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## Enemies of the Internet 2011 - China

Domain name : .cn

Population : 1,34 billion

Internet users : 457 millions

Average charge for a one-hour cybercafé connection : about 2 U.S. dollars

Average monthly salary : from 220 to 300 U.S. dollars

Number of imprisoned netizens : 77

### Censorship to ensure regime stability

*The “Great Firewall”: ready to spring into action*

China has the world’s most consummate censorship system. The Great Firewall combines URL filtering with the censoring of keywords considered “sensitive,” ranging from “Tiananmen” to the “Dalai Lama” to “democracy” and “human rights.” Censorship is institutionalised and managed by several ministries and administrations. In addition to filtering URLs, the authorities are monitoring the largest blog and micro-blogging platforms, from which they are removing numerous posts and comments. Assistance from foreign companies – mainly in the form of Yahoo ! and Microsoft self-censored search engines – is making their job that much easier. The regime has been known to use the pretext of fighting pornography or the crackdown against the “dissemination of false news” to justify the filtering.

The man who designed the Great Firewall, Fang Binxing, who is also President of the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, defended his creation in early 2011, stating to the newspaper *Global Times* that censorship met an “urgent” need. Although he had opened a micro-blog account on sina.com, the account was closed a few days later after thousands of netizens left comments blaming him for the control measures he had made possible.

The main news sites, such as the Chinese state-controlled media, regularly receive oral and written directives from the [Department of Propaganda](#) specifying what topics can, or cannot, be covered and under what conditions. For example, the Department’s directives of January 2011 imposed an information blackout on social and economic problems and specifically on price increases, anti-government demonstrations and the real estate market, to “reassure” the Chinese people and defend the regime’s concept of “fair growth.”

*Tightening censorship in the name of national security*

On 29 April 2010, China adopted an [amendment](#) to the State Secrets Law which requires Internet and telecom companies to cooperate with the authorities on matters relating to national security. Such companies must now block the transmission of vaguely defined state secrets over their networks, keep connection logs and alert the competent authorities to any possible violations. They may also be forced to suppress certain contents.

This amendment thus seems to be yet another warning sent to netizens to induce them to practice more self-censorship, and an attempt to give the international community the illusion of legality, since companies are already cooperating with the authorities in matters concerning national security.

### *Censored revolutions*

The Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions and their potential domino effect are greatly troubling to Chinese leaders, who took prompt measures to restrict online discussions on such topics, in order to prevent the population from being influenced by them.

On 28 January 2011, three days after the Egyptian uprising began, China began censoring netizens' searches by blocking results linked to the keyword "Egypt" on the micro-blogging Twitter website and its Chinese equivalents, [sina.com](http://www.sina.com) and [sohu.com](http://www.sohu.com). In response to this keyword, users receive the following message: "Under existing laws, the result of your search cannot be communicated." On Twitter as well as on Facebook, both of which are blocked in China, the hashtag #jan25 referring to the Egyptian demonstrations of 25 January of 2011 quickly spread around the Web. The Chinese Communist Party seems to be more fearful than ever of political reforms, democratic demands and "breaches of public order." On 30 January 2011, news wires about Egypt issued by Xinhua, the official Chinese press agency, were reportedly also suppressed.

Censorship does not stop there. On 20 February, the authorities deployed security forces to Beijing and Shanghai following an online call for a "Jasmin Revolution" and arrested people suspected of organizing it. Since then, the term "Jasmin" has joined the Chinese Internet's long and ever-growing list of censored words, such as "Tunisia," "Egypt," and "democracy."

### *Censors attack the Nobel Peace Prize*

The authorities' indignation over the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to intellectual dissident Liu Xiaobo has translated into harsher online censorship and acts of intimidation against supporters of this human rights activist. The government reacted by doing everything it could to censor the topic on the Web in order to prevent Chinese citizens from becoming aware of the historical import of this event. Chinese media coverage of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the jailed dissident has been dominated by the Beijing authorities' hostile reaction. The national TV network and most of the newspapers – even the most liberal – did not even mention it, and for good reason: on 8 October 2010, when the laureate's name was announced, the newsrooms received a clear order from the Department of Propaganda that it was "forbidden to relay information" about the topic (不能跨范围转载). A few Chinese foreign-language media, including the English-language version of the nationalist newspaper Global Times, and the French and English editions of the *People's Daily* reported the government's reaction. The *Youth Daily* ran an article headlined "Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo nominated: an insult to the Nobel Peace Prize." Foreign TV programmes are still being jammed whenever they broadcast any news about Liu Xiaobo.

