



CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

Issue No. 19: April 21, 2011

Top Headlines

-  Arab journalist faults China's Middle East coverage
-  China's internet freedom on the decline, report finds
-  TV censors warn against time travel programs
-  Tencent and Intel plan joint research center
-  Chinese state media articles found in Taiwanese paper

BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS

Arab journalist faults China's Middle East coverage

Ezzat Shahrour, the chief Beijing correspondent for the Qatar-based satellite television station Al-Jazeera, criticized Chinese media coverage of the recent political upheaval in the Arab world in an April 15 post on his Chinese-language blog. He said Chinese newspapers have been intentionally misleading their readers by amplifying Arab leaders' point of view while downplaying how the uprisings are an expression of the popular will in these countries. Citing Libya as an example, Shahrour said Beijing was "wasting money" by sending its state media journalists overseas only to report on events such as Libyan leader Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi's victories against rebels, which could be done without traveling. He criticized the omissions of reporting on Qadhafi's use of mercenaries to target Libyan civilians and Chinese media ignoring important opposition press conferences. Given that China is home to a fifth of the world's population, he added that Chinese media could play a much more important role, but that their lack of credibility prevented them from making a global impact. Commenting on Shahrour's observations, David Bandurski of Hong Kong University noted that his critique is all the more significant given that Al-Jazeera was "the very network China has so often cited as the best example of how credible non-Western voices can compete for global public opinion."

- [How China reports the Arab world](#): China Media Project 4/18/2011
 - [A hundred thousand whys from Arabs to China's media](#) (in Chinese): Ezzat Shahrour's blog 4/15/2011
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More artists, writers targeted while Ai Weiwei remains incommunicado

Chinese authorities have continued a campaign against the country's artists and writers following the April 3 detention of well-known artist and blogger Ai Weiwei, who is apparently being held incommunicado and has faced a range of accusations in the Chinese media, from bigamy to pornography to tax evasion. On April 14, the Beijing-friendly Hong Kong newspaper *Wen Wei Po* accused Ai of fathering an illegitimate child, among other misdeeds. Citing anonymous sources, it also said he had begun to confess to investigators, exacerbating concerns of him being abused in custody. The whereabouts and well-being of Ai's assistant Wen Tao have also been unknown since he was taken away by police on April 3. Amid the growing crackdown, Hubei-based blogger Li Tie was put on trial in the city of Wuhan on April 18 for alleged "incitement to subvert state power." Li, who had frequently posted online articles about government reform, had been detained on September 15, 2010. According to Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), the Chinese government has criminally detained at least 38 individuals and "disappeared" more than 16 since anonymous calls for a protest-driven "Jasmine Revolution" in China started to circulate on the internet in mid-February. In a separate case, prominent writer Liao Yiwu was denied permission to travel to the United States for an event held by the New York-based literary rights group PEN American Center, which was set to begin on April 25.

- [China human rights briefing](#): Chinese Human Rights Defenders 4/12/2011
 - [Artist's family rejects bigamy claim](#): *Sydney Morning Herald* 4/16/2011
 - [Activist on trial for subversion](#): Radio Free Asia 4/18/2011
 - [Liao Yiwu: Grounded in China](#): *New Yorker* 3/30/2011
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TV censors warn against time travel programs

China's media regulator, the State Administration for Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT), issued a statement on March 31 that urged television broadcasters to refrain from airing popular fantasy dramas that involve characters traveling back in time. It warned that such storylines can "promote feudalism, superstition, fatalism, and reincarnation." The guidelines appear to have come in response to several popular programs aired on provincial networks, such as Hunan Television, seen as strong competitors of state-run broadcaster China Central Television. As part of the celebration of the upcoming 90th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in July, SARFT has urged broadcasters to produce shows that highlight the prosperity of China under party rule.

- [Making TV safer: Chinese censors crack down on time travel](#): *New York Times* 4/12/2011
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Sinopec spending scandal sparks concerns for whistleblowers

On April 13, state broadcaster China Central Television reported on a scandal over extravagant spending at the state-run oil company Sinopec, including the revelation that Sinopec's Guangdong branch had purchased high-end Chinese liquor for more than one million yuan (\$153,000). The story broke after Chinese netizens posted Sinopec receipts online. Sinopec is reportedly attempting to identify the "inside ghost" who leaked copies of the receipts, and has allegedly ordered its employees not to speak to the media without prior approval. In an unusual move, the state-run news agency Xinhua thanked Sinopec's anonymous whistleblowers and urged readers to condemn the company for pursuing them. Nevertheless, given a history of whistleblowers in high-level corruption cases facing severe retribution—including the brutal murder of one man's wife—concerns remain over the potential reprisals the source of the Sinopec leak may face.

