employee said that work on the May issue had been halted for over a week, and that the Masanjia article had gotten the staff "into some trouble." The International Federation of Journalists reported on May 13 that the magazine had also been prevented from making an initial public stock offering, scheduled for June, and had its publication license canceled. Gao Yu, a Beijing journalist, speculated on her microblog that the authorities may have used restrictions on cross-regional reporting as the basis for the license cancelation, since Lens is registered in Heilongjiang Province, not Liaoning. It remains unclear whether the magazine will resume publishing. Separately, on May 9, Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post* reported that the legal affairs section was missing from the latest issue of *Caixin Century Weekly*, a leading Beijing magazine known for its investigative reporting. An insider at the magazine told the *Post* that the section had been suspended under "some pressure" to focus more on economic rather than legal matters, but that legal articles would still be published in the other sections.

- **Radio Free Asia 5/6/2013:** [China hits back at magazine over labor camp expose](#)
- **IFJ 5/13/2013:** [China urged to investigate political interference in a magazine](#)
- **NTDTV 5/8/2013:** [Lens Magazine closed?](#)
- **South China Morning Post 5/9/2013:** [China's press censors in spotlight as Caixin Century Weekly suspends legal section](#)

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## NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



### **State internet office gets new director, cracks down on news content**

On May 10, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported that the State Internet Information Office (SIIO) was launching a two-month campaign to regulate "improper" news editing online. Among the practices the campaign will reportedly suppress are publishing stories without attribution, publishing false stories, tampering with headlines, and "assuming the identity of a news organization in publishing news." The last item relates to rules under which online news portals are prohibited from producing their own content and are only authorized to repost information from state-run traditional media. According to Xinhua, the campaign will include heavier punishments for websites that violate regulations. It remains unclear how the effort will be implemented and to what degree it will target politically sensitive information in particular. The announcement comes amid broader pressure from the new party leadership to crack down on "online rumors" and strengthen ideological "internet management." Also on May 10, state media reported that a new director of the SIIO had been named. Former Beijing vice mayor Lu Wei will serve as chief of the SIIO and deputy chief of State Council Information Office. Lu, who had previously been a vice president at the official Xinhua news agency, was also a former member of the Standing Committee of the Beijing People's Congress and director of the Propaganda Department of the Beijing Communist Party. The SIIO was created in 2011 to coordinate the work of the many government and party entities involved in managing the internet.

- CCP News 5/10/2013 (in Chinese): [Lu Weiren to be appointed SIIO chief, SCIO deputy chief](#)
- Xinhua 5/10/2013 (in Chinese): [SIIO to launch online news and information dissemination rules](#)
- Xinhua 5/10/2013: [New campaign targets improper online news editing](#)
- CCP News 5/10/2013 (in Chinese): [Lu Wei to be appointed SIIO chief, SCIO deputy chief](#)
- eBeijing: [Resume of vice-mayor Lu Wei](#)



## Popular bloggers targeted in latest ‘antirumor’ campaign

Chinese authorities have reportedly embarked on a new effort to control online discussion by deleting the microblog accounts of influential individuals, in some cases openly announcing the bans in state media. The official Xinhua news agency reported on May 10 that He Bing, a prominent law professor at Beijing University, had been suspended from accessing his microblog on the popular platform Sina Weibo for “deliberately spreading rumors.” The article said the professor had reposted false information about a student stabbing an official who would not approve his website. However, He also recently posted a survey encouraging readers to weigh in on President Xi Jinping’s reported assertion that formally repudiating Chinese Communist Party founder Mao Zedong for his abuses would lead to chaos. Past “antirumor” campaigns have made little distinction between false and politically undesirable information (see CMB Nos. [49](#), [53](#)). According to Agence France-Presse, the professor’s microblog had more than 400,000 followers. On May 11, an even more popular writer, Murong Xuecun, said all of his accounts on the microblogging platforms Sina, Tencent, Netease, and Sohu were removed by web administrators, apparently on orders from the authorities. His accounts had a total of 8.5 million followers. Murong, who frequently discussed controversial issues such as media censorship and labor camps (see CMB Nos. [67](#), [71](#)), said he “reincarnated” by creating a new account on May 12, but it was deleted within 10 minutes. On May 13, his attempts to create a new account were unsuccessful; both his internet protocol (IP) address and his mobile-telephone number were blocked, preventing him from acquiring the verification codes needed for registration. Even so, one of several fan accounts created to support him commented, “Block one Murong Xuecun, and thousands of ‘Murong Xuecun’ will appear. This is the strength of freedom.”

