



International Federation of Journalists

IFJ Press Freedom in China Campaign

April 8 Bulletin

Four months until the Beijing Olympics

To IFJ Asia-Pacific affiliates and friends,

Welcome to the IFJ Asia-Pacific's monthly Press Freedom in China Campaign e-bulletin. This bulletin marks four months until the Beijing Olympic Games open on August 8. The next bulletin will be sent on **May 8, 2008** and contributions are most welcome.

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

Please distribute this bulletin widely among colleagues in the media.

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1. Tibet Riots Expose Heavy State Control over Foreign Press

Tensions in Tibet have exploded in the nation's capital Lhasa after a protest of at least 1000 monks on Friday 14 March 2008 which coincided with the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (NPC & CPPCC) held in Beijing. After the protest, the Chinese government attempted to shut off Tibet from the media, with all information channeled through its state Xinhua media agency. Foreign and non-local Chinese journalists who were reporting from Tibet were forced to leave Lhasa on March 17 under the directive of state officials who searched, confiscated and deleted some of their material. Some journalists informed the IFJ that they obeyed the order to avoid jeopardising future applications to enter China at a later stage. The State Council's press office selected 17 foreign media organisations to attend a three day controlled visit of Lhasa on March 27 with all destinations scheduled by the provincial authority. The authorities say at least 22 people have died in Lhasa but Tibetan rights groups said nearly 140 Tibetans were killed, including 19 in Gansu province. To date journalists have not been granted access to information to confirm the numbers. Reports also suggest that the authorities have intensified the jamming of signals from the Voice of Tibet, a radio service which has been broadcasting from India since 1996.

2. Media Lock-Out in Tibet Sparks Criticism for Breaking Olympic Promises

Several international press associations criticised the Chinese Central government for barring



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foreign journalists from Tibet and selectively allowing entry only to hand-picked members of the media, action which violate government promises of access and freedom of information. So far, a number of countries including the U.S., Britain, Germany and France have condemned China for its response to the protests. However, at this stage most countries have not threatened to boycott the Games or the August 8 opening ceremony. While facing allegations that China is unable to host the Olympic Games 2008, the Chinese Foreign Minister repeatedly says that Olympic Games should not be mixed up with politics.

The IFJ and the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA), an IFJ affiliate, are planning a four day conference from April 30-May 3 to discuss issues surrounding freedom of expression and freedom of the press in China and Hong Kong in the lead-up to the Olympic Games. Representatives from a range of organisations from China and abroad will participate.

3. Human Rights Activist Hu Jia charged for inciting subversion of state power

Human Rights activist Hu Jia was sentenced to three and a half years jail and one year's denial of political rights on charges of "inciting subversion of state power" in Beijing No 1 People's Intermediate Court on April 3, 2008. Hu was accused of making comments to foreign media and publishing articles on Boxun, a banned Chinese-language website based in the United States, that were critical of Chinese authorities in relation to democracy and human rights from August 2006 to October 2007. He was under house arrest at the time. Hu's friend and colleague, human rights lawyer and university lecturer Teng Biao, was detained on March 6 without notice and questioned by Beijing Public Security Bureau officials for 41 hours. Teng was questioned also about articles he had written and the content of interviews with journalists. Teng said he could not speak further because officials had warned him not to do so. Hu's wife, blogger Zeng Jinyan, lawyers, diplomats and journalists were not allowed to attend Hu's trial. One of Hu's lawyers, Li Fangping, reported he was under surveillance for more than 20 days after taking up the case.

To sign a petition protesting Hu's sentence and calling for his immediate release, visit <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/demand-immediate-release-of-beijing-human-rights-activist-hu-jia.html>.

Another activist, Yang Chun-lin, was reportedly sentenced to five years jail and two years denial of political rights by the Hei Long Jiang provincial court on March 24 for the same charge. He was arrested for organising and uploading a signature campaign to boycott the Olympic Games on the internet. Yang's sister reported that he was beaten by policemen when he tried to approach his younger sister after the sentence was handed down. After persuasion by his lawyer, Yang decided to file an appeal in a higher court.

