China’s Hidden Unrest

Protests against land grabs and graft are roiling the countryside. As Beijing crushes dissent, it silences the press ...

Critics or Traitors in Ethiopia?
Exploiting the Prophet Cartoons
Courage under fire: When the Chinese government shut down news coverage of demonstrations in the village of Taishi last September, activists and journalists sought ways to document the unrest. (Ai Xiaoming/Hong Kong International Film Festival)

"Public security organs can issue a warning or detain for less than 15 days."
A look at recent red-letter cases from the CPJ files...

**December**

5 Pakistani reporter Hayatullah Khan disappears after being seized by armed assailants. The abduction comes days after his reporting contradicts official accounts of an explosion that killed a senior al-Qaeda commander.

21 Ethiopia indicts more than a dozen journalists on charges of treason after civil unrest prompts a massive crackdown on the independent press and the political opposition. (Story, page 22.)

**January**

3 CPJ reports that 47 journalists were killed in connection with their work in 2005. More than 100 journalists died on duty over the past two years, the deadliest such period in a decade.

17 A Chinese court sentences Zhu Wenzhong to 10 years in prison and Wu Zhengyou to six years after they sought to report on rural unrest in the southeast province of Zhejiang. (Related story, page 10.)

**February**

1 Guatemala’s highest court strikes down laws that criminalize expressions deemed offensive to public officials. The country joins the growing ranks of Latin American nations that have eliminated desacato, or disrespect, laws.

6 Assassins storm the Mexican newspaper El Mañana after his reporting concerning Bambang Haryzza Rice to CPJ. More than 30 Chinese journalists are in prison for their work, CPJ research shows.

**March**

19-28 More than two dozen journalists are arrested in Belarus while covering postelection demonstrations. President Aleksandr Lukashenko, whose re-election was tainted by irregularities, cracks down on independent coverage. (Story, page 8.)

30 Jill Carroll, a freelance reporter working for The Christian Science Monitor, is freed in Baghdad after being held by kidnappers for nearly three months. Carroll is among 40 journalists who have been abducted in Iraq.

**April**

4 The BBC says Niger is blocking its coverage of malnutrition in the central region of Maradi. The government pulls accreditation from a BBC reporter and bars officials from talking about the problem.

6 CBS cameraman Abdul Ameen Younis Hussein is freed a year after he was detained by U.S. forces in Iraq. An Iraqi court acquits him on charges of collaborating with insurgents, citing a lack of evidence. Hussein was held without charge for 11 months.

**May**

3 Marking World Press Freedom Day, CPJ names the 10 Most Censored Countries. North Korea heads the dishonor roll. (Graphic, page 20.)

**As They Said**

“No one in China is jailed for expressing their views.” —Chu Maoming, Chinese Embassy spokesman, to CPJ. More than 30 Chinese journalists are in prison for their work, CPJ research shows.

“I have no doubt that Iran and Syria have gone out of their way to inflame sentiments and have used this for their own purposes. The world ought to call them on it.” —U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to reporters. Rice accused the two nations of exploiting controversy over published caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad. (Related story, page 16.)

“We’ll make sure we don’t hold someone for six or eight months.” —U.S. Maj. Gen. John Gardner to reporters. Gardner announced a new policy to promptly review detentions of journalists by U.S. troops in Iraq. At least seven journalists were jailed for prolonged periods without charge in 2005.

**Shorty after midnight on March 2, police commandos stormed Kenya’s oldest newspaper and private television station, both owned by the Standard Group. The raids came two days after several Standard journalists were arrested for publishing “alarming” statements in a story about political machinations within President Mwai Kibaki’s troubled ruling coalition. Police disabled the printing press at The Standard, herded employees outside, and set fire to thousands of copies of the day’s edition. The rival Nation newspaper reported that one hooded officer shouted to terrified Standard workers: “I can smoke you! I can waste you!” Government forces also raided the offices of the Kenya Television Network (KTN), detaining staff and confiscating tapes and computer hard drives.

The raids were widely covered by local media and the extensive foreign press that uses Nairobi as a hub to cover eastern Africa. While Information Minister Mutahi Kagwe initially denied reports that the government had ordered the police action, National Security Minister John Michuki later said the raids were carried out to protect state security. “If you rattle a snake, you must be prepared to be bitten by it,” he warned.

—Alexis Arieff

Standard CEO Tom Mshindi said that the raids were part of Kenyan authorities’ “growing intolerance” of the media in general and The Standard—which had published a string of exposes on official corruption—in particular. The media outlets resumed normal activities later that day, but the raids made waves within the Kenyan media, among Africa’s largest and most diverse, and the opposition. On March 7, thousands of Kenyans marched in Nairobi to demand Kibaki’s resignation. “To hell with the snake government,” one placard read.
Heading into Danger

An Iraqi reporter must hide his profession even as he is compelled to follow its demands.

By Bassam Sebti

Sebti, 26, is a special correspondent for The Washington Post and one of a growing number of Iraqi reporters covering the conflict for Western news organizations.

BAGHDAD, Iraq

As I leave home each day, I peer right and left to be sure no one is tracking me. I follow the same routine when I return 12 hours later. Being a journalist for an Iraqi organization is dangerous enough, but working for a foreign news outlet puts you in double jeopardy. In the eyes of insurgents, I am a “spy,” an “infidel,” a profiteer exploiting the suffering of Iraqis.

No one in my neighborhood knows what I do. I’ve convinced them that I run my own business, an Internet café. If anyone discovers my profession, I am sure to be threatened. By nature, I am compelled to follow its demands. I don’t want to be identified going in or a bomb planted at my family’s doorstep. In 2004, a colleague had to flee Iraq after a bomb shattered windows and destroyed parts of his home. As a reaction, I’ve created my own security measures. When I am home, for example, my parents don’t answer any nighttime knocks on the door. Instead, I check who is there, in case it is someone with a gun.

I do give my name when conducting interviews—I feel it’s the ethical thing to do. My byline also appears on stories, although I ask my bosses not to use it on sensitive pieces that might put me in danger.

Car bombings are among the most dangerous assignments, yet I am drawn to them because it brings me closer to the people who are suffering. I wait at least a half hour before going to such scenes, though, because insurgents use double-bombing techniques to heighten the devastation. A car bomb will explode, draw a curious crowd to the scene, and then a second bomb will claim a new set of victims.

Stress is an unforgiving companion. Body parts scattered in the streets and children weeping over dead parents are common scenes in my daily life. Covering the news on the ground and then watching it on television have left these vivid pictures in my mind, and they play like a videotape over and over.

Yet I’m determined not to allow my emotions to interfere with the job. I’ve succeeded in large part, but my will was tested last November while covering an explosion at a Baghdad restaurant. Rescue workers were carrying off the wounded as soldiers and police cordoned off the area, fearing another attack. I left the huge gathering of reporters, hid my notebook and camera, and, with my driver, persuaded police to let me inside. It was the first time I had seen a large number of dead people. They were in piles, one atop another. A child sobbed over the body of his father.

The moment I stepped into the car to return to the office, emotions washed over me and, for the first time, I let loose my tears. I imagined my father or a friend in that restaurant, lifeless and bloodied like those I saw inside. I haven’t slept well since, and nightmares accompanied me for months.

Iraq Snapshot

Key statistics compiled by CPJ staff as of May 2006:

• Iraqis constitute 78 percent of the journalists and support staff killed for their work in Iraq.
• Overall, 60 percent of journalists and support workers killed in Iraq were murdered.
• Fifty-four percent of journalists and support staff who died were working for international news organizations.
• Baghdad province is the most dangerous, with 34 journalists and 15 media workers killed.
• Insurgent actions are behind 68 percent of journalist and support worker deaths.

Data on Iraq is updated regularly at www.cpj.org.

Becoming a reporter wasn’t my dream. I studied English literature in college, becoming drawn to journalism as the security situation worsened. I started as an interpreter in 2003, first for freelance reporter Jill Carroll (who would be kidnapped in January 2006 and held for nearly three months before being released unharmed) and then with The Post. As The Post came to trust my work, editors gave me increasing reporting responsibilities.

