

China Human Rights and Rule of Law Update

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United States Congressional-Executive Commission on China

Representative Sander M. Levin, Chairman | Senator Byron L. Dorgan, Co-Chairman

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Message From the Chair and Co-Chair

On behalf of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, we express our most heartfelt condolences to the Chinese people for the terrible loss of life and injury suffered as a result of the tragic earthquake of May 12, 2008. Our thoughts and sympathies are with all those who now must endure the pain and heartbreak of losing family and friends. We sincerely hope for the complete success of all rescue efforts, the health and welfare of China's emergency responders, and the speedy recovery of all those who have been injured. We offer our full support and hope for recovery and healing at this difficult time.

Sander Levin, Chair

Byron L. Dorgan, Co-Chair

Announcements

CECC Translation: Hu Jia's Indictment

The Commission has prepared a translation of activist [Hu Jia's Indictment](#), issued by the Beijing Municipal People's Procuratorate Branch No. 1 on March 7, 2008. For more information, see previous CECC analyses on Hu Jia's [sentencing](#), [trial](#), [arrest](#), and [detention](#), and his record of detention, searchable through the CECC's [Political Prisoner Database](#).

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China Commits to "Open Government Information" Effective May 1, 2008

In a move that Chinese officials claim is intended to combat corruption, increase public oversight and participation in government, and allow citizens access to government-held information, the State Council on April 5, 2007, issued the first national [Regulations on Open Government Information](#) (OGI Regulation), which take effect May 1, 2008. Implementation begins at a time when the need for greater transparency in the areas of environmental health, land disputes, disease, and food, drug, and product safety has become apparent. The time lag between issue and effective date provided citizens and government departments a one-year preparatory period.

The national regulation may alter relations between citizens and traditionally protective government bureaucracies. But it is not entirely a new development. While the overall impact of the national regulation remains unclear pending implementation, over 30 provincial and city-level governments throughout China as well as central government agencies and departments have adopted OGI rules in the last several years. Guangzhou, which was the first municipality to do so in 2002 ([Chinese](#), English [translation](#)) and Shanghai, which issued its [regulations](#) in 2004, are but two examples.

[Click here for the full analysis. This link will open in a new Web page.](#)

Censorship of Internet and Foreign News Broadcasts Following Tibetan Protests

Foreign media in mid-March reported incidents of censorship of the Internet and international news broadcasts in China following Tibetan protests that began on March 10. The Chinese government and Internet companies operating in China routinely censor political content on the Internet in China, but the recent actions indicate stepped up efforts to control access to information about the protests.

About a week after the protests started, foreign news media in China noted that access to foreign Web sites had been blocked, video Web sites and search engine results appeared to be censored, and foreign news broadcasts were temporarily blacked out.

[Click here for the full analysis. This link will open in a new Web page.](#)

China Blocks Foreign Reporters From Covering Tibetan Protests

Chinese officials have barred foreign journalists from entering large parts of western China to cover recent incidents of Tibetan protests. The closed areas include the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), about half of Sichuan province, and parts of Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces, according to a March 20 Deutsche Welle [article](#) and an April 10 Wall Street Journal [article](#).

Foreign journalists trying to enter or leave the areas reported incidents where local police locked them in a hotel overnight or threatened to confiscate their footage, according to the [Foreign Correspondents Club of China](#) and an April 5 Associated Press [article](#) (via the

International Herald Tribune). The Tibetan protests, many peaceful but some of which have been violent, began on March 10 in Lhasa, the capital of the TAR. The protests spread quickly to the Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai provinces, where most of the reported protests have occurred.

[Click here for the full analysis. This link will open in a new Web page.](#)

Authorities Block Uighur Protest in Xinjiang, Detain Protesters

Authorities suppressed demonstrations by ethnic Uighurs in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) who gathered on March 23 and 24 to protest human rights abuses, according to reports from U.S. media. The protests, which took place in Hoten city and nearby Qaraqash county, appear to have stemmed from a prominent businessman's death while in official custody and from general grievances over government policy in the region. Of the 1,000-plus protesters, most of whom were women, authorities reportedly detained 600 and, according to unconfirmed reports, have since released more than half.

According to a series of reports from Radio Free Asia (RFA), 600 women gathered on March 23 at a bus stop in Hoten and marched to a marketplace in the city center, by which time their numbers had grown to over 1,000. (See an April 1 RFA [report](#) in English, and March 29 reports ([1](#), [2](#)) and March 31 reports ([1](#), [2](#)) from RFA's Uighur service for more information.) According to sources cited in the March 29 articles, participants called for the release of political prisoners, an end to physical abuse of prisoners, respect for Uighur customs, and religious freedom. Women also wore headscarves during the protest in defiance of admonishments against such apparel issued during a government campaign to promote stability, according to the first March 31 article.

[Click here for the full analysis. This link will open in a new Web page.](#)

Government Official Reaffirms State Controls Over Religion

Ye Xiaowen, Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, called for continued controls over religion to meet state goals in a March 13 [interview](#) in the Southern Weekend newspaper. (Translation cited here via [Open Source Center](#), subscription required, April 10, 2008). "We should not expand religions," Ye said, "but strive to let existing religions do more for the motherland's reunification, national unity, economic development and social stability." The Chinese government currently [recognizes only five religions](#) for limited state protections and subjects these religious communities to stringent controls.

Although Ye stated that the government regulates only "religious affairs" touching on "social and public interests," rather than regulate "religions" or "religious belief," he stressed both here and in a [2006 interview](#) the importance of government control over the internal practices of religious communities. In 2006 he said that government-led interpretations of religious doctrine would "convey positive and beneficial contents to worshippers and direct them to practice faiths rightly." In the 2008 interview, he stressed the importance of continued state controls over a variety of religious practices, such as Tibetan Buddhists' [recognition of reincarnated Buddhist lamas](#) and the appointment of Catholic bishops. Ye also called for blocking [Chinese Protestants' interaction with foreign co-religionists](#) and preventing the establishment of private Buddhist sites of worship.

[Click here for the full analysis. This link will open in a new Web page.](#)

Wang Zaiqing Presumed Released From Prison, Shi Weihai Detained in Separate Bible-Printing Cases

House church pastor [Wang Zaiqing](#) completed his two-year prison sentence for "illegal operation of a business" on April 27 and is presumed to have since been released from prison, according to information from the Congressional-Executive Commission on China [Political Prisoner Database](#). Authorities in Huainan city, Anhui province, [initially detained Wang on April 28, 2006](#), after he printed and distributed Bibles and other religious materials without government authorization. On October 9, 2006, the Tianjia'an District People's Court levied the two-year prison sentence on Wang and fined him 100,000 yuan (then approximately US\$12,500).

In a separate development, authorities in Beijing detained bookstore owner [Shi Weihai](#) on March 19, 2008, in apparent connection to earlier activities involving the preparation and distribution of Bibles and other religious materials, according to an April 18 [report](#) from Compass Direct News. Authorities had first detained Shi on November 28, 2007, and accused him of illegally printing and distributing religious literature. After determining they had "insufficient evidence" to proceed, authorities released Shi on bail on January 4, 2008, and detained him again in March.

[Click here for the full analysis. This link will open in a new Web page.](#)

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