

China Clings to Control Press Freedom in 2009



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Cover caption: Journalists record the arrest of a woman who crossed a police security line at Beijing's National Day military parade on October 1, despite attempts by a plain-clothes officer (far left) to stop them filming.

封面圖片說明：「十·一」國慶軍隊巡遊時，一名女士圖超越警界線便立即遭公安阻截，一名記者立即將情景攝錄不管另一名便衣(圖左)人員趨前欲阻擋。

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Preface

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) initiated a program in early 2008 to monitor and report on press freedom and violations of media rights in China in the lead-up to the Olympic Games in Beijing in August 2008. The IFJ's first annual report on press freedom in China, *China's Olympic Challenge*, assessed the media environment through 2008 and, even as it noted many instances of infringements of journalists' rights and media freedom, there was some optimism at year's end that China was moving, even if slowly, toward a more free, safe and secure working environment for local and foreign journalists.

With the dimming of the international spotlight after the Olympics, the IFJ remained determined to continue its monitoring in China through 2009. The following report presents an analysis and details of the information gathered during monitoring conducted over 12 months from December 2008. It highlights some of the most significant challenges faced by journalists and media workers operating in China, including Hong Kong and Macau. Unfortunately, the news is not good, with authorities issuing a steady flow of new restrictions on reporters, media organisations and news content. Aside from outlining the situation for local and foreign journalists, this year's report also contains much additional detail about extreme efforts to control online media and information sharing, as well as a compilation of just some of the hundreds of regulations issued by authorities during the year.

The information in the report has been provided by a growing network of contributors to the IFJ monitoring project, from Mainland China and beyond. Many of these contributors must remain anonymous. But without them, this report could not have been done.

IFJ Asia-Pacific
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Introduction: China Clamps Down

It has been a tough year for press freedom in China, as the fading international spotlight on the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing emboldened central and provincial authorities to revert to clamping down on journalists and media that seek to present a diversity of news reports and points of view about events in China and beyond. The loosening of controls on both local and foreign media in the period leading up to the Olympics, and then the much welcome announcement that the less restrictive regulations for foreign media would remain in force past October 2008, generated some hope for positive change on the press freedom front. But this optimism was quickly challenged very early in 2009, as authorities sought to re-exert control on the media and information – focusing in particular on the rising power of the internet as a means for social expression and organising.

As 2009 opened, China's Central Government prepared itself for several significant anniversaries to be marked during the year. At the same time, events late in 2008, when a political reform movement known as Charter 08 emerged into the public realm, required sharp attention in the interests of maintaining the "social harmony" promoted by a political order that would mark 60 years in power in 2009.

Mainstream traditional media were very aware that the biggest taboo issue during 2009 would be the 20th anniversary of the June 4 Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, followed closely by the 50th anniversary of Tibet's failed uprising against China in 1959. Most journalists and media outlets would self-censor and there be no need for regulations or orders on these issues. Self-censorship remains a matter of self-preservation - if Mainland journalists do not toe the line, they risk losing their accreditation to work in the media. But the accreditation rules tightened further in 2009, by defining journalists as those who are employed in traditional news rooms, thereby making it difficult for online journalists to gain accreditation.

For the most part, authorities devoted their energies to controlling information on other anticipated big events, especially targeting online reporting and

chatter. Central authorities showed concerns about the risk of an upsurge in nationalism ahead of the 90th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement - an anti-imperialist, cultural and political movement dating to protests by scholars in 1919 about China's response to the Treaty of Versailles. Heightened sensitivity was also apparent ahead of the one-year anniversary in May of the devastating earthquake in Sichuan in 2008.

Multiple new regulations were issued throughout the year, many seeking to control online content and traditional media's reporting of online information. The authorities themselves acknowledged that online communications presented a growing challenge to national security and social stability. Online surveillance was stepped up, websites were entirely or partly closed, online social networks were shut down, online news portals were censored, online journalists and bloggers were detained and arrested. The Golden Shield Project's censoring system, known as the Great Firewall, continued to block sensitive information. But there was a marked further tightening of controls using a variety of methods, from a morals campaign to protect minors from vaguely defined "vulgar or pornographic" content to efforts to install new filtering software in all personal computers. The latter move was defeated, but saw new bans issued on media reporting of heated online discussions among netizens objecting to the filtering software and new administrative rules for online communications.

As the authorities battled cyber information flows, a change of tack could be seen in the manner of controlling information on big breaking news events, such as riots in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in western China in July, and then again in September. A series of orders sought to prevent journalists heading to Xinjiang, and then to prevent mention of the clashes between Uyghur and Han factory workers in June which led to the riots in July. But authorities then seemed to recall the negative international publicity for China the previous year, when they sought to shut down all reporting on unrest in Tibet. This time, they decided to allow an official media tour for local and foreign media to visit Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi. The tour was

tightly supervised, journalists and media crews were quarantined in an officially designated hotel, internet and phone access out of the region was limited or blocked, but the media were nevertheless allowed in.

Meanwhile, China's Government closely observed the power of online organising of mass public events to protest against the actions of authorities - not only in China, but also in Iran after controversial elections there in June resulted in massive street protests. Online social networking could be seen to unnerve authorities, and an all-out effort was made to close social networking sites completely through 2009.

The reporting of violations against foreign media declined, due to their reduced presence after the Olympics. Even so, foreign journalists still encountered many obstacles and difficulties through 2009, including acts of violence, destruction of work materials and equipment, prevention of access to public spaces, surveillance and reprimands. Sources, potential interview subjects and Chinese assistants and drivers were especially targeted in actions to obstruct foreign media reporting on events in China.

Media teams from Hong Kong appeared to bear the brunt of efforts to control reporting by non-Mainland journalists and media crews, as they dealt with an increased incidence of assault and arrest while working on the Mainland. As well, a post-Olympic tightening of controls on entry permits to work in China sharply affected the ability of journalists from Hong Kong and Macau to conduct reporting work on the Mainland.

At the same time, interference in the publication of "sensitive" content in Hong Kong and Macau was increasingly prevalent while massive cut-backs and lay-offs in the Hong Kong media sector pose serious concerns for the defence of ethical and independent journalism in the territory, as many experienced senior journalists leave the industry.

Amid a trying year for journalists and media in China, President Hu Jintao pledged at the World Media Summit in Beijing on October 9 to uphold the legal rights of foreign journalists working in China. His statement came a day after 15 bloggers issued a declaration calling on the Central Government to respect the rights of all people in China to access information from the internet in accordance with China's Constitution. It remains to be seen how the authorities will respond in the year ahead. But they may have noted comments made by US President Barack Obama during a state visit to China in November. Although a new round of regulations was issued for Obama's visit, he still commented in his opening speech: "Because in the United States, information is free, and I have a lot of critics in the United States who can say all kinds of things about me, I actually think that that makes our democracy stronger and it makes me a better leader because it forces me to hear opinions that I don't want to hear."

Mainland Journalists

"The year 2009 is far worse than 2008 because we have received hundreds of various orders to restrain our jobs. Our hands were tied," a Mainland journalist said.

Since 2000, the number of daily newspapers published across China is the largest in the world. In 2008, 44 billion papers were sold. But the size of the market does not indicate that people have access to a variety of views. For China's Communist Party,

media remains a sensitive industry that needs to be controlled. Several official bodies supervise the media, the most powerful of which is the Central Propaganda Department and associated provincial propaganda departments.

The period leading up to the Beijing Olympic Games in August 2008 saw a relaxing of media controls, in deference to the Government's pledge to the International Olympic Committee that all journalists would have free rein. As well, there was a brief period



Many press freedom and human rights groups have demanded the release of Liu Xiaobo.

from about 2003 to 2006, according to one experienced journalist, when journalists enjoyed more freedom to report the news. However, with the Games over, authorities reverted to clamping down on free media and free expression on the Mainland.

From the beginning of 2009, many various orders were issued to restrict content and prevent free media reporting on a range of topics related to foreign affairs and matters of public interest such as health and safety. In regard to riots in Xinjiang in July, in which almost 200 people were killed, at least seven orders were issued. Similarly, restrictions were imposed for reporting on a corruption scandal involving Shenzhen Mayor Xu Zongheng. Even the election of Macau's Chief Executive in March and political reform in Hong Kong were topics on which journalists were not permitted to report freely. Foreign affairs also caught the attention of authorities. When controversial elections in Iran in June resulted in massive street protests, Mainland media were ordered not to report the issue prominently and to refrain from comment.

Double standards are common. Authorities did not allow Chinese media to report on the forced closure of the Gongmeng Legal Research Centre, also known as the Open Constitution Initiative, run mainly by human rights lawyers to provide assistance to minority groups. The Centre's co-founder, Dr Xu Zhiyong, was detained by the Civil Affairs Bureau allegedly for tax evasion. Yet authorities permitted the state-owned English-language China Daily to report in August on Dr Xu's case and how he helped parents of children who died or were made ill by contaminated milk powder.

Double standards also apply when it comes to reporting on the same topic in print or online. A news report may be printed without restriction, but

its uploading to the internet on the same day may be restricted. This occurred when a media outlet was ordered not to upload to the internet a report about land compensation in Suqian, Jiangsu Province, even though the report appeared in the newspaper.

China's authorities sharpened their focus on the internet during 2009. In some cases, only internet sites were permitted to report certain news, as when the Southern Metropolis Group website at <http://www.southcn.com> was the only outlet permitted to run an investigative report on a fight among Uyghur and Han factory workers, in which two Uyghur people were killed, in Shaoguan, Guangdong Province, on June 25. The incident sparked riots in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in western China in July. (See China Online Section.)

Despite the difficulties, many journalists try to go out of their way to get the news. When pedicure worker Deng Yujiao was charged with murder in Yesnaguan, Hubei Province, in May, after she had refused "special services" demanded by officials, some journalists went to the area to investigate, even though authorities had ordered they not report the case. On August 30, authorities ordered all journalists reporting on Burmese refugees at the border with China to leave the area. However, some journalists stayed until authorities re-issued the order the next day.