Internet censorship has not abated. On some of the major news sites, Sina and Sohu in particular, no content can be accessed which directly mentions Liu Xiaobo. On the Baidu search engine, some results do refer to the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize, but the corresponding media pages are usually blocked. The official network CCTV remained silent about Liu Xiaobo and opened its evening news programme of 8 October with a report about torrential rains falling on Hainan Island.

Some bloggers, such as the writer Han Han, have protested by posting [empty messages](#) to symbolise the impossibility of discussing what happened to Liu Xiaobo. The chat forum 1984bbs, used by many journalists, was closed by its administrators after the latter were pressured by police. Twenty-three retired Communist Party officials and intellectuals have been urging the country's highest authorities to carry out political reforms and to comply with Article 35 of the China's Constitution, which guarantees free speech and media freedom. This appeal was systematically removed from Chinese blogs and websites where it had been posted. Although within one hour of the announcement of the Nobel Prize award related online messages remained accessible for less than five minutes before being deleted.

It has also been impossible to send an SMS containing the characters found in "Liu Xiaobo" or "Nobel Prize." The micro-blogging website Weibo has also been censored. Yet on Twitter, which is blocked in China, thousands of enthusiastic messages from netizens have been posted since the announcement. Renowned artist Ai Weiwei stated that it was China's happiest day in the last sixty years.

Moreover, a short time before the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded, a bogus invitation to attend the 10 December 2010 ceremony in Oslo containing a very powerful "Trojan horse" computer virus circulated by email. The computer security firm F-Secure stated that it was unable to identify the origin of these cyberattacks. Two weeks before the virus appeared, the Nobel Peace Prize recipient's website had been the target of an initial hacker attack.

#### *The height of censorship: Censoring the debate on Internet censorship*

While censoring an article on [censorship](#) may seem to be business as usual in China, the Diyi Caijing Zhoukan case (第一财经周刊- cbnweek.com) proves yet again the extremes to which the Chinese propaganda apparatus will go to ensure that any discussion of Internet censorship in China is nipped in the bud.

On 24 November 2010, the authorities banned the reprinting or posting of an article by Shanghai business weekly *Diyi Caijing Zhoukan*, which was a behind-the-scenes look at Beijing's Bureau of Website Administrators (北京市的网管办), one of the entities responsible for online censorship. The report was quickly withdrawn from the website cbnweek.com. The article provides a detailed description of how the Beijing Bureau of Website Administrators, a government agency, controls online information and shuts down websites in order to stifle any debate about social and political issues.

In the last few months, the authorities launched a new offensive against the proxy servers used by Chinese Internet users to bypass the "Great Firewall." Access to Freegate and Ultrareach, two of the most popular proxies, was made very difficult for several days as from 27 August 2010. To counter this new wave of blockings, their developers reacted by making updated versions of their software available to netizens.

### **The regime's Internet charm offensive**

#### *Internet White Paper*

On 8 June 2010, the Chinese Council of State's Information Bureau published a "white paper" on the Internet, which reasserts the need for online [censorship](#) in China in the name of "respect for local laws" and "maintaining stability." Far from challenging the authorities' policy towards the Internet, or the upsurge in online censorship, it merely adds to the Beijing leadership's usual rhetoric. While the government's resolve to broaden the Chinese people's access to the Internet is commendable, it regretfully does not encompass access to the World Wide Web, but solely to the Chinese Web, complete with its sophisticated filtering system that blocks political, social or other news which the authorities deem undesirable.

