



# CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

Issue 95: October 29, 2013

## Headlines

-  Paper forced to retreat after bold defense of detained journalist
-  Peking University fires dissident scholar Xia Yeliang
-  Social media mum on Yuyao flooding, blogger crackdown cited
-  Overlooking censorship, foreign media leaders flock to Chinese summit
-  Beijing blocks criticism at UN rights review

## PHOTO OF THE WEEK: A BOLDFACE CRY FOR FREEDOM



Credit: [Sina Weibo](#)

## BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS



### **Paper forced to retreat after bold defense of detained journalist**

On October 18, journalist Chen Yongzhou of *New Express* newspaper in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, was summoned by local police and then turned over to authorities from Changsha, Hunan Province. He was accused of “damaging the business reputation” of Zoomlion, one of the country’s largest construction machinery businesses, which is partly owned by the Hunan government. After several days of quiet attempts to secure Chen’s release, *New Express* published a full front-page editorial with the headline “Please Release Him.” It defended Chen’s reporting, claiming that staff had reviewed his 15 articles about Zoomlion and discovered only one minor error. The editorial was a rare example of Chinese media directly appealing to the public over the unfair treatment of one of their journalists. In an outcry reminiscent of the January protest against censorship at Guangzhou’s *Southern Weekly* (see CMB [special](#)), *New Express* garnered support from prominent bloggers and business figures. The Central Propaganda Department reportedly instructed media not to cover the incident, but several commercial papers published statements of solidarity. A strongly worded editorial from the *Southern Metropolis Daily*—about how Chen’s cross-regional detention was sending a chill through the media—was allegedly removed by propaganda authorities; the paper then published a different editorial on the case. On October 24, *New Express* repeated its call for Chen’s release in a small front-page story. Two days later, official media began reporting that Chen had confessed to printing disinformation about Zoomlion in exchange for payment. He was paraded on China Central Television (CCTV) in a prison uniform and confessed on camera, adding to a broader trend of televised statements of guilt or contrition in recent months (see CMB Nos. [93](#), [94](#)). On October 27, *New Express* printed a small apology for its earlier statements, reportedly under pressure from authorities. Meanwhile, Zoomlion’s share price tracked its change in fortune, recovering after Chen’s televised confession indicated that the firm would be protected by its government patrons. This is not the only backlash *New Express* has faced recently for its reporting. On September 30, another detained journalist, Liu Hu, was formally charged with criminal defamation for his coverage of a scandal involving Chongqing officials (see CMB No. [92](#)).

- *New Express* 10/23/2013: [长沙警方请放人 \[Changsha police please release the person\]](#)
- *China Digital Times* 10/22/2013: [Guangdong newspaper pleads for journalist’s release \(updated\)](#)
- China Media Project 10/23/2013: [Paper goes public over reporter’s detention](#)
- China Media Project 10/24/2013: [The New Express story in today’s papers](#)
- *China Digital Times* 10/24/2013: [Minitrue: Do not report on Chen Yongzhou’s arrest](#)
- Xinhua 10/26/2013: [China exclusive: Detained reporter apologizes for releasing untrue stories](#)
- BBC 10/26/2013: [China reporter Chen Yongzhou ‘confesses’ on TV](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 10/28/2013: [Guangzhou paper apologises for detained reporter’s story](#)
- Bloomberg 10/28/2013: [Zoomlion shares rise after daily apologizes: Hong Kong mover](#)

- **Reporters Without Borders 10/11/2013: [Detained investigative journalist formally charged with defamation](#)**
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## **Eying foreign companies, state TV rounds on Starbucks and Samsung**