But even where orders were not explicitly issued, there is self-censorship. This was especially so in relation to the failure to report on the political reform agenda of Charter 08 and its co-instigator, Liu Xiaobao, and other signatories, who were either interrogated or detained by the security bureau, as well as the cases of 22 human rights lawyers harassed by the state-run Beijing Justice Bureau and the Beijing Lawyers' Association; the August 2008 escape of HIV/AIDS activist and gynaecologist Dr Gao Yaojie to the United States after long house arrest; the detention or placement in mental health institutions of aggrieved citizens in Hubei; and Zhao Lianhai, a key representative of parents in the Sanlu tainted milk powder cases in 2008, who was detained by Beijing police on November 13 and charged with "provoking an incident". It was rare to see anything on these issues reported in Mainland media.

Journalists' hands were tied not just in reporting on sensitive political issues but also on matters of wider public interest. In August, media were ordered not to report on events related to the lead-poisoning of thousands of children in Huana, Shanxi and Yunan Provinces. Public outrage erupted in protests outside

local government offices, but the media was ordered not to report the protests, even as some protesting parents were detained. On September 1, a ban was issued for reporting on a riot of more than 10,000 villagers in Fengwei town, Quanzhou, Fujian Province. Dozens of people were injured when villagers protesting the contamination of drinking water by a tannery and oil refinery clashed with police.

Anniversary Aversion

The year marked many important anniversaries of sensitive events considered taboo by the Central Government, notably the 20th anniversary of the June 4 Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989 and the 50th anniversary of Tibet's failed uprising against China in 1959. Media did not need to be ordered how to report these matters – they were very aware there was to be no independent reporting on these topics. But for other big events, many orders were issued.

Media outlets understood that no negative news could be published before or during the General Meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in March. Media could use reports from the state-controlled Xinhua News Agency regarding a mine blast that killed 74 people in Shanxi Province on February 23, but they knew not to report on protests regarding the accident. But despite the media's awareness of the requirement to self-censor, authorities still felt they had to issue several restrictive orders during the March conference.

On March 6, all media were ordered not to report on the case of a former Communist Party chief and deputy director of the Shenzhen Maritime Safety Administration, Lin Jiexiang, who was sacked for alleged drunken behaviour and child molestation.

On March 7, journalists were ordered not to report on comments by some NPC members about a possible ban by China on poultry imports from the US.

On March 9, a ban was imposed on reporting on a decision by the Supreme People's Court to review a four-year-old plagiarism case against Zhou Yezhong, a prominent law professor of Wuhan University. The ban is similar to restrictions imposed when the case was first brought to court in 2006.

Heightened sensitivity was apparent in the lead-up to the one-year anniversary of the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008. Many citizens, including a high number of children, died in the disaster. The

public was very concerned about the quality of school buildings that had collapsed during the quake. Yet no comprehensive victims' list was issued and local government authorities announced that school buildings were found not to be sub-standard. Lawyers and human rights activists who assisted parents of killed children to file a case against the Government were harassed by various means.

On February 11, an order requested media outlets not to send journalists to the quake zone ahead of the anniversary. On April 19, a series of orders noted the following: Media wanting to report on the list of quake victims could use only state information; there were to be no interviews with parents whose children had been killed; there were to be no "subjective" comments about why school buildings collapsed; only government information could be used in reporting on the area's reconstruction; any reports on difficulties to do with reconstruction should be submitted first to government agencies as an internal report before being reported publicly.

Xinjiang Riots

Meanwhile, orders flowed in regard to the riots in Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi, on July 5, in which the reported death toll was 197. Thousands of Uyghurs protested that authorities had covered up the murders of two Uyghur workers in a factory fight in Shaoguan in June. They demanded the Government conduct a full investigation. The protests escalated into an attack on Han people after a confrontation with police, who sought then to quell the rioters with tear gas, water hoses, armoured vehicles and road blocks. A curfew was imposed in some areas.

On June 26, an order was issued that there be no independent reporting on the factory incident. Media were to use only information provided by government departments.

On June 27, media was told that no journalists were to go to the factory. Any articles on the issue should not be placed in a prominent position.

On June 28, only Xinhua and the Southern Metropolis website were permitted to publish reports on the factory incident. No other media could republish these reports.

On June 29, only the Southern Metropolis website and Shaoguan's local media reported on the alleged cause of the factory fight, based on reports of a police investigation. No re-publication was permitted.

On July 6, the day after major riots broke out in Urumqi, only Xinhua reports were to be published. Media were ordered to ensure headlines and the placement of reports were "positive". At that time, no journalists were to be sent to Urumqi.

On July 11, media were ordered not to report the link between the riots and disagreements between ethnic minorities. Media could report the numbers killed, but not their ethnicity. All websites were also bound by this restriction.

National Day

The lead-up to China's National Day on October 1 spurred a new round of orders and regulations in September. The Central Propaganda Department issued 15 orders banning journalists from interviewing, photographing and reporting from Tiananmen Square

and other public venues. Any information to be run should come from Xinhua. Any reporting on the military must be censored. All media reports must be "positive". No media were permitted to enter Tiananmen Square. Nothing was to be said about how difficult or tiresome it might be to prepare for the October 1 events.

Obama's Visit

US President Barack Obama's five-day state visit from November 16 generated much caution from China's authorities, and another round of restrictions on local media. On November 16, a new order required again that only Xinhua reports of the visit be used in local media. Media were ordered to delete any reference to questions raised at a forum at the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum, during which Obama answered questions. People were forbidden from organising questions to be relayed over



The Central Propaganda Department demanded all media outlets use only Xinhua News Agency reports on riots in Xinjiang, and sought to prevent journalists from going to Xinjiang.

the internet and put to Obama during the session. A Guangzhou-controlled cable television intercepted the broadcasting signal of Asia Television of Hong Kong's English Channel while Obama was answering a question about restrictions on the internet in China. Media were not to report about protests or spontaneous news events occurring during Obama's visit.

Reporting Foreign News

Other news related to foreign affairs was subject to much advice from government departments.

On March 25, media were ordered only to use information provided by Xinhua when reporting on a fuel agreement between China and Burma.

From May 7 to 25, orders were issued demanding media only use reports from Xinhua, including in regard

to the US Navy intercepting a Chinese fishing vessel in the Yellow Sea on May 1, a visit by US senators to China, and a nuclear test in North Korea.

On June 19, protests in Iran against the election outcome prompted an order that all media report the issue in a low-key way without commentary. Media were encouraged to limit the number of articles on the issue.

In July, only Xinhua reports could be run in relation to the detention of four employees of Australian mining company Rio Tinto.

On August 20, any reports about Russia limiting China's access to Russian markets had to be submitted to government departments to be censored before publication.



US President Barack Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao hold a joint press conference in Beijing on November 17. Independent media was not granted entry to the press conference.

On August 30, the arrival of up to 30,000 Burmese refugees at Konkan in south-western Yunan Province prompted another order for all reporters to leave Konkan and to use only information provided by Xinhua.

Job Security

Journalists on the Mainland are not only restricted in their reporting, but commonly self-censor. The main reason is lack of job security. The issuance of Administrative Press Cards to journalists by the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) of China requires that they obey all regulations. If they do not conform, they risk losing their accreditation. During 2009, the accreditation system was amended to further tighten the definition of professional journalism, ensuring that "citizen journalists" could not be classified as journalists.

On August 25, the deputy editor of the Nanning-based Nanguo Morning Post, Liu Yuan, was dismissed

and a senior editor at Modern Life Daily received a suspension order from the newspaper's management. Both had reported on the August 4 murder of a boy who attended a training course to regulate his internet "addiction". The actions against the two journalists was reportedly due to pressure on the publications by the Guanxi Propaganda Department, which subsequently sought a total ban on reporting the case despite widespread public interest, including at Xinhua.

On June 22, five Guangzhou TV journalists were reportedly suspended from work for delaying implementation of a filtering process (required by authorities to censor sensitive subject matter) on two programs – one on the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre and another on religious freedom referring to Falun Gong. The programs were produced by Asia Television in Hong Kong. Guangzhou's Propaganda Department said the two editors and three assistants had made a serious political mistake by not censoring their material as required by authorities.

Media-Related Orders, 2009

The following list does not include all orders issued in 2009, due to the difficulties in accessing information about instructions issued to the media. It was compiled with the assistance of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD).

January

- 105: Media must not report on the reformation of fuel tax.
- 110: Media must cease reporting on the discovery of a body at a psychiatric hospital in Dongguan.
- 122: Media must use Xinhua News Agency reports about the court verdict in the Sanlu tainted milk powder case. No commentary or investigative reporting permitted.
- 130: Media must not report on photos of actress Zhang Ziyi topless on a Caribbean beach.

February

- 211: Media must not be sent to report on the earthquake zone in Sichuan province.
- 220: Media including internet-based outlets

must not republish a February 17 report on a company found guilty of defaming a reporter who reported a miscarriage of justice case in 2005.

- 223: Media must be reminded that reporting spontaneous news from other provinces is prohibited.
- 224: Media must not be sent to Shanxi province to cover a gas explosion.
- 228: Media must not be sent to Shandong or Henan provinces to cover a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak.

March

- Date unknown:
 - Media must not report on the election of Macau Chief Executive.
- 306: Media must not report on the sacking of former Communist Party chief and deputy director of the Shenzhen Maritime Safety Administration, Lin Jiexiang, who was sacked for alleged drunken behaviour and child molestation.
- 307: Media must not report on comments by members of the National People's Congress about a possible ban by China

- on poultry imports from the US.
- 309: Media must not report on a decision by the Supreme People's Court to review a four-year-old plagiarism case against Wuhan University law professor Zhou Yezhong.
- 313: The 21st Century Business Herald must remove an article about financial dealings between tycoon Wang Guoju and Hong Kong-listed company China Energy Development Holdings Ltd.
- 318: Media must not report on the failure of a team led by Liaoning Governor to attract investments by overseas entrepreneurs in China.
- 324: Media must use official information to report on the fatal shooting of a guard in front of an army station branch in Chongqing.
- 325: Media must use official information to report on the signing of an oil channel agreement between China and Burma. No reporting on the background of the agreement or feature writing permitted.
- 327: Media must not report on a lawsuit

April

- against China Eastern Airline by victims of a plane crash in 2004 in which 53 passengers were killed.
- 410: Media must not report on the welfare, injury or death of prison inmates unless the information is sourced from the Prison Bureau.
- 413: The State Administrative of Radio Film and Television prohibits entertainment programs from publishing or discussing celebrity love affairs or scandalous material.
- 414: All media including internet-based outlets must report positively on a book called China Unhappy. No commentary or billboard rankings about the book allowed.
- 417: Media must cease reporting on the connection between a high incidence of miscarriages in pregnant women in Dujiangyan City and formaldehyde exposure.