- [Sinopec's liquor problem](#): *Wall Street Journal* 4/19/2011
 - [Pledge to go after informants in Sinopec scandal an act of 'anti-supervision'](#) (in Chinese): Xinhua 4/19/2011
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Germany criticized for aiding 'propaganda show' in Beijing

An art exhibition at the newly reopened National Museum of China in Beijing has turned into a political embarrassment for Germany, after Chinese authorities detained the internationally acclaimed artist Ai Weiwei on April 3. The exhibition, titled *The Art of the Enlightenment*, is sponsored by the German Foreign Office. Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle had even flown to China for its opening ceremony on April 1, during which he praised the two countries' arts diplomacy. German author and Nobel laureate Herta Müller criticized the exhibition, the product of years of planning by Germany and China, as a "decoration for a propaganda show by an authoritarian regime." The *New York Times* has reported that senior Chinese Communist Party officials rejected exhibits elsewhere in the museum on politically sensitive historical events, such as the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 (See [CMB No. 17](#)).

- [Arrest takes gloss off Beijing art show](#): *Financial Times* 4/15/2011
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NEW MEDIA/TECHNOLOGY NEWS



China's internet freedom on the decline, Freedom House report finds

On April 18, Freedom House released *Freedom on the Net 2011*, a report that assesses internet freedom in 37 countries, including China, based on obstacles to access, limits on content, and violations of users' rights. The study found that China remains one of the world's most restrictive countries with respect to internet freedom and home to the most sophisticated control apparatus. The report noted a negative trend since a 2009 assessment. While Chinese netizens have shown

increasing creativity in pushing back against censorship, the new report said, the Chinese Communist Party continues to refine its strategy, carefully manipulating the information landscape and imposing vague laws that require internet companies to self-censor on a massive scale. In particular, over the past two years, blogs on political and social issues were shut down, the space for anonymous communication dwindled, blocks on Facebook and Twitter became permanent, and the authorities stepped up efforts to counter circumvention tools. China's indirect influence as a model of internet control on growing restrictions in other countries was also evident.

- [China: Freedom on the Net 2011 4/18/2011](#)
 - [Reaction grows on internet freedoms: Financial Times 4/18/2011](#)
 - [Internet freedom declining as use grows: San Francisco Chronicle 4/18/2011](#)
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Tencent and Intel plan joint research center

The popular Chinese web portal Tencent announced on April 12 that it plans to open a joint research center with the U.S. technology giant Intel in Shanghai by the end of the year. The so-called Innovation Center will hire 200 engineers and focus on the development of MeeGo, an open-source mobile operating system on which Intel had previously collaborated with Finnish mobile-telephone company Nokia. Tencent, which owns the popular Chinese instant-messenger service QQ, has its own game-development unit that is expected to contribute a range of applications to MeeGo, helping it to compete against Google's Android platform. However, the Chinese company has been accused of monopolistic practices. In November 2010, it was criticized for its handling of a dispute with Qihoo 360, China's top provider of antivirus software. Qihoo 360 had claimed that QQ software was gleaning personal data from users' computers, and Tencent subsequently sought to bar users of QQ's more than 600 million active accounts from accessing its services if they had Qihoo 360 software installed on their computers.

- [Can China's Tencent breathe life into Intel's MeeGo mobile platform?: Venture Beat 4/13/2011](#)
 - [Tencent under fire in clash with Qihoo: Financial Times 11/8/2010](#)
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Huawei's attempt at transparency falls short; Renren to go public

In its 2010 annual report, released on April 11, the Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei published names, photographs, and profiles of its board members for the first time. The company, founded by former Chinese military officer Ren Zengfei, is aiming to improve its transparency to dispel concerns among some U.S. lawmakers that its overseas expansion represents a threat to U.S. national security. However, in the Huawei report, the biography of board chairperson Sun Yafang fails to mention her stint at China's Ministry of State Security, which had previously been noted in the Chinese media. The omission was not subsequently explained by the company. Separately, the Beijing-based social-networking website Renren will begin selling shares on the New York Stock Exchange on May 4. The company claims to be the leading "real name" social-networking site in

China, meaning it strictly requires users to create accounts using the names printed on their identity cards. Although it has only 117 million users worldwide, as opposed to the 600 million users of its competitor Facebook, Renren benefits from the fact that Facebook is blocked in China and can only be reached with circumvention tools.

