



# CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

## Issue No. 48: February 24, 2012 Headlines

-  State media boost Xi's image during U.S. trip
-  Regulator plans online television restrictions
-  Mainlander named to head Hong Kong paper
-  China to increase foreign film quota
-  China's telecom role in Central, South Asia questioned

## BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS

### State media boost Xi's image during U.S. trip

During Chinese vice president Xi Jinping's five-day visit to the United States, which ended on February 17, Chinese state media showed Xi being greeted with ceremonial honors and feted by political elites in Washington, burnishing his image ahead of an autumn Chinese Communist Party gathering at which he is expected to be elevated to the top party position. Coverage of the trip also seemed designed to stress Xi's common touch, particularly through his appearance at a Los Angeles Lakers basketball game. While there he met with former Lakers star Magic Johnson and British soccer player David Beckham, both of whom are extremely well-known among Chinese youth. However, coverage of Xi's trip largely avoided serious discussions of policy differences between Washington and Beijing, as well as human rights-related protests that occurred in each city Xi visited. At least one independent journalist reportedly had difficulty covering the visit. Zhao Yan, a journalist for the U.S.-based, Chinese-language news site Boxun.com, told the *New York Times* that he was barred by Chinese officials from entering a White House news conference featuring Xi and U.S. president Barack Obama on February 14. Zhao said the White House had granted him access to cover the event, but White House officials said the incident was the result of a miscommunication, stating that Zhao had been granted access only to a regular White House press

briefing later in the day. An editor at Boxun said Zhao, who spent three years in prison in China for assisting a foreign correspondent on a sensitive story related to former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin, could have been turned away due to his own history.

- *Wall Street Journal* 2/19/2012: [China's Xi cultivates relaxed image on U.S. trip](#)
  - *New York Times* 2/17/2012: [China blocked access to White House news conference with Xi, reporter says](#)
  - NBC 2/16/2012: [To Chinese state media, Xi's US visit a success](#)
- 



## Foreign reporters beaten while covering village protests

Assault cases against foreign journalists have surfaced in the Zhejiang Province village of Panhe, as authorities attempt to suppress coverage of protests against land grabs by the local government. On February 15, while conducting interviews with villagers, Netherlands Press Association reporter Remko Tanis was beaten by 20 to 30 individuals who appeared to be hired thugs or plainclothes police. Villagers he was interviewing were beaten more severely. Tanis, whose bag had been seized, was then taken into a car by county officials and driven to Wenzhou. When his bag was returned to him, his notebooks, documents given to him by villagers, and the memory card from his camera were missing. On February 16, two reporters working for Paris-based television broadcaster France 24 were also stopped by a group of unidentified individuals in Panhe. Both Baptiste Fallevoz and Jack Zhang were removed from their car, and Zhang was beaten and struck on the head with his video camera. The police reportedly blamed villagers for the attack and gave financial compensation to the journalists. Foreign journalists are kept on a tight leash by the Chinese authorities, as they frequently attempt to conduct uncensored reporting on issues deemed sensitive by the government (see CMB Nos. [13](#), [23](#)). According to state media regulations, international news outlets are not allowed to recruit local Chinese to work as reporters, though Chinese journalists often assist foreign reporters as “fixers,” as was the case with Zhang. Chinese reporters generally face more serious consequences for critical coverage than their foreign counterparts. Meanwhile, the Beijing-based Foreign Correspondents’ Club of China, which has been speaking out in defense of foreign journalists’ rights since 1981, is not recognized by the state as a legal organization and has faced increased pressure from authorities in recent years.

- IFEX 2/17/2012: [International journalists attacked while covering land dispute](#)
  - *China Digital Times* 2/16/2012: [Foreign journalists jumped in Panhe](#)
  - Agence France-Presse 2/17/2012: [China blames foreign reporters for bad press abroad](#)
- 



## Chinese reporter struck by executive

Liu Weihung, chief executive of Yijing Central Walk, a real-estate developer and owner of a shopping mall in Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province, was seen in public hitting a *Shenzhen News*

newspaper reporter named Qin Xinmei on February 13. The incident occurred during a company press conference at the mall, aimed at clarifying allegations of illegal leasing of commercial space. Liu left the session as a group of 20 protesters entered the mall with banners accusing her of lying. Amid the ensuing chaos, the reporter was punched in the chest by Liu as she attempted to interview her. Liu admitted that she had struck the reporter, but claimed that it was because Qin had made “baseless accusations” against her in her articles. According to local media reports, Liu is affiliated with the state-run All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce and is a member of Guangdong Province’s Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a government advisory body. Her political connections appeared likely to protect her from legal repercussions. Chinese reporters routinely face assaults in the course of their work, though they are rarely carried out by such senior figures and in such a public venue; more common are attacks by unidentified thugs.