Authorities restricted media to using only official information regarding the death toll in the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008 and progress on reconstruction in the quake zone, ahead of the one-year anniversary of the disaster.

- 419: Media must not report on issues related to the parents of children killed during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Media must only report the list of victims announced by officials. Media must not conduct independent investigative reporting about the number of victims. Media must not publish subjective conclusions about the reasons why buildings collapsed during the earthquake. Media must use official information about the reconstruction of the quake zone. Problems during the reconstruction must be reported to the authorities and must not be published.
- 420: Media must not report on a dispute relating to a cross-province railway extension between Shanghai and Yunnan.
- 422: Media must cease reporting on the suicide of propaganda department vice director in Beichuan, Sichuan.
- 428: Media must report positively on the reform of the Health Medical Policy of the Health Department. Media should only interview experts recommended by the authorities and should be careful of other experts' comments.

May

- Date unknown:
Media must not report on former Premier Zhao Ziyang's memoirs.
- 502: Media must not publish commentary about the May Fourth Movement.
- 507: Media must use Foreign Ministry information about the interception by the US navy of a Chinese fishing vessel. Media must not publish commentary or use information sourced from overseas.
- 522: Media must use Xinhua News Agency information and reports about a visit by US senators to China.
- 525: Media must use Xinhua News Agency information to report on nuclear testing in North Korea. Articles about the issue should not be placed in a prominent place.
- 526: Media must not report on a murder case in Badong. All journalists should leave Badong immediately.
- 529: Media must not be sent to Badong. Media must use Xinhua News Agency information about the Badong case.

- Media must not report on conflict between journalists and local government officials.
- 530: Media must not report on pollution in Jiaozuo, Henan.

June

- 608: Media must only use information from the Xinhua News Agency website, the China Daily and CCTV to report on investigations of Shenzhen Mayor Xu Zongheng.
- 610: Media must report positively on the Green Dam project. Media can organise interviews with some experts and parents about filters for pornographic material under this project. No commentary allowed. Website management must delete all critical articles about the project.
- 619: Media must report the Iran election in a low-key fashion without commentary. Do not place prominently.
- 626: Media must use official information to report on an ethnic-based violent incident in Shaoguan. Media must not be sent to Shaoguan to report on the incident.
- 627: Media must not be sent to Shaoguan. Any articles written must be low-key and not placed prominently.
- 628: Xinhua News Agency and Southern.cn will report the cause of the Shaoguan incident. Other media must not republish this information.
- 629: Only Southern.cn website in Shaoguan is permitted to report the investigation report of the Shaoguan conflict. Other media must not republish this information.

July

- 706: Media must use only Xinhua News Agency information to report on riots in Xinjiang and Shaoguan. No journalist should be sent to Xinjiang.
- 708: Media must not report on a lawsuit brought by an academic against a Xinnet.com website.
- 711: Media must only report the number of people killed in Xinjiang. Media must not report on the cause of the ethnic-based conflict. Media must use Xinhua News Agency information only or will face

punishment from the Central Propaganda Department.

- 715: Media must use only Xinhua News Agency information about the cause of train collision in Zhenzhou, Hunan Province, on June 29.
- 721: Media must not report on corruption allegations relating to the eldest son of President Hu Jintao.
- 728: Media must use Xinhua News Agency information to report on the death of a factory general manager in Jilin after a protest by factory employees. Media must not be sent to Jilin and all journalists must be instructed to leave the vicinity.

August

- 805: Xinhua News Agency website will report on the investigation into the secretary of the Communist Party of China National Nuclear Corporation. Other media must not republish or broadcast this information.
- 814: Media must not report on issues related to Gongmeng Legal Research Centre legal representative Dr Xu Zhiyong.
- 815: Media must not report any unconfirmed information about terrorist organisations' attack on China in relation to the Xinjiang riots. Media must not republish China Daily's report about 200 Xinjiang riot suspects pending to trial.
- 820: Articles about conflict between Russia and China in relation to business must be censored before publication. Media must reduce the number of articles about this case.
- 825: Media must delay reporting about alleged bribery between the US-based CII company and a state-owned company.
- 828: Media must not report on organ transplants at Sun Yatsen University.
- 830: Media must use Xinhua News Agency information to report on the arrival of up to 30,000 Burmese refugees in Konkan in south-western Yunan province. All reporters must leave Konkan.
- 831: Media must use official information to report about the arrival of Burmese refugees to Yunan. All journalists must leave Yunan.

September

- Date unknown:
Media must not report on a riot of more than 10,000 villagers in Fengwei town, Quanzhou, Fujian, which was sparked by industrial contamination of drinking water.
- Date unknown:
Media must use Xinhua News Agency information about the visit by Tibet spiritual leader the Dalai Lama to Taiwan.

October

- Date unknown:
More than 10 orders were made: some orders prohibited the media from reporting at Tiananmen Square and other public venues in the lead-up to National Day on October 1.
- Date unknown:
Media must delete all images of President Hu in front of a billboard advertising the Japan-based company Toshiba during China's National Day Parade on October 1.

November

- Date unknown:
Media must not report about elections of the Legislative Council and Chief Executive of Hong Kong.
- 1116: Media must use Xinhua News Agency information to report on US President Obama's visit to China. Media must delete any news or other articles referring to questions at a forum at the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum. Journalists are forbidden from organising questions to be relayed over the internet and put to Obama. Media must not report on or publish reports of protests or spontaneous news during Obama's visit.
- Date unknown:
Only the magazine of Southern Metropolis enterprise is allowed to report interviews with Obama. Other media must not republish these interviews.

Jailed for Their Work

In the worst scenario, journalists are jailed because of their work. About 50 journalists and writers remain in jail or detention in China, according to the Writers in Prison Committee of Independent Chinese Pen Center, International PEN.

Huang Qi, who helped victims of the Sichuan earthquake, was sentenced to three years' jail by the Court of Wuhou in Sichuan Province on November 23. Huang, 46, founder of the 64 Tianwang website at www.64tianwang.com, was detained in June 2008 after posting an article online which criticised the Government's handling of the disaster. The judgement found Huang guilty of "illegal possession of state secrets" on the basis that he had obtained three documents deemed to be "state secrets". The judgement did not define "state secret" or clarify how the documents could be defined as such. Huang's wife, Zeng Li, said the documents were already publicly available. Meanwhile, Huang's health is deteriorating in jail.

Mehbube Ablesh, a writer, poet and media worker at the government-run Xinjiang People's Radio Station, based in Urumqi, was sacked and detained by authorities in August 2008. She is reportedly being held for posting articles critical of China's Government and the provincial leadership in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. She is reportedly being held in Urumqi, although no details of any charges have been made public.

Tashi Rabten, a Tibetan writer from Ruergai county in Ngaba, Sichuan Province, and editor of the banned literary magazine Shar Dungri (Eastern Snow Mountain), was arrested on July 27, 2009. Tashi was reportedly under surveillance while studying at the Northwestern Minorities University in Lanzhou. It is believed he was detained because of his recent book, *Written in Blood*, a collection of political articles on democracy, freedom and equality, as well as his participation in the publication of Shar Dungri, which dealt with the suppression of protests



Protesters confront police outside the trial of Charter 08 founder and dissident Liu Xiaobo in Beijing on December 25, 2009.

in Tibet in 2008. He is reportedly held at a detention centre in Ngaba.

Shi Tao is a journalist and poet who wrote for the daily Contemporary Business News based in Changsha and contributed to other newspapers, was active on the internet and submitted articles and occasional political commentary to Chinese websites abroad. His essays often call for political reform. He was employed at Contemporary Business News between February and April 2004 when a staff meeting assessed a Central Propaganda Department memo giving instructions on information gathering and media coverage of the approaching 15th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre. Shi forwarded his meeting notes via email to independent Chinese-language websites abroad, which are banned in China. Shi was arrested in November 2004 and charged in December 2004. His writings, computer, and other personal belongings were confiscated. His wife was warned by the police that if she told anyone about this action, her husband would be mistreated. In March 2005, Shi was found guilty in a closed two-hour hearing of "illegally divulging state secrets abroad". In April 2005, he was sentenced to 10 years' jail and two years' deprivation of political rights.

Du Daobin, a writer and member of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre, was re-arrested on July 21, 2008 to serve the remaining two years and four months of a three-year sentence. Du was convicted in June 2004 of "inciting subversion of state power" for 175 words in 26 of his articles. The original sentence was suspended for four years, followed by two years' deprivation of political rights. However, in 2008 he was accused of violating the terms of his sentence by publishing more than 100 articles on the internet, leaving his home city, and receiving guests without permission. Du is being held in Hanxi Prison, Wuhan City, Hubei Province.

Writer Liu Xiaobo, 53, was sentenced on December 25 to 11 years' jail and deprived of his political rights for two years. Liu, a renowned literary critic, academic and political activist, was charged by the Beijing Public Security Bureau on June 23 with "inciting subversion of state power" for co-authoring Charter 08. The Charter is a declaration calling for political reform, greater human rights and an end to one-party rule in China. He was detained on December 8, 2008, along with Zhang Zuhua

and Jiang Qisheng, before the formal release of the Charter. Zhang and Jiang were released the next morning. Their detainment came during a period of several sensitive anniversaries, including the 100-year anniversary of the promulgation of China's first constitution, the 60-year anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the 30-year anniversary of Beijing's "Democracy Wall" movement. Liu's wife, Liu Xia, is rarely allowed to visit and is also under surveillance.

The Charter was initially endorsed by 300 signatories, and has since been signed by hundreds of people throughout China and supported by tens of thousands of people around the world. Members of the initial group of 300 experience varying degrees of harassment. Phones are tapped, emails and online messenger chats are hacked, they are followed in the street, there is interference when they meet their friends, and they are not permitted to leave their home towns. At times of heightened sensitivity, such as during the visit of President Obama, some members of the group have been forced to leave their homes in Beijing.

