



CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

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Headlines

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BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS

Chongqing reverses 'red' TV policies

In a rare propaganda policy reversal, Chongqing's satellite television station resumed its broadcasting of popular drama series and news programs during prime time (7:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.) on March 26, according to the state-run newspaper *China Daily*. In February 2011, these had been taken off the air and replaced with pro-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) programs under orders from Chongqing CCP chief Bo Xilai, who was removed from office amid party infighting earlier this month (see CMB No. [13](#)). Since his ouster, many of the unique policies and trends associated with Bo have been suppressed, including his promotion of revolutionary themes from the Mao Zedong era (see CMB No. [51](#)). A Chongqing television singing program that featured Maoist anthems, called *Daily Red Songs*, has been reduced to a weekly show. Similarly, according to the *Chongqing Daily* on March 28, the city's propaganda chief, He Shizhong, called on municipal propaganda workers to "firmly avoid movement-style [propaganda] methods" and "resolutely maintain a high degree of uniformity" with the CCP's Central Committee. An executive at the state-owned Chongqing Broadcasting Group denied reports that the station would also be reinstating commercial advertisements, which had been replaced with CCP propaganda clips in 2011. However, on March 15, the same day Bo was sacked, a liquor advertisement was reportedly aired following a local evening newscast on Chongqing Satellite

Television. Despite the sudden rollback of Chongqing's more aggressive approach to television propaganda, nationwide restrictions on television entertainment programming that have been introduced over the last several months remain in place (see CMB No. [47](#)).

- *China Daily* 3/27/2012: [Chongqing channel restores TV series](#)
 - *Chongqing Daily* 3/26/2011 (in Chinese): [Chongqing satellite television programming to be modified](#)
 - China Media Project 3/28/2012: [Propaganda changes lanes in Chongqing](#)
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Amid official silence, Bo Xilai speculation turns to Briton's death

Since the official Xinhua news agency announced on March 15 that Chongqing Communist Party chief Bo Xilai was being removed from his post, Chinese officials and state-run media have offered no additional information on his fate or whereabouts, raising questions about whether he would also be ejected from the central party's Politburo or face criminal charges (see CMB No. [51](#)). This week, voices ranging from the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists to the Chinese-language version of the Chinese Communist Party-owned *Global Times* newspaper called on officials to explain what was happening within the party's top ranks. The information vacuum has been filled largely by speculation, including rumors of a coup attempt last week. More recently, online and foreign media discussion has focused on the mysterious death in Chongqing of a British businessman, Neil Heywood. Known to have close ties to Bo and his family, Heywood was found dead in his hotel room in November 2011 and was quickly cremated. Police claimed that he died due to excessive alcohol consumption, but acquaintances said he was not a heavy drinker, raising suspicions of foul play. On March 26, the *Financial Times* reported that former Bo aide Wang Lijun, whose attempt to seek asylum at a U.S. consulate triggered the scandal that led to Bo's ouster, had alleged that Heywood was poisoned and was in a business dispute with Bo's wife at the time of his death. Meanwhile, Chinese censors continued to restrict content involving Bo online. A search by *China Media Bulletin* editors for Heywood's name on the popular Sina web portal—with the user location set as Beijing—and on the Baidu search engine returned only two or three results. By contrast, a search on Sina with the user location set as North America returned over 5,000 results.

- *Financial Times* 3/23/2012: [Wall of silence around fate of China's Bo](#)
 - CNN 3/23/2012: [Heavy hand of China's censors fuels online frenzy](#)
 - CPJ 3/27/2012: [How to stop rumors in China: Stop censorship](#)
 - *Global Times* 3/22/2012 (in Chinese): [Social rationality after Chongqing adjustment](#)
 - *Financial Times* 3/26/2012: [China urged to probe British man's death](#)
 - China Media Project 3/28/2012: [Chatter about Heywood death deleted from Weibo](#)
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NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