I was inspired by an Iraqi friend and Post reporter, Omar Feketiki, who directed, advised, and taught me how to depend on myself and use my instincts. In 2003, Omar was about to be kidnapped by the Mehdi Army, a militia loyal to the Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr, but he escaped with a few punches in the stomach. A picture of that terrifying moment was captured by a photographer. I remember the image of Omar being surrounded by the militia and the look in his eyes. He has continued to work, and I’ve been stirred by his dedication.

Western news organizations have come to rely a lot on Iraqi reporters—particularly in dangerous areas—because we speak the language and we know the culture. Despite the obstacles, the Western media cover most of the news, and reporters try their best to present a complete picture. As an Iraqi, I don’t see much good news around me.

A few months after I joined the press corps, after I told these stories every day over dinner, my parents begged me to quit. By then, it was too late. I am infected by this job. I believe that my country needs me and that journalism is a noble profession, a mirror in which people can see what is happening in their world. As Jackie Spinner, a friend and former Baghdad colleague, says in her book, Tell Them I Didn’t Cry, “We drive into hurricanes, not away from them.”

Here, the hurricanes are bombs. We go toward them, warily, determinedly.
Atwar Bahjat

In Iraq, a reporter and patriot is silenced.

By Jihad Ballout

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates

She was a daughter of Samarra, an Iraqi who loved for her country as much as for her profession. That’s why we in Al-Arabiya’s newsroom were not surprised when Atwar Bahjat insisted on covering the escalating violence in her hometown that fateful February day.

The bombing of the Shiite shrine Askariya, known as the Golden Mosque, had sparked sectarian bat-

Adnan Khairallah, 36—were found near Samarra the next day. Bahjat represented everything that the merchants of war on all sides despise. A journalist who refused to take sides, she personified Iraqi non-

Bahjat had already filed reports from Samarra and was conducting additional interviews that day, Feb-

Covering wide-scale death and destruction in her country was not, perhaps, foremost on her mind when Bahjat decided that journalism was her life and passion. An avid writer of verse, Bahjat first joined the staff of a weekly publication covering social issues, and she contributed works of poetry to specialized publications. After the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime, she joined the newly founded Iraqi Satellite Network as a reporter.

Bahjat’s professional aspirations would draw her to the more widely viewed regional satellite networks—first to Al-Jazeera, where we were also colleagues, and then, just weeks before her murder, to Al-Arabiya. At the satellite stations, she became the most recognized female war corre-

Atwar Bahjat, in an image taken from video, wore a gold pendant depicting Iraq on the day she died.

mately prevailing in the face of much resistance from male colleagues. Some genuinely feared for her safety as a female correspondent in a pre-

When we were both at Al-Jazeera, I recall Bahjat approaching me one day to express concern that she would not get to do much field work because authorities had banned the channel from reporting inside Iraq. I pointed out that it could be a blessing in dis-

Bahjat was too courteous to bick-

Yet the traits that served her well—as a woman who personified all of Iraq, as a patriot who reported all sides—could not protect her from the purveyors of violence. In an interview aired on Al-Arabiya after Bahjat’s murder, her sister lashed repeated over and over in a heartbreaking voice: “Why, why Atwar? I need someone to talk to is the need for federal statutory

 protection for the confidentiality of reporters’ sources. Is there precedent to prosecute whistleblowers for leaking infor-
mation? Under federal law, people can go to jail for disclosing classified information, and in rare instances that does happen. There is even an argument, which some media critics have been trying to build, that a media outlet itself could be prosecuted under Section 798 of the Espionage Act. Most lawyers who have studied the issue would say with a lot of confidence that Section 798 would be unconstitu-
tional if applied to a newspaper or a media outlet.

For three decades, Justice Depart-

ment guidelines said a journalist would be compelled to testify only in “exigent circumstances.” Now, what’s the future of those guidelines? I think they have a terrific future—as guidelines. But guidelines by defini-
tion are not enforceable, and courts have said the DOJ guidelines are not enforceable. What the lack of protec-
tion under the guidelines really points to is the need for federal statutory

under the NSA program? Will these cases lead to a more established definition of confiden-
tiality? We always encourage a reporter to have a very specific understanding of confidentiality with the source up front. Unstated assumptions that an interview is confidential aren’t very helpful when you’re in front of a grand jury. ■

The Courtroom Press

Media lawyer Jeremy Feigelson discusses confidentiality, wiretaps, and talking to sources on park benches.

Interview by Maya Taal

Did special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald’s tactics in the CIA leak case set a precedent for jailing journalists? After all, Judith Miller of The New York Times went to jail and then testified. The Judy Miller case didn’t change the law very much, if at all. But it undoubtedly makes prosecutors everywhere a little bit cocky about their ability in the real world to get journalists to disclose their confiden-
tial sources. That’s something that historically prosecutors have shied away from. After Fitzgerald’s success in the Miller case, I don’t suspect they’ll be quite so shy.

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media outlet for publishing informa-
tion that somebody in the govern-
ment regards as confidential. That 
kind of publication happens all the 
time, and it’s overwhelmingly in the 
public interest when it does.

How does the interpretation of e-mail as corporate property affect source confidentiality? The 21st century reporter has to rely on tools like e-mail and cell phones. These create evidentiary trails that are within the custody and control of the companies that run the systems. So if those companies are subpoenaed, the individual reporter may not be able to exercise any control over the records.

For reporters working on very sen-
sitive stories, in the future you may see more meetings with sources on park benches and more notes written in notebooks. Will these cases lead to a more established definition of confidentiality? We always encourage a reporter to have a very specific understanding of confidentiality with the source up front. Unstated assumptions that an interview is confidential aren’t very helpful when you’re in front of a grand jury. ■

Fedigelson, a partner in the New York law firm Debevoise & Plimpton, represents a number of news organizations, along with the Committee to Protect Journalists. Taal is CPJ’s board liaison and execu-
tive assistant.

Q & A

Feigelson, a partner in the New York law firm Debevoise & Plimpton, represents a number of news organizations, along with the Committee to Protect Journalists. Taal is CPJ’s board liaison and executive assistant.
The Putin Effect

A Belarusian dictatorship survives because of Russian support. It’s time for other leaders to object.

By Alex Lupis

Belarusian dictator Aleksandr Lukashenko, a former collective farm chairman who has ruled the country since 1994, presides over Europe’s last dictatorship—a Soviet vestige that would likely collapse without the economic, political, and military support of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Putin sees Belarus as a buffer between the European Union and Putin’s authoritarian Russia. The unstable Belarusian economy depends on Russia, both for imports of subsidized gas and as an export market for low-quality Belarusian manufactured goods. The Kremlin’s ongoing military support is complemented by its dependable public rebuttals to any international criticism of Lukashenko.

But as Russia occupies the center of the international stage with the chairmanship of the Group of Eight industrialized countries, which it assumed in January, and the presidency of the Council of Europe, which it took on in May, Putin should not be allowed to keep an outdated dictator in power in Belarus. Editors like Kalinikina should be able to report the news without fear of reprisal. The families of Zavadsky and Cherkassova, journalists eliminated under highly suspicious circumstances, deserve justice.

The United States and the European Union are promoting democracy in Belarus by supporting opposition groups and fostering civil society initiatives, but these democratization policies will not work as long as Belarus has Russian support. When European leaders and U.S. President George W. Bush gather in July at the G8 summit in St. Petersburg, they should publicly call on Putin to stop diverting Europe and work with the international community to promote a stable, democratic Belarus with a strong independent press.

For updates on the Belarusian crackdown, visit www.cpj.org.

Belarus has become a geopolitical buffer between the European Union and Putin’s authoritarian Russia.

The Committee to Protect Journalists visited Belarus in February to assess conditions for local journalists ahead of the election—and we found them to be deplorable. Some journalists critical of Lukashenko’s government have disappeared or been murdered. Recent popular uprisings in neighboring Ukraine and Georgia prompted an all-out assault on the media to suppress domestic dissent and keep Belarusians isolated and uninformed about events at home and abroad. Independent radio and television stations have been eliminated, allowing state and private pro-governmental media to flood the country with anti-Western propaganda.