Risks at Work

Journalists on the Mainland not only contend with wide-ranging restrictions but face varying risks such as assault, threats, harassment, dismissal and imprisonment. Information is difficult to access, but many Mainland journalists report that physical violence against media personnel is a common violation of their right to conduct their work safely. Attackers are commonly civil servants or their agents. While some journalists were able to draw attention from their local police bureau or journalists' association, full police investigations and legal proceedings are rare in these cases.

Assaults

On October 20, Zhang Jinxing, a journalist for Cheng Du Shang Bao newspaper, was reportedly assaulted and detained for eight hours by police

from Laocheng District, Luoyang, Henan Province, while reporting on a traffic accident. Zhang was surrounded by police who kicked and punched him until he lost consciousness. When he regained consciousness, he was handcuffed to a chair in a police station and was refused access to a phone and the toilet. Police twisted his wrists back when Zhang demanded an explanation. His camera and mobile phone were taken from him. The police claim that they removed Zhang from the accident site for allegedly arguing with the accident victim and for resisting police intervention.

On August 31, Guangzhou Daily journalist Liu Manyuan was seriously hurt after security personnel from Human Town in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, attacked him for taking photographs of a body found in a house. It was reported that two



In the wake of riots in Xinjiang in July, the local government blocked all communication channels. Journalists who went to the area had great difficulty in transmitting their reports back to offices elsewhere.

security personnel blocked Liu and chased and attacked him. Liu was hospitalised with serious injuries.

On July 8, seven journalists and two drivers for the Communist Party-owned China Daily were ambushed by more than 100 protesters armed with knives, iron bars and hammers at a highway junction as they returned to their newspaper office. One driver suffered injuries to his hands.

On July 27, Dong Zhe from Guangzhou Daily Newspaper, Mo Xiaodong from Southern Metropolis Daily and Jiang Yun from the Yangcheng Evening News were assaulted by factory workers as they reported on a fire at a factory in Xiegang town in Dongguan city. They suffered injuries to their faces and necks. The workers threatened them as they sought to prevent them reporting the fire. Jiang's photographs were deleted from his camera and his notebook was destroyed. Police arrested only two people, who were detained for seven days and fined 300 Yuan (about USD 45).

Abuse and Harassment

On May 26, three journalists were harassed by officials of Badong Village, Hubei Province. One said they were under surveillance and forced to leave Badong as they sought to report on the case of a local official killed by a woman who refused a request for "special services". The journalists said that they were interviewing the woman's grandmother when four or five people claiming to be relatives entered the house, abused the journalists and confiscated their bags and equipment.

On September 15, Yao Haiying, of the Chiangjiang Times, was threatened by a judiciary department officer after publishing a report on September 4 alleging malpractice at the department. He received several intimidating phone calls and messages from a department officer who said "you cannot evade us - we are able to find you". In response to concerns expressed by Chiangjiang Times editor-in-chief in a formal letter, the officer said, "If you continuously do not cooperate with us . . . we will take further action." The case was publicised on the internet, drawing attention from the Central Propaganda Department and the Judiciary Ministry. The officer apologised to Yao. However, Yao resigned after the newspaper management criticised him.

Job Insecurity

On August 25, Nanning-based Nanguo Morning Post deputy editor Liu Yuan was dismissed and a senior editor at Modern Life Daily received a suspension order for reporting on the murder of a boy during a training course on August 4. The treatment of both journalists was reportedly the result of pressure by the Guanxi Propaganda Department, which subsequently sought a total ban on reporting the case.

On November 9, Hu Shuli, the editor-in-chief of Caijing Business Magazine, resigned in protest against editorial interference. Hu had previously resisted orders not to publish reports on a range of sensitive topics, including the wave of violence in Xinjiang in September. Hu also sent three journalists to report on the riots in Xinjiang in July, despite Central Propaganda Department instructions prohibiting any media travelling to the area. A total of about 200 other personnel also resigned at the same time or shortly after, including general manager Wu Chuanhui and nine executives, as well as journalists and editors.

Restrictions on Foreign Journalists

After the 2008 Olympic Games, China's Government extended the regulations in force for the Games, which allowed foreign journalists to travel in China without need to seek permission except to make sure subjects consented to be interviewed. The move was regarded as a forward step and gained international applause. A year later, on October 9, China's President Hu Jintao pledged at the World Media Summit in Beijing to uphold the legal rights of foreign journalists working in China.

However, positive moves such as these are challenged when it comes to reporting on sensitive issues, including controversial anniversaries. A year after the regulations were extended in October 2008, the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC) reported it had received 16 complaints about violence against foreign media personnel, including destruction of images and reporting materials. It reported 100 incidents of foreign journalists being turned away from

public spaces, 75 cases where foreign journalists and media workers were followed by authorities, and 18 cases of foreign media receiving a reprimand from authorities.

Compared with more than 300 cases of interference reported from January 2007 to September 17, 2008, the number of incidents of foreign media experiencing interference has dropped sharply. However, one foreign journalist said, "After the Games, many journalists left [China] so the chance of running into trouble is less likely. The working conditions of 2009 actually are the same as in 2008." A British journalist said, "The situation actually is regressing when compared with 2008."

Through 2009, foreign journalists reporting on sensitive topics experienced varying forms of interference. Mostly, officials and authorities at different levels ignored the extension of the regulations which were meant to allow more freedom for foreign media



A paramilitary officer uses an umbrella to block photo-journalists taking pictures of Tiananmen Square for the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre on June 4.

to report in China. For example, when a Japanese journalist was stopped from entering the border area between China and North Korea, an army official told him that the Olympic regulations did not apply to sensitive issues, the journalist said.

Interference and outright obstruction of foreign media seeking to report on the Tiananmen Square Massacre's anniversary was common. On May 29, a few days before the anniversary on June 4, a foreign television crew went to the square to report. Security officials blocked the crew and told them to apply for a permit to enter the square to film. Although the American journalist and Chinese producer referred to the Olympic regulations, they were still asked to go to the local security office. After several hours, they were permitted to enter the square, but only with a security escort. They were followed by about 30 plainclothes personnel, according to the FCCC, some of whom filmed the journalists as they prepared to do their work.

The journalist later said, "I was in position for the stand-up when two men from the crowd stood between me and the camera and started snapping pictures, as tourists, and making a big scene, taking multiple pictures. Then someone else stood right in front of the camera. We asked them to leave . . . our cameraman gestured for the crowd to leave. Another man got in our way. I said in Chinese we just needed a minute or two if everyone would just step back.

"A third man in red - let's call him Mr Red - then stood squarely in front of our camera. Our cameraman, who doesn't speak Chinese, gently held his arm and moved him to the side. At which point Mr Red wailed, 'I'm injured! The foreigner - he just hit me!' The chorus of followers started talking about the 'incident'. 'A foreigner just hit a Chinese man for no reason!' 'How can you hit a Chinese? We all saw it!' . . . The angry crowd surrounded us and wouldn't allow the cameraman to move one step."

Mr Red then demanded to be taken to hospital. The TV crew had to go to the police station. While they were there, Mr Red began asking the Chinese producer questions, insinuating he was at fault for assisting foreigners. At some point, Mr Red disappeared, and the police did not seek to investigate further. But the TV crew was successfully prevented from doing their job.

Sources Targeted

On August 19, an APTN camera crew reported that they were followed and obstructed by local government officials in Fengxiang County, Shaanxi

Province. As the crew sought to interview parents of children hospitalised for lead poisoning, the officials did their best to block or disrupt the interviews. The officials followed the crew throughout the day, often leaning in over the media team's shoulders as they interviewed people.

In its 2008 report on Press Freedom in China, the IFJ recommended the Central Government "issue directives to government departments, police and officials ordering an end to interceptions, intimidation, harassment and punishment of journalists and their interviewees, and the confiscation of journalistic materials." However, frequent interference and obstruction continued through 2009, with officials and authorities adapting their methods to harass not just journalists and interviewees, but local sources. According to an FCCC survey, 45 cases were reported in 2009 of intimidation of sources, 11 cases of punishment of sources, 23 incidents of summoning by authorities for questioning, and six incidents of violence.

In a prominent case on April 2, Dutch TV journalist Marije Vlaskamp was trying to report on unemployed migrant workers in the countryside. When the media crew arrived to interview a family in a village in Xiping District, about six local officials arrived, representing the local agencies. The officials allowed them to film but a policeman asked for the journalist's personal information, and said the crew needed to ask for written permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, according to the FCCC.

While the crew did the interview, the officials waited outside the family's house. The crew's local contact pushed for the interviews to be done quickly because he was under pressure from the local government. Other villagers came and also asked the media team to work quickly because they were worried about what the officials might do. Later, the local contact and the village chairman asked the crew to have lunch with the officials, in order to avoid trouble for the villagers. After lunch, the crew's car was followed and the local contact asked them to leave to avoid trouble for the village.

In a similar incident in February, the main target of harassment was a local driver employed casually by a foreign media team. From about midnight on February 27, a journalist and a photographer working for the New York Times were detained at Maqu, Gansu Province, with their driver for 36 hours without valid explanation.

The group was driving on a road south to the Gansu-Qinghai border about 11pm, and was stopped



Plain-clothes and uniformed security personnel interrogate a man at a checkpoint near the Tibetan area of Chengdu in Sichuan province on March 12 while a journalist, carrying a notebook (right), observes.

at a checkpoint guarded by six police. Their passports were checked, and they were not permitted to leave. About 4am, two police cars escorted them to a police compound. Only the driver was interrogated. The journalist said, "The driver later told us he was asked to describe our activities in Maqu."

After being held for more than a day, the journalist and photographer were escorted by an official to a hotel and plane tickets were bought for them to Beijing. They were worried about their driver and suggested to the officer that they would like to accompany the driver in his car to make sure he got home safely. Suddenly, the officer pulled the driver into his own car and drove around the parking lot, interrogating the driver. The two media personnel then had to leave.