- [Huawei opens up its board to scrutiny](#): *Financial Times* 4/17/2011
 - [Going public: Chinese social network Renren IPO imminent](#): Dow Jones Newswires 4/18/2011
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SCIO launches iPad app to promote China's image

On April 11, China's State Council Information Office (SCIO) launched a free application for Apple's iPad tablet computer that features videos of news conferences and a database of the Chinese government's English and Chinese-language white papers on subjects ranging from the country's internet development to human rights issues, dated from 2005 to 2010. There is also a "China Image" section that includes promotional films. It is unclear whether the SCIO plans to develop a similar app for Google's Android software, which the *Wall Street Journal* said would yield a "fine irony," as Beijing and Google have clashed recently over the country's censorship rules.

- [Beijing's PR office embraces iPad app](#): *Wall Street Journal* 4/19/2011
 - [App gives net users a unique insight](#): Xinhua 4/18/2011
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BEYOND CHINA



In critique of U.S. rights record, China relies on open U.S. sources

On April 10, China's State Council Information Office (SCIO) published a report titled *The Human Rights Record of the United States in 2010*, a tit-for-tat response to the U.S. State Department's *2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, released on April 8. The SCIO report said the United States had "turned a blind eye to its own terrible human rights situation and seldom mentioned it," listing shortcomings including "fairly strict restriction" of the internet. However, the document shows a heavy reliance on uncensored U.S. news sources including the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, indirectly undermining the claim of limited U.S. reporting on domestic human rights abuses. In all, roughly 80 percent of the source references in the SCIO report are to U.S. media outlets, websites, government entities, and nongovernmental organizations.

- [Human Rights Record of the United States in 2010](#): *China Daily* 4/11/2011
 - [China](#): U.S. State Department 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices
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Chinese state media articles found in Taiwanese paper

China Post, an English-language newspaper in Taiwan, was found to have inserted seven articles from China's state-run media outlets—including Xinhua news agency, the *People's Daily*, and the *China Daily*—in its special “China Reports” on April 8. As no attribution was provided with the articles, which discussed the Chinese government's economic policy, readers were most likely unaware of the source of the information in the insertions and their close relationship to the Chinese Communist Party. According to the *Taipei Times*, *China Post* said the special report was produced in Hong Kong by external contributors. Taiwan's current media regulations prohibit print media from China to be sold in Taiwan without government permission. On January 13, an amendment to the Budget Law was passed to prohibit the use of public funds for paid news. However, embedded marketing by foreign governments was excluded. Department of Planning Director Hsu Hsiao-li said his office would ask the *China Post* for an explanation regarding the “China Reports” inserts ([See CMB No.9](#)).

- [CCP news articles seep into Taiwanese paper](#): *Taipei Times* 4/9/2011
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NOTABLE ANALYSIS



Chinese cyberattacks hearing before House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee

On April 15, Adam Segal, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, testified at a hearing held by the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, titled “Communist Chinese Cyber-Attacks, Cyber-Espionage and Theft of American Technology.” Segal's testimony outlined the Chinese government's innovation, espionage, and technology policies that target U.S. computer networks and intellectual property. His report also noted China's desire to reduce its dependence on the United States and its allies for advanced technologies.

- [Innovation, Espionage, and Chinese Technology Policy](#): Adam Segal
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Susan Shirk: Changing Media, Changing China

On March 30, Professor Susan Shirk of the University of California, San Diego, discussed her edited volume *Changing Media, Changing China* with the *Wall Street Journal*. Published in November last year, the book traces the development of Chinese media and covers topics ranging from netizen opinion to Chinese military journalism. Shirk served as deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs during the administration of President Bill Clinton.

- [Changing Media, Changing China](#): Susan Shirk
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For additional information on human rights and free expression in China, see:
Freedom in the World 2010

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