In an echo of its campaign against U.S. technology giant Apple in March (see CMB No. [84](#)), state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) on October 20 took aim at another American company, the global coffee retailer Starbucks. CCTV reported that based on an investigation conducted by its news correspondents in London, Chicago, and Mumbai, Starbucks charged up to 50 percent more for some of its products in China than in the United Kingdom, the United States, and India. After showing footage of Chinese customers complaining about the cost of Starbucks beverages, the 22-minute program concluded in a nationalistic tone that the company's allegedly exploitative pricing was found only in China. However, on the popular microblogging platform Sina Weibo, many netizens said the coverage was unnecessary, and some asked why the station did not investigate more important issues. Others noted that the prices were competitive and worth paying because "the quality makes people feel safe" in China's scandal-ridden food industry. A Starbucks spokesman said price variations between countries depended on factors like labor costs, rent, and the expense of raw materials. Reuters noted that imported products in China, such as coffee beans, draw importation and sales taxes of 15 and 17 percent, respectively. On October 22, CCTV aired a financial news program that targeted another successful foreign company, Samsung Electronics of South Korea. According to the program, there was a problem with the memory chips of some of Samsung's smartphone models, causing them to crash, and the flaw was not covered under the company's warranty. In a statement issued on October 23, Samsung said it would start offering free repairs and other services to its customers in China. State media have singled out a number of foreign firms with large market shares in China in the past year, but the *Wall Street Journal* noted subtle differences between the attacks. The criticism of Apple, for example, came during CCTV's primetime newscast, suggesting a higher priority, while the rebuke of Samsung was aired on a less popular show on CCTV-2.

- **Quartz 10/22/2013: [First Starbucks, now Samsung, China's state TV goes after foreign firms for 'bullying' Chinese customers](#)**
  - ***Wall Street Journal* 10/21/2013: [Starbucks is criticized by Chinese state media for higher prices](#)**
  - **CCTV 10/22/2013: [\[视频\] 记者调查：星巴克咖啡中国市场高价 \[Video: Investigation: Starbucks coffee costs more in Chinese market\]](#)**
  - ***Wall Street Journal* 10/23/2013: [Samsung apologizes to Chinese consumers for handset flaws](#)**
  - **Samsung China 10/23/2013: [三星\(中国\)投资有限公司声明 \[Samsung \(China\) Group statement\]](#)**
  - **Reuters 10/21/2013: [Starbucks is charging higher prices in China, Chinese media claims](#)**
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## Peking University fires dissident scholar Xia Yeliang

Citing “poor teaching,” China’s prestigious Peking University (PKU) on October 18 dismissed economics professor Xia Yeliang, an outspoken critic of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (see CMB No. [91](#)). The decision was made a week after the school signed a pact with a consortium of Chinese, European, Australian, and American universities in Hefei, Anhui Province, that vowed to uphold academic freedom. A statement posted on PKU’s website claimed that Xia’s teaching performance had been ranked the lowest among the university’s faculty for many years, making the case that the firing was not based on his political views. However, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on October 25 that the professor, a signer of the prodemocracy manifesto Charter 08, was warned in 2009 to “take good care” of his teaching position. For years he had been barred from appearing on state television, followed by plainclothes police, and repeatedly detained and questioned. Xia said he may be forced to go abroad as a visiting scholar if he could not find another job offer in China. His dismissal was seen as part of widening crackdown on dissent by the new party leadership under President Xi Jinping. Despite the growing scale of cooperation and exchanges between Chinese and foreign universities in recent years, the Chinese political authorities have yielded little control over domestic institutions. “All universities are under the party’s leadership,” Xia lamented. “In Peking University, the No. 1 leader is not the president. It’s the party secretary of Peking University.” Meanwhile, with the notable exception of Massachusetts-based Wellesley College, most of PKU’s foreign partner schools have remained silent about its apparent assault on academic freedom.