Back at the International Press Centre in Beijing on March 3, the journalist and photographer sought an explanation for their detention from Foreign Ministry officials. Two ministry employees noted an article the journalist had written the previous week from a Tibetan town in Qinghai. They criticised the article, saying it was not "objective". They urged the journalist to be more "objective" when reporting on sensitive political matters. The officers asked the journalist to describe details of the detention, but offered no further assistance.

Cases of Assault

In 2009, the FCCC received reports of 16 incidents of assault on foreign media personnel. The most prominent case was that of two Japanese journalists and their Chinese assistant, who worked for Kyodo News Agency. The three were assaulted at a Beijing hotel on September 18, during preparations for

the National Day parade on October 1. When the media personnel opened a balcony door to their room, a group of people, some in uniform, stormed in. The attackers kicked and beat the three workers. One was held on the floor, while the other two were forced to kneel as the attackers destroyed computers. Kyodo reported that it had not received any order that day, although the Foreign Ministry had ordered news organisations not to take photos of a parade rehearsal on September 6.

Local Obstruction

Despite the extension of the Olympic regulations, foreign journalists suddenly were being told of various new "orders" that restricted their ability to report on matters to do with the National Day and Tibet. Foreign journalists who sought to report on the situation in Tibet were not granted official permission on the grounds of "safety".

On March 20, a German media team went to Tibet to report on the situation there after a year of unrest. On arrival at the Ershanlang check-point, police checked their passports and wanted to search the hired car for "forbidden or dangerous stuff". The police did not pursue the search after the journalists complained to the Foreign Ministry by phone. However, the police would not permit the team to cross the border. One officer put his arm around the neck of the team's Chinese assistant and pulled his ear to the officer's mouth. The team returned to Chengdu. When they left the town, state security personnel questioned hotel staff. Meanwhile, the manager of the rental car company had been visited by officials at 2am on the night the media crew arrived at Ershanlang.

Difficulties for Assistants

Chinese assistants to foreign media crews were commonly intimidated. Some were physically harassed, as in the case above, while others were verbally intimidated. The FCCC reported one incident of violence against an assistant, 21 incidents of intimidation and 23 cases of assistants being summoned by authorities for questioning about the work of a foreign correspondent. Assistants say that regardless of whether their employer is a foreign media outlet or based in Hong Kong, security personnel will seek to talk with them - often during late-night visits to their homes.

The FCCC reported that while the National People's Congress (NPC) held an important conference in March, a local journalist who also works as an assistant for foreign media crews was denied a request to conduct his own interview with the NPC. The denial highlights how authorities discriminate against local journalists who also work as assistants for foreign media. Under the current rules of retaining a local media assistant, foreign media must hire assistants through a state-controlled personnel service corporation. Assistants are warned by authorities that they will be fined and stripped of accreditation if they conduct independent interviews.

Through the year, the FCCC received several complaints of local assistants being verbally harassed. They were reportedly warned not to tell friends or family about information they collected during their work with foreign media, unless it had been already published by state media. Other assistants said they were urged by security personnel to present a positive image of China. One assistant retained by a Hong Kong media outlet said assistants were warned not to help to arrange interviews with dissidents. (See Hong Kong Chapter.)

New Tack in Urumqi

After the riots in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in western China erupted on July 5, China's authorities arranged a media tour for foreign and non-local media crews, in stark contrast to their approach when shutting down reporting on unrest in Tibet in March 2008.

A Japanese journalist, who arrived in Urumqi on July 6, said he was surprised because the troops seemed well prepared, could speak English and were willing to have their photo taken. However, another foreign journalist reported being shoved into a van and taken back to his designated hotel whenever police noticed him taking photos on the street. Some

journalists from Hong Kong, who joined the authorised media tour, were assaulted on July 6. (See Hong Kong Chapter.)

A journalist with Radio Free Asia was detained in her hotel room for two days from July 10, after she filmed security personnel in Urumqi as they searched a suspect. She was told the detention was because she did not have accreditation. She was not interrogated but a woman officer stayed with her the whole while. She left Urumqi under the escort of the state security bureau.

The most striking aspect of the management of the media during this time was the total blocking of internet connections. All journalists permitted to join the media tour to Xinjiang complained that they were unable to communicate with the outside world while in Urumqi. Xinjiang authorities arranged for internet connections to be available at a local media centre, but the service hardly met the media teams' needs.

Access to Information

In August, China's authorities made an unprecedented promise to all foreign press regarding the right to access information. According to the China Daily on August 13, government ministries would be required to give better access to foreign journalists under a policy known as "zero refusal". Guo Weimin, director of the State Council Information Office (SCIO) press department, explained: "Zero refusal means that the ministries must designate people to deal with calls and interview requests from foreign media and that they have to give a response within 24 hours or the period they prescribed, no matter what the result is."

However, a Japanese journalist said the policy was a "joke". He filed a question to the information officer to ask the precise dates for a visit by the Central Military Commission Vice Chairman, General Xu Caihou, to the United States in October. He did not get a reply for three days. On the fourth day, the answer was "no comment". Meanwhile, BBC journalist Michael Bristow queried the policy after he submitted a series of questions to various government departments about the National Day celebrations but received no reply or was not provided with adequate information.

Hong Kong

Journalists in Hong Kong experienced new kinds of threats during 2009. They faced significant pressures on job security, a tightening of controls on gaining permits to work in China, and an increased incidence of assault and arrest while working on the Mainland.

Promises by China's Central authorities that they would maintain relaxed requirements for permits for territory and foreign journalists to report on the Mainland after the Olympics were quickly broken. In February 2009, a new permit system for Hong Kong and Macau journalists was introduced. Xinhua News Agency denied this was a step back, describing the reintroduction of permits as an extension of the regulations in force for the 2008 Games "that had allowed greater freedom for journalists from outside the Mainland." The Olympic regulations had allowed reporters to interview individuals as long as interviewees gave prior consent, and to visit places designated by the Government as open to foreigners.

The new rules from February required Hong Kong and Macau journalists to apply to the All-China Journalists' Association (ACJA) for a press card. All such journalists also had to submit proof of formal written consent from potential Mainland interviewees to the Central Government-controlled Liaison Office

in Hong Kong or Macau. Approved permits would last for one month and restrict journalists to one destination. Some media outlets labelled by the Central Government as anti-government, including Apple Daily and Radio Free Asia (RFA), were forced to leave the Mainland for allegedly not abiding by these rules.

Across the industry, journalists encountered difficulties with the new permit system because of the need to name interviewees and concerns that interviewees would be pressured by authorities. One Hong Kong journalist said he had intended to interview dissidents, but could not note their names on the permit application. Journalists also reported delays in the renewal of accredited press cards, which negatively affected their ability to do their work.

Interference in the publication of "sensitive" content in Hong Kong was increasingly prevalent. Mainland subscribers to the Hong Kong-based Ming Pao newspaper, Hong Kong Economic Times and South China Morning Post reported that content related to the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre was manually removed from their papers and deliveries were disrupted. A source told Ming Pao that the delays and missing pages were a result of "senior instruction" to delivery companies.



Journalist Lam Tsz-ho, who was assaulted in Urumqi on September 4, protests at the Liaison Office of the PRC in Hong Kong on September 7. (Photo courtesy of Hong Kong Journalists' Association)

A Hong Kong-based reporter for Esquire magazine, Daisy Chu, was sacked on June 29 for revealing that the magazine had removed a 16-page feature on the Tiananmen Square Massacre from its June 27 issue. She was told by her supervisor that she "should know the reason" for her dismissal, and she was instructed by the magazine's editorial board not to disclose the reasons. Esquire's chief executive, Jessica Ng, is the daughter of the company's owner, South China Media, and also reportedly a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Increasing Attacks

Hong Kong journalists working on the Mainland suffered increasing incidence of attacks. On August 12, two Beijing-based journalists for Hong Kong Now Broadband, Ka-yu Wong and Siu-wing Wu, were detained in their hotel room by security officers for suspicion of possessing drugs and prohibited goods, which could entail a jail term. A search yielded no evidence, but the journalists were held for several hours. They were therefore unable to report on the trial of poet and writer Tan Zuren, charged with subversion of state power for investigating the deaths of children in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Following a complaint to the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, the journalists were released. Now TV, the Hong Kong News Executive Association, the Hong Kong Journalists' Association (HKJA) and the IFJ demanded an explanation for the incident but received no response.

A Hong Kong TV crew reporting on violence in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in July were reportedly attacked by three men presumed to be police. When the cameraman produced his accreditation card, one of the attackers said, "Journalist? So what? I can punch you whenever I like." The crew were detained without explanation for more than an hour at a police station while officials deleted their footage.

On September 4, as a new wave of violence erupted in Xinjiang, Lam Tsz-ho and Lau Wing-chuan, of Television Broadcast (TVB), and Lam Chun-wai, a Now TV cameraman, were injured as police detained them for reporting on police use of tear gas to control protesters in Urumqi. The three were detained for three hours and police deleted some of their footage. Two days later, another group of five Hong Kong journalists was detained and escorted to their hotel while trying to interview protesters.

The treatment of Hong Kong media in Xinjiang aroused the ire of Hong Kong politicians, members of the People's Congress of the People's Republic of China in Hong Kong, and the wider public. The HKJA, an IFJ affiliate, led a protest outside the China Liaison Office of China on September 7 and held a rally with Hong Kong's Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) on September 13. The IFJ wrote to China Vice-President Xi Jinping and other government leaders demanding an investigation and explanation for the violent treatment of Hong Kong media working on the Mainland.

Open Discussion Closes

Meanwhile, previously open discussion forums in Hong Kong suffered increased efforts at censorship. In March, China's Foreign Ministry Office threatened the FCC with "unspecified consequences" if it hosted a speech by Kate Saunders, communications director for the Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet. The speech was scheduled to be held soon after the first anniversary of 2008 riots in Tibet's capital, Lhasa. The FCC postponed the event at short notice, saying in a statement that "the Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacted the FCC, voiced concern that it had not been offered a chance to argue its case and asked that the speech either be cancelled or postponed until the Chinese Government could find a speaker to present its view". No speaker from China was put forward, and Saunders delivered her speech at the FCC in April.