- Xinhua 5/10/2013 (in Chinese): [SIIO: Xiaoshan Junzi and He Bing microblogs deleted and suspended for spreading rumors](#)
- Agence France-Presse 5/11/2013: [China academic’s weibo blocked over ‘rumours’: Xinhua](#)
- *Telegraph* 5/13/2013: [China launches new crackdown on internet celebrities](#)
- *Christian Science Monitor* 5/15/2013: [As China’s social media takes off, Beijing’s censorship campaign heats up](#)
- *Guardian* 5/15/2013: [Chinese internet: ‘a new censorship campaign has commenced’](#)
- Global Voices 5/13/2013: [Popular Chinese writer’s microblog scrubbed from Sina Weibo](#)



## Auditors criticize China Mobile for accounting, graft problems

On May 10, the National Audit Office (NAO) published a report that criticized state-owned telecommunications giant China Mobile, which has the largest number of mobile subscribers in the world, for mismanagement and weak enforcement of antigraft rules. The report cited instances of malfeasance involving billions of yuan in 2011, often related to poorly managed subsidiaries. For example, a Henan Province branch allegedly gave its employees almost 100 million yuan (\$16 million) without paying the requisite taxes, while an office in Inner Mongolia reportedly used fake invoices to avoid taxes. The audit of China Mobile was part of an annual NAO review of key state-owned enterprises (SOEs). SOEs generally and telecoms in particular are among the sectors most prone to corruption in China, and China Mobile has faced a string of such allegations in recent years. Since 2009, 13 of the company's serving or former executives have faced corruption investigations, and at least one received a suspended death sentence in 2011. According to a report in *China Business News* in April, China Mobile was one of five centrally administered SOEs that were criticized at a January State Council meeting for mismanagement. In a company statement dated May 10, China Mobile said that the "relevant responsible persons have been dealt with in a serious manner," but provided no further details.

- *China Daily* 5/11/2013: [Audit office criticizes China Mobile's anti-graft system](#)
- National Audit Office 5/10/2013 (in Chinese): [China Mobile 2011 financial audit report](#)
- *Global Times* 5/11/2013: [SOEs busted in annual auditing](#)
- China Mobile 5/10/2013: [Announcement in relation to the audit of National Audit Office](#)
- *Economic Observer* 4/26/2013: [China Mobile corruption scandal continues to unfold](#)



## Apple accused of tax evasion and spreading pornography in China

In an article published by state-run *Legal Daily* on May 10, the state-affiliated China Association of Consumer Protection Law accused Apple of tax evasion, violations of intellectual property law, and distribution of pornography. The U.S. technology giant had been the object of a coordinated attack in Chinese state media in March, prompting it to issue an apology for its perceived "arrogance" toward consumers in China (see CMB No. [84](#)). The consumer protection group said Apple had "bluntly" bypassed import taxes for software applications, which are available for direct download by Chinese users. The report also claimed that the company's online store in China contained unauthorized reading materials, as well as pornographic content, which is officially banned. The Communist Party mouthpiece *People's Daily* had previously named Apple in an April 17 editorial as one of 198 companies implicated in a nationwide antipornography investigation. The motives behind the mounting official criticism of Apple in China remained unclear, though some speculated that it was part of an effort to weaken foreign competitors in the technology sector to protect domestic firms.

- *South China Morning Post* 5/10/2013: [Apple accused of tax evasion and spreading pornography by mainland legal group](#)
  - *Legal Daily* 5/10/2013 (in Chinese): [Apple China platform accused of tax evasion](#)
  - TheNextWeb 5/10/2013: [Legal organization claims Apple is dodging tax and selling pornography in China](#)
  - *People's Daily* 4/17/2013 (in Chinese): [198 pornographic websites targeted for investigation](#)
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## Protest over migrant worker's death spurs online censorship