- *Wall Street Journal* 10/25/2013: [Xia Yeliang: The China Americans don’t see](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 10/23/2013: [Expelled scholar Xia Yeliang may have to take US visiting scholarship](#)
- Peking University 10/18/2013: [关于对夏业良终止聘用合同的说明 \[Statement on termination of contract with Xia Yeliang\]](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 10/15/2013: [Nine Chinese universities sign academic freedom pact](#)
- *New York Times* 10/21/2013: [Beijing’s assault on academic freedom](#)



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## Media coverage muted as Bo Xilai sentence upheld

Since the Intermediate People’s Court in Jinan, Shandong Province, announced in late September that ousted Chongqing Communist Party chief Bo Xilai had been sentenced to life in prison for various counts of corruption (see CMB No. [94](#)), domestic media coverage surrounding the case has dwindled considerably. After the Jinan High People’s Court rejected Bo’s appeal on October 25, the official Xinhua news agency posted a brief announcement that the court was “reaffirming the original sentence of life imprisonment.” The *New York Times* noted that the higher court offered little information on the hearing compared with the unusually detailed disclosures about the trial in August. Under reported censorship orders, media outlets carried only Xinhua’s articles on the appellate ruling, and pro-Bo comments were allegedly deleted from social media, leaving mostly positive remarks about the sentence.

- Reuters 10/25/2013: [China court upholds life sentence for Bo Xilai](#)
  - *New York Times* 10/24/2013: [Court upholds life sentence for Bo Xilai](#)
  - *China Digital Times* 10/25/2013: [Bo Xilai: Out of sight, but not out of mind](#)
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## NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



### **Social media mum on Yuyao flooding, blogger crackdown cited**

On October 7, Typhoon Fitow came ashore in southeastern China, dropping the heaviest rainfall in a century on the city of Yuyao, Zhejiang Province, and causing severe flooding. The following week, residents took to the streets after state media falsely reported that all had returned to normal. Several days later, larger crowds decried inadequate relief efforts, demanded the local party secretary's resignation, and vandalized police cars. On October 15, the authorities sent riot police to quell the demonstrations. Although some news of the developments was shared via the social-media platform Sina Weibo, observers noted that online discussion and the involvement of top opinion leaders was limited compared with other natural disasters over the past year. They attributed the change to the chilling effect of a recent crackdown—including arrests of both prominent and little-known microbloggers—aimed at enforcing strict September judicial guidelines on the dissemination of “online rumors” and other supposedly harmful information (see CMB No. [93](#)). Bloomberg reported that 170,000 items on Yuyao were posted, far fewer than the almost five million posts on an April earthquake and 610,000 regarding Beijing flooding in 2012 (see CMB Nos. [66](#), [86](#)). Moreover, fewer microbloggers with large followings reposted news, asked sharp questions, or called for government accountability than in the past, while searches for Yuyao and words related to the protests were blocked on Sina Weibo, limiting the spread of such information. However, as traditional media sought to control coverage, they stoked the angry protests, causing Liz Carter of *Tea Leaf Nation* to ask whether the online censorship had backfired by channeling public frustration onto the street. On October 17, China Central Television (CCTV) promoted its upcoming evening news program on Weibo, promising an investigation of the cause of flooding and apparently linking it to local government failures. But no such story aired, and the preview post was deleted, prompting speculation that the show had been censored at the last minute. In a related incident, on October 15 political cartoonist Wang Liming, also known as Rebel Pepper (see CMB Nos. [52](#), [72](#)), was detained after posting information about Yuyao and a cartoon depicting a faceoff between police and protesters. The *Beijing Times* reported that he had been held for spreading rumors but released when authorities determined that there was no “malice” behind his posts. Wang confirmed his release the following day; his name was censored on Sina Weibo during his brief detention.

- *Offbeat China* 10/11/2013: [Unrest in flooded Chinese city Yuyao over untruthful disaster reporting](#)
- *Tea Leaf Nation* 10/17/2013: [Is social media censorship of a deadly flood backfiring?](#)
- *Fei Chang Dao* 10/19/2013: [Cartoonist Wang Liming detained for rumor about Yuyao, Sina Weibo censors searches for ‘Rebel Pepper’](#)

- Reuters 10/16/2013: [China sends riot police to block new protests by flood victims](#)  
*South China Morning Post* 10/18/2013: [Who censored CCTV's report on Yuyao's flood chaos?](#)
  - *China Digital Times* 10/18/2013: [Chill in social media apparent in flood response](#)
  - *China Digital Times* 10/16/2013: [Riot police block new protests by flood victims in Yuyao](#)
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## TIBET & XINJIANG