- **Red Net 2/16/2012 (in Chinese): [Guangdong official attacks reporter outside press conference](#)**
- 

## **State TV remains cautious on Jeremy Lin coverage**

China Central Television (CCTV), the state broadcaster, is taking a cautious approach to the rising popularity of Taiwanese American basketball star Jeremy Lin of the New York Knicks (see CMB No. [47](#)). The Chinese web portal Netease has reported that viewership of CCTV’s sports channel, which monopolizes broadcasting of U.S. National Basketball Association (NBA) games in the country, has increased 39 percent compared with last year. But despite the surging interest in U.S. basketball, driven at least in part by Lin’s recent successes, CCTV staff told Netease that most Knicks games could not be aired due to the “time difference.” The Chinese web portal Sina, which has made most of Lin’s games available online via live streaming, did not carry a February 20 game that pitted the Knicks against the Dallas Mavericks, whose mainland Chinese player Yi Jianlian has not performed well. Observers speculating on the reasons for the limited Chinese media coverage of Lin have cited his Taiwanese background, the frequent appearance of Taiwanese flags among fans at his games, the fact that he did not emerge from China’s state sports system, and his outspoken Christianity. On February 13, a New Yorker who was interviewed in English by CCTV said of Lin, “I love the fact that he gave praise to his team and to God.” But the report’s Chinese subtitles translated the comment as “I love him for praising his team.”

- *Economist* 2/20/2012: [Stop the Linsanity?](#)
  - *Financial Times* 2/15/2012: [Chinese censors face ‘Lin-sanity’ conundrum](#)
  - Hoop China 2/14/2012 (in Chinese): [When will CCTV air Jeremy Lin’s Knicks games?](#)
  - North News Net 2/16/2012 (in Chinese): [Jeremy Lin fanfare on global scale, CCTV viewership increases 39 percent](#)
-

# NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



## Regulator plans online television restrictions

At the National Science and Technology Working Conference held in Beijing on February 14, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) announced plans to develop new regulations for online television content. Details of the planned rules remained unclear. However, the SARFT has imposed a series of strict new controls on ordinary television programming in recent months (see CMB No. [47](#)), and the latest announcement appeared to represent an effort to make similar changes to television online. User-generated video content is already heavily restricted on the Chinese internet. According to SARFT deputy administrator Zhang Haitao, the nationwide regulations will cover internet protocol television (IPTV) streaming services, mobile-telephone video services, and video-streaming websites like Youku and Tudou. The Guangzhou-based newspaper *21st Century Business Herald* reported that the SARFT aims to increase the “safety” and “user friendliness” of new media content through integration of the so-called “three networks”—telecommunications (or mobile) networks, computer networks (the internet), and cable television networks. Among other effects, the proposed regulations seem likely to change the business outlook of Youku and Tudou, both of which carry television and movie content, are traded on U.S. stock exchanges, and benefit from long-standing bans on potential foreign competitors like YouTube.

- **Penn-Olson 2/16/2012:** [SARFT establishing platform for regulating internet video in China](#)
- **21st Century Business Herald 2/16/2012 (in Chinese):** [New media regulatory platform: Nationwide integration of video websites](#)
- **IFEX 4/2/2009:** [Freedom House dismayed by new Chinese internet restrictions](#)



## Online activists decry death sentence, face police and censors

Chinese microblog users and online activists have continued to face censorship and police harassment in February, though in at least one case collective netizen action appeared to yield a concession from authorities. The following is a selection of recent developments:

- **Death sentence reviewed:** In a rare gesture, China’s Supreme People’s Court gave assurances on February 15 that it would carefully review the death sentence of former billionaire businesswoman Wu Ying, after Chinese netizens launched a campaign on the microblogging site Sina Weibo to prevent her execution. Wu was sentenced to death in 2009 for “fraudulent fundraising,” or raising money through illegal lending networks and then misusing the borrowed funds. Her appeal to the Zhejiang High Court was rejected last month, leading to the Supreme People’s Court appeal. Wu’s defenders have argued that the private networks are widely tolerated, and that she is being used as a scapegoat as the central authorities attempt to curb uncontrolled lending and real-estate speculation. Netizens remarked that senior public officials often get away with far worse abuses.