On May 8, hundreds of protesters, mostly migrant workers from Anhui Province, gathered outside a mall in Beijing where a young woman from Anhui, Yuan Liya, had fallen to her death on May 3. Doubts about the official assessment of the death as a suicide had circulated in the community, spurred in part by an online allegation that Yuan was raped by seven security guards at the mall and then thrown off the building. Migrant workers in China are often treated poorly by authorities in urban areas, where they are barred from accessing many public services, fueling discontent. The protest, which was unusual for the tightly controlled capital, was apparently augmented by many onlookers. The crowd was ultimately dispersed by thousands of police, with helicopters hovering over the site, and several protesters were reportedly hurt. On May 10, state-run *Beijing News* reported that a woman in Beijing surnamed Ma had been detained the previous day for allegedly fabricating the rape and murder claim and disseminating it online. Police stressed that Yuan's family had not questioned the official autopsy report, which suggested a suicide. Online discussion related to Yuan was quickly censored on microblogging platform Sina Weibo. According to *China Digital Times*, terms such as Yuan's name and the streets occupied by the police during the protest were blocked. A leaked May 10 media directive ordered web administrators to only allow repostings of items on the topic that were first published on the official microblog accounts of Beijing's public security bureau. The Communist Party-owned *Global Times* also reported that comments related to the incident had been removed from Weibo, adding that the bureau had closed the comments section of its own post on the case.

- *Wall Street Journal* 5/9/2013: [A death and a poisoning show disaffection with Beijing](#)
  - *China Digital Times* 5/8/2013: [Police quell Beijing protest after woman's death](#)
  - *Global Times* 5/9/2013: [Beijing protest sparked by alleged suicide](#)
  - *Financial Times* 5/8/2013: [Beijing police and protesters clash over migrant worker's death](#)
  - *China Digital Times* 5/8/2013: [Sensitive words: Beijing protest after 'suicide'](#)
  - *Beijing News* 5/10/2013 (in Chinese): [28-year-old woman 'under control' for spreading rape rumor](#)
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## HONG KONG



### **Court rejects incumbent broadcaster's bid to block new TV licenses**

On March 13, Hong Kong's High Court rejected a request submitted in January by Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) that aimed to stop the government from issuing free-to-air television licenses to other local networks. TVB, a Hong Kong-based media giant, claimed that the territory's Communications Authority had provided the government with material containing legal and factual errors in making its recommendation to expand free-to-air licensing. The executive branch is currently in the process of deciding whether to grant licenses to three broadcasters—Fantastic Television, HK Television Entertainment, and Hong Kong Television Network—that had submitted applications between December 2009 and March 2010. The court said TVB failed to show that it had suffered injury thus far and that it was inappropriate for the court to intervene before the government had made a final decision. The ruling was hailed by other television networks. The local newspaper *Sing Tao Daily* reported that the Executive Council would approve two licenses at most, due to the limited capacity of the broadcast market. However, a social science professor at the Hong Kong University for Science and Technology warned, "The government is more likely to issue television licenses to those who are not against the government." TVB is one of only two current free-to-air television broadcasters in Hong Kong, the other being Asia Television (ATV). The lack of competition has led to criticism regarding diversity of news coverage and the advantages enjoyed by the two stations in attracting advertising.

- *South China Morning Post* 5/14/2013: [TVB's judicial challenge over licences rejected](#)
- *Standard* 5/15/2013: [Wong upbeat on free-TV license](#)
- *Standard* 5/14/2013: [End in sight to license saga](#)

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## BEYOND CHINA



### **'Iron Man 3,' 'Django' releases reflect Hollywood's China travails**

The version of the Hollywood superhero film *Iron Man 3* that opened on May 1 in China was different from the international version in several ways. According to *Foreign Policy*, in an effort to appease authorities and appeal to Chinese audiences, the filmmakers changed the villain's name, inserted a product placement for a Chinese milk drink that can recharge Iron Man, and added an awkward scene in which Chinese characters—played by leading mainland stars—perform surgery on a wounded Tony Stark, Iron Man's alter ego. According to several media outlets, moviegoers were unimpressed by the attempts to make a "special China version," while an editorial in the state-run *China Daily* warned audiences not to be "tricked" by Hollywood tactics to increase ticket sales. Nevertheless, the film grossed almost \$100 million by May 12. Separately, Chinese authorities allowed the reopening of *Django Unchained*, U.S. director Quentin Tarantino's Oscar-winning film, on May 12, a month after the movie was abruptly pulled from theaters across China on its original opening day for unspecified "technical reasons" (see CMB No. [85](#)). The new version is reportedly three minutes shorter, with several scenes containing nudity or violence removed. However, the

second release failed to shed light on why the scenes in question had not been flagged by censors earlier in the often onerous review process. According to the Hollywood Reporter, the delay likely hurt the film's financial success, as it played in 10 percent of available slots on May 12, rather than the 17 percent it was slated for in April, and faced fiercer competition. The two incidents underscore Hollywood's increasing willingness to adjust film content to tap into China's lucrative market, as well as the difficulty of predicting whether such changes will satisfy the Chinese industry's fickle gatekeepers, let alone win over audiences.