### Tibetan writers arrested, woman held for WeChat messages

According to Paris-based Reporters Without Borders, the Chinese authorities on October 11–12 detained three Tibetan writers who had provided outside observers with information about conditions in Driru (Biru) County, Nagchu (Naqu) Prefecture, in the Tibet Autonomous Region. The government said they were detained for carrying out “political activities aimed at destroying social stability and dividing the Chinese homeland.” The authorities had recently ordered Driru residents to fly the Chinese flag from their homes, setting off protests and a deadly crackdown by security forces. Tsultrim Gyaltzen, known by the pen name Shokdril and formerly the editor of a Tibetan-language magazine, *New Generation*, was detained on October 11 in Driru. His computer, mobile telephone, and other belongings were confiscated from his home. An associate, Yulgal, was taken the next day. Kalsang Choedhar, a monk from Palyul monastery in eastern Tibet, was also detained on October 12, and his whereabouts remained unknown. Separately, the overseas Tibetan news site Phayul reported that a Tibetan woman named Kalsang from Driru had been arrested on October 11 for expressing “anti-China” sentiments on WeChat, a popular Chinese mobile-phone messaging platform that strictly adheres to Beijing’s censorship rules (see CMB No. [92](#)). She also allegedly stored photos of Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama and banned Tibetan-language songs on her phone. Phayul noted that an increasing number of dissidents relied on WeChat for communications, raising concerns that this could facilitate Chinese government surveillance.

- Reporters Without Borders 10/16/2013: [Wave of arrests contributes to Tibet's growing isolation](#)
  - Phayul 10/17/2013: [WeChat leads to Tibetan woman's arrest in Driru](#)
  - Radio Free Asia 10/11/2013: [Four Tibetans shot dead as protests spread in Driru county](#)
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### Police arrest scores of Uighur netizens for ‘jihad’ talk

*Xinjiang Daily*, a Chinese state-run paper, reported on October 8 that from June 26 to August 31, police in Xinjiang had investigated 256 people for allegedly spreading “online rumors,” 139 of whom were said to have disseminated information about jihad or other religious ideas. Some 110 people

were reportedly detained. Xinjiang’s ethnic Uighurs, who speak a Turkic language and are predominantly Muslim, have long been subjected to cultural and religious repression. They frequently face arbitrary detention and arrest for activities, including peaceful religious practice, that the Chinese authorities view as incitement to separatism and religious militancy (see CMB No. [89](#)). The latest crackdown was associated with a nationwide campaign to punish internet users for spreading “online rumors” (see CMB No. [93](#)). According to *Xinjiang Daily*, one of those arrested was a schoolteacher who had produced video clips promoting religious extremism that were widely viewed and shared on the microblogging platform Sina Weibo. Another was a farmer who had allegedly uploaded e-books containing separatist materials to a website he created, allowing thousands of others to download them. However, the paper did not describe the exact nature of the allegedly incriminating materials, and the government generally prevents foreign journalists and independent researchers from accessing the region, making verification of such allegations difficult. Dilxat Raxit, a spokesperson for the exiled World Uyghur Congress, said the latest accusations were a “total distortion of the truth” that formed part of a larger campaign to “suppress Uighurs’ use of the internet to obtain information and express different points of view.” He said those detained had merely “expressed discontent with Chinese rule and systematic repression in the area.”