In another incident involving the FCC, Thaksin Shinawatra, the ousted former Prime Minister of Thailand, had to deliver a speech via video link after experiencing problems entering Hong Kong in March.

Financial Crisis Strikes

Hong Kong's media industry suffered heavy stress due to the global financial crisis, with significant falls in advertising revenue. Many media outlets restructured budgets, resulting in pay cuts, reduced



Three Hong Kong journalists and media workers were brutally harassed by the police as they sought to report on renewed conflict in Xinjiang on September 4. Two of the team (inside the circle) were hand-cuffed and forced to kneel on the street.

holiday leave and lay-offs. HKJA's 2009 annual report said an estimated 800 journalists and media workers had been laid off since November 2008. Broadcasters are at the forefront of staff cuts.

Hong Kong's two free local broadcasters – Asia Television (ATV) and Television Broadcasts (TVB) – laid off hundreds of staff from November 2008 to June. At ATV, which has operated in the red for many years, the axe fell hardest in February as about 20 percent of the workforce - 207 people - lost their jobs. This was despite Taiwanese tycoon Tsai Eng-meng announcing that he would invest HKD 500 million in the station. Then ATV executive chairman and director Linus Cheung said only abrupt measures could save the company. However, ATV staff complained that with reduced staff, reporters were forced to film-edit while technicians were forced to be drivers. In May, ATV announced a fourth round of lay-offs – this time 36 staff, including long-serving anchors, reporters, editors and directors from the news department, with total job losses numbering about 300.

Despite making a profit of HKD 1.055 billion in 2008, TVB conducted three rounds of sackings affecting almost 400 staff between December 2008 and May. The biggest redundancy round – involving 212 people – was in December 2008. TVB defended its actions by pointing to a drop in advertising revenue and an expected deterioration in the business environment. In May, it sacked another 110 workers, mainly from its engineering and production resources departments.

The station said some laid-off staff would be able to re-apply for 200 new jobs being created as part of its development plan. Trade unionists condemned the job losses.

In other parts of the television sector, Star TV axed 20 people at the end of March, leaving it without newsroom staff. Cable TV laid off seven people in April.

Print media also suffered. Hong Kong's leading English-language paper, the South China Morning Post, sacked 30 staff in December 2008, followed by another 17 in April, when it also cut salaries by 5 to 12 percent for those earning more than HKD 20,000 a month. In June, editor-in-chief C.K. Lau and editor-at-large Chris Yeung resigned without explanation. The deputy managing editor for the New York-based Wall Street Journal, Reginald Chua, replaced Lau.

Chinese language financial newspaper the Hong Kong Economic Times also imposed pay cuts. Higher earners bore the brunt of a 5 percent average cut in wages. The Next Media group, which publishes Apple Daily and Next Magazine, cut salaries by an average 3.5 percent, while the Sing Pao Group cut wages by 3 to 10 percent.

Hong Kong's Government has called on media managements to think twice before dismissing staff. But trade unionists say some employers are reluctant to shoulder greater responsibility in mitigating the impacts of the financial crisis. Instead, media outlets



Police harassment of several Hong Kong journalists working in China led many journalists to protest in front of the Liaison Office of the PRC in Hong Kong. (Photos courtesy of Hong Kong Journalists' Association)

make more demands of remaining staff to improve productivity in a context of shrinking salaries and the replacement of senior journalists by less experienced journalists on insecure employment contracts. There are serious implications for the maintenance of a core of experienced senior journalists to mentor others in defending ethical and independent journalism and to ensure the airing of diverse points of view.

ATV continues its decade-long struggle for survival. The station hit the headlines in early December 2008, when it announced the appointment of former Cable and Wireless HKT telecom company's chief executive officer Linus Cheung as executive chairman and City Telecom chairman Ricky Wong as CEO. Neither has direct broadcasting experience. The move prompted four ATV executives to resign. Leung Ka-wing later withdrew his resignation after Wong stepped aside.

Wong was critical of the station for acting as an outlet for the propaganda station China Central Television (CCTV). He said that ATV needed to be independent and Hong Kong-oriented. His resignation on December 15, 2008 and public complaints about ATV's political ties sparked a rigorous investigation in December 2008 by Hong Kong's Legislative Council into allegations of political pressure from Beijing. In January, it was announced that Taiwan businessman and new owner of China Times Group Tsai Eng-men would invest in the company, while exploring cooperation between ATV and the China Times Group. A government spokesman said the Hong Kong

Government would monitor developments and work with Hong Kong's Broadcasting Authority to ensure ATV continued to provide services in keeping with Hong Kong's Broadcasting Ordinance and its licence.

New Media Expansion

While traditional media faces turbulence, Hong Kong's Government actively encouraged expansion of new media outlets. In December 2008, it announced three 15-year licences would be issued for mobile television services from 2010. Licence holders would be able to offer up to 26 channels for broadcast on mobile phones or MP4 players with a TV receiver. At least half of the transmission capacity will be for mobile TV content. The rest is set aside for new services including digital audio broadcasts and data transmission. The Government said it would not impose cross-media ownership rules on new service providers. Hong Kong Digital Content Alliance convenor Ringo Lam said lifting cross-media restrictions would pave the way for broadcasters to offer content through this new media.

New radio station Wave Media, currently holding a 12-year licence, is scheduled to begin broadcasting an AM radio service in 2010. It will provide Cantonese programs focused on news, public affairs and music and is backed by several supporters of the Hong Kong Government, including legislator David Li and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference delegate Wong Cho-bau.

Another community radio station, Citizens' Radio, had its licence application rejected by the Hong Kong Government and was subsequently charged with illegal broadcasting. Citizens' Radio, run by a group of people including legislator Leung Kwok-hung and former legislator Tsang Kin-shing, declared that broadcasting without official permission was a "first step in the fight to open up the air waves". The licence application was rejected on the grounds that the applicants did not have the technical capability and financial backing to maintain a sound broadcasting service. In 2006, several Citizens' Radio activists were arrested and charged under Hong Kong's Telecommunications Ordinance with maintaining a system of telecommunications without a licence. In court, the activists argued that the law breached Hong Kong's Bill of Rights. In January 2008, a magistrate ruled in favour of Citizens' Radio, declaring sections of the ordinance were unconstitutional because they curbed freedom of expression provisions in Hong Kong's Basic Law and Bill of Rights. Nevertheless, the Government won an appeal against the decision in December 2008, forcing a resumption of trials against the activists. On November 9, 2009, six staff

were convicted on 14 charges of illegal broadcasting. They are reportedly planning another constitutional challenge. On December 14, seven guest speakers, including several serving Hong Kong legislators, were fined for transmitting a message using an unlicensed communication device.

The role of public service broadcasting in Hong Kong has come under fire as Beijing loyalists criticise state-owned public broadcaster Radio and Television Hong Kong (RTHK) of being too critical of the Central and Hong Kong governments. On September 22, the Hong Kong Commerce and

Economics Development Bureau announced that RTHK would remain a government department despite more than two decades of public campaigning for the broadcaster's independence. It said a new board would provide editorial policy advice to RTHK, but would not intervene in day-to-day operations. Plans for an RTHK-run television channel and a channel for Central Government Broadcasting in mainland China were also made known. The broadcaster's future has been in doubt since the Public Service Broadcasting Review Committee proposed in March 2007 that a new independent statutory public service broadcaster should be set up, but that RTHK was not fit to take on this role.

Macau

Security Law Concerns

On February 25, Macau's Legislative Assembly passed a national security law just four months after a consultation document on the issue was first unveiled. The law refers to vaguely defined crimes to do with national secrets and subversion.

Both Macau and Hong Kong are required, under Article 23 of the special administrative regions' Basic Laws, to enact laws banning treason, sedition, secession, subversion against the Central Government, and the theft of state secrets. Article 23 also prohibits foreign political organisations or bodies from conducting political activities in Macau or Hong Kong or establishing ties with local bodies.

The security laws specifically refer to sedition and theft of state secrets, thus posing a significant threat to journalists who seek to conduct critical and independent work. Moves by Hong Kong officials to introduce a similar law in Hong Kong in 2003 were quashed after half a million people, including members of the media, marched in protest. Critics feared that the Macau law could be adapted for use in Hong Kong - although legal experts pointed to the different legal systems in use in the two special administrative regions.

In late October 2008, Macau Chief Executive Edmond Ho announced the release of a consultation document on national security legislation. It included the 15-article national security Bill. Ho insisted that the proposed law would not infringe on freedom of expression. Macau's Secretary for Administration and Justice, Florinda da Rosa Silva Chan, said

the Bill was in line with the 1995 Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.

The Macau Journalists' Association, which is the only media group in Macau that is not pro-government, urged the local government to conduct a full consultation on the Bill. It called for a clear definition of what constitutes a state secret and for open trials to be standard practice. It also called for a public interest defence for media publications.

Some academics were also critical of the draft law. University of Macau law lecturer Jorge Godinho said that if sedition and theft of state secrets were not clearly defined, they "would likely result in self-censorship by the press".

At the same time as the national security law was introduced in Macau, the region's authorities seemed not to welcome outside media in the territory. A Hong Kong-based photographer with the South China Morning Post, Felix Wong Chi-keung, was denied entry twice. Immigration officials denied him entry on February 18, although he had a press accreditation card to cover the trial of Ao Man-long, Macau's former Secretary for Transport and Public Works. He was again refused entry on February 25 when he travelled to Macau to report on Ao's case as well as the final vote on the national security law's Article 23. On both occasions, immigration officers did not explain the denial of entry, but requested that Wong sign a document stating he had breached Macau's internal security law. He did not do so. The IFJ sent an open letter to Macau Chief Executive Ho Hau-wah on February 27 expressing concern.



The global financial crisis has been cited as a reason for many Hong Kong media outlets downsizing and cutting salaries. Many journalists complain that their workload has increased as a result.

China Online

“The internet has already become a powerful anti-government tool in China. It brings a new challenge to national security and social stability. We need to be cautious and strengthen the surveillance power in all aspects,” according to Meng Jianzhu, China’s Minister of Public Security, in an interview with the Communist Party-owned Qiu Shi magazine on December 1, 2009.

