

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/china-censorship-and-persecution-in-pole-12-04-2013,44370.html>

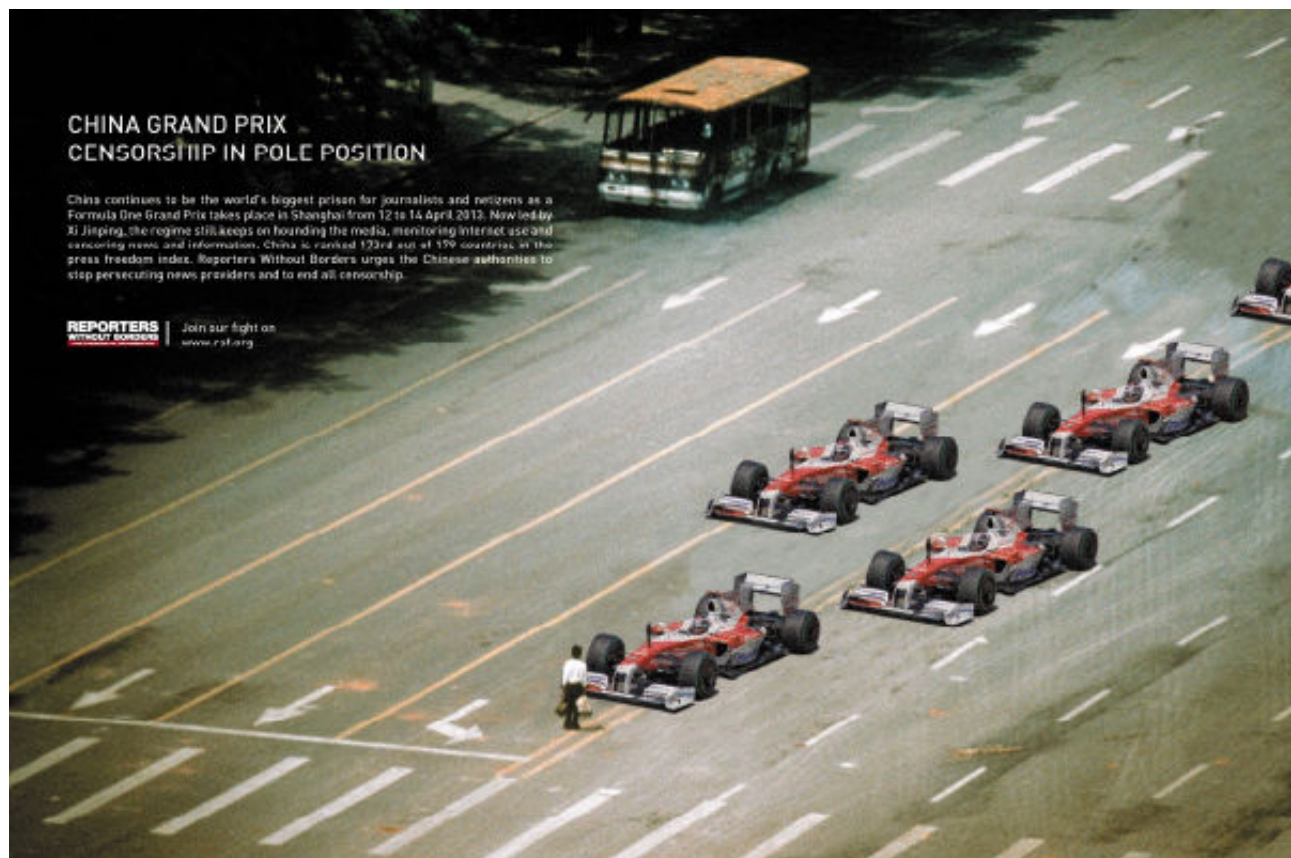
Asia - China

Formula One censorship

## Censorship and persecution in pole position at Shanghai Grand Prix

12 April 2013

As a three-day Formula One Grand Prix gets under way in Shanghai today, Reporters Without Borders urges the Chinese authorities to stop persecuting news providers and lift censorship.



To highlight what is behind the scenes of this sports event, Reporters Without Borders is releasing a visual inspired by "Tank Man," the anonymous individual who was famously photographed blocking the advance of a column of People's Liberation Army tanks during the June 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.