*Is a "national" search engine being developed?*

In August 2010, the official Chinese press agency, Xinhua, and state-owned China Mobile – the largest Chinese telecommunications operator – signed an agreement to create a joint venture called the Search Engine New Media International Communications Co. Its purpose is to launch a search engine directly controlled by the state which would enable Chinese authorities to expand their control of the Internet by taking advantage of the mobile phone market boom.

In addition, the regime is encouraging state-owned companies such as CCTV or Xinhua to strengthen their online presence.

In the meantime, the "50-cent party", named after the Net surfers paid to post pro-government online comments in order to "influence public opinion," is still in operation.

*A window of opportunity for online dialogue between Internet users and the authorities?*

Some local and regional officials are already using the Web to convey their messages and address criticisms. In September 2010, the [website](#) Zhitong Zhongnanhai, named after the government's headquarters in central Beijing, was launched as a way for Internet users to send their messages to the national leadership. One week after its launch, over 20,000 comments had already been posted for President Hu Jintao alone on subjects such as real estate price increases, corruption, pollution and violations of civil liberties. However, this free-speech window has been subject to 26 rules ever since. Netizens may not, for example, post comments which could jeopardise the state's honour and interests, or disrupt social order by advocating for the right of association, demonstration, or assembly.

Any Internet user who sends a disagreeable comment faces penalties which can be as harsh as the permanent termination of his or her IP address. Aware that it is prohibited on this government website to send a message from an IP address located outside of China, Chinese netizens therefore cannot do so anonymously by using proxy servers which assign them a foreign IP address. Even in cybercafés, every user is systematically asked to present an ID. Despite this risk, some critical comments do manage to slip through the Net's filter. "When will prices go down? The only thing that isn't going up is salaries!" "Comrade Hu, don't you think it interesting that I have left so many messages, yet they all have been harmonised? Can't you let us tell the truth?" one netizen asked.

### **Crusading against online and cell phone anonymity**

In February 2010, the Chinese Ministry of Technology had already announced that anyone wishing to create an Internet website should register with Internet regulators in person and present an ID.

In May 2011, Wang Chen, the Department of Propaganda's Assistant Director, quoted in an article published on 5 May by *China Daily*: "We are exploring an identity authentication system for users of online forums." Internet users are currently required to register before posting comments on these sites, but they can do so using a pseudonym. According to Wang, now that anonymous posting on key news and commercial websites is banned, the next step is to [extend](#) the system to online forums and chat rooms.

Cellular telephony is not exempt from this effort. Chinese authorities are tightening their grip on prepaid cell phone communications. A new regulation which entered into effect on 1 September 2010 now requires users of prepaid cell phones to provide detailed personal information by presenting their identity card when buying SIM cards. Anyone who already owns one has three years to register.

The newspaper *Global Times* claims that 800 million telephone numbers are already assigned to cell phones now used in China, of which 320 million were acquired anonymously. Card sellers, mostly in newsstands, will be responsible for collecting photocopies of the buyers' IDs and for recording their contact information in the centralised cell phone user name data collection system. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technologies (MIIT) justifies this initiative by claiming that it is part of the government's campaign against spams and fraud. In actuality, this new rule may potentially compromise the cell phone users' personal data protection, since it enhances the authorities' ability to monitor calls, SMSs, and data exchanges, thereby facilitating the identification of individuals who criticise or demonstrate against the government.

### **The authorities take aim at micro-blogging**

In the summer of 2010, the authorities launched a new crackdown on online networking tools, especially [micro-blog](#) services. On 15 July 2010, several dozen micro-blog accounts were closed, among them those of blogger **Yao Yuan** and lawyer **Pu Zhiqiang**. Four of the leading Chinese micro-blogging platforms, Netease, Sina, Tencent and Sohu, were inaccessible for several hours or days, displaying notices that the site was down for maintenance.