- **BBC 10/8/2013: [China arrests 110 in Xinjiang for spreading online rumours](#)**
- **Agence France-Presse 10/8/2013: [Xinjiang police arrest 139 people for ‘spreading religious extremism including jihad’](#)**
- **Reuters 10/8/2013: [China police target online ‘jihad’ talk amid rumor crackdown](#)**
- **Xinhua 10/8/2013: [新疆警方查处 139 人传播“圣战”等宗教极端思想 \[Xinjiang police detain 139 people for spreading extremism including 'jihad'\]](#)**

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## HONG KONG



### **Lack of transparency on TV licensing decision prompts protests**

On October 15, the Hong Kong government granted free-to-air television licenses to two applicants—PCCW and I-Cable Communications—in a move that ended the nearly 40-year duopoly of Television Broadcasts (TVB) and Asia Television (ATV) in the territory (see CMB No. [87](#)). However, officials rejected an application filed by startup operator Hong Kong Television Network (HKTV) without immediate explanation, raising concerns that the government had favored large businesses with vested interests in the political status quo. Both PCCW and I-Cable are controlled by billionaire tycoons with close ties to the central government in Beijing. The announcement and lack of transparency surrounding the criteria for the decision prompted a protest by at least 36,000 people on October 20. Many expressed discontent with Hong Kong chief executive Leung Chun-ying and said the licensing decision had undermined the territory’s freedom of speech and rule of law. On October 25, tens of thousands of protesters rallied outside the government headquarters to demand an explanation, but Leung refused to provide any information, citing pending court challenges. HKTV chairman Ricky Wong Wai-kay said the decision was “unjust.” He noted that his company had spent more than HK\$900 million before its application was turned down, and warned that it would be forced to cut 320 jobs by the end of October. Press freedom advocates have long

questioned the constitutionality and selective application of existing procedures for granting licenses to new media outlets, as the decisions are made by the executive branch rather than an independent regulatory body.

- *South China Morning Post* 10/25/2013: [Thousands of protesters demand answers on HKTV decision](#)
- *Bloomberg* 10/26/2013: [Hong Kong protesters press Leung to issue TV license](#)
- *ZDNet* 10/25/2013: [What TV licensing decision means for Hong Kong media freedom](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 10/17/2013: [Public outcry over rejection of Ricky Wong's free-to-air TV license bid](#)
- *Standard* 10/16/2013: [Jolted by 'unfair contest,' Ricky Wong demands answers to TV license denial after sinking HK\\$900mi](#)

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## **BEYOND CHINA**



### **American historian accepts censorship to publish book in China**

The *New York Times* on October 19 reported that historian Ezra F. Vogel, a professor emeritus at Harvard University, had yielded to Chinese censorship in order to publish his work in the country. As a result, several passages were excised from the mainland Chinese translation of his book, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, a biography of the so-called paramount leader who had presided over China's economic reforms in the 1980s as well as the brutal crackdown on prodemocracy protesters in 1989. Among the censored lines were references to Deng's preoccupation with the 1989 student protesters while dining with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and an official order instructing Chinese newspapers not to cover the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe. Explaining his decision, Vogel said, "I thought it was better to have 90 percent of the book available here than zero." Many foreign writers have made similar choices, the *Times* reported, as have Hollywood film studios and other content producers seeking access to the huge Chinese market (see CMB No. [87](#)). Although Vogel said he was satisfied with the outcome of his experience with Chinese censorship, St. Louis-based novelist Qiu Xiaolong told the *Times* that changes had been made to his books without his consent, leading him to decide not to publish his latest novel in China.

- *New York Times* 10/19/2013: [Authors accept censors' rules to sell in China](#)
- *Guardian* 10/22/2013: [Author bows to Chinese censorship of his Deng Xiaoping biography](#)
- *Harvard Crimson* 10/8/2013: [Professor discussing publishing in China](#)