China is ranked 173rd out of 179 countries in the [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#). Its authorities control news and information by censoring the Chinese media, obstructing foreign media coverage, persecuting individual news providers and, increasingly, monitoring and blocking the Internet.

### Reprisals against Chinese news providers

A total of 30 journalists and 69 netizens are currently detained in China. This makes it the

world's biggest prison for news providers.

The persecution of human rights defenders has been stepped up, just as repression in general has intensified since the calls for a "jasmine revolution." There has been a recent increase in arbitrary detention, unfair trials and long jail sentences, and cyber-dissidents in particular have been targeted.

The well-known human rights lawyer **Gao Zhisheng**(高智晟) was sent back to prison on 1 January 2012 for "violating the conditions of his release." Other news providers and human rights defenders, the lawyer **Ni Yulan** and his husband **Dong Jiqin** (董继勤), the cyber-dissidents **Chen Xi** (陈西) and **Chen Wei** (陈卫), and the poet **Li Bifeng**, friend of the exiled writer **Liao Yiwu**, have been given jail sentences of up to 12 years.

The harassment of the [relatives](#) of dissidents has become widespread. The families of Nobel peace laureate **Liu Xiaobo**, who has been jailed since 2009, the dissident lawyer **Chen Guangcheng** and the dissident **Zhang Lin** have all been the victims of recent government reprisals.

### **Press censorship and propaganda**

Every day, the Publicity Department (the former Propaganda Department) issues very detailed directives to the Chinese media, including news websites, listing the stories or developments that should not be covered, those that should be covered by using the official news agency Xinhua's dispatches, and those that they are allowed or encouraged to cover.

Whenever a development grabs the attention of the traditional or online media or public opinion, the Publicity Department issues reminders about the importance of China's political and social stability.

The Publicity Department's censorship of a New Year editorial on 3 January in the reformist weekly Nanfang Zhoumo about hopes for change triggered an unprecedented wave of protests by journalists and netizens calling for freedom of information.

The authorities use disinformation and censorship to control their image, especially their international image, regardless of the consequences for the population.

They waited three weeks after the deaths of persons with the H7N9 strain of bird flu virus in various eastern cities including Shanghai before reporting the risk of an epidemic. Ten people in different parts of the country who mentioned cases of infection online [were arrested](#) for spreading "false information."

### **China : "Enemy of the Internet"**

The Chinese authorities have created one of the world's most sophisticated systems for monitoring and censoring the Internet, often referred to as the Great Firewall of China. ([Read the report "The Enemies of Internet"](#))

One of its latest refinements, installed ahead of the 18th congress of the Chinese Communist Party last November, was the blocking of Virtual Private Networks, software provided by foreign companies that allowed users to circumvent online censorship.

Words such as "human rights," "Tiananmen" and "Liu Xiaobo" are permanently blocked on the Internet. The regime has enlisted private sector Internet companies such as the social networks Tencent and Sina to monitor what their customers are posting online and withdraw posts on sensitive subjects.

### **Foreign media in the government's sights**

The Communist Party also tries to control the coverage of China provided by the foreign media, which continue to play a key role in informing not only the international community but also the Chinese public, the victim of the censorship increasingly imposed on the local media.

The Bloomberg news website was blocked on 29 June 2012 because of its investigative coverage of the fortune acquired by the family of the country's new president, Xi Jinping. Then the *New York Times* website was [censored](#) and the newspaper was threatened with a lawsuit after it ran an article about the fortune amassed by Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's family.

Asked about interference of its broadcasts, the *BBC* [told](#) Reporters Without Borders that "intermittent cuts were identified (...) and intensified in the course of February." [Two Sky News journalists were arrested](#) last March. In October 2012, an AFP journalist was detained. And there has been an increase in cases of foreign reporters [being denied press accreditation or press visas](#).

Reporters Without Borders urges the Chinese government to:

- ▶ Release all journalists and cyber-dissidents who have been jailed in connection with the provision of news and information.
- ▶ End the arbitrary detention, surveillance and harassment of journalists and dissidents, and their families.
- ▶ Allow all foreign journalists to work normally and stop subjecting them to various kinds of pressure and harassment including the refusal of visas and accreditation.
- ▶ Dismantle the censorship system by ending the practice of issuing directives to the media, and by ceasing to use the Great Firewall to filter and block online news and information.

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#### Other images



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