



CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

Issue No. 44: January 26, 2012 Headlines

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BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS

State TV's New Year show loses fans amid censorship

The annual Spring Festival Gala, a four-hour variety program of dance, song, magic, and comedy that one Shanghai film critic called the “most censored show on Chinese television,” was aired on January 22, Lunar New Year’s Eve, on China Central Television (CCTV). The show has been part of many Chinese families’ New Year traditions since its inception in 1983, but it has declined in popularity in recent years. The latest gala was marred by claims of censorship and top Chinese entertainers’ refusal to participate. Actor Zhao Benshan was absent despite being invited to appear for the past 21 years, with observers speculating that his skit had failed to pass the three-round approval process. Comedian Jiang Kun was also off the program, possibly because his script mentioned a deadly 2011 train crash in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, that had sparked public outrage. Popular female comic Song Dandan said she would not participate “unless they arrest me.” Instead, several entertainers appeared on a rival show that aired a few days earlier on Hunan’s provincial television network, which is popular nationwide and less rigorously controlled than CCTV. In an apparent attempt to boost viewership of its gala, CCTV turned to a “most beautiful family photo” contest, aired the program with no advertisements, and included a video of American billionaire Warren Buffett singing and playing the ukulele. CCTV has claimed that the gala is

watched by 90 percent of the Chinese population, but state-run Xinhua news agency and other media outlets reported that in various online polls, between 48 and 70 percent of respondents expressed disappointment in the quality of the 2012 gala.

- [Must-see Chinese TV becoming a snooze](#): *Los Angeles Times* 1/20/2012
- [CCTV's 2012 spring festival gala](#): *Global Times* 1/12/2012
- [Warren Buffett sings in the Chinese New Year](#): *Christian Science Monitor* 1/22/2012
- [Spring festival TV gala gets mixed opinions](#): Xinhua 1/24/2012
- [CCTV's spring festival gala losing viewers](#): Chariweb 1/23/2012



Writers receive long prison terms during holiday season

Several detained writers and online dissidents received severe prison sentences or formal indictments during the holiday season, when foreign and public scrutiny was at an ebb. Beijing-based rights lawyer Liu Xiaoyuan said it was the “right time” for the Chinese Communist Party to act, as the country is scheduled to carry out a leadership transition in the second half of the year.

- **Chen Wei, a cyberdissident based in Sichuan**, was sentenced on December 23 to nine years in prison and two years’ post-release deprivation of political rights by the provincial court. Convicted of “inciting subversion of state power,” Chen had been detained in February 2011 for a series of political essays that he posted on overseas websites between March 2009 and January 2011.
 - **Chen Youcai, a Guizhou-based writer** who uses the pen name Chen Xi, was sentenced on December 26 to 10 years in prison and three years’ post-release deprivation of political rights by a court in Guiyang. He was detained on November 29 for “inciting subversion,” having published 36 articles online that criticized the Chinese government and campaigned for independent candidates during local People’s Congress elections.
 - **Li Tie, a Hubei-based writer**, was sentenced by a Wuhan court on January 18 to 10 years in prison for “subverting state power.” Li had been detained in September 2010 and tried in April 2011, after he wrote and published online articles that were critical of the Chinese Communist Party.
 - **Zhu Yufu, a Zhejiang-based writer** who was arrested in April 2011, is set to stand trial on subversion charges, having written and published online a poem entitled “It’s Time,” in which he alluded to the Arab Spring and called for Chinese people to defend their rights. According to Zhu’s lawyer, the Hangzhou authorities finally issued an indictment on January 16.
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- [China rushes to jail activists before political handover](#): *Telegraph* 1/19/2012
 - [News Chinese dissident to stand trial for poem](#): Reuters 1/17/2012
 - [When words are crimes in China](#): IFEX 1/4/2012
 - [Dissidents who posted ‘subversive’ articles online get up to 10 years in prison](#): IFEX 1/4/2012
 - [Democracy activist Chen Wei gets nine years for ‘inciting subversion’](#): Human Rights in China 12/23/2011



Chinese writer flees with family to United States

Yu Jie, a dissident writer and former vice president of the literary rights group Chinese PEN Center, fled to the United States with his wife and son on January 11. Speaking a week later at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, Yu described how he had been detained, stripped naked, and beaten on December 9, 2010, the day before the ceremony awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to jailed Chinese democracy advocate Liu Xiaobo. He remained under house arrest for much of the period from August 2010, when his critical book *China's Best Actor: Wen Jiabao* was published in Hong Kong, until shortly before his departure. Yu warned that the Chinese authorities, if they decided to do so, could easily capture all of the country's influential dissident intellectuals "in one night and bury them alive." His flight from China came after Sichuan-based writer Liao Yiwu's escape to Germany in July 2011 (see CMB No. [29](#)). Separately, on January 23, the wife and son of jailed Nanjing-based scholar Guo Quan arrived in the United States via a route that included Indonesia, Singapore, and South Korea. Guo was sentenced in October 2009 to 10 years in prison for "subverting state power," having founded the New People's Party in December 2007. The verdict cited his dissemination of information regarding the new party and other prodemocracy writings via instant messenger and e-mail.