Most of the journalists I met with in Minsk were too fearful to speak on the record because of harassment by the secret police, as well as a criminal law Lukashenko signed in December that punishes criticism of the state with up to five years in prison. The opposition Narodnaya Volya (People’s Will) and several other struggling papers that dare to criticize Lukashenko are on the verge of extinction because printers, the post office, and the state newspaper distributor Belsoyuzpechat refuse to publish, mail, or sell the publications. These newspapers print their editions in neighboring Russia (when they can) and then smuggle them back into their own country.

At Narodnaya Volya, Managing Editor Svetlana Kalinikina showed me around a newsroom where every wall was filled to the ceiling with thousands of newspapers. Her staffers were scrambling to hand out copies to their daughter. Police had arrested her husband, Dmitry, a cameraman, and were pressuring him to confess to the murder. The boy was eventually freed without charge. Time and again, Belarusian journalists told me that their isolated country has become a geopolitical buffer between the European Union and Putin’s authoritarian Russia. The fallout from this election, they said, would have important implications for Europe. “You [in the West] can close your eyes to the situation here, which means you will only wake up when it becomes unstable and it’s too late to do something,” Marina Sadowskaya, deputy editor of Belorusy i Rynok (Belarusians and the Market), told me over lunch in Minsk.

She pointed to the ongoing lawlessness and smuggling on the Polish-Belarusian border, along with Russia’s use of Belarus as a transit route for weapons sales to Middle East states. The unstable Belarusian economy depends on Russia, both for imports of subsidized gas and as an export market for low-quality Belarusian manufactured goods. The Kremlin’s ongoing military support is complemented by its dependable public rebuttals to any international criticism of Lukashenko.

At the same time, authorities have failed to properly investigate the cases of journalists who have disappeared or been killed. Svetlana Zavadskaya has yet to recover the body of her husband, Dmitry, a cameraman for ORT Russian television who vanished in July 2000. In July 2005, a police officer punched her, causing a concussion, when she tried to commemorate Dmitry’s disappearance with several friends in a central square in Minsk. When I met with the elderly parents of Veronika Cherkassova—a reporter for the opposition weekly Solidarity who was stabbed to death in October 2004 while investigating illegal arms sales to Iraq—they were distracted from mourning the loss of their daughter. Police had arrested their teenage grandson and were pressuring him to confess to the murder. The boy was eventually freed without charge.

The Moscow-led Commonwealth of Independent States, a group of several former Soviet republics, chimed in to declare the vote free and fair. Others disagreed. The Vienna-based Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe called the vote “severely flawed,” citing a pattern of government intimidation, the suppression of independent voices, and vote-counting irregularities.

When citizens gathered in Minsk’s October Square to protest the election shortcomings, the government locked up hundreds of them—along with more than two dozen foreign and domestic reporters who tried to cover the unrest. The European Union and the United States denounced the Belarusian actions. Only Russia’s foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, defended Lukashenko, saying the protests were unauthorized and the government response appropriate.

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Vladimir Putin, left, confers with Aleksandr Lukashenko at a security meeting that brought leaders of former Soviet states to Moscow last year.

By Alex Lupis

Alex Lupis is CPJ’s senior program coordinator for Europe and Central Asia.
The Unseen Rebellion

Across rural China, tens of thousands of protests are waged against land seizures and corruption. Few people ever hear about them.

By Kristin Jones

BEIJING

The word from the village of Dongzhou was growing dire last December. Security officers were clashing with residents over the local government’s seizure of land for a power plant. Official force, villagers said, was escalating.

“I called them every hour, and it kept getting worse. First it was tear gas, then there was shooting, then two dead, then more,” said Ding Xia, the 23-year-old Hong Kong-based reporter who broke news of the violent crack-down for U.S. broadcaster Radio Free Asia. The crack of gunfire could be heard in tapes of her phone calls to residents of the village near Shanwei, in southern China’s Guangdong province. “They were asking for help. They said, ‘Please call the central government to ask for help. We have called, but there was no response.’”

Following Ding’s report, the crackdown got wide attention outside of China. But print and broadcast media on the mainland were instructed to carry only a belated official account defending the use of force against the protesters. The death toll is still unknown; the government reported that three were killed, but human rights organizations have said the actual number may be much higher. Dongzhou villagers have been under tight surveillance since December and have been warned to keep silent on threat of punishment.

This policy of enforced silence has come to define the central government’s approach to widespread rural unrest, China’s most salient domestic issue. Fearing that news of land disputes and other civil discontent could fuel a united threat to its authority, the Communist Party government has undertaken one of the biggest media crackdowns since the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy demonstrations.

Mass incidents is the term the Chinese government uses to describe demonstrations, riots, and group petitioning. In January 2006, the Ministry of Public Security announced that there were 87,000 such incidents in 2005, a 6.6 percent increase over the previous year. 

Protests over corruption, taxes, and environmental degradation caused by China’s breakneck economic development contributed to the rise. But some of the most highly charged protests have occurred over government seizure of farmland for construction of the factories, power plants, shopping malls, roads, and apartment complexes that are fueling China’s boom.

In a speech published by state media in January, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao warned that local officials’ requisition of land without adequate compensation or arrangements for the livelihood of farmers was threatening social stability. “We absolutely cannot commit an historic error over land problems,” Wen said. But while putting the blame on local governments, central authorities have robbed rural residents of a way of holding officials accountable.

“News of mass incidents cannot be reported,” Li Datong said simply. The former chief editor of Bing Dian, a pioneering supplement to the Beijing-based China Youth Daily, Li has effectively been out of a job since February when he and Deputy Editor Lu Yue-gang were removed from their posts following criticism by the Central Propaganda Department’s News Commentary Group, a group of retired officials that issues regular pronouncements intended to guide China’s system of self-censorship.

Li said that he, like other editors of national publications, was told by his employers not to publish anything about the December crackdown at Dongzhou. Some journalists in Guangdong province told CPJ that they received specific do-not-report orders on the land dispute long before it escalated into violence.

Censorship in China does not involve prepublication monitoring of the news, and most journalists never hear directly from the Central Propaganda Department. Instead, the system relies on the heads of each news outlet to interpret instructions and comments from local and central propaganda authorities, to spike stories that might generate criticism, or to turn news articles into “internal reports” that reach only an elite audience of high-level officials and others who have received security clearance.

Until recently, some in-depth reporting on land grabs, corruption, and other local issues could be done, ironically enough, by journalists from outside the local area. These reporters, if they moved fast enough, could file at least a few, relatively uncensored reports before local propaganda officials would be able to alert central authorities to shut down nationwide coverage.

Central authorities banned this reporting practice—known as yidi baodao, or cross-territorial reporting—last year. Reporters told CPJ that the ban, while applied unevenly, has had a profound impact. The decree has compelled editors to rein in some of their strongest investigative reporters, and has empowered local officials to harass, intimidate, and block access to journalists who were once beyond the censor’s grasp.

One journalist told CPJ that after traveling to the site of a land dispute that had erupted into violence, she argued at length with local propaganda authorities who refused her access to government officials and instructed her not to report the matter. Unfazed, she continued her reporting, sneaking through fields and past police roadblocks to interview witnesses. She filed the story only to be told by her editor that the recent ban on yidi baodao meant her work could not be published.

“I was so angry, I didn’t sleep for two days,” said the journalist, who spoke to CPJ on condition of anonymity because she feared reprisals. She recalls pleading with her boss, “Do you know how difficult it was for me to report this?”
Technology in the hands of ordinary Chinese citizens makes suppressing news of protests more difficult. Protesters use cell phones, text messages, and digital video cameras to document events and to alert the media, which they often see as a means to communicate with central authorities. They also make news outlets a regular stop on trips to the capital to petition the central government to address grievances about local officials. But Chinese journalists told CPJ that the Internet is by far the greatest source of such information. Though the postings are quickly removed and are rarely prominently placed on blogs and the threads of Web bulletin boards, reports of land disputes and other protests can be found online for those willing to search.