Around the same time, censors implemented an additional control level. In August 2010, Chinese authorities ordered micro-blogging websites to hire a "self-discipline commissioner" to be responsible for censorship. According to the official press, the results of the first micro-blogger self-censorship test conducted in January 2010 in Hebei province were deemed satisfactory enough to convince the authorities to extend its application in Beijing to eight micro-blogging platforms: Sina, Sohu, NetEase, Iphonix, Hexun, Soufang, 139Mobile and Juyou9911. The latter hired such commissioners and asked them to monitor and censor anything which could threaten the country's security or the society's stability. They are focusing on content dealing with illegal activities, pornography and violence, as well as unsubstantiated rumours and politically sensitive issues. Each commissioner has been assigned a website whose content he or she is responsible for.

### **Impact of the Google case**

#### *Stopping censorship*

The U.S. firm Google announced on 22 March 2010 its [decision](#) to put an end to censorship via the Chinese version of its search engine, google.cn. Now, when users click on the home page of

google.cn, they are redirected to [Google.com.hk](http://Google.com.hk), where they have access to uncensored content in simplified Chinese characters. This website was intermittently censored in late March 2010. Despite tense relations with the Chinese authorities following this decision, the company did manage to get its operating license there renewed in July 2010. It will maintain its research and development activities in China, and keep on selling advertising spots on Google.com to Chinese companies.

Google may have set an example for [others](#): the U.S. Internet company GoDaddy announced on 24 March 2010, during a U.S. congressional hearing, that it would stop offering its clients new Chinese domain names ending in the .cn suffix because of the radical control measures being implemented by Chinese authorities.

*Are Chinese authorities directly implicated in hacking activities?*

Google's decision apparently was reached in the wake of cyberattacks launched from China against the Gmail accounts of several dozen human rights activists. Some twenty media and technology sector companies are said to have also been victims of these hacker attacks and of intellectual property infringement.

Cyberattacks were still going on in early 2010. The Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC) [reported](#) that the Yahoo! email boxes of at least ten foreign journalists based in China and Taiwan were hacked. Independent news sites such as Boxun have been under constant attack.

In secret documents released by WikiLeaks, a "Chinese source" cited by U.S. diplomatic sources confirmed the Chinese government's involvement in the computer hacking of Google. These revelations have raised considerable concern about spying methods used on journalists and human rights activists working on China. The diplomatic [cable](#) cited by the *New York Times* specified: "The Google hacking was part of a coordinated campaign of computer sabotage carried out by government operatives, private security experts and internet outlaws recruited by the Chinese government."

### **Web censorship: A trade barrier?**

Internet censorship is not just a human rights issue. It also negatively impacts trade and business through the lack of access to reliable information. Online censorship has also become a way to discriminate against foreign – particularly American – companies, and to afford Chinese companies preferential treatment, which led two experts of the European Centre for International Political Economy to label it, in *The Wall Street Journal*, "[disguised protectionism](#)."

The European Union entered the debate in 2010, as the censorship spread to mobile telephones – a sector in which European companies do considerable business. In May 2010, European Commission Vice President and Digital Agenda Commissioner Neelie Kroes called this censorship a "trade barrier" and said it is an issue that should be tackled within the World Trade Organization.

### **Tibet and Xinjiang: Sensitive provinces, special treatment**

*At least 50 Tibetans sentenced for having sent news abroad*

The repression has never stopped since the March 2008 uprising in the Tibetan regions. Since then, at least 50 Tibetans have been [arrested](#) and some sentenced to lengthy prison terms for having sent information, photos and videos abroad. The latest to be convicted, Dasher, was given a 10-year prison sentence on a charge of “separatism” in February 2010.

*Xinjiang: Reconnected to the Net, but still plagued by purges*

The arrests continue. Cut off from the world for nearly 10 months following the social unrest in July 2009, the Xinjiang Autonomous Region was then subjected to a discriminatory shut-down of Internet access, and was only reconnected to the Chinese Internet on 14 May 2010.

Meanwhile, Xinjiang’s Internet users are subject to filtering by the Chinese Firewall, and the websites and blogs dealing with the Uyghur issue are still a favourite target for censors. Many of them are still blocked – including the sites of the Uyghur American Association (UAA) and the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) – because they refuse to toe the official Beijing Party line. Banned keywords include “**Rebiya Kadeer**” (the Uyghur human rights activist), “World Uyghur Congress”, “Uyghur Human Rights Project” and “East Turkestan Independence.”