- [Chinese dissident in U.S. tells of harassment, torture](#): *Los Angeles Times* 1/18/2012
- [Activist's family escapes China](#): *Los Angeles Times* 1/18/2012



State broadcaster's investigative journalism questioned

On January 2, the Singapore-based furniture company Da Vinci filed a complaint with Chinese authorities against Li Wenxue, a reporter at state-run China Central Television (CCTV), accusing him of fabricating claims that part of the company's advertised "Italian-made" products were actually manufactured in China. Li's story was aired on CCTV's Weekly Quality Report in July 2011, resulting in a significant public scandal for Da Vinci. However, according to an exposé by Beijing-based *Caixin Century Weekly* magazine, one of the main figures interviewed on Li's program, the owner of a Guangdong-based furniture factory, admitted that he had "exaggerated" and that his factory did not in fact make the items in question. *Caixin* also revealed that the CCTV reporter had pressured Da Vinci to pay him 1 million yuan (\$158,000) through a middleman in exchange for ceasing further reporting on the story. An investigation by customs authorities did not confirm all of the claims in the CCTV report, but did find problems with Da Vinci's management and product quality, prompting a fine of 1.33 million yuan (\$210,000) in 2011. This is not the first time that the credibility of the Weekly Quality Report has come into question. In September 2008, the show praised the now-defunct Sanlu Group for its "excellent product control" after an investigation. Several weeks later, however, it emerged that six children had died and 300,000 had fallen ill after consuming melamine-tainted milk produced by the company.

- [Chinese retailer casts doubt on TV investigation](#): *New York Times* 1/3/2012
- [CCTV reporter accused in Da Vinci scandal](#): *Global Times* 1/4/2012
- [Da Vinci says CCTV reports were biased](#): *South China Morning Post* 1/3/2012
- [The complicated case of Da Vinci](#) (in Chinese): *Caixin Century Weekly* 1/2/2012

- [Milk powder contamination discovered in August but made public now?: China Digital Times 9/13/2008](#)
 - [CCTV 'Weekly Quality Report' Special Feature premiere presents Sanlu \(in Chinese\): Net Ease 9/11/2008](#)
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NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



Chinese internet users top 500 million

On January 23, the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released the latest official figures on internet development in China. The user population has reportedly reached 513 million, for a penetration rate of 38.3 percent, and almost half of them are microblog users. (A separate government estimate in November 2011 had put the number of microbloggers at over 300 million. See CMB No. 41.) The report concluded that although 60 percent of the population was not yet online, expansion may slow because those with the requisite resources and education are already using the internet. State media are positive about the growth of internet usage, recognizing the potential of the medium to address social problems and corruption. At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) mouthpiece *People's Daily* emphasized the importance of finding ways to make the internet serve “social stability,” a term that is effectively equated with the CCP's hold on power. Reflecting on internet developments during 2011, China Media Project fellow Hu Yong has identified three trends: a general shift from an emotionally driven nationalistic tone to greater attention on public welfare issues; the rise of the “social power of the internet” and the growing importance of online media in Chinese social justice and civil rights movements; and the party-state leadership's lack of a “networked mindset” in its governance approach.

- [China internet development report \(in Chinese\): CNNIC 1/1/2012](#)
 - [Internet boosting China's development: People's Daily Online 1/20/2012](#)
 - [Half of 500m web users are microbloggers: Global Times 1/17/2012](#)
 - [Three trends on China's internet in 2011: China Media Project 1/16/2012](#)
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Microblog real-name registration to expand nationwide

Wang Chen, head of the State Internet Information Office and deputy director of the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda department, said on January 18 that a real-name registration system for microblogs would be expanded to all of China. Without offering an exact timeline, he said the system would be implemented after trial programs—introduced in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen in late 2011—“prove successful.” He justified the new real-name rule by stating that microblogs could be used to spread “harmful and irrational opinions and information.” Given the government's record of requiring microblog providers to censor posts on politics, corruption, and social issues, many observers fear that the real-name system will be used to identify and punish netizens who are critical of the government. Since December 16, in a joint effort with the capital's public security bureau, the Beijing Internet Information Office (BIIO) has been

requiring users of Beijing-based microblogging sites to provide their full names when registering accounts, though they can still present their posts to readers under pseudonyms. According to BIIO deputy director Tong Liqiang, about 600 million accounts are registered with Beijing-based providers, including Sina Weibo and Sohu, reflecting the fact that many netizens have more than one account. The companies have been given up to three months to verify information in their user databases.