## Overlooking censorship, foreign media leaders flock to Chinese summit

On October 10, representatives of China’s state-run media and leaders from international outlets such as the Associated Press, Reuters, the *New York Times*, the BBC, and Kyodo News gathered in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, for a presidium meeting of the World Media Summit, a Chinese-organized event first held in 2009. The 2013 meeting was chaired by Li Congjun, head of the official Xinhua news agency and a member of the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee. Aside from the 2012 summit in Moscow, past gatherings have all been held in China (see CMB No. [34](#)). While the latest meeting was widely covered in the Chinese media—garnering a special section on Xinhua’s website—it received scant mention elsewhere. David Bandurski of Hong Kong University’s China Media Project characterized the summit as “the media event that all major global media players attend but none bother to actually cover,” suggesting that this was due to the foreign delegates’ embarrassment at associating themselves with the Chinese government’s extensive censorship and suppression of media freedom. Indeed, a number of the participating outlets have faced website blocking and other major reporting obstacles in China. Bandurski argues that the summit grew out of top party leaders’ desire to influence international coverage of China rather than to resolve challenges facing global media. This year’s meeting took place at a particularly ironic moment as the Chinese authorities engage in a crackdown on free expression. Li Congjun himself authored an article in the *People’s Daily* last month that Bandurski calls “one of the most hardline pieces on the CCP’s press control priorities to appear in China in recent years.” As part of its coverage of the meeting, Xinhua made two announcements: that the group was discussing the launch of a new global journalism prize, and that the 2014 summit would be hosted by the *New York Times*. The paper’s website has been blocked in China since it published a Pulitzer-winning exposé on former premier Wen Jiabao’s family assets.

- *New York Times* 10/19/2013: [Authors accept censors’ rules to sell in China](#)
- *Guardian* 10/22/2013: [Author bows to Chinese censorship of his Deng Xiaoping biography](#)
- *Harvard Crimson* 10/8/2013: [Professor discussing publishing in China](#)



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## Beijing blocks criticism at UN rights review

On October 22, the UN Human Rights Council examined China’s human rights performance since 2009 as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, in which each country is assessed every four years. Civil society groups from around the world submitted their shadow reports on China to the council for the UPR meeting. However, in the lead-up to the event, Beijing increased internet censorship and carried out arbitrary detentions to obstruct Chinese activists who sought to participate in the UPR process. Prominent rights defender Cao Shunli was detained on September 14 at a Beijing airport before she could board a plane to Geneva to take part in the UN gathering. Chinese authorities confirmed on October 21 that Cao had been charged with “unlawful assembly.” Another activist, Chen Jiangfang, was also reportedly stopped from flying to Geneva. During the UPR meeting, a total of 141 states contributed their comments on China, but the vast majority reportedly used similar rhetoric that praised the regime for its treatment of rural citizens, efforts on

environmental protection, and in some cases even for its notorious internet censorship apparatus, leading to speculation that Beijing had orchestrated the laudatory remarks to bury criticism. Although some states, including the United States, Britain, and Canada, did voice grave concerns regarding the Chinese government's severe human rights violations, each was forced to present its extensive list of recommendations in a 50-second time slot due to the large volume of states submitting comments.

- **Voice of America 10/22/2013:** [China to appear before UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review—China](#)
- **Washington Free Beacon 10/22/2013:** [West criticizes, China defends human rights record at U.N.](#)
- **Huffington Post 10/24/2013:** [Wide acclaim for China's state-centered, collective human rights](#)
- **UN News Centre 10/16/2013:** [UN experts alarmed by reprisals against Chinese human rights activists](#)
- **Amnesty International UK 10/24/2013:** [\[CHRB\] Cao Shunli's detention confirmed, crackdown expands as China touts 'Achievements' at UN review \(10/17-23, 2013\)](#)

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## NOTABLE ANALYSIS



### **U.S. congressional panel holds hearing on Guo Feixiong, freedom of expression**

On October 29, a subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing titled “Guo Feixiong and Freedom of Expression in China.” It focused on the detention in August of Guo (see CMB No. [92](#)), a prominent rights advocate from Guangzhou. He had called for officials to declare their assets and publicly supported demands for greater press freedom after journalists at the *Southern Weekly* went on strike in January. He was previously imprisoned for five years, from 2006 to 2011, and was reportedly tortured in custody. Among other witnesses, Guo's wife and daughter and exiled legal activist Chen Guangcheng gave testimony. Their submissions and a video of the hearing are available at the link below.

- **House Foreign Affairs Committee 10/29/2013:** [Subcommittee hearing: Guo Feixiong and freedom of expression in China](#)

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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 2013](#)

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