- **Democracy advocate warned:** Qin Yongmin, a democracy advocate who was released in November 2010 after serving 12 years in prison for “inciting subversion of state power,” told Radio Free Asia on February 20 that he had been taken by police for questioning the previous week, after he met several activists—including a writer from the Chinese literary rights group Independent Chinese PEN Center—at a restaurant in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, on February 14. Qin was told that he had violated national security law by publishing articles and giving interviews to journalists. He was also warned that he would face immediate detention if he launched his planned political website, hosted overseas, called “Peaceful Transition Advice.” Qin has been under close surveillance since his release from prison, with officials searching his home and confiscating his computer equipment.
  
  - **Chen Guangcheng microblog suppressed:** Chinese Human Rights Defenders reported on February 15 that a Chinese netizen nicknamed “Lanzhou Yu Nan” had set up a microblog account supporting activist lawyer Chen Guangcheng some 40 times in two months, only to have it shut down by censors each time. Chen has been under strict house arrest in Shandong Province since leaving prison in 2010, and many netizens have participated in online campaigns on his behalf (see CMB No. [42](#)).
  
  - **Reuters 2/16/2012:** [China Internet users strive to spare businesswoman from death](#)
  - **Radio Free Asia 2/16/2012:** [Death row billionaire gets review](#)
  - **Radio Free Asia 2/20/2012:** [Activist warned over website](#)
  - **China Human Rights Briefing 2/15/2012:** [Authorities close down pro-Chen Guangcheng microblog dozens of times](#)
- 

## TIBET



### **Tibetan writers jailed amid ongoing clampdown**

The authorities have escalated a crackdown on Tibetan writers amid deadly unrest in the region (see CMB No. [46](#)). On February 15, Gangkye Drubpa Kyab, author of the Tibetan-language book *Dhi Ring Ghi Mikchu* (Today’s Tears), was taken by police from his home in Seda County, Sichuan Province, and his subsequent whereabouts were unknown. Separately, a court in Lhasa sentenced Norbu Tsering, a Tibetan monk from Pelyu County, Sichuan, who wrote the 2008 book *If You Have Oppression and Repression, Then I Have Compassion and Truth*, to two years in prison on February 12. He had been arrested in 2011. On February 3, Dawa Dorjee, a young writer and Tibetan-language advocate who had published the book *Labm* (Road) on democracy and human rights issues, was detained at Lhasa Gonggar Airport after he participated in a cultural conference in Chengdu. His whereabouts thereafter were unknown. In an indication of how legal processes often lag behind police action in Tibet, the Tibetan news site Phayul reported on February 20 that an arrest warrant was finally issued on January 1 for a monk named Jigme Guri, who had been in jail since August 2011. Until the warrant was issued, no information had been available on his situation. Jigme Guri had previously recorded and posted online a video in which he described his arrest and torture amid

a crackdown in 2008. Despite the recent unrest in Tibetan areas, which has included self-immolations and the use of live fire against protesters, Chinese state media ran cheerful reports about local celebrations on February 22, Tibetan New Year (Losar). The Tibetan government-in-exile had urged Tibetans to spend the holiday in quiet prayer for the victims of Chinese rule.

- Agence France-Presse 2/19/2012: [China ‘detains Tibetan writer’](#)
- Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy 2/20/2012: [Three Tibetan writers detained, one sentenced](#)
- Phayul 2/20/2012: [Tibetan served with arrest warrant after four months in jail](#)
- *Shanghaiist* 2/22/2012: [State media ignore self-immolations, paint extraordinarily cheerful image of Tibetan new year](#)

---

## HONG KONG



### **Mainlander named to head ‘*South China Morning Post*’**

The *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) announced on January 31 that Wang Xiangwei would be its new editor in chief, having joined the paper in 1996 and held the deputy editor position since 2007. Wang was born in mainland China and worked at the state-run *China Daily* for three years early in his career. Some observers raised concerns that the influential English-language Hong Kong paper was drifting closer to China, posing a challenge to its journalistic integrity. Upon his appointment, Wang named Tammy Tam and Kenneth Howe as deputy editors. Howe, formerly of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, has been a senior editor at the SCMP since 2007. Tam had recently joined the paper after serving as vice president of news and public affairs at Hong Kong’s Asia Television (ATV), a broadcaster seen as friendly to the central government in Beijing. She had resigned after the station erroneously reported the death of former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin (see CMB No. 42). According to Hong Kong-based news site *Asia Sentinel*, Tam is thought to be close to the Central Liaison Office and the Hong Kong–Macau Affairs Office, but is “not considered to be an apologist” for the Chinese Communist Party.

