



IFJ Press Freedom in China Campaign Bulletin

March 8, 2011

To IFJ Asia-Pacific affiliates and friends,

Welcome to IFJ Asia-Pacific's monthly Press Freedom in China Campaign e-bulletin. The next bulletin will be sent on **April 8, 2011**, and contributions are most welcome.

To contribute news or information, email ifj@ifj-asia.org. To visit the IFJ's China Campaign page, go to www.ifj-asia.org.

Please distribute this bulletin widely among colleagues in the media.

In this bulletin:

- 1. Journalists Covering Jasmine Protests Instructed to 'Cooperate' with Police**
- 2. Reports of Protests Censored in Print and Online Media, Names of Flowers Banned**
- 3. Foreign Journalists Harassed, Pelted with Stones in Assaults**
- 4. Journalist Sacked for Questioning Colleague's Dismissal**
- 5. Senior Editors Sacked, Warned for Reporting Fire**
- 6. Funding Cuts to Voice of America Chinese Language Services**
- 7. China Launches New Search Engine in Wake of Google's Departure**
- 8. RTHK Abandons Live Webcast of Democracy Activist**

1. Journalists Covering Jasmine Protests Instructed to 'Cooperate' with Police

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) was dismayed by irresponsible comments made by the Foreign Ministry of China, after a series of incidents in which journalists were targeted when covering "jasmine revolution" protests in the country during February. Police in China also threatened many foreign correspondents with cancellation of their working visa if they continued to report on Sunday protests. In a regular press conference on March 1, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu accused journalists of breaching reporting restrictions put in place by police for protests in Beijing and Shanghai on February 20 and 27, and that journalists must "cooperate" with police. Many journalists from non-mainland media outlets including Bloomberg TV, BBC, CNN, Deutsche Presse-Agentur, German state broadcaster ARD, Hong Kong-based broadcasters including ATV, TVB, Cable TV, RTHK and Taiwan-based broadcaster Sanli TV were harassed, assaulted and detained by police and other unidentified people during the protests. Mainland writers and bloggers were also detained, with *Sichuan Literature* magazine writer and Charter 08 signatory Ran Yunfei reportedly detained by police on February 20 and now facing a charge of inciting subversion of state power. Bloggers Liang Haiyi and Ye Du were also detained by police on February 20 on the same charge. 1984BBS administrator Secretary Zhang was also questioned for almost twelve hours by police who alleged he sent images of the protest through the internet. Many human rights lawyers and academics were still either under house arrest or were forced to leave their apartments at time of writing.



2. Reports of Protests Censored in Print and Online Media, Names of Flowers Banned

When information of “jasmine revolution” in the Middle East, Northern Africa and China, began circulating through the internet, China’s central authorities immediately responded with heavy censorship. A mainland journalist told the IFJ that it is well-understood that nobody is allowed to write a word of any of the protests in China. *Global Times*, sister website of state-controlled Xinhua News Agency, reported the protest on February 20, but the next day the report disappeared. “Before the President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak announced he was to step down, how many news reports could you read from the Mainland media outlets? Almost none except for Xinhua which only reported that the Central Government had sent the troops to evacuate Chinese citizens from Egypt,” the journalist said. All relevant words were blocked on the internet, which included not only the term “jasmine” but the names of all types of flowers; “Wangfujing” in Beijing “McDonalds” (one of the proposed protest sites in Wangfujing) and “jasmine revolution” as well as any reference to the Ambassador of the United States to China, Jon Huntsman, who visited Wangfujing for the February 20 protest with his family. Popular websites such as Sina.com and 163.com posted a warning notice on their websites by reminding all internet users to obey Chinese law otherwise the administrators will work according to the law. Boxun.com, a website that distributed the information on the protests received a serious cyber attack from an unknown source on February 19.

3. Foreign Journalists Harassed, Pelted with Stones in Assaults

The IFJ was deeply frustrated by a series of cases in February in which foreign journalists were harassed, pushed and even had stones thrown at them by unknown attackers in Dongshigu Village, Shandong. The journalists were travelling in separate groups in attempts to enter the village to interview human rights activist Chen Guangcheng and his wife. Chen Guangcheng was jailed for campaigning against China’s one-child policy and was released on September 9, 2010, after completing his 4 and a half year sentence but was immediately placed under house arrest with his wife. The IFJ delivered an open letter to Chinese authorities protesting the restrictions on foreign media access to Chen and Liu Xia, the wife of Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo in October 2010.