- *Foreign Policy* 5/9/2013: [Iron Man vs. the super censors](#)
- *New York Times* 5/13/2013: [Success of 'Iron Man' hasn't reduced tension over U.S. films in China](#)
- *Hollywood Reporter* 5/13/2013: ['Django Unchained' reopens in China with nudity and screenings reduced](#)
- *Metro* 5/14/2013: [Chinese audience unimpressed by extra Iron Man 3 footage](#)
- *BBC* 5/14/2013: [Django Unchained reopens in Chinese cinemas](#)
- *Associated Press* 5/13/2013: [Django Unchained returns to Chinese cinemas—a minute shorter than pulled version](#)



## Chinese netizens flood White House petition site

A growing number of Chinese netizens have turned to a petition feature on the official website of the U.S. presidency to urge action on various issues in China, ranging from meal subsidies at work to cancellation of the college entrance exam (see CMB No. [79](#)). On March 3, a Chinese American created a petition on the White House website's "We the People" platform to demand that the United States intervene in the case of a Chinese college student, Zhu Ling, who was poisoned in 1994, leaving her severely disabled. The case had recently resurfaced as a popular topic on the Chinese internet. The main suspect was the victim's roommate, who was never prosecuted. Many Chinese speculated that the woman escaped justice due to her family's political ties, and she now reportedly lives in the United States. The petition, which specifically asks the U.S. government to deport the suspect, generated heated debate on the Chinese microblogging platform Sina Weibo. It quickly surpassed the threshold of 100,000 signatures required to get an official response from the White House. Many observers were skeptical that the deportation request would be granted, but they noted that the effort illustrated Chinese citizens' disappointment with their own country's justice and petitioning systems. Some netizens even created mock images portraying U.S. president Barack Obama as Bao Zheng, a famous judicial official during China's Song dynasty, or revamping Obama's White House office as a Chinese petitioning center. A March 10 commentary carried by the Communist Party-owned *Global Times* sought to throw a wet blanket on the phenomenon, asserting that "most Chinese loathe the idea of foreign intervention in China's domestic affairs." However, the flurry of petitions have sometimes yielded concrete responses from the Chinese authorities. The Associated Press reported that the Zhu Ling campaign may have prompted Beijing police to issue a statement on the case after weeks of silence. In a more disturbing development, the *South China Morning Post* reported on May 14 that a Chengdu blogger was summoned by local police

after she initiated a White House petition to draw attention to a petrochemical project in Pengzhou, Sichuan Province, that had triggered street protests by local opponents. She said a security agent had tracked her down via her Weibo registration information. She was ordered to withdraw her plea, but the U.S. website does not allow deletion of petitions.

- Global Voices 5/14/2013: [Chinese web floods White House with petitions](#)
- China Media Project 5/6/2-13: [Obama, minister of China petitions?](#)
- Associated Press 5/12/2013: [Chinese air their cases by petitioning White House](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 5/14/2013: [‘I am scared’: Chinese creator of White House petition seeks help after police visit](#)
- *Global Times* 5/10/2013: [1001 Chinese tales: Subtlety of Chinese politics, humor in US petitions](#)
- We the People 5/3/2013: [Invest and deport Jasmine Sun who was the main suspect of a famous Thallium poison murder case \(victim:Zhu Lin\) in China](#)
- We the People 5/7/2013: [Of pengzhou, sichuan province, 10 million tons/year crude distillation and 800000 tons/year ethylene production project](#)

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## NOTABLE ANALYSIS



### English-language database of deleted microblog posts created

Students at Hong Kong University have created WeiboSuite, a tool that enables users to search in English through a selection of recently deleted microblog posts from the Sina Weibo platform. The initiative is related to WeiboScope, a project at the university’s Journalism and Media Centre that has collected 200 million deleted posts since 2011.

- *South China Morning Post* 5/14/2013: [Censored Sina Weibo posts translated into English by HKU project](#)
- [WeiboSuite](#)

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

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