The internet is a part of daily life for ordinary people across China and its territories. According to research by the state-controlled China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in July, more than 330million Mainlanders use the internet. Third-generation (3G) technology, by which phones have internet access, has more than 155million users in China, with 700million subscriptions to ordinary cell phones.

Authorities in China have been alert to the power of the internet for a long time. In 2003, the Ministry of Public Security set up the Golden Shield Project’s censoring system, initiated as a firewall to block sensitive information being communicated online. However, 2009 saw a marked further tightening of controls. From early 2009 to December 4, more than 130,000 non-registered websites had been closed and 226 service providers had been ordered to close on grounds of carrying “vulgar or “pornographic” content, according to an announcement by central authorities.

The tightening began on January 5, when seven government departments, including the General Administrative of Press and Publication (GAPP), the State Council Information Office and the Ministry of Public Security, announced a project to curb online content deemed “vulgar” or “pornographic”. Websites would incur a warning for violations, followed by a shutdown if they did not comply. On January 6, GAPP said the project would run for one month. Within a day, 19 websites were issued warnings.

It was not until January 9 that the State Council Information Office’s vice-officer, Cai Mingzhao, elaborated on the definition of “vulgar” or “pornographic”. She said the term “vulgar” would include information that violated China’s laws and regulations, and which

influenced minors to think or behave improperly. It remained unclear what kind of content might have this effect. On the same day, the www.bullog.cn website, which promoted freedom of speech and posted many political articles, was shut down. Authorities at the China Internet Illegal Information Reporting Center did not notify of the closure on their own website. Bullog controller Luo Yonghao said no warning or reason was given. Later that day, he was informed by the internet service provider (ISP) that the order was issued by “the relevant department”. Luo believed the website was closed because it carried content by several writers who had signed Charter 08. (See Mainland Section.) By that time, a separate website dedicated to Charter 08 and related information had disappeared – it survived only 16 days after going public on December 8, 2008.

Other overseas-based websites - including Yahoo Taiwan, Amnesty International, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Radio Free Asia (RFA) - had been blocked before the new restrictions. On June 2, Central Government spokesman Qin Gang was asked by a foreign journalist to explain why RFA’s website was blocked. Qin replied that news produced by RFA interfered in China’s internal affairs. On the same question about the BBC, he said he was not fully aware of the case.

In addition to the website closures in 2009, many blogs, online forums, social networking sites and chat rooms have been blocked or comments have been deleted.

The one-month “pilot scheme” remains in force, though its continuance has not been announced officially. Meanwhile, the orders of authorities adapt to current and anticipated events as China’s filtering system has been ramped up to control content to do with highly sensitive issues. Websites were entirely or partly closed in relation to content about sensitive anniversaries of social upheaval. An independent opinion on Tibet or Xinjiang is rare to find online in China.

On March 23, Youtube was temporarily blocked after a film related to riots in Tibet in March 2008 was posted. The website was blocked again without explanation on March 29.

In May, authorities closed without explanation some academic websites and forum sessions, including those of a critical cultural studies group at Tongji University, Shanghai, and a constitutional forum. Some people believed it was because the Central Government was concerned about an upsurge in Chinese nationalism ahead of the 90th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement - an anti-imperialist, cultural and political movement.

No relevant information could be seen inside China concerning the greatest taboo issue during 2009 - the 20th anniversary of the June 4 Tiananmen Square Massacre. A former online manager of a China-based website said that social networking sites such as Twitter, Flickr and Facebook were blocked two days before June 4 without warning or explanation. Many people complained at the time that their email systems were blocked or delayed. Meanwhile, sites such as Fanfou and Youku (alternatives to Twitter and Flickr) then became the targets.

Xinjiang Blackout

In July, all internet services in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region were blocked by order of the local government, as riots erupted. (See Mainland Section.) At the same time, Ilham Tohti, an ethnic Uyghur professor at the Central National University in Beijing and a founder of the www.uighurbiz.cn website, posted information online about the upheaval. The report was immediately deleted and the website was closed without explanation. Tohti disappeared from his Beijing home on July 7. His whereabouts were unknown until he was released by authorities on August 23. He remains under surveillance.

Other websites, including the state-controlled www.tianshannet.com.cn and www.wlmgwb.com, as well as Facebook and Twitter, were shut down. Xinjiang residents and journalists complained they could not make calls or send text messages within the region or country or access the internet. Outbound international calls from Xinjiang were blocked. Journalists could only access the internet at the press room in the Hoi Tak hotel, where foreign and Chinese media personnel were placed by authorities. More than 100 foreign journalists were offered limited phone lines. No independent



Online journalist Huang Qi was sentenced to three years’ jail on November 23, 2009 for accepting an interview with a foreign journalist and for posting an article online that criticised the Government’s handling of the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008.

opinions were permitted to pass through the nationwide firewall.

Many websites dedicated to ethnic minorities were blocked or inaccessible after the Xinjiang riots. Most of these sites are believed to be still inaccessible. Meanwhile, Google was forced to filter images and video footage of the Xinjiang upheaval.

Social Networking Power

The power of online social networking unnerved the central authorities, notably in the case of Deng Yujiao, who was charged with murder after killing a local officer who had made unwelcome advances to her in Yesanguan, Hubei Province, on May 10. Deng’s situation prompted much discussion among netizens and some organised a “tour” through the Fanfou social networking site to attend the court hearings. The “tour” members faced harassment and various obstacles but did attend the court. Deng’s submission of self-defence was upheld by the court and she was freed in June. In another case, Tu Yuangao, a chef, was found dead at his workplace at a hotel in Shishou City, also in Hubei Province, on June 17. Tu’s family was dissatisfied with the police handling of the case. At the instigation of social networking sites, more than 10,000 people protested in front of the hotel, according to RFA.

The authorities’ concerns increased as they witnessed online organising of mass public events to protest against authorities not only in China, but also in Iran after flawed elections there in June. An all-out effort was made to close social networking sites completely, even as authorities also recognised that the internet can serve the interests of propaganda. On June 29, an order was issued permitting only www.southcn.com to publish an investigative report of the

factory fight in Shaoguan which prompted the Xinjiang riots. The report could not be carried on other sites or in print or electronic media. The www.southcn.com site is a sister organisation of the well-known newspaper Southern Metropolis Daily. Both are within the Southern Metropolis Group, controlled by the Guangdong News and Publishing Bureau.

In another example, US President Barack Obama accepted an interview with an online magazine, infzm.com, also within the Southern Metropolis Group. The Central Propaganda Department issued an order on November 18 that no other media were to republish the interview. A few days later, the editor-in-chief of infzm.com, Xiang Xi, was assigned to a new position. The group denied Xiang was demoted. However, some sources said the Propaganda Department had "penalised" him because in publishing the report online, he had left a large blank space signifying where the department had made deletions.

Control and Supervision

The Central Government's control of the internet requires consistent supervision. Among the many government departments monitoring the cyber world are the Propaganda Department's Internet Bureau and Bureau of Information and Public Opinion; the Information Office of the State Council's Internet Propaganda Administrative Bureau and its Internet Bureau; and the Computer Monitoring and Supervision Bureau of the Ministry of Information Industry and the Ministry of Public Security. Numerous internet "commentators" have been trained to conduct monitoring. The tasks of the various departments include the following:

- Supervise and manage online information.
- Check and approve internet information service licences.
- Close websites or demand deletions.
- Ensure restricted news articles are not



A Uyghur woman demonstrates in front of paramilitary police as photographers attempt to photograph scenes of violence in Urumqi on July 7.

uploaded or republished.

- Ensure no one makes any comment on sensitive topics.
- Instruct websites how and where to place articles.
- Request government-owned and some commercial websites to conduct weekly meetings in order to monitor the latest hot topics.
- Permit the republishing of only about 200 newspapers and websites.
- Close websites or blogs, and issue warnings or fines as necessary.
- Train cyber-police to censor online content.

All website companies must have a licence and sign a self-regulatory agreement which includes a commitment not to violate China's laws and to filter "harmful" messages. Section 5 of an administrative order issued by the Ministry of Public Security requires all such companies to ensure no entity or individual is permitted to use the internet to disseminate messages that may be deemed to incite subversion of state power, separatism or defame reputations. Since December 2008, websites with video-sharing functions must be operated under Chinese ownership. All these websites must apply for a licence from the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television or they will be closed. All commercial online companies are also encouraged to join an industry association. Supervisory bodies then arrange courses about "appropriate online content".

For online issues, authorities may deliver orders by telephone, email, SMS, MSN, QQ (a popular instant message channel in China), real-time exchange, web platforms or weekly meetings. Punishments for violations include fines, dismissal, suspension, demotion, deduction of website licence points, website closure or licence withdrawal. For example, the editor of state-owned website tianshannet.com.cn, Wang Dahao, was forced to resign on April 7 after writing an article criticising an instruction by the Education Bureau of Urumqi, Xinjiang, that all students memorise the name of the local official leader.

Under a State Council order issued in 2000, China-based websites cannot link to overseas news websites or carry news reports from foreign media without approval. Only "licensed print publishers" are permitted to report news online. Non-licensed websites may only publish information already released publicly by other news media in China. These sites must obtain approval from state information offices and the State Council Information Agency. Article 12 of this order says that "content providers are responsible for ensuring the

legality of any information disseminated through their services". Article 14 gives officials full access to any kind of sensitive information.

Independent non-licensed websites are rare in China. Websites using an outbound service provider are able to survive but are easily shut down by authorities. In early December 2009, RFA reported that the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology had issued a demand notice to all ISPs requiring that they not service any website on the Government's watch list. The decision was reportedly aimed at protecting minors. ISPs must also check all websites and submit reports to the department, or their company may be closed.

The independent Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch website at www.msguancha.com has experienced repeated interference from the Hubei Information Office (under the authority of the Information Office of the State Council's Internet Bureau) since it was established in 2006. But Liu Feiyue, who hosts the site, said the new wave of controls and interference would make it extremely difficult for independent sites to survive. Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch experiences regular cyber attacks, while Liu has been manhandled by security personnel in the course of his reporting work, denied permission to leave China, and temporarily detained in a psychiatric hospital.