Online cartoons mock government, attract censors

Satirical cartoons have emerged as an effective way for Chinese netizens to criticize their government. A recent drawing by popular internet cartoonist Rebel Pepper was widely circulated on the web this month after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched its “Learn from Comrade Lei Feng” campaign, which featured extravagant events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of an army truck driver who has been used as a propaganda symbol since the Mao Zedong era (see CMB No. [50](#)). The cartoon was first posted on Rebel Pepper’s microblog account, which currently has nearly 102,000 followers. It depicts a giant anglerfish with sharp teeth, dangling a glowing image of Lei Feng that lures a group of innocent-looking smaller fish. Explaining the cartoon, Rebel Pepper wrote that the Chinese government “still uses this sham image of Lei Feng to confuse gullible people.” The authorities and Chinese internet companies working on their behalf have attempted, with mixed success, to track and delete such subversive cartoons, which are not subject to automatic keyword-based filtering. The anglerfish image has apparently been overlooked, but on March 26, censors removed one of Rebel Pepper’s latest drawings from his microblog account. It depicts Chinese people bidding farewell to a large red ship that carries Mao and other CCP leaders and is labeled “Titanic.” A netizen known as Pi San, who runs an animation studio in Beijing, became famous last year after he created an animated video that alluded to various recent scandals in which ordinary Chinese, portrayed as rabbits, suffered at the hands of the powerful, depicted as tigers (see CMB No. [8](#)). The video remains available on YouTube—which is blocked in China—but was removed from Chinese web portals and video-sharing sites the day it was posted.

- **China Media Project 3/27/2012: [Cartoon post critical of CCP deleted](#)**
- **NPR 3/16/2012: [Provocative Chinese cartoonists find an outlet online](#)**



Users report fleeting censorship gaps on taboo topics

Despite the sophistication of China’s online censorship system, temporary openings periodically emerge. Amid the political shakeup following Bo Xilai’s ouster as Chongqing Communist Party chief on March 15 (see above, CMB No. [51](#)), several instances of reduced censorship on highly taboo topics were reported. Beginning on March 17, some China-based readers of the *Epoch Times*—a New York-based international newspaper run by practitioners of the banned Falun Gong spiritual group, whose website is typically blocked in China—reported that they were suddenly able to access the site without the use of circumvention tools. Similarly, users said that results on China’s Baidu search engine for terms related to the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown included links to nongovernmental sources that would normally be obscured, including reports that Premier Wen Jiabao had recommended reconsidering the Communist Party’s ban on discussion or redress related to the incident. Others reported getting politically sensitive results through searches on Baidu and the Sina Weibo microblogging service for phrases like “Wang Lijun live harvest” and “bloody harvest,” a reference to allegations that former Bo aide Wang Lijun had been involved in the forcible extraction of bodily organs from Falun Gong prisoners of conscience for use in transplants. By

March 28, media reports and tests by *China Media Bulletin* editors indicated that most of these censorship gaps had been closed, though a search on Sina Weibo for “Wang Lijun live harvest” surprisingly returned 52 uncensored posts on the topic. There are some indications that the temporary openings stemmed from party infighting rather than technical glitches or negligence. A reputed faction that includes Bo, former president Jiang Zemin, and security chief Zhou Yongkang is associated with the Tiananmen and Falun Gong crackdowns, whereas those surrounding Wen and President Hu Jintao are believed to have supported less draconian approaches to both issues.

- *Epoch Times* 3/26/2012: [Bo Xilai fired, Epoch Times website unblocked behind GFW](#)
- *Wall Street Journal* 3/22/2012: [Amid uncertainty in Beijing, the ultimate taboo](#)
- *Epoch Times* 3/28/2012: [Chinese internet allows searches for ‘live \[organ\] harvest’](#)
- *Epoch Times* 3/28/2012: [‘June 4 massacre’ internet ban partly lifted in China](#)

TIBET & XINJIANG



State website lambasts Dalai Lama over self-immolations, ‘Nazi’ goals

The state-run news website China Tibet Online has launched harsh attacks on Tibet’s spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, accusing him of inciting Tibetans to set themselves on fire and advocating Nazi-like racial policies. A March 22 Chinese-language editorial on the site called the Dalai Lama a “tricky liar” who sought to build a “Berlin Wall” of ethnic segregation and confrontation between ethnic Tibetans and China’s ethnic Han majority, whose numbers in Tibet have grown dramatically since Chinese forces took control of the region. Of the Dalai Lama’s call for Tibetan autonomy, the piece said, “How similar it is to the Holocaust committed by Hitler on the Jewish!” According to another editorial on the website, “Why doesn’t the Dalai Lama immolate himself” was the most common question from netizens. At least 30 Tibetans have set themselves on fire over the past year to protest the Chinese authorities’ repressive policies in Tibet. The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile have discouraged the practice but expressed sympathy for those involved. On March 28, a Tibetan man named Jamphel Yeshe died in India’s capital, New Delhi, two days after setting himself on fire during a demonstration against Chinese rule in Tibet. His death came just a few hours before Chinese president Hu Jintao arrived in India for an international summit. Photographs and video of Jamphel Yeshe running in flames were widely circulated on the global internet, in contrast to the previous cases that took place inside China, which have gone unreported due to a government-imposed media blackout in restive Tibetan areas.