- [China to expand real-name registration for Twitter-like microblogs](#): IDG News 1/19/2012
- [China to expand real-name registration of microbloggers](#): *Guardian* 1/18/2012
- [Beijing requires real names in microblog registration](#): Xinhua 12/16/2011



Taiwan elections stir envy, irony in Chinese blogosphere

Taiwan's presidential election on January 14 was the most discussed topic in China's blogosphere that weekend. Popular microblogging sites such as Sina Weibo became platforms for instant news updates, scooping the heavily regulated state media. The concession speech by defeated opposition candidate Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party was widely circulated on Chinese discussion forums, where users compared the election with those in China. One blogger commented, "In Taiwan, the ballot stands for dignity and human rights, while in China votes are bought and sold like train tickets." Other netizens joked that in Taiwan people had to wait until the evening after the elections to learn who won, whereas "the whole world knows" well in advance who China's next president will be. The BBC noted that while television and radio coverage of Taiwan's election remained closely monitored, Chinese censors "interestingly" allowed comments to be circulated over the internet.

- [Taiwan's election on Sina Weibo](#): China Digital Times 1/13/2012
- [Chinese look on with envy at Taiwanese elections](#): NTDTV 1/19/2012
- [Netizens react: The Taiwan vote](#): *Wall Street Journal* 1/16/2012
- [China eyes Taiwan's election freedoms](#): BBC 1/17/2012



Apple reports on Chinese suppliers' labor practices

Facing scrutiny from both China and the United States, California-based technology giant Apple on January 13 issued a report on the labor practices of its suppliers that for the first time identified the companies by name. The 27-page report, entitled *Apple Supplier Responsibility*, made several references to one of Apple's biggest partners, Taiwan-based Foxconn, whose factories in mainland China became infamous for series of employee suicides in 2010 and an explosion that killed four workers last year. Apple chief executive Tim Cook said the company is joining a Chinese state labor group to allow outside monitoring of its suppliers' facilities. On January 25, the *New York Times* published a lengthy investigative report on Apple's experience in China. "Executives want to improve conditions within factories," the report found, "but that dedication falters when it conflicts with crucial supplier

relationships or the fast delivery of new products.” According to the article, Apple has often identified violations of the company’s code of conduct, and even Chinese law, in its hundreds of audits. But while it has pressured suppliers to improve conditions, less than 15 have been terminated since 2007, in large part because of the high cost of finding replacements. The controversy highlighted the awkward position of companies that seek to thrive both in China, where the rule of law and many basic rights are not upheld, and in established democracies, where they are judged by a higher standard.

- [Apple navigates China maze: *Wall Street Journal* 1/14/2012](#)
 - [Apple reveals a list of its suppliers for the first time: *The Next Web* 1/13/2011](#)
 - [2011 Progress Report: Apple Supplier Responsibility](#)
 - [In China, human costs are built into an iPad: *New York Times* 1/25/2012](#)
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Netizens ridicule tablet computer for party elite

State media have unveiled RedPad Number One, a 9,999 yuan (\$1,584) iPad-like tablet computer specially designed for Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials. RedPad spokesman Liu Xianri told Guangzhou-based *Southern Daily* on January 18 that the product, reportedly a joint effort by the CCP mouthpiece *People’s Daily* and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, is “looking to compete against the foreign brands.” The computer, which is twice as expensive as Apple’s most costly iPad2, comes with applications that track the latest party ideology, microblog postings by senior leaders, and state-run media reports. Netizens have raised concerns that the RedPad would fuel the misuse of public funds for gift-giving among CCP officials, which is seen as a common practice. Following a wave of negative responses from the online community, articles and advertisements for the RedPad have reportedly disappeared from Chinese media. *People’s Daily* removed its article on the device, and the official RedPad website is currently inaccessible.

- [Part iPad, part Little Red Book. Yep, it’s the Red Pad: *Wall Street Journal* 1/17/2012](#)
 - [China’s challenge to the iPad raises a red flag: *Reuters* 1/19/2012](#)
 - [‘Red Pad’ tablet for Chinese Communist Party officials ridiculed: *NTDTV* 1/20/2012](#)
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TIBET

Media curbs yield conflicting accounts of Tibet unrest

The London-based Tibetan rights group Free Tibet reported that on the day of the Chinese Lunar New Year, January 23, at least one person was shot dead and over 30 were injured by Chinese police gunfire during a protest in Draggo, Sichuan Province, making it the most violent outbreak in the region in nearly four years. However, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman accused overseas Tibetan rights groups of distorting facts and fabricating rumors, adding that the episode was provoked by Tibetan rioters who attacked shops and a police station. The true circumstances remained unclear due to the lack of independent media access to the area. The U.S. news site *Global*

Post observed that accurate reporting on Tibet is extremely difficult, as Chinese journalists are constrained by censorship rules and foreign correspondents need special permits to enter the region. According to the London-based International Campaign for Tibet, the shooting followed increased tensions stemming from the circulation of leaflets that urged Tibetans not to celebrate the New Year in light of a series of recent self-immolations by individuals protesting Chinese rule or religious restrictions. The unnamed author of the leaflets reportedly declared his or her intent to self-immolate on the day of the Tibetan New Year, February 22.