Technology prevented one rural crackdown from remaining a secret. Before dawn on June 11, 2005, hundreds of men armed with pipes, hook knives, and guns descended on a makeshift encampment set up by residents of Dingzhou, in northern China’s Hebei Province, to prevent construction of a power plant. Six farmers were killed in the attack, and dozens more were seriously injured. The killed and injured had been protesting the government’s low compensation for land requisitioned for the project.

A farmer with a digital video camera captured three minutes of the attack before he was spotted, his camera smashed, and his arm broken. Villagers told a Beijing News reporter that friends of the injured farmer carried him 2 kilometers (1 mile) to safety and managed to save his videotape. It later appeared on the Web site of The Washington Post, showing a dark, medieval-looking assault by men in hard hats, ravaging the encampment with brutal force and chasing villagers across the dirt field.

The Beijing News reporter who broke the news succeeded in publishing a series of un-bylined accounts in his newspaper before the Central Propaganda Department shut down all coverage a few days later. His reports detailed the attack and the government’s response. Even more enlightening were the field notes the reporter posted anonymously online, detailing what he went through to report the story. His notes made the rounds among journalists in China, and were translated into English by Hong Kong-based blogger Li Xinde, who broke the news to the Chinese public.

A handful of journalists, including blogger Li Xinde, have made online reporting their full-time work. Li moves around the country with laptop in hand, writing exposés of local corruption. Officials’ threats of legal action have plagued him, but Li does not consider himself a dissident and believes that he has the protection of Chinese law. “I’m honest, so I have nothing to fear,” he told CPJ a few hours after disembarking from an early morning train in Beijing, en route to another story in another town. “The constitution protects me.” Still, the central government has sought to limit his influence. Li’s blog is often blocked, forcing him to change Web addresses frequently. Postings on sensitive subjects disappear shortly after they’re written, so Li must depend on an audience highly motivated to read banned news.

Foreign reporters are also subject to state harassment while covering rural protests. Several of these journalists told CPJ that police interrogations and brief detentions are common, and that potential sources are warned not to talk to the media. A number of foreign reporters were roughed up while covering unrest in the southern village of Taishi last fall. And, most disturbing to many foreign journalists, their Chinese translators, assistants, and editors are harassed and interrogated by state security agents.

Some see the improvisation in 2004 of New York Times researcher Zhao Yan as a warning to the foreign press corps—and their local staffs—that they, too, should heed the lines of censorship set by the Chinese government.

With the traditional press tightly controlled, the job of reporting on rural protests and mass disturbances has been taken up increasingly by members of China’s emergent civil society—activists, lawyers, and intellectuals who believe strongly that the information deserves a place in the public debate, and who work outside the censorship machine.

Farmers want to use the media, but the media can’t report their issues. Often, with the help of scholars and lawyers, the news comes out in overseas Web sites,” said Beijing-based legal scholar Li Baiguang, who has traveled the country educating farmers on their rights to pursue legal redress.

This kind of samizdat press relies heavily on the Internet, a point not lost on the central government, which issued a fresh set of Web restrictions in September 2005. Added to the list of banned content—which already included news and commentary that harmed state security or made reference to banned religious sects such as the Falun Gong—were material that “illegally incites” gatherings or demonstrations, and material distributed in the name of “illegal civil organizations.” The additions were a clear attempt to clamp down on the use of technology to organize and report on rural discontent.

The government’s harder line was evident in fall 2005, when it cracked down on activists’ efforts to aid and document a campaign by residents of Taishi—a dusty village at the ragged edges of Guangzhou, one of China’s richest cities—to oust their top elected official, Chen Jinsheng.

Villagers had initiated a peaceful signature campaign to recall Chen, whom they accused of misconduct in the sale of land seized for this new power plant in Dingzhou sparked village discontent and a violent backlash.
A Camera as Witness

When documentary filmmaker Ai Xiaoming read online accounts of the recall campaign in Taishi, she packed up her video camera and headed to the village. Ai, who is also a gender studies professor at Zhongshan University, intended to document the role of women in village politics for use in her classes.

She found residents very willing to talk. “When there was an event, the villagers would call me and ask me to be there,” she said. “They thought my camera could be their testimony.”

Ai was there on September 7 to capture the extraordinary scene of Taishi villagers, many of them elderly and illiterate, gathering to put signatures on a petition to hold a recall election. The mood turned dark, though, in the days that followed. In an essay published in Biting Dian—just hours before government censors shut down coverage of the recall—Ai detailed a litany of arrests, beatings, threats, and printouts on a petition to hold a recall election. Print and broadcast media in the southern city made a strong initial effort to cover the recall. Southern Metropolis News chronicled the campaign in a series of articles, including a two-page spread topped by a striking photograph of Feng speaking into a bullhorn. The piece appeared on September 12—the same day that hundreds of riot police used water cannons to disperse the squatters at the budget office, arrested villagers, and confiscated documents.

Much of the ensuing coverage was heavily edited for ideological correctness. By mid-September, editors in Guangzhou had received orders from propaganda officials that Taishi coverage was over; henceforth only official reports would be published.

“Online reports had also provided timely, if emotionally charged, information about the village campaign. Beijing-based activist Yang Maodong, under the pen name Guo Feixiong, was among several legal scholars posting regular dispatches and essays on Internet bulletin board systems such as the popular Lunnon. It was this set of activists and scholars, along with the villagers themselves, who eventually bore the brunt of the government crackdown at Taishi. On September 13, Guo disappeared. Villagers reported seeing him in a detention center, huddled under a blanket. Local authorities accused him of ‘sending news overseas’ and ‘gathering crowds to disturb social order.’ They force-fed him when he refused to eat. Two weeks later, authorities shut down Lunnon after removing all content related to Taishi. It was clear by that time that local officials had the support of the central government. Police and young men on motorcycles roamed the village, harassing and assaulting any activist, lawyer, or journalist who turned up.

In October, newspapers in southern China carried an official version of the incidents at Taishi that blamed the recall attempt on a misunderstanding caused by a few troublemakers. “Faced with the facts,” this account read, “most villagers realized that the original reasons for the recall no longer existed and therefore told the village recall committee that they wished to withdraw the motion.”

Some Guangzhou-based journalists who covered events at Taishi remain under government surveillance, and an editor at Southern Metropolis News was sacked. The activist Guo was released from jail in December but now lives under the watch of state security agents who track his moves and his communications. He has been beaten several times by police and hired thugs, prompting dissident lawyer Gao Zhisheng to organize a hunger strike in protest. Dozens of activists involved in the hunger strike have disappeared.
A Yemeni editor's decision to reprint cartoons of Muhammad sparks government reprisals. Other cases abound.

By Ivan Karakashian

When Yemen Observer Editor Mohammed al-Asaadi gathered his editors February 1 for their regular meeting to pick the top story for the next edition, the choice seemed clear. Thousands of Palestinians were demonstrating in Gaza, a retail boycott of Danish goods was gaining momentum, and Saudi Arabia and Syria had just withdrawn their ambassadors to Denmark. The issue that sparked the discontent—a Danish newspaper’s publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad—that sparked the discontent—a Danish newspaper’s publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad—had become the talk of the world.

The language of the drawings, in black and white and reduced size, with large Xs overlaid on each, as part of multiple-page coverage of the controversy. The editors wanted to denounce the cartoons, explain to the mainly foreign readership of the Yemen Observer why they elicited outrage among Muslims, and to show readers exactly what was under protest. The decision to reprint a small selection was unanimous among the editors, some of whom objected only to obscuring the drawings with Xs. Al-Asaadi, described by colleagues as a devout Muslim, insisted on the markings to make clear the paper’s view that they were inappropriate.

The February 3 issue included a front-page news story, along with commentary and sidebars on three inside pages. The Observer’s main editorial decried the drawings as an insult to Islam. The obscured cartoons ran on page 11, next to a photo of people boycotting Danish goods.

