

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/chine-propaganda-department-in-attack-on-31-01-2011,39421.html>

Asia - China

Journalists under fire

## Propaganda department in attack on "false news"

31 January 2011

Chinese journalists are to undergo six-month training courses that will teach them how to "eradicate false news, improve the feeling of social responsibility and reinforce journalistic ethics."

"In short, to make journalists themselves actors in censorship," Reporters Without Borders commented.

The initiative comes from the Propaganda department, directly linked to the Communist Party, and follows its announcement of [10 directives](#) relating to the press in 2011.

Reporters Without Borders condemns this escalation in the control of information.

"The Propaganda Department shows itself to be ever more inventive in working out new directives to put pressure on journalists," the press freedom organization said. "This training takes the form of banning among journalists any critical spirit and making out of them state employees in the service of state ideology."

On 26 January **Zhai Huisheng** (翟惠生), the secretary general of the Official Association of Chinese Journalists, made public the new campaign to control the media.

The training arrangements will be the responsibility of several bodies, including the central propaganda bureau, the Association of Chinese Journalists (中国记协), Renmin Ribao (人民日报, People's Daily) and the Xinhua news agency (新华社). It will be up to them to control the process in 14 provinces and to ensure the smooth running of this operation, which will allow journalists to "recognize and avoid politically sensitive topics."

Reporters Without Borders also condemns the abusive use of the notion of "false news" ("虚假报道"), which justifies a large number of cases of maltreatment on the part of the authorities in respect of defenders of free expression such as **Long Can** (龙灿) of the *Chengdu Shangbao* (成都商报), and **Chang Ping** (长平) of the *Nanfang Baoye Jituan* (南方报业集团), unjustly removed from their jobs.

Long Can, a well known investigative reporter from the daily Chengdu Shangbao (Chengdu commercial Daily), was fired on 21 January, on charges that he produced "false news." He had revealed that the authorities in Huangshan, in Anhui province, had ignored three appeals for rescue from 18 students from Fudan University in Shanghai whose lives were in danger during a visit to the Huangshan mountains.

Under pressure from the central propaganda department the *Chengdu Shangbao* was forced to dismiss its staff reporter. Within the newspaper, editor **Zhang Feng** was fined 1,000 yuan (110 euros). Executive editor **Zeng Xi** was also fired. **Jiang Quanhong**, an editor on the news desk, was stripped of his duties and subjected to a searching inquiry. **Wang Qi**, a member of the editorial team, was fined 3,000 yuan (333 euros), as was chief editor **Chen Shuping**.

On 28 January, Chang Ping, a talented and daring journalist, was forced to quit his job with the

*Nanfang Baoye Jituan* for refusing to change certain passages in his articles. [Chang Ping has a policy of refusing any compromise with the government.](#)

His press group, based in Guangzhou, has a reputation for the high quality of its investigations and the boldness of its editorial choices. Once again the authorities exerted pressure on the management of the group to fire the journalist after he published “false information.” [He had already lost his job as editor in chief](#) for his articles highlighting the role of the Chinese government during the uprisings in Tibet in 2008.

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