

**Statement of The New York Times
Congressional-Executive Commission on China Roundtable
“China’s Treatment of Foreign Journalists”
December 11, 2013**

In the last year, The New York Times and other major foreign news organizations have been confronted with deteriorating conditions for doing journalism in China. The Communist Party and Chinese government have stepped up their efforts to shape news coverage and suppress stories they find objectionable, applying pressure in various forms and in arguably unprecedented fashion. The situation is the most serious in years and poses an urgent threat to our ability to report freely and comprehensively on the world's second largest economy.

Most recently, Chinese officials have halted the regular year-end renewal process for the residency visas of nine Times journalists. If the renewal process does not go forward, these journalists and their families will be forced to leave China before the end of the year. With the first visas expiring in less than two weeks, the Times could be left without reporters in mainland China for the first time in nearly three decades.

The Chinese government has also refused for many months to provide visas for two journalists hired for the Beijing bureau by the Times. Philip Pan, the incoming bureau chief, has been waiting more than a year and a half. Chris Buckley, who was hired from Reuters in the fall of 2012, had to leave Beijing a year ago when his visa from his previous employer expired and the government declined to provide a new one for the Times. He has been forced to live in Hong Kong, apart from his wife and daughter, who reside in Beijing.

In addition, China has blocked access to the websites of the Times, including a new Chinese-language site, since the October 2012 publication of a report on the hidden wealth of family members of the prime minister at the time. This severely hampers our ability to provide quality journalism to readers in Chinese. This fall, we started an online Chinese-language version of T Magazine, the Times’ culture and lifestyle publication, only to have that blocked in November after publication of other stories the authorities deemed unacceptable.

In conversations in the last year with the Times, Chinese officials have pointedly objected to articles that explore the intersection between elite politics and the economy. In other words, they are asking that the Times and other news organizations refrain from the kind of reporting that we do in every part of the world, including the United States. As China's economy becomes more deeply intertwined with that of the United States and other nations, covering the full range of issues in the country becomes increasingly important.

Senior executives at the Times have tried to explain our mission and our viewpoint to Chinese officials. The Times increased those efforts last year when our websites were blocked and our visa applications for new journalists frozen. Despite our attempts at dialogue and at resolving misunderstandings, Chinese officials continue to treat coverage in the Times as hostile. So we find ourselves at an unusually uncertain moment, one that involves our core principles of open journalistic inquiry and also our ability to reach the large and news-hungry online audience in China.

The Times remains committed to coverage of China. We have invested great resources in this, and we have demonstrated a willingness to report on all aspects of China -- its politics, economy, foreign policy, environment, culture, sports, even fashion. We will continue to report on China even if our journalists are expelled from the country, though the range and depth of our coverage will suffer — as would our readers' understanding of China. We also worry that expulsions would have a profound chilling effect across news media organizations.

As always, we are willing to work with all parties to ensure that we can remain engaged with China while performing our journalistic mission. That has been the goal of the Times in China since the country's leaders embraced a policy of reform and opening up decades ago.

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