The issue was distributed widely, and for three days there was no adverse reaction. Then al-Asaadi received a phone call informing him that the Ministry of Information had suspended his paper’s license to publish. “A friend of mine called from Rome and told me Reuters reported that our license was suspended,” al-Asaadi said in an interview with the Committee to Protect Journalists. “I had no idea because the Ministry of Information did not tell me the paper was closed.”

But closed it was, he soon learned, as it remained for three months. The prosecutor for press and publications in Sana’a summoned al-Asaadi and Faris Abdullah Sanabani, the paper’s publisher and a media advisor to President Ali Abdullah Saleh, for questioning on February 11. Sanabani was relieved of responsibility, but al-Asaadi was detained for printing materials deemed offensive to the Prophet. The prosecutor told al-Asaadi’s lawyer that the journalist was being held for his own protection.

Al-Asaadi spent the next 12 days in a poorly ventilated basement cell, along with a dozen or so other detainees. At night he found it difficult to breathe amid clouds of cigarette smoke. Having never spent a day in prison before, the experience shocked him; he kept a daily journal as a means of coping. The attorney general later charged al-Asaadi with insulting the Prophet under both the penal code and the press law and released him on bail. At least 14 private lawyers recruited by Sheik Abdul Majid Zindani, chairman of Islah Shura Council, filed complaints against al-Asaadi and called, at least indirectly, for his execution. Yemeni law permits private individuals to take a criminal case to court if they believe their civil rights have been infringed. Al-Asaadi faces severe jail time and a possible death sentence if they believe their civil rights have been infringed. Al-Asaadi faces severe jail time and a possible death sentence for his editorial decision.

The controversy began last September when the Danish daily Jyllands-Posten published 12 caricatures of Muhammad, one of them depicting the Prophet wearing a bomb-shaped turban with a lit fuse. The publication caused anger in the Muslim world, where many consider Muhammad Shaher Hussein, the deputy information minister, a small Christian evangelical weekly based in Norway, and then republished by publications across Europe and the World Wide Web. By February, protests, some of them violent, were reported in several cities.

Throughout the Muslim world, a number of publications printed versions of one or more of the cartoons for various reasons: to denounce them, to mobilize protests against them, or to appeal against the violence they sparked. Many of the publications were targeted as a result, becoming easy prey for governments seeking a pretext to retaliate against the press, curry favor with Islamists, and deflect public attention from domestic problems.

Worldwide, the Committee to Protect Journalists found that at least nine publications were closed or suspended and that at least nine publications were closed or suspended and that at least nine publications were closed or suspended and that at least nine publications were closed or suspended and that at least nine publications were closed or suspended and that at least nine publications were closed or suspended...
Article 103 of the Press and Publications Law of 1990, which prohibits “printing, publishing, circulating, or broadcasting anything which prejudices the Islamic faith and its lofty principles or belittles religions or humanitarian creeds.” They also face penal code charges.

“The government sees us becoming more independent and increasingly writing about sensitive issues against the government’s interests,” al-Asaadi said. His newspaper, while often sympathetic to the president, has also reported on alleged corruption in the Yemeni foreign service. “The message to the Yemeni press,” al-Asaadi said, “is that the government can mimic these circumstances and carry out the same sort of measures when the press does something they don’t like.”

But the press itself played into the hands of government. During al-Asaadi’s first hearing in the General South Court in Sana’a on March 8, prosecution lawyers seemed to call for al-Asaadi’s execution by recounting a story in which Muhammad praised a companion for killing a woman who had insulted him. The prosecution team also seeks financial compensation—$4 million for what’s happening to us. We played a role,” said al-Asaadi, who cited his own case as an example. “During my initial arrest, the Yemeni press didn’t provide further information or try to clarify the context, reporting simply that I had published the cartoons.”

Worldwide, Arrests and Shutdowns

Here is a rundown of reprisals worldwide in the cartoon controversy. Except where noted, the actions came in response to publishing versions of one or more of the cartoons.

- Countries where reprisals were reported: 13
- Journalists criminally charged: 10
- Newspapers suspended or closed: 9
- Assault, harassment cases: 3
- Censorship orders: 2

Africa:

- Algeria: Two editors criminally charged.
- Morocco: Government organized demonstrations against cartoons.
- South Africa: Two newspapers suspended.

Asia:

- Belarus: One newspaper suspended.
- Russia: Two newspapers closed.
- Saudi Arabia: Newspaper suspended.
- Yemen: Three newspapers suspended. Four journalists criminally charged.

For details on these cases, visit www.cpj.org.

Defense lawyers Khaled Al-Anees and Mohammed Naji Allaw, standing left to right at the podiums, want to present the drawings in their support. … Al-Asaadi was defending the Prophet, and he should be found innocent.”

Context is at the root of the case: The defense wants the cartoons to be judged as part of the Observer’s full coverage, including the accompanying text and the placement of the drawings. The attorney general and prosecution team have argued that al-Asaadi should be judged on the published drawings alone.

West Court in Sana’a on March 8, prosecution lawyers seemed to call for al-Asaadi’s execution by recounting a story in which Muhammad praised a companion for killing a woman who had insulted him.

The prosecution team stated further demands in a second hearing on March 22. “When the Yemen Observer published the pictures they were aware of the anger caused by them,” according to a statement read in court by the prosecution. “We demand the punishment of its editor-in-chief, the permanent closure of the paper, and for Mohammed al-Asaadi to be banned from writing for newspapers forever.” The prosecution team also seeks financial compensation—for itself—because of the psychological trauma the Yemen Observer allegedly caused, according to the statement.

Mohammed Naji Allaw, a lawyer with the National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms, is helping defend al-Asaadi. “The intention of the Yemen Observer was to criticize the Danish press,” Allaw told CPJ, “He did not intend to insult the Prophet: he did not intend to republish the cartoons in their support … Al-Asaadi was defending the Prophet, and he should be found innocent.”
North Korea leads the dishonor roll of the world’s most censored countries, a new CPJ analysis shows. These nations share several traits: They disregard citizens’ safety by withholding information, as in Burma, where the government stifled coverage of the 2004 tsunami. Leaders have zero tolerance for criticism: In Belarus, two dozen reporters were jailing for covering election protests in 2006. News media are nearly all owned or controlled by governments—no independent news outlet, for example, operates in Libya. And state-controlled media promote a cult of personality, as witnessed in Equatorial Guinea, where the president is called “the country’s God.” The full report is now online at www.cpj.org/censored.

CENSORSHIP BY THE NUMBERS:
1. Independent journalists in North Korea.
2. Months that Burmese magazine Han Thit was banned for running a Valentine ad promoting “negative” values.
3. Year the Turkmen government closed public libraries and banned foreign publications.
4. Broadcast media not owned by the Equatorial Guinean government. RTV-Asona is owned by the president’s son.
5. Private news outlets in Libya.
6. Year Eritrea shut down all private news outlets and imprisoned 11 journalists.
8. Reporters for foreign media who were forced to flee after a violent 2005 crackdown in Uzbekistan.
10. Belarusian newspapers printed outside the country and smuggled back in.

To determine the worst offenders, CPJ judged press freedom conditions in dozens of countries according to 17 criteria. Criteria included: absence of independent media, existence of censorship regulations; state-sponsored violence against journalists; jamming of foreign news broadcasts; restrictions on Internet access; limits on journalists’ mobility; interference in production and distribution of publications; and existence of laws forbidding criticism. Countries on the list met at least nine of 17 criteria.

For full coverage, visit www.cpj.org/censored

THE WORLD’S 10 MOST CENSORED COUNTRIES
‘Poison,’ Politics, and the Press

In Ethiopia’s toxic political climate, Zenawi’s government sweeps up journalists and shuts down newspapers.

By Julia Crawford

The journalists are the most notable example of a government crackdown on the press that began in November when postelection street protests drew a show of official force, violence flared, and more than 40 died. The government issued “wanted lists” of opposition party leaders, editors, and writers; journalists who weren’t arrested went into hiding. Direct government orders and indirect pressure were blamed for the closing of more than half of the newspapers that once published in the capital. Self-censorship is rife among those still publishing.