Salkin website collaborator **Gulmire Imin** was sentenced to life behind bars in April 2010 for having “revealed” state secrets, for “organising a demonstration” and for “separatism.”

On 21 July 2010, in Urumqi, three Uyghur webmasters, **Dilshat Perhat**, **Nureli** and **Nijat Azat** were tried in camera for having endangered state security and for the content of their publications, which the Chinese government deemed to be politically sensitive. They were sentenced, respectively, to five, three and ten years in prison.

**Liu Xiaobo (刘晓波): The world’s only Nobel Peace Prize recipient still behind bars**

On October 8, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded for the first time to a Chinese citizen residing in China, even though he has been serving an 11-year jail sentence in Jinzhou Prison (Liaoning Province). Very moved when he learned the news, intellectual and human rights activist [Liu Xiaobo](#) dedicated this prize to “the lost souls of 4 June” – the date of the Tiananmen Square massacre. Liu Xiaobo is one of the co-writers of [Charter 08](#), which calls for more freedoms and an end to the one-party rule in China.

The pressures being placed on **Liu Xiaobo**’s relatives and supporters, as well as on all defenders of freedom of expression, have not lessened in China since this announcement was made. Beijing tried to dissuade diplomats from attending the Nobel Prize award ceremony in Oslo on 10 December 2010 and prevented several human rights activists from leaving the country. Liu’s wife, **Liu Xia** (刘霞), is under house arrest and her relatives are not permitted to leave China. The Nobel Committee awarded the prize to an “empty chair.”

An ever-growing number of Liu’s supporters are being [arrested](#). Since mid-October 2010, according to the independent Chinese PEN Centre, at least 40 human rights activists and journalists have been arrested or brought in for questioning throughout China for attempting to celebrate the news of Liu’s award. Three of them were detained for at least eight days: **Wang Lihong**, **Wu Gan** and **Zhao Changqing**. Formerly imprisoned journalist **Liu Jingsheng** said that two police officers



had been posted outside his home. **Liu Xiaobo** supporters without Beijing residence permits have been sent back to their home province.

**Guo Xianliang**, an Internet writer known by his pen name, "hermit of Tianshan Mountain" has been behind bars since 28 October after being arrested by the Guangzhou authorities for passing out flyers with pictures of Liu Xiaobo in the streets and parks of Canton. Human rights activist **Liu Di**, known by her pen name, "Stainless Steel Mouse", along with about 100 [other people](#), were placed under house arrest and strict police surveillance.

#### *A few releases offset by new convictions*

The sentences of some "4 June dissidents" who had participated in the June 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations were [shortened](#). Cyberdissident **Li Zhi**, a former government official sentenced in December 2003 to an eight-year prison term for "subversive" use of the Internet, was released last November, nine months early. He is one of the netizens condemned on the basis of information originating from their email accounts, which Yahoo! had provided to Chinese authorities.

Dissident Qin Yongmin was freed after serving his full 12-year prison sentence, but is still kept under close watch.

Writer Guo Xianliang, who had been arrested in Canton for having passed out flyers supportive of Liu Xiaobo, was released on 26 November. His friends and family report that he was able to safely return to Kunming. However, on 9 June 2010, the Sichuan Provincial High People's Court upheld the decision made against activist and environmentalist Tan Zuoren, who had been sentenced to a five-year prison term for "inciting subversion of state power" and to a three-year deprivation of his political rights. He had been arrested in March 2008, after urging Chinese netizens to travel to Sichuan Province to look into the situation of the earthquake victims' families.

For the first time, an ironic tweet earned a netizen one year of forced labour. On 15 November 2010, cybernaut Cheng Jianping was sentenced to serve a year in the Shibali River "re-education through work" labour camp for women in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, for "disturbing social order." Her lawyer, Lan Zhixue, appealed this administrative order, issued without any form of trial. Cheng Jianping was arrested on 28 October – on what would have been her wedding day – and charged with having retweeted, on 17 October 2010, a satirical message about anti-Japanese demonstrations taking place in China, using her pen name "Wang Yi" (@wangyi09) on the Twitter website. She has more than 5,000 netizen followers on this social network. The message suggested that young Chinese protesters should attack the Japanese pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo and mocked the excessive tension between the two countries.