- *Guardian* 3/25/2012: [China accuses Dalai Lama of Nazi policies](#)
- *China Tibet Online* 3/22/2012: [Seven questions for Dalai Lama](#)
- *China Tibet Online* 3/21/2012: [Netizens indignant with Dalai clique for inciting self-immolation](#)
- *Associated Press* 3/29/2012: [Dead Tibetan activist Yeshe’s letter calls for freedom](#)



Outspoken Tibetan musician detained

Radio Free Asia reported on March 26 that Ugyen Tenzin, a 25-year-old Tibetan singer from Yushu Prefecture in Qinghai Province, had been detained in February after he released an album dedicated to the Dalai Lama and other exiled Tibetan political and spiritual leaders. On a DVD of the album, *An Unending Flow of My Heart's Blood*, the singer reportedly advocated the “religious and political cause of Tibet.” Unconfirmed reports have suggested that Ugyen Tenzin is in prison, is being denied access to visitors, and has been severely abused in custody, leaving him in poor health. According to overseas Tibetan groups, the Chinese government has arrested scores of local intellectuals and cultural figures since 2008, as their expressions of Tibetan identity are considered a threat to Chinese rule over the territory (see CMB Nos. [48](#), [49](#)).

- **Radio Free Asia 3/26/2012: [Popular Tibetan singer detained](#)**
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Uighur netizens detained, Kadeer criticizes censorship

The Germany-based World Uyghur Congress reported on March 15 that the Chinese authorities had recently detained a total of five Uighur youths in Xinjiang’s Qorghas County. Three were accused of inciting separatism by sharing religious pamphlets. The local police confirmed on March 4 that the other two, identified in Chinese as Amou and Yemou, were detained for spreading information harmful to national security and stability, after they reposted unverified reports on microblogging platforms that there were two bombs under the local Ili River Bridge (see CMB No. [50](#)). A Chinese netizen told Radio Free Asia that he had seen similar postings, with different cities named as the locations of the bombs, circulating on the internet for over a year. “If a Han Chinese person had posted this, at most he would have been reprimanded by having to ‘drink tea’ with the police,” he said, referring to a common form of light interrogation. Separately, on March 16, Uighur exile leader Rebiya Kadeer urged the Chinese authorities to stop censoring news about a fatal shooting incident in Korla, a city near Xinjiang’s capital, Urumqi. According to Radio Free Asia, police had raided a farmhouse on March 8 and killed four Uighur men who were suspected of plotting terrorism. Kadeer warned that if the Chinese government “continues to keep events in the region secret, this will create an environment of rumors,” which could in turn lead to more ethnic tensions and violence.

- **Radio Free Asia 3/15/2012: [Uyghur youths detained](#)**
 - **Radio Free Asia 3/19/2012: [China silent over slain Uyghurs](#)**
 - ***China Letter* 3/11/2012: [Xinjiang: Korla incident—an analysis](#)**
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HONG KONG



Media pressure, cyberattacks cloud chief executive election

Several infringements on press and internet freedom in Hong Kong have been alleged in connection

with the March 25 indirect election of Leung Cheung-ying as the territory's chief executive. In the days before the vote, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reported that the Chinese Liaison Office, which represents the central government in Hong Kong, had made telephone calls to several Hong Kong newspapers, castigating them for investigations of Leung and coverage of claims that the office had attempted to influence members of the 1,200-seat committee—dominated by pro-Beijing elites—that chooses the territory's leader. One member of the election committee, himself a publisher, confirmed to the IFJ that the Liaison Office had called and subtly urged him to shift his support from Henry Tang, the candidate Beijing initially backed, to Leung. Separately, on March 23, administrators of an online election poll organized by Hong Kong University reported that its website had been brought down by a massive denial-of-service attack. Three days later, two men were arrested in connection with the attack, though their suspected motives remained unclear. Global Voices reported two cases of individuals who opposed Leung's election being subjected to online harassment, possibly by progovernment commentators paid by the Chinese authorities, known pejoratively as the 50 Cent Party. In one incident, a professor received threatening e-mails and had defamatory remarks added to his Wikipedia profile. Another prominent Hong Kong opinion leader had his Facebook account suspended after a large number of users disingenuously complained to site administrators that a photograph of Hong Kong's skyline at night—with a title saying that a dark new era had begun—violated Facebook's code of conduct. Meanwhile, the Hong Kong election was closely watched by mainland netizens, becoming a top-trending topic on the microblogging platform Sina Weibo. Their reactions ranged from criticism of Leung's close ties to the Communist Party to admiration for his ability to rise so high from humble beginnings. Some netizens observed that Hong Kong's limited suffrage compared unfavorably to Taiwan's direct presidential elections.