4. Former Party Leader's Secretary resists ban on interviews

Bao Tong, secretary to the former Communist Party leader Zhao Zi-yang, who remains under tight surveillance after being released from prison in 1996, has been instructed by authorities not to give any interviews to foreign journalists. Bao had arranged to give interviews to two foreign journalists before the opening of the National People's Congress (NPC) in early March, but was later directed to cancel all interviews. Bao refused and explained that he had already abided by all new regulations introduced by the authorities in the run-up to the 2008 Olympic Games. He has given one interview with a journalist from the Financial Times and was forced to decline an arrangement with another Dutch journalist.

5. Legislation to Protect Press Freedom, Demands Writer

Zan Ai-Zong, a Chinese journalist and writer, has urged the Chinese authorities to legislate to protect freedom of the press in China after friend and colleague from Guangdong, Liao Zu-sheng was forced to leave Beijing when he was intercepted by the policemen at Tiananmen Square in early March during the NPC meeting. Zan said that he had written an open letter to the members of NPC and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) during the meeting on 12



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March 2008. Zan was sacked from his post as Zhejiang bureau chief of *Haoyang Bao* newspaper in 2006 after he reported human rights violations in the Zhejiang province in China.

6. US says China's Human Rights Remain Poor

The United States Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs announced on March 12 that while China was no longer among the worst human rights offenders in the world, its record of human rights violations remained poor. According to the report, the ten worst offenders are: North Korea, Burma, Iran, Syria, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Eritrea and Sudan. The report also stated that 2007 saw a tightened grip on religious freedom in Tibetan and Xinjiang areas, freedom of speech and press freedom. In particular, efforts to control and censor the internet were increased in anticipation of and during sensitive events. Reporters Without Borders and Amnesty International USA condemned the decision by the United States to drop China from the top ten, arguing that the need for good will in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics did not alter the reality of torture, mass arrests and imprisonments of Tibetan monks, human rights activists and pro-democracy dissidents.

7. Websites Shut Down as the State Tightens Grip on Media

On March 21, the State Administrator of Radio, Film and Television ordered 25 video-sharing web sites to halt operations after it announced a new regulation that only state-owned or state-controlled companies can apply for licensees to broadcast or stream video online. This is the first time some of the web sites were ordered to shut down. Dozens were issued warnings after authorities conducted a survey from December 2007 to February 2008. Under the new regulations, online media cannot carry pornographic, violent or political content, including any images of actress Tang Wei whose role in the film *Lust, Caution* attracted opprobrium because of supposed "glorification" of spying in wartime. These new regulations have been criticised for tightening their grip on an already struggling media industry.

8. Hong Kong Newspaper fined for HK\$245,000 for late payment of staff entitlements

Sing Pao Newspaper, a Chinese funded media entity and a listed company on the Hong Kong stock exchange, pleaded guilty to delaying payments to staff and contributions towards the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF). The newspaper was fined a total of HK\$245,000. This is not the first time Sing Pao has been charged and convicted by the Hong Kong government for late payment and failure to contribute to the MPF. Sing Pao staff's reported the delayed payment to the IFJ, saying on average it is overdue by at least one and a half months.

9. Dui Hua Foundation Seeks Olympics Amnesty

John Kemm, Executive Director of the Dui Hua Foundation, said on March 29 that 742 people were arrested in China in 2007 for endangering state security, although he believed the number could be higher due to sharply reduced reporting on political crime and Government secrecy about the names of political prisoners. Kemm also said that China is less transparent than it was in 1989, and suggested that there are 60 to 100 people still imprisoned for offences committed during the After the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. Speaking at the 12th Annual Human Rights Press Awards, Kemm said the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress should exercise its authority to grant an Olympics amnesty. Such an amnesty would cover prisoners serving sentences for "counter revolution" and "hooliganism".

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

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