#### **Endangered netizens: Criminal detentions and mock releases**

##### *Cyberdissidents detained despite being gravely ill*

The incarceration of certain netizens can sometimes have a tragic outcome. Shortly after having finally been granted the medically motivated release he had repeatedly requested, cyberdissident Zhang Jianhong – better known by his pen name **Li Hong** – [died](#) on 31 December 2010 in a hospital in Ningbo of complications from a disease for which he had never been treated during his

three years behind bars. Li Hong was the chief editor of [Aiqin Hai](#), a literary online magazine closed by the authorities in 2006 for disseminating “content critical of the Chinese government.” He also contributed to news websites [Boxun](#) and [Epoch Times](#).

The lives of several other netizens are hanging in the balance. The Chinese authorities should have learned their lesson from this tragedy and immediately released all other netizens with health problems, particularly **Huang Qi**, **Fan Yanqiong**, Cheng Jianping, **Hu Jia** and [Yang Tianshui](#).

[Huang Qi](#), arrested in 2008, was sentenced to three years behind bars for having posted articles online about the consequences of the Sichuan Province earthquake. He is said to have stomach and chest tumours which are not being treated properly, and to have been tortured and deprived of sleep.

[Cheng Jianping](#) was sentenced on 15 November 2010 to a year of “re-education through work” in a labour camp for having relayed a comment on Twitter about tensions between China and Japan. She is suffering from tuberculous pleurisy, a chronic lung condition.

Netizen [Fan Yanqiong](#), arrested in 2009, was given a two-year prison sentence in April 2010 for having reported online the case of a raped and murdered woman in Fujian Province. At the time of her trial, she had to use a wheelchair and an oxygen mask because she was suffering from high blood pressure, muscular atrophy and severe pains in all her limbs.

Blogger and human rights activist [Hu Jia](#) got a three-year prison sentence in 2008 for “inciting subversion of state power” after posting articles online and granting interviews to the foreign media. He has cirrhosis of the liver, but is not receiving the medications he needs.

#### *Forced disappearances?*

Geng He, the wife of Chinese human rights activist and lawyer **Gao Zhisheng**, has never stopped [demanding](#) an explanation for the disappearance of her husband, one of the first “barefoot lawyers” who has been missing again since April 2010#.

Human rights activist and cyberdissident **Govruud Huuchinhuu**, a member of the Southern Mongolia Democratic Alliance (SMDA), has been reported [missing](#) since 27 January 2011, when she was released from the hospital in Tongliao, a city in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of northern China, where she had received cancer treatments. Huuchinhuu had been under house arrest since November 2010 for using a website to call for a rally of Mongol dissidents to celebrate the anticipated release of **Hada**, a human rights activist and the SMDA’s Chairman.

#### *False releases?*

**Hada**, a journalist and activist for the Mongal cause, is still being held by the Chinese authorities, even though he should have been freed on 10 December 2010 after serving his full sentence. When he was finally permitted to meet with his uncle, Haschuluu, in late January 2011, he looked undernourished and had had no news of his wife Xinna and his son Uiles. On 14 December, a Chinese official referred to only as “Jin,” told people close to Hada that his wife and son were safe and enjoying the family’s reunion in a “five-star luxury hotel.”

Similarly, activist and netizen **Zhao Lianhai** allegedly has been released but still cannot be [contacted](#). He was arrested in November 2009 and sentenced one year later to two and one-half years in prison for having set up an Internet news and mobilisation website ("Kidney Stone Babies") devoted to the scandal involving the milk powder contaminated by the Sanlu company in China. He had first announced that he wanted to protest the court's decision and had started a hunger strike, but he later said that he no longer wished to see his lawyers or to appeal.

### **Online mobilisation stronger than ever**

#### *Word games and caricatures: New anti-censorship weapons*

The Chinese are ardent word game players. The Chinese language is full of homophones and lends itself very easily to this exercise.