- IFJ 3/22/2012: [Mainland interference in political reporting alleged in Hong Kong](#)
- *Wall Street Journal* 3/25/2012: [Mainland Chinese scrutinize Hong Kong vote](#)
- BBC 3/23/2012: [Organisers say Hong Kong mock poll 'under cyber attack'](#)
- *Register* 3/26/2012: [Election poll shot down by DDoS-ers](#)
- Global Voices 3/26/2012: [Hong Kong: Web freedom under threat, 50 Center Party takeover](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 3/27/2012: [Media hail historic win but warn of challenges ahead](#)

BEYOND CHINA



China's ZTE limits Iran telecom business after exposé

ZTE, China's second-largest telecommunications supplier, announced on March 27 that it is no longer seeking to expand in Iran, after Reuters reported the previous week that it held a \$130 million contract with an Iranian state-owned company to build a sophisticated surveillance system for the country. According to the special report by Reuters, the deal was signed in December 2010 between ZTE and the Telecommunication Company of Iran (TCI), which has a near monopoly on landline telephone and internet services. It aimed to create a nationwide network capable of locating ordinary users, intercepting phone calls, and tracking text messages and e-mail conversations. The Chinese

company has also reportedly acted as a middleman through which Tehran can dodge U.S. trade sanctions and obtain advanced technology from American companies such as Dell, Cisco, and Hewlett-Packard. ZTE spokesman Li Erjian claimed that his company only sells “standard” equipment to Iran for commercial use. However, internal documents revealed that the ZTE-TCI contract included a system described by ZTE marketing materials as a “turnkey solution for lawful interception” that offered “high security and good secrecy” and was “invisible to the targets.” Another leading Chinese telecommunications firm, Huawei, similarly announced in December 2011 that it would no longer pursue new business in Iran after the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Iranian police had used its products to track dissidents via their mobile phones (see below, CMB No. 43). Both China and Iran are rated Not Free in Freedom House’s 2011 *Freedom on the Net* report.

- Reuters 3/22/2012: [Special Report: Chinese firm helps Iran spy on citizens](#)
- Reuters 3/27/2012: [ZTE to stop looking for new customers in Iran](#)
- *Business Insider* 3/26/2012: [ZTE cuts Iran ties at a very convenient time](#)



Security concerns cited in Huawei-Symantec split

The *New York Times* reported on March 26 that California-based security software company Symantec was ending its joint venture with Huawei after less than four years due to security concerns surrounding the Chinese telecommunications giant (see CMB No. 48). The U.S. government is currently working to share more classified information about online security threats with private companies, and according to the *New York Times*, Symantec anticipated that its affiliation with Huawei, which is known for its strong ties to the Chinese security establishment, would prevent it from becoming a recipient of such information. Symantec had first announced in November that it was selling its stake in the joint venture to Huawei, saying only that the project had achieved its objectives. In another apparent blow to Huawei, the company said on March 26 that the Australian government had barred it from becoming a supplier to the country’s National Broadband Network (NBN) due to cybersecurity concerns. The project aims to connect 93 percent of Australian homes and workplaces with fiber-optic cable by 2020. According to Reuters, Huawei’s bid for a \$1.04 billion contract was blocked based on advice from the Australian Security Intelligence Organization.

- *New York Times* 3/26/2012: [Symantec dissolves a Chinese alliance](#)
- ZDNet 3/27/2012: [‘Worried’ Symantec ended Huawei alliance](#)
- CNN 3/27/2012: [The trouble with China’s Huawei](#)
- Reuters 3/26/2012: [Australia blocks China’s Huawei from broadband tender](#)

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 2011*](#)

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