- [China accuses Tibet activists of 'distorting' clashes: BBC 1/24/2012](#)
- [Deadly confrontation spreads in Tibetan region of China: New York Times 1/24/2012](#)
- [Tibetan shootings: What really happened?: Global Post 1/24/2012](#)
- [More protesters reportedly shot in Sichuan: China Digital Times 1/24/2012](#)
- [2011 Annual Report: Human Rights Situation in Tibet: Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy 1/23/2012](#)

BEYOND CHINA



Chinese state TV opens African news hub

On January 11, state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) launched its first overseas production center in Nairobi, Kenya. CCTV Africa will produce a one-hour daily news program covering news from the African continent, which will be transmitted through CCTV's Beijing headquarters and broadcast around the world on its English news channel. A total of 14 news bureaus will be set up across Africa by the end of 2012 to serve the Nairobi hub. CCTV also plans to establish regional production centers for Europe, Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East. The global expansion of Chinese state media is part of Beijing's broader plans to increase its "cultural soft power." However, Harvard University professor Joseph Nye argued in a recent *New York Times* op-ed article that unless China loosens its restrictions on domestic cultural activities and civil society, its soft power efforts will remain ineffective. Kenya was rated Partly Free in Freedom House's 2011 *Freedom of the Press* index.

- [CCTV Africa and "I Love Africa" mobile TV launched in Kenya: CCTV 1/13/2012](#)
- [Chinese TV launches English-language Africa broadcast: Agence France-Presse 1/12/2012](#)
- [Soft power on airwaves: Global Times 1/16/2012](#)
- [Why China is weak on soft power: New York Times 1/17/2012](#)



Leaked '07 cable shows pressure on NASDAQ to bar NTDTV

A diplomatic cable recently made public by the antisecrecy group WikiLeaks has revealed Chinese government pressure on the New York-based NASDAQ stock exchange regarding reporting access

it granted to New Tang Dynasty Television (NTDTV), a station established by Falun Gong practitioners, also based in New York, that broadcasts uncensored news to China, including on human rights issues. According to the cable, which relayed the details of a communication between NASDAQ management and U.S. embassy officials in China, NASDAQ's chief representative in China was summoned and interrogated by the State Security Bureau on January 26, 2007, about the presence of NTDTV staff in his company's New York offices. The representative, U.S. citizen Lawrence Pan, was released later the same day, but "may have pledged to Chinese authorities that NASDAQ would no longer allow" NTDTV to report from the exchange headquarters. NTDTV says that by mid-February 2007, its reporter was indeed barred from the building after over a year of reporting there on a daily basis. Prior to the incident, the station had been the only Chinese-language news outlet directly covering the stock exchange. Although NTDTV and other independent Chinese news outlets often report signs that the Chinese Communist Party is using economic leverage to pursue censorship goals outside China, the cable offers rare insight into the lengths to which the Chinese authorities are willing to go to stifle alternative news sources.

- [China state security demanded NASDAQ eject network, cable says: *Epoch Times* 1/24/2012](#)
- [CCP pressured NASDAQ, Serene Lee reveals details \(in Chinese\): NTDTV 12/21/2011](#)
- [07BEIJING621: HUMAN RIGHTS: AMCIT NASDAQ REP DETAINED THEN: Cable Search](#)

NOTABLE ANALYSIS



International Federation of Journalists issues annual China report

On January 22, the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) released its annual report on press freedom in China. According to the study, the clampdown suffered by the media during 2011 represented the continuation of a downward trend that began after the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. The report documents cases in which journalists faced injury and even death, harassment under state secrecy laws, and dismissals under pressure from the authorities. The IFJ also notes that central and provincial propaganda departments have issued more "verbal" censorship directives that leave no paper trail. Foreign journalists were subject to frequent harassment as the government responded to online calls for a "Jasmine Revolution" in February. There were also more cases of reporting restrictions in Hong Kong, especially during a visit by Chinese vice premier Li Keqiang in mid-August.

- [Press freedom at growing risk, journalists warn: *South China Morning Post* 1/22/2012](#)
- [China's New Clampdown: Press Freedom in China 2011: IFJ](#)

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*](#)

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