The government alleges that the editors and reporters were part of an opposition conspiracy to overthrow the “constitutional order.” The genocide charges rest on assertions that the journalists’ work harmed members of the ruling coalition, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front, and the Tigrayans who form its dominant ethnic group.

Many of the shuttered publications did advance the views of the opposition, featuring numerous interviews with party leaders and editorials critical of the government’s handling of the May 2005 parliamentary election, according to interviews and a review of published material. But the government has disclosed no evidence linking published material to acts of violence, nor has it offered any substantiation that the journalists were motivated by anything other than what they saw as their work responsibilities, the Committee to Protect Journalists has found.

Evidence has been presented that treason or genocide were planned or occurred, CPJ found. The charges have enormous emotional resonance in Ethiopia, which fought a bitter war with neighboring Eritrea, and where ethnicity is part of the political landscape. The defendants were not allowed to post bail because of the severity of the charges, enabling the government to effectively silence these critics during their court case. By most accounts, the trial, which began in February, could last many months or even years.

The imprisoned journalists—several of whom were interviewed by CPJ with the government’s permission—said they were doing their jobs in criticizing the administration of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. “We’re not against this government,” Fassil Yenealem, the jailed publisher of Addis Zena, told CPJ. “It is through this government that we began to write. But when the government sees people starting to demand more democracy, freedom of expression, and development, they think it’s the fault of the press.”

Governing officials stress that there was no private press until the current administration toppled Haile Mariam’s notorious Derg regime in 1991. In an interview with CPJ, Zenawi said his government has tried to build democratic institutions, including a free press, even though much of the private media “is in effect a party organ of the opposition.”

Until recently, Western donors regarded Zenawi as a reform-minded leader who had put his troubled country on a path that could be emulated by others in Africa. With a population of more than 70 million, Ethiopia is one of Africa’s most populous nations. It is also the seat of the African Union and of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The United States regards Zenawi as an important partner in its fight against terrorism, and British Prime Minister Tony Blair gave Zenawi a seat on his advisory commission for Africa.

But if Zenawi’s democratic credentials compared favorably to those of his predecessors, his government has never had a good press freedom record. Ethiopia was an underdog journalist among journalists throughout much of the 1990s, and it drove scores of reporters and editors into exile. The government has a long record of arresting journalists under a restrictive press law, which imposes criminal sanctions for defamation and the publication of news that authorizes deem “false.” Editors routinely have multiple press law charges pending against them.

Until recently, the number of journalists imprisoned in absentia with treason, Ethiopia is now the third-leading nation just showing under a robe, Serkalem Fassil appeared shy and scared as she talked about life in Addis Ababa last year.

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia scarf tied around her head and her five-month pregnancy just showing under a robe, Serkalem Fassil appeared shy and scared as she talked about life in Addis Ababa last year.

An Ethiopian officer prevents a photographer from taking pictures of a police sweep following protests in Addis Ababa last year.

An Ethiopian officer prevents a photographer from taking pictures of a police sweep following protests in Addis Ababa last year.

A 14 journalists held in this crowded, sweltering prison alongside dozens of political opposition leaders. They are being tried jointly for genocide and treason, charges that could bring life imprisonment or the death penalty.

Julia Crawford is CPJ’s Africa program coordinator.

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi says his government wants to encourage press freedom, but journalists went too far.

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi says his government wants to encourage press freedom, but journalists went too far.
Moereda survived the November crackdown but his paper, the Amharic-language weekly Tömar, did not. Printers refused to publish it, Moereda said. On this day in March, he also described frequent government harassment and intimidation. “For the last four months I cannot move freely, the security forces follow me,” he recounted. “The first harassment is smooth; they ask you politely to work with them. Then they accuse you of being a member of the opposition, and they use force.”

Shortly after meeting with CPJ, Moereda fled the country. It was just in time to escape a jail sentence suddenly imposed under the press law for an opinion piece he published five years ago. Fewer than 10 private newspapers, most of them weekly, are now publishing in Addis Ababa, compared with more than 20 before the November crackdown. Eight newspapers were shut as a result of criminal indictments and the jailing of their top journalists. Several others have been blocked from publishing because the government pressured their printers, local journalists told CPJ. The government denies applying such pressure.

A CPJ delegation—including the Johannesburg-based journalist and CPJ board member Charlayne Hunter-Gault, and Charles Onyango-Obbo of Kenya’s Nation Media Group—heard about ongoing harassment in a series of March interviews with journalists, lawyers, and diplomats. Fear and suspicion were evident. Local journalists were reluctant to meet the CPJ delegation in public places; several spoke only on condition that their names be withheld; telephone interviews were avoided because fear of wiretapping was widespread. Political tension was heightened by a series of small explosions in the capital. Although the government blamed the blasts on the opposition and on neighboring Eritrea, no one claimed responsibility for them.

Local journalists said they were especially chilled by the government’s unprecedented charges against their colleagues under the criminal code with crimes carrying possible death sentences. As repressive as the press law is, fewer than 10 private newspapers, most of them weekly, are now publishing in Addis Ababa, compared with more than 20 before the November crackdown. Eight newspapers were shut as a result of criminal indictments and the jailing of their top journalists. Several others have been blocked from publishing because the government pressured their printers, local journalists told CPJ. The government denies applying such pressure.

The government appeared to open yet another offensive in February, when police detained hundreds of people in what they called an antiterrorism sweep. Among those arrested was media lawyer Berhanu Mogese, who had offered pro bono services to imprisoned journalists. A colleague, Teshehne Gabre-Mariam Bokan, told CPJ that Mogese was arrested the day after he met with visiting European Union envoy Louis Michel.

Authorities appeared to step up enforcement of the press law as well, imposing prison terms and fines in cases that date back several years or stem from technical infractions. Journalists Leykun Engeda and Abraham Gebrekidan are serving sentences of 15 months and one year respectively for publishing “false news” in articles from 1999 and 2002, according to CPJ sources. Ibeyi Demekse, former editor-in-chief of the defunct Amharic-language weekly Tarik, was fined in February for failing to print the name of the newspaper’s deputy editor on its masthead in one edition. He spent six days in jail before enough money was raised to pay the fine.

Zenawi acknowledged that relations between the government and private press have long been confrontational, but he said the treason allegations were different. “They went beyond their normal bias and went for the jugular,” he told CPJ. “They became part and parcel of the day-to-day preparation for the insurrection after the elections.”

The defendants in the treason trial are charged with “outrage against the constitution and the constitutional order.” The indictment, or “charge sheet,” accuses the journalists of working with the opposition CUD, declaring the elections fraudulent, calling for violence, and “disseminating false accusations to create public distrust of officials and transmitting messages that cause conflict among people.” The journalists also face the charges of “impeachment of the defensive power of the state” by sowing divisions in the armed forces.

Genocide is the final charge against the journalists. Home to dozens of ethnic groups, notably Amharas, Tigrayans, Oromos, and Somalis, Ethiopia has indeed seen ethnic tensions flare into violence. Tigrayans form the base of the ruling EPRDF, while the opposition CUD draws substantial support from the Amharas. The CUD platform called for constitutional reforms to effectively abolish Ethiopia’s “ethnic federalism,” under which state boundaries are drawn along ethnic lines.

Fighting Words?

Here are English translations of excerpts from two editorials cited by the Ethiopian government as evidence against journalists being tried for treason.

Ethiop, August 17, 2005:

“The constitution clearly states that a human being cannot lose his or her life except in one way. Article 15 reads: ‘Every person has the right to life. No one shall lose his life except under penalty for a capital offense.’ Was a legal provision ever invoked before those 40 innocent young kids were massacred in pub- lic? If the rulers violate their own constitution, and if the opposition then violates the constitution in order to save the country from a crime, who should be the one responsible for a crime?”

“There cannot be free elections until the electoral board, which is a stooge of the EPRDF (ruling party), is dismantled. Justice cannot be found in the courts that are governed by EPRDF cadres and are filled with those who have enriched themselves with embezzle- ment. Getting rid of these generals through a national coalition government would indeed bring about last- ing peace and stability.”