See: <http://asiapacific.ifj.org/en/articles/foreign-journalists-in-china-pelted-with-stones-in-assault>

4. Journalist Sacked for Questioning Colleague’s Dismissal

The IFJ was troubled to learn that another journalist of *Chengdu Commercial Newspaper*, had his employment terminated after he voiced his concern for his former colleague, Long Can, who was sacked for writing an article related to a group of youngsters who were lost on Huangshan Mountain on December 12, 2010. Li Jianjun was suddenly informed he was fired on February 18 for writing a letter to the newspaper’s editor-in-chief to express his concern about the reasons for his colleague’s sacking. Li, who had been employed at the paper for one year, wrote in his blog that he believed the main reason he was sacked was for distributing the letter online. In the letter, Li expressed his opinion on various topics and said the newspaper has blindly followed directions of the Central Propaganda Department.

5. Senior Editors Sacked, Warned for Reporting Fire



Two senior editors of daily newspaper *Chinese Business Morning View* suffered extreme consequences on February 19 after publishing a routine report of a fire at a five-star hotel in Shenyang, near the border of China and North Korea, on February 3. Online reports said that Editor-in-Chief Xu Li was given a warning letter by the Propaganda Department of Shenyang while Deputy Editor-in-Chief Wang Xiaoyu was sacked. The Propaganda Department of Shenyang said that they breached regulations when they reported the fire at Dynasty Wanxin Hotel, but did not specify any regulations that they had breached. The pair were also alleged to have published an opinion piece about North Korea in the wake of military raids on South Korea in November 2010, which was objected to by the North Korean Government.

6. Funding Cuts to Voice of America Chinese Language Services

The IFJ was deeply concerned to learn that the United States Government's Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which oversees the operation of Voice of America (VOA) and several other international broadcasters such as Radio Free Asia, announced a 57 per cent reduction in staff numbers to its Mandarin service and closure of all Cantonese-language programming, as reported by VOA on February 16. According to a proposal before the United States Congress, the BBG would reallocate funds to enhance the agency's global satellite transmission infrastructure and expand efforts to move VOA to an all-digital broadcast platform. David Wu, a Democratic member of Congress from Oregon, told VOA on February 16 that he is "utterly opposed" to any reduction in the broadcaster's Mandarin service. Wu said he will raise the matter with speaker of the House of Representatives John Boehner and chairman of the House committee responsible for the BBG budget Frank Wolf.

See: <http://asiapacific.ifj.org/en/articles/funding-cuts-to-voice-of-america-chinese-language-services>

7. China Launches New Search Engine in Wake of Google's Departure

A new internet search engine, Panguso.com, is operating in China following a February 21 announcement by operators Xinhua News Agency and its joint venture partner, state-owned China Mobile Company. The search engine is heavily censored, with all information of Liu Xiaobo, the jailed activist and Nobel Peace Laureate unavailable through the service.

8. RTHK Abandons Live Webcast of Democracy Activist

The IFJ is concerned that the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) editorial board decided to abandon a live webcast of pan-democracy camp stalwart Szeto Wah's funeral on January 28 and 29. Acting director of broadcasting Gordon Leung denied on February 9 that the decision was made as a result of political pressure, instead saying that the funeral committee had already arranged a live webcast and because of the duplication the editorial board decided to stop the webcast. The RTHK staff union remains concerned, with chairwoman Janet Mak informing the IFJ that staff members had been preparing for the webcast since the funeral committee's January announcement of the date of the event. The committee had announced their planned webcast at a number of press conferences leading up to the funeral, Mak said. "During the preparation, nobody from management stopped them until the very last moment and did not give us any reason why the webcast should be abandoned."



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

JACQUELINE PARK
IFJ Asia-Pacific Director
AIDAN WHITE
General Secretary

If you have information on a press freedom violation or matters relating to media freedom and journalists' rights in China, contact staff at IFJ Asia-Pacific so that action can be taken. To contribute to this bulletin, email ifj@ifj-asia.org.

Serenade Woo
IFJ Asia-Pacific
asiapacific.ifj.org
ifj@ifj-asia.org