Filtering Battles

Since 1998, many people have used software programs to help circumvent online censorship and filtering conducted via the Golden Shield Project, or the Great Fire Wall, which filters some ISP addresses and content, including reference to the Tiananmen Square Massacre, the Tibet independence movement, Falung Gong and reports from the BBC, VOA, RFA, Yahoo Hong Kong and Yahoo Taiwan. In response, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology demanded in July that all new computers and any computers in schools use new filtering software known as Green Dam Youth Escort. There was no public announcement until the demand was reported by foreign media. Many computer technicians said Green Dam would not only filter information but could also be used to check browser histories.

When polls conducted online and by Southern Metropolis Daily showed many people objecting to the software, the Central Propaganda Department issued an order on June 10 demanding all media stop conducting such surveys, and delete or block all critical opinions and comments about the software. (Officials

had responded similarly in May when they banned reports about online discussion opposing new rules requiring all netizens to use their real names when posting comments online.)

Although the Green Dam project was dropped as it was due to be launched on July 1, the Great Fire Wall's reach has strengthened and all circumvention software systems are reported to have been successfully blocked since mid-September, just before National Day on October 1.

Bloggers Blocked

The blogs of many journalists, writers and activists such as human rights activist Dr Gao Yaojie,

artist Ai Weiwei and Zeng Jinyan, the wife of jailed writer Hu Jia, have been blocked without explanation. More recently, authorities have begun to use criminal laws against bloggers, referring to charges such as endangering social stability, criminal defamation and inciting subversion of state power.

Blogger Liu Yiming wrote about 10 articles querying the law enforcement and judiciary department of Zhejiang Province regarding a court case in July. On August 21, the security bureau of Ezhou, Hubei Province, held him for 10 days in administrative detention. He was charged with using the internet to spread rumours that could disturb social stability. There was no court hearing, as required under Section 25 of Public Security Administration Punishments. The

Central Propaganda Department then ordered a ban on further publishing of his articles.

Liu said that others had already written on the same topic, but he believed his articles had generated much attention online. It was not the first time he had been targeted – he was charged with inciting subversion of state power in Shenzhen in June 2005 due to articles in which he criticised the local government. At that time he was detained by police for 81 days without charge, and then told to leave Shenzhen and return to his hometown of Hubei.

On February 25, blogger Duan Lei, in Shandong, was detained and charged with criminal defamation for an item posted on three popular websites from

February 2 to 8. His article questioned the conduct of Guo Feng, a Communist Party Committee Secretary in Cao County, Shandong. The prosecution department of Cao County said Duan had endangered social stability. On the night of July 24, after the first closed-door hearing of his case on July 17, Duan was suddenly released on the basis of insufficient evidence. He was issued a public apology.

On October 8, 15 bloggers issued a declaration of human rights in the cyber world, requesting the Central Government respect people's rights to access information from the internet in accordance with rights outlined in China's Constitution. Some members of this group have been questioned by security personnel, but no further action has yet been taken against them.

Press Freedom Hits the Wall

The following is contributed by a journalist working on the Mainland, who prefers to remain anonymous.

It has been a really difficult year for press freedom in China. Propaganda departments have issued bans on the media, one after another. Cases of journalists being beaten have been reported again and again. The environment for journalism is awful - this is particularly evident when looking at what information is published on the internet.

It is well known that China's Government controls the internet in China. The Great Fire Wall is a notorious obstacle for China's netizens. In 2008, under pressure from foreign media and because China hoped to present an image of openness before the Beijing Olympic Games, the Government temporarily loosened controls and allowed a freer flow of information. Hundreds of millions of netizens found a short-lived opportunity to access overseas and international websites without needing to get past VPN blocks.

However, in 2009, and in anticipation of the 60th anniversary of China's current political system, the Government again tightened its control over the media in the aim of presenting anniversary celebrations in an atmosphere of a "harmonious society" with a façade of peace and prosperity. Strengthened internet censorship was one of the measures it used to do this.

In early 2009, the combined information offices of State Council, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Culture, the State Administration for Industry and Commerce, the State Administration of Radio Film and Television, and the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) launched a movement to clean up the information on internet available to people in China. Presented as an issue of moral protection for young people, the Government imposed further restrictions on accessing and communicating information online. Thousands of websites, including the domestically well-known BullBlog, were blocked or forcibly closed. Several websites, including Google China, were punished for delivering content considered "indecent". Social networking websites including Facebook and Twitter were blocked. Fanfou, the popular networking website in China, and many popular personal blogs were also closed.

Reviewing the year, and seeing what has happened to online communications in China with attempts to impose the Green Dam filtering software, local government blocks after the Xinjiang riots, and controls imposed for the 60th anniversary, people can easily feel the tightened controls on the internet. Journalistic freedom retreated.

In 2009, the Government mainly took three measures to control the internet. One was strengthening the supervision of the main portal websites and putting them totally under government

control. Another was controlling the online delivery of news from more outspoken media such as Southern Metropolitan and Southern Weekend. The third measure was to close or block interacting social networking websites and control the development of web 2.0.

As for supervision of websites, the Central Government almost totally controlled online news. Information that fits in with propaganda aims would be specially recommended. Information that the Government dislikes would disappear. The information filtering and selecting extends the Communist Party's tradition of information control. The bad result is that it helps to create a false image, needed by the Government, of the Chinese living in a harmonious society.

Control of online news by outspoken media is a new thing. Since the Government controls the portals, negative stories that would usually have been reported by media such as Southern Weekend and Southern Metropolitan have not been published. In the internet age, if a piece of news cannot be delivered via the internet, it means that the public may not learn of a huge issue. Negative reports calling governments to account and exposing social injustices are lost in a sea of controlled information.

When the internet entered the age of web 2.0, a group of "civilian journalists" appeared and made use of the simultaneous and interactive character of

web 2.0. With this tool, anyone could report on events, and so the Government has paid close attention to it. The technology has been widely used among China's netizens, and this makes some local governments nervous. In 2009, after seeing how web 2.0 affected the public's response to the Iranian elections, China's Government determinedly disciplined social networking websites and short message services. Twitter, Facebook and Fanfou were closed. Controlling web 2.0 is a new part of the Government's efforts to control the internet. It not only stops the free flow of information, but also prohibits the public being alerted to and informed of core issues, and thereby prevents these issues becoming general discussion topics. This helps the Government maintain control.

But as vice rises, so too does virtue. Objectively speaking, the controls on the internet have been generally effective, resulting in increasing violations of press freedom throughout 2009. But people who seek to uphold the value of press freedom - China's journalists and netizens - are finding their own ways for dealing with the tightening controls. For example, they ask portals not to publish the name of the media from where they get their news reports. And they are improving their own websites. Civil journalists are mastering technologies that help them circumvent the Great Fire Wall. Conquering the information controls will take not just the modernisation of China's Government, but perseverance in the efforts and struggle of the people who are devoted to promoting the free flow of information to the people of China.

Recommendations

1. Central Government to order the immediate release all jailed journalists in China, and to issue orders to all government levels that journalists and writers are not to be jailed for doing their jobs and serving the public interest.
2. Central Government to order an end all arbitrary and unexplained detentions of journalists.
3. Central Government to order an end the use of state security and social order laws to intimidate and silence journalists.
4. Central Government to order appropriate authorities to conduct full investigations into acts of violence committed against local and foreign media personnel, including where violence is allegedly at the hands of government officials; bring perpetrators of such violence to justice, and ensure all understand that attacks on the media will not be tolerated.
5. Central Government to order officials and police, at all levels of government, to end interceptions, harassment and punishment of journalists, their local assistants (including drivers), their sources and interviewees. Likewise rule that the confiscation of journalistic materials is barred.
6. Central Government to order appropriate authorities to implement fully the extended Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists (the Olympic regulations); issue orders to officials at all levels to comply with the October 2008 announcement that relaxed restrictions in place before the Olympics remain in force.
7. In line with the above regulations, Central Government to ensure officials at all levels allow freedom of movement for journalists to report in all areas of China, without entry restrictions.
8. Central Government to order appropriate authorities to rescind the 2009 changes to entry permit requirements for Hong Kong and Macau journalists so that they may again conduct journalistic work on the Mainland without obstruction by local authorities; provincial governments to order local authorities to comply with revocation.
9. Central Government to order a revision of the 2009 changes to the accreditation system for Mainland journalists; rescind the newly implemented definition of a journalist as someone who works in a traditional news office environment.
10. Central Government to order appropriate authorities to implement measures to ensure no discrimination by officials at all levels (accreditation or otherwise) is applied against journalists who publish their work through traditional media outlets, new media formats, or who independently publish their work, in recognition that definitions of professional status require adaptation in a rapidly evolving new media environment.
11. Central Government to rescind all regulations and orders introduced in 2009 which cite vague and subjectively defined notions of “vulgarity” as a reason for censoring information and punishing journalists and media workers.
12. Central Government to rescind all other regulations issued in 2009 concerning censorship of content, whether in a traditional or online format.
13. Central Government to order an end to efforts to restrict journalism conducted online, or otherwise re-published in online formats.
14. Central Government to order authorities at all levels not to manipulate local or national telecommunications systems or impose communication blackouts at any time, but notably during times when there is great public interest in receiving information about unfolding events.
15. In view of President Hu Jintao’s remarks in October that his Government would uphold the legal rights of foreign journalists working in China, the President is urged to ensure all media personnel in China enjoy the same rights; he is further urged to ensure all central and provincial government departments and agencies are assisted to understand and respect the value of press freedom for the wider public good.
16. In line with the above, the Central Government is urged to implement an awareness-raising program at all levels of government and bureaucracy to assist relevant authorities to understand China’s constitutional obligations to support press freedom values.
17. The Central Government is urged encourage the enactment of laws at the national and provincial levels to protect press freedom and freedom of expression, in line with China’s constitutional obligations and international instruments.



The IFJ is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation that promotes coordinated international action to defend press freedom and social justice through the development of strong, free and independent trade unions of journalists. IFJ Asia-Pacific coordinates IFJ activities in the Asia-Pacific region. The IFJ works closely with the United Nations, particularly UNESCO, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, WIPO and the ILO, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the European Union, the Council for Europe and with a range of international trade union and freedom of expression organisations. The IFJ mandate covers both professional and industrial interests of journalists.