- *Asia Sentinel* 2/1/2012: [Mainland named as South China Morning Post editor](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 1/31/2012: [South China Morning Post \(SCMP\) appoints veteran Wang Xiangwei as new editor-in-chief](#)

---

## BEYOND CHINA



### **China to increase foreign film quota**

On February 17, U.S. vice president Joe Biden and his visiting Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, reached an agreement that will allow 34 foreign films to be shown in China per year. The previous

cap of 20 titles has been enforced despite being ruled a trade violation by the World Trade Organization in 2009. According to the new pact, the additional 14 movies need to be in premium (IMAX or 3D) format. In addition, the share of Chinese box-office receipts going to foreign studios for their films will increase to 25 percent, from the previous 13 percent. Also on February 17, the California-based animation studio DreamWorks announced a joint venture with China Media Capital, Shanghai Media Group, and Shanghai Alliance Investment. The three Chinese companies will hold a 55 percent stake in the new company, called Oriental DreamWorks, which plans to release its first film in 2016. The “Chollywood” partnership model is on the rise (see CMB No. [46](#)), but China’s censorship rules remain a hindrance to the creation of content that can appeal to international audiences. *The Flowers of War*, a recent coproduction directed by Zhang Yimou and starring Christian Bale, has been panned by critics and neglected by U.S. audiences (see CMB No. [43](#)).

- *Variety* 2/20/2012: [China’s film quota cracked](#)
- *Reuters* 2/18/2012: [White House gets China to open market to U.S. movies](#)
- *CNN* 2/21/2012: [More Hollywood films set for China](#)
- *Wall Street Journal* 2/18/2012: [China agrees to increased access for U.S. films](#)
- *Atlantic* 2/17/2012: [China’s \(probably doomed\) plan to partner with Hollywood](#)
- *Agence France-Presse* 2/18/2012: [Oriental DreamWorks eyes first Chinese film in 2016](#)



## **Mysterious Cambridge donation stirs debate, censorship**

Britain’s *Telegraph* newspaper reported on February 19 that China’s internet censors had erased news of a £3.7 million (36 million yuan) donation to Cambridge University by a practically unknown Chinese organization called the Chong Hua Foundation, after faculty members raised concerns that the donor was linked to the Chinese government. The gift endowed a new chair of Chinese development studies at the university, and the first occupant of the post will be Professor Peter Nolan, who is known to have close ties to Chinese premier Wen Jiabao and his family. Nolan reportedly helped to solicit the gift. Netizen discussion and articles related to the donation were reportedly erased over the course of one night on popular Chinese web portals. Yao Shujie, a Chinese scholar at Nottingham University, told the *Telegraph* that his blog posts on the controversy were repeatedly taken down, even though he had defended Cambridge’s decision to accept the donation. Cambridge insists that it has found no link between the Chinese government and the Chong Hua Foundation, which has no website or official listing in Britain or China.

- *Telegraph* 2/21/2012: [Chinese internet censors erase news of £3.7 million donation to Cambridge](#)
- *Cambridge Student Online* 2/2/2012: [Beware the threat of China?](#)



## China's telecom role in Central, South Asia questioned

A pair of recent articles has highlighted the growing presence of the Chinese telecommunications companies Huawei and ZTE in authoritarian countries in Central and South Asia. The two firms have reportedly secured a series of major contracts to build telecommunications infrastructure in countries like Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Sri Lanka, often with the help of intergovernmental loans from Beijing. U.S. lawmakers and others have expressed concerns that Huawei and ZTE technology could include hidden components that would aid cyberespionage efforts by China, or features designed to assist local regimes in spying on or blocking the flow of information to their own citizens. In an example of the firms' dominance, a U.S. diplomatic cable from late 2009 reported that Huawei was rapidly eclipsing European competitors in Sri Lanka, and hoped to have an 85 percent share of the country's new infrastructure market by early 2010. Both Huawei and ZTE have denied working with the Chinese government to steal data. However, Huawei announced in December that it would limit its business in Iran after the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the company had provided user-tracking equipment to the authoritarian country (see CMB No. [43](#)).

- EurasiaNet 2/15/2012: [Are Chinese telecoms acting as the ears for Central Asian authoritarians?](#)
- Groundviews 2/16/2012: [Are Chinese telecoms acting as the ears for the Sri Lankan government?](#)

---

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

[\*Freedom on the Net 2011\*](#)  
[\*Freedom in the World 2011\*](#)  
[\*Freedom of the Press 2010\*](#)

To subscribe or submit items, e-mail:

[cmb@freedomhouse.org](mailto:cmb@freedomhouse.org)

For archives, go to:

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/news/china-media-bulletin>