For several years, Web surfers have been making censors the butt of humorous and creative puns and word games. The fight against censorship is represented by a mythical creature called the Caonima (a grass-mud horse), a homonym for a stinging personal insult. Internet users ridicule Chinese Communist Party (CCP) censorship by inventing false reports and [songs](#) about animal characters on the Caonima.

More recently, the lizard Yake (yakexi in Chinese) appeared following a TV show on the Chinese New Year ceremonies in which Uyghur singers were supposed to praise the government, but they kept on repeating that the CCP Central Committee's policy was "good" (yakexi in Uyghur). Shocked by this propaganda in light of the utter instability in Xinjiang, some netizens invented a lizard character (xi in Mandarin) called Yake, who patrols the Internet. According to its authors, the lizard representing the Central Committee's policies had a glorious past in the Soviet Union, where its race is now dying out but is still thriving in countries like Cuba, North Korea and China. The lizard Yakexi, with his forked tongue, feeds on "river crabs" (hexie) a homonym of "to harmonise," President Hu Jintao's political leitmotif, and a government euphemism for censorship). Ironically it has been put to a new use by netizens.

The Chinese Internet's latest "harmonised" animals are featured in an animated video produced by Wang Bo, which shows an innocent rabbit population oppressed by a government of aggressive tigers. The year 2010 was the "Year of the Tiger," while 2011 is that of the Rabbit, according to the Chinese calendar. In this film, baby rabbits are dying and in atrocious pain after drinking some Sanlu milk, a reference to the 2008 melamine scandal which had caused the death of several infants and poisoned several hundred thousand others. The Li Gang case is also featured. In all, Chinese bloggers and netizens have created a dozen creatures representing Internet censors.

#### *A necessary battle which is not without risk*

While there have been many examples of successful online mobilisations, tragic cases of tortured bloggers and journalists are still far too frequent. "You will be punished in kind," as member of the Guobao (public security squad) told Liu Shasha, a young Beijing blogger who was in jail in July 2010. While being interviewed by a French journalist, she described the conditions of her detention and the barbaric tortures that she had to endure. What was this young woman's crime? She had urged people on the Twitter network to place funeral wreaths in front of the building which houses

the Chinese research engine firm Sohu, after it reportedly eliminated hundreds of free speech activist blogs.

*Denouncing corruption: Netizens' Trojan horse*

The Li Gang case has caused a massive outcry in the Chinese blogosphere, where the impunity enjoyed by Chinese officials is extremely unpopular. In October 2010, one young man, Li Qiming, caused a mortal road accident on the Baoding campus of Hebei University (in Hebei Province, near Beijing) while driving intoxicated. Right after hitting two young women head on, one of whom later died, the young man allegedly said, while leaving the scene, "Go ahead and try to sue me, my father is Li Gang." The story spread like wildfire on the Internet, as did the statement, "my father is Li Gang," which has become a catchphrase for shirking responsibility while breaking the law. By using a "human flesh research engine," some cybernauts managed to identify Li Gang as the deputy police chief of Baoding's Beishi district. His son, Li Qiming, was arrested on 24 October 2010. The case was referred to the country's highest courts, which were troubled by the intense public indignation aroused by this case. A video of Li Gang was broadcast on the national TV station in which he tearfully asked to be forgiven for his son's behaviour.

*"He who has not climbed the Great Wall is not a true man" – Chinese proverb*

The Great Wall of censorship continues to rise higher and higher around the Middle Kingdom's readers, listeners, TV viewers and cybernauts. Yet defenders of free expression are managing to circumvent it, or scale it. As these "true men" join forces in pursuing this effort, they will win. It is up to governments, corporations and Internet users in democratic countries to give them their unwavering support, for the Chinese government seems disinclined to change its positions on the issue.

In his 19 February 2011 speech to leaders of Chinese provinces, Hu Jintao spoke of intensifying the regime's management and control of the Internet in his country. He notably specified the need to "increase the government's level of control over the virtual society and to perfect mechanisms for channelling online public opinion."