Addis Zena, September 19, 2005:

“The people of Ethiopia have clearly been robbed of their voices. A party or a government that conspired to rob the voice of its own people should never be given legitimacy. Even if it wants to stay in power, the people would only chant, ‘Thief! Thief!’ and would not let it happen. And because the electoral board has been the main organizer and accomplice of such rob- bery, it should be denounced and should lose its credibility.”

“Opposition parties must provide wise leadership in recovering the voice of the people from the party that has stolen it in order to stay in power.”

The government’s genocide charges, however, are vague and unsubstantiated. The prosecution cites the be- ing of one Tigrayan individual, an arson attack against another, “acts causing fear and harm to the mental health of members of the ethnic group,” and “indirect and direct acts causing harm to members and supporters of the EPRDF by excluding them from social interactions.”

The charge sheet cites no evidence linking journalists to these incidents, which do not themselves appear to con- stitute genocide. The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.”

As evidence against the journalists, the government has cited more than 20 editorials and more than a dozen press interviews with CUD leaders. At CPJ’s request, ChiefProsecu- tor Shemelis Kemal provided a sampling of 12 of the pieces in the original Amharic. CPJ analyzed English translations of the pieces. While the editorials are antigovernment, some harshly so, none calls for violence and none makes reference to ethnic aggression. CPJ found no evidence to support the prosecution’s contention that the pieces were intended to provoke acts of violence or genocide.

Amare Aregawi, editor of The Reporter, one of the few private newspapers that have published without interrup- tion, said much of the postelection newspaper coverage was shoddy and exploited public tensions. But, he said, “There is no evidence that I would call treason myself.” Areg- awi said government authorities typically refuse to speak to the private press. When Zenawi spoke with invited domestic reporters this year, the prime minister noted that it was the first such meeting in 14 years.

That breakdown is symptomatic of the deeper political divide. “The press is a reflection of politics,” Aregawi said. “There’s no tolerance. It’s ‘you are either with us or against us,’ that is what has been the case.” Zenawi, who acknowledged a “poison” in his government’s relationship with the press, said much the same. “We are aware that the poison is not merely between the press and the ruling party,” the prime minister said. “It’s a reflection of the overall tension between some in the opposition and the ruling party.”

Most of the jailed journalists said that they would not offer a defense because they believe the charges are base- less and the proceedings politicized. Sitting in Kilofi Prison, the jailed publisher Fasil Yenealem was asked if he had a message for the prime minister. “The journalists should be released,” he said. “Banning the press means ban- ning democracy. The prime minister has done some very good things in the last 14 years. The media are not against the government but against injustice.”

For continuing coverage of Ethiopia, visit www.cpj.org.
ISTANBUL, Turkey

Even when he is trying to be conciliatory, Hrant Dink gets in trouble. The managing editor of the only Armenian newspaper in Turkey was convicted in a criminal court last year for “insulting Turkishness.” Ironically, the article in the weekly Agos for which he was convicted was an appeal to diaspora Armenians to let go of their anger against Turks for the mass killing of Armenians during World War I.

“This is a political decision because I wrote about the Armenian genocide and they detest that, so they found a way to accuse me of insulting Turks,” Dink told the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Dink, a Turkish citizen who has been at the helm of Agos for all of the bilingual Armenian-Turkish newspaper’s 10-year existence, has appealed the verdict in Turkey and is ready to take the case all the way to the European Court of Human Rights to clear his name.

“If in this case I am not acquitted I will not live in this country anymore,” he said. Dink was convicted under Article 301 of the penal code, which forbids denigrating Turkish identity and state institutions. The verdict came the same month that Turkey opened formal negotiations to join the European Union, whose officials criticize Article 301 as incompatible with EU norms on freedom of expression. Yet several other journalists have been charged under Article 301 in recent months, all at the urging of influential nationalist lawyers.

“The state of press freedom in Turkey today depends on a battle between those forces who believe in the European Union and want to change the law and practices … and conservatives, the military, and the bureaucracy, who fear losing their privileges if there is a change in the status quo,” said human rights activist Sanar Yurdatapan, head of the Istanbul-based Initiative for Freedom of Expression.

Dink’s prosecution followed a series of articles in early 2004 dealing with the collective memory of the Armenian massacres of 1915-17 under the decaying Ottoman Empire. Ottoman military forces, allied with Germany, killed thousands of Armenians and deported others, accusing them of sympathizing with invading Russian forces. Armenians call the killings the first genocide of the 20th century, a term Turkey rejects.

Dink suggested ways for Armenians, particularly those in the diaspora, to move on, saying that continuing rage against Turks was a poison in Armenian blood. He urged them to rid themselves of the poison and “turn to the new blood of independent Armenia.” Turkish nationalists seized on the reference to poisoned blood associated with Turks and found a prosecutor to bring the case.

They even found a way of prosecuting him for commenting on the proceedings.

In October, Dink called the Article 301 charges politically motivated, and the statement was picked up by the Turkish press. This prompted the Turkish Union of Lawyers, a nationalist group led by lawyer Kemal Kerincziz, to initiate another criminal case under Article 288 of the penal code for attempting to influence the outcome of judicial proceedings. “It is weird,” Dink said, “because this statement of mine was published and transmitted by many newspapers and TV channels in the mainstream media. A case was not opened against them.”

Dink’s appeals received an important boost in February when the chief prosecutor’s office of the Supreme Court of Appeals said the October verdict was based on “faulty assessments” and called for it to be overturned. Although the opinion was not binding, analysts doubt the court would ignore the chief prosecutor’s recommendation. Dink would not comment on the prosecutor’s statement while the appeal was still pending.

Dink said he had always been in the sights of Turkish nationalists, but the past year saw an escalation in their efforts. “The prosecutions are not a surprise for me. They want to teach me a lesson because I am Armenian. They try to keep me quiet.”

Asked who “they” are, Dink replies unhesitatingly, “the deep state in Turkey.”

This is not the moderate, Islamist-based government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan but secular nationalist forces supported by sections of the army, security forces, and parts of the justice and interior ministries.

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This is not the moderate, Islamist-based government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan but secular nationalist forces supported by sections of the army, security forces, and parts of the justice and interior ministries.


discussion withheld
In particular, the nationalists have pursued journalists who write critically on five major areas: Ataturk, the Armenian killings, separatist Kurds, the security forces, and the Turkish presence in northern Cyprus.

Dink managed to tread on two of these landmine issues in 2004 when Agos reported that Ataturk’s adopted daughter Sabiha Gokcen was Armenian by birth. Gokcen, who died in 2001 at age 88, was a modern Turkish feminist icon. She won international fame as the country’s first woman combat pilot. Official histories say that Ataturk adopted her in 1925 after meeting her during a visit to Bursa in western Turkey. Agos published claims by an Armenian, Hripsime Sebilciyan Gazalyan, who said that she was Gokcen’s aunt. She said Ataturk had taken her niece from an orphanage in the southeastern town of Sanliurfa where the child had been sent after losing her parents in the Armenian massacre.

The story incensed the deep state. Protesters jammed the entrance to Agos offices and newspapers reported that Dink had received anonymous death threats. “I have written about the 1915-17 killings, but that got less reaction than the piece on Ataturk’s daughter,” Dink noted. “Sabiha Gokcen was a hero, a myth for Turkish women. By publishing that she was an Armenian, that myth was shuttered.”

For an iconoclast, Dink is remarkably mild-mannered. “I appear often on Turkish television talk shows. I try to be cool-headed and get my message across,” he said. The television appearances are part of a strategy to reach beyond the estimated 60,000 Armenians left in Turkey to ordinary Turks. Agos has a circulation of just 6,000.

Dink defends his constant revising of history. “I challenge the accepted version of history because I do not write about things in black and white. People here are used to black and white; that’s why they are astonished that there are other shades, too.”

He hopes his questioning will pave the way for peace between the two peoples. “If I write about the [Armenian] genocide it angers the Turkish generals. I want to write and ask how we can change this historical conflict into peace. They don’t know how to solve the Armenian problem.”

