



International
Federation
of Journalists
國際記者聯會

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IFJ Press Freedom in China Campaign

July 8 Bulletin

One month until the Beijing Olympics

To IFJ Asia-Pacific affiliates and friends,

Welcome to IFJ Asia-Pacific's monthly Press Freedom in China Campaign e-bulletin. This bulletin marks one month until the Beijing Olympic Games open on August 8. The next bulletin will be sent on **August 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. **Restrictions continue with one month to Beijing Olympics**

While the Beijing Olympic Games begin on August 8, the Beijing Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) continues to place restrictions on foreign media. A foreign journalist posted in Beijing informed the IFJ in early June that BOCOG announced in a meeting its intention to renege on promises to allow media to broadcast events live from Tiananmen Square. BOCOG has also imposed new requirements such as asking media institutions to submit a detailed route map for broadcasting vehicles. The submissions must account for every day of the Games. Chinese authorities also placed heavy restrictions on freedom of expression by forbidding dissidents or lawyers from meeting with foreign envoys or by threatening penalties if they accepted interviews with foreign media.

On July 7 the IFJ issued a new appeal to China to give unrestricted access to journalists from the region who wish to visit the country. New fears were stoked after it was reported that Norman Choy, a reporter for Hong Kong newspaper *Apple Daily*, was turned back upon his arrival in Beijing to cover Olympic Games preparations on July 1. Beijing immigration officials reportedly questioned



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Choy before sending him on a flight back to Hong Kong. Choy had applied for and been granted press accreditation to report on the Games. The IFJ joined its affiliate the Hong Kong Journalists' Association (HKJA) in expressing grave concerns at this interference in the official media accreditation process and called on the Chinese authorities to reverse the decision to bar Choy.

2. Internet firewall grows higher

News websites continued to be shut down in June despite Chinese President Hu Jintao's declaration that he would spend time online in order to better understand his citizens. Websites shut down or heavily censored in June included those of the China Federation for Defending Diaoyudao Islands; Market Weekly, set up by Huang Liangtian, former editor-in-chief of *Baixing* magazine; and health website www.bbs.hbvhbv.com, which carries information and anti-discriminatory literature for hepatitis B carriers. Several prominent bloggers, such as journalist Zan Aizong, have also had their blogs closed down without being given reasons.

3. IFJ launches *Play the Game* information portal

The IFJ, in co-operation with the media and sports campaign Play The Game, has launched a web-site for journalists and media staff planning to visit China around the time of the Olympic Games. The site provides information and background for journalists and media staff, and gives details of a special 24-hour hotline the IFJ is establishing during the Games to provide emergency assistance to journalists who find themselves facing pressure from the authorities because of their work. To view the site, go to www.playthegameforopenjournalism.org.

Human Rights Watch has also launched a guide for reporters travelling to the Olympics. To view the guide, go to http://china.hrw.org/press/news_release/reporters_guide_to_china_olympics.

4. Torch Relay attracts heavy restrictions

Chinese authorities continued their tight control over coverage of the Olympic torch relay as it passed through Tibet on June 21 and Xinjiang on June 18, two most of the politically sensitive areas for China. While roads were blocked and shops were ordered to close, monks reported that they were forced to stay inside monasteries, and citizens were barred from speaking to foreign journalists by plain clothes security officials. Media workers were closely escorted by police throughout the relay event. The torch relay was originally scheduled for three days in Tibet but was reduced to one day due to the unrest there in March 2008.

5. Backwards steps for media in earthquake zone

A series of restrictions on media reporting from the disaster zone after the May 12 earthquake in Sichuan have been introduced by authorities in June. While initially media were able to report on the disaster with relative freedom, the Central Propaganda Department has since sought to crack down on negative reports about alleged mismanagement and poor planning by local authorities, said to have contributed to the high death toll. Police have become especially vigilant in controlling reports related to the deaths of students at Juyuan Middle School, Dujiangyuan city. The Central Propaganda Department has issued a directive to all media not to carry reports about the collapsed school buildings. Journalists of the *Southern Metropolis Daily* were recalled from Sichuan after the Guangdong's top official, Wang Yang, expressed his anger in early June about critical coverage of the quake by the newspaper and its counterparts the *Southern Metropolis Weekly* and *Guangzhou Daily*. The commentary pages of *Southern Metropolis Daily* were reduced



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from three to one after it went ahead with publication of a critical article by university professor Zhu Xueqin.

6. Attacks against online journalists continue

Zheng Hongling, a retired university professor, was detained in early June and her computer, camera and books confiscated by police after she wrote three critical articles about Sichuan published on website *64tianwang*. The founder of the website, Huang Qi, was himself abducted then charged on June 10 with illegally obtaining state secrets by the security bureau of Chengdu, Sichuan after he published Huang's work and other critical articles. Zeng Li, Huang's wife, told the IFJ that she was followed by plain clothes officers on June 30 when meeting foreign journalists to talk about her husband. Finally, activists Huang Xiaomin and Liu Zhengyou were detained in May and June respectively after writing articles about Huang Qi's treatment and accepting foreign media interviews.

Meanwhile journalist Sun Lin was sentenced to four years' imprisonment on June 26 by a Nanjing court for "disturbing the social order" and "concealing a weapon". Sun, who writes for US-based website *Boxun News* under the pen name Jie Mu, and his wife He Fang were arrested on May 30, 2007, after reporting on civil rights violations in Nanjing and other regions of China.

7. Tiananmen sensitivities flare on TV

A China Central Television (CCTV) website editorial team was suspended from work in mid-June for airing a report regarding a candlelight vigil paying tribute to the victims of the Sichuan earthquake held in Hong Kong on June 4, the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Participants at the vigil also mourned the memory of the 1989 victims. The CCTV team was suspended for covering the vigil despite not mentioning the 1989 events.

8. Hong Kong Journalists denied entry to Japan

Three journalists from the Hong Kong press group *In-media*, publishers of online news sites focussing on the environment and human rights issues, were detained by immigration officials in Japan on June 27. The group had reportedly arrived at Narita airport, Tokyo, Japan, en route to reporting on the G8 summit in Hokkaido when they were detained. One journalist, Chu Hoi-dik, told the IFJ that they had registered with the G8 press centre before arriving in Japan. The three were detained and questioned for a number of hours before being sent back to Japan. Chow Sze-chong, another of the journalists, told the IFJ that the three planned to report on protests around the event and interview dissidents in Japan.

9. Mass Sacking of Journalists Expected at Taiwan's China Times Group

The IFJ has received reports that the China Times Group plans to sack between 500 and 600 employees after a unilateral notice of dismissal was received by the China Times Workers' Union on June 18. According to the Association of Taiwan Journalists (ATJ), an IFJ affiliate, CTG President Lin Sheng-fen has refused to answer questions about the mass retrenchment but cited a decline in circulation and insufficient advertising revenue as reasons for proposed structural changes in the company. The Chinese-language *China Times*, published in Taiwan for more than six decades, has a reported circulation of one million readers. The IFJ has joined the ATJ in demanding that CTG promptly make a full disclosure on the group's fiscal situation, covering the *China Times*, the China Television Company (CTV) and CTI Television.



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10. Journalists attacked at coal mine in Shanxi

Journalists of six media organizations, including *San Jin City News* in Shanxi and *Wang Luo Bao* in Beijing were threatened and beaten by people claiming to be security personnel of a coal mine in Shanxi in June. The journalists had visited the mine site to investigate allegations of illegal mining. The journalists' cars were smashed and belongings including cameras and money were taken. One of the journalists was seriously injured and was taken to hospital for treatment.

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 ifjchina@ifj-asia.org.

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