The flurry of cases brought by Kerincsiz and his fellow lawyers against journalists has brought the Turkish justice system into the world spotlight. After a chorus of international protests in December, prosecutors dropped a case under Article 301 against Turkey’s famed novelist Orhan Pamuk in January. He had spoken of the Armenian killings in a Swiss magazine interview. The opening of a freedom of expression case against five prominent journalists in February, also linked to the Armenian question, prompted another wave of foreign and domestic protest. Four of those cases were later dropped.

Dink does not think the tide has yet turned in favor of critical writers—“the situation in Turkey is tense”—but he believes they will prevail. “I believe in democracy and press freedom. I am determined to pursue the struggle.”

That means he will continue to shine a light into the dark corners of Turkish history, albeit cautiously. “These cases have not stopped me or intimidated me. I am not practicing self-censorship. That said, I am careful in my writing not to insult anybody.”

For more on this issue, read CPJ’s special report, “Nationalism and the Press,” at www.cpj.org.

Stories on Ataturk, the Armenian killings, separatist Kurds, security forces, and Cyprus are considered volatile.

An Open Case

Four years after Daniel Pearl was brutally murdered in Pakistan, questions and concerns remain.

By Abi Wright

O n the evening of January 11, 2002, Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl walked into a hotel near the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, and was introduced to a man who called himself Bashir. Pearl thought he was meeting a potential source who could help him get access to a radical Islamic cleric for a story on terrorism. In fact, that night Pearl met a British-born Pakistani militant with a track record of kidnapping Westerners. His real name was Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh. Instead of helping Pearl land a scoop, the meeting with Saeed set events in motion that led to his entrapment, kidnapping, and murder. U.S. officials say, at the hands of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the suspected mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

Four years on, significant progress has been made in bringing Pearl’s killers to justice. “We believe that most, but not all, of the key figures in Danny’s kidnapping and murder have either been killed or are in jail,” said Wall Street Journal Deputy Managing Editor John Bussey. But questions linger about who ordered the murder and what precisely happened. Saeed, the mastermind of the kidnapping, is on death row but is delaying his appeals amid allegations that he is protected by Pakistan’s powerful Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI). He has also violated Pakistani prison rules for death row inmates by making contact with the outside world from his prison cell. It seems uncertain he will ever be executed, according to the Pearl family, who are frustrated by the slowness of the investigation and want Saeed’s sentence carried out.

Pearl traveled to Pakistan at a particularly tense time, according to Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at the Rand Corp. in Washington. With the fall of the Taliban regime in neighboring Afghanistan in December 2001, militants were pushed out. “When they lost their geographical center of gravity in Afghanistan, they went to Pakistan, which was something of a haven because they had longstanding relations with existing (militant Islamist) groups.”

Daniel Pearl in a photograph taken by his captors.
On January 23, 2002, after exchanging e-mails with Saeed for nine days, Pearl was lured to a restaurant in the southern port city of Karachi. He got into a car he thought would take him to interview a refugee Muslim leader. Instead, he was kidnapped and held for a week before being killed. A video camera recorded the grisly act. The search for Pearl continued for several weeks until a copy of the video surfaced on February 21, 2002.

Pearl had been researching a radical Islamic leader, Sheikh Mujibur Ali Gilani, who had been linked to the so-called “shoe bomber” Richard Reid. Reid tried to blow up an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami in December 2001. To find his way to Gilani, Pearl did what reporters do every day—he reached out to new contacts and made himself accessible. That also made him a target, Hoffman said. “It is a question of opportunism and access. A reporter has to chase a story, making him or her more vulnerable.”

Journalists investigating militant groups and their connections to terrorist activities were not welcome, according to Pearl’s widow, Mariane, who traveled with him to Karachi and who wrote about her experience in her 2003 book, A Mighty Heart. A pattern of overlapping Islamic militant groups with ties to al-Qaeda emerges from the streets in the Pearl case. Three separate groups carried out the crime: the organizers of the kidnapping who lured Pearl; those who detained him; and those who carried out the execution.

Saeed turned himself in to police on February 12, 2002, but he told a court in Karachi that he had first surrendered to the ISI a week earlier in Lahore. What took place during his time with the ISI is not known, but Saeed’s association with the powerful intelligence agency appears to be protecting him, Pearl’s family said. “He is kind of untouchable,” Mariane Pearl told CPJ.

Saeed was a member of the militant Islamic group Jash-e-Mohammed whose goal is to unite Indian-administered Kashmir with Pakistan. He told police that he plotted to seize Pearl because he wanted to strike at the United States and embarrass Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf on the eve of his visit to Washington, The Journal reported.

Other arrests in the case include Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, al-Qaeda’s third-ranking operative, who was snared in March 2003 near Islamabad. U.S. officials say that he carried out Pearl’s execution. He is being held in U.S. custody at an undisclosed location.

For Pearl’s family, patience is running thin. “We are looking for closure,” Judea Pearl said. “We don’t know what happened that last few days and we have not received this information. We have been after (the U.S. State Department and the FBI) for four years to hear one scenario that will match all the clues, and we haven’t received it yet.”

Reports in the British and Indian press that Pearl continues to receive visitors and communicate with followers from jail disturb the Pearls. Normally, those sentenced to death are allowed only short visits with family members and are not permitted to speak to the press, Haq said. “It hurts that the regime is still operating from prison,” Pearl’s mother, Ruth, said.

Saeed has been linked to other crimes since he was arrested. After two assassination attempts on Musharraf, prison authorities moved Saeed from Hyderabad to Adiala prison near Islamabad in January 2004. He was questioned there about his connection to the man behind the plots, Amjad Hussain Farooqi, a militant with links to al-Qaeda. Farooqi, who also played a role in orchestrating Pearl’s kidnapping, died in a shoot-out with Pakistani security forces in September 2005.

More pressure is needed to resolve the case, Mariane Pearl said. “There is a lack of will to pressure Pakistani authorities by the U.S. government and by The Wall Street Journal,” she said. Bussey responded that his newspaper hired a lawyer in Karachi to advise it on the case and has contacted all relevant parties. “The Journal has urged a swift resolution of the prosecution of this case with President Musharraf, with other Pakistani government officials in Islamabad and those visiting the U.S., and with the Bush administration,” he said.

Three years ago, in June 2003, Musharraf told reporters that the Pearl case was “history.” Pearl’s parents responded in a letter to the editor of The Journal on July 8, 2003. They said their son’s case would remain an open wound until two conditions were met: “All those involved in the planning and execution of the murder are brought to justice and justice is served, and a monument to Daniel Pearl is erected in Karachi, reaffirming the ideals for which he stood: truth, humanity and dialogue.” Those steps remain.

Information on the Daniel Pearl Foundation is available at www.danielpearlfoundation.org.
Coaxing Uribe

In Colombia, months of reporting and lobbying produce a crucial declaration.

By Joel Simon

BOGOTA, Colombia President Alvaro Uribe didn’t look up from the documents he was reading as we ushered into a stark conference room in his campaign headquarters. After extending his hand for a perfunctory handshake, the president yanked it away, barely giving a photographer time to shoot a few frames.

As Americas Program Coordinator Carlos Lauría and I began to present his hand for a perfunctory handshake with Carlos Lauría, CPJ’s Americas program coordinator, but he issued an important statement supporting the press.

The appointment had been months in the making for the staff at the Committee to Protect Journalists. In October, CPJ issued a report describing pervasive self-censorship in the Colombian media. Written by Bogotá journalist Chip Mitchell, based on extensive interviews with three dozen reporters in several strife-ridden provinces, “Untold Stories” found that journalists routinely muzzle themselves because they fear physical retribution from leftist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary forces. Harassment by government troops and officials further impedes their work.

Journalists said they felt vulnerable and isolated because of a lack of support from the central government. Uribe and Vice President Francisco Santos have frequently complained about the press and have lashed out at critics in the media. Local officials, including military commanders, have accused critical journalists of having ties with the guerrillas. And while the number of Colombian journalists murdered has declined since Uribe took office four years ago, violence is still common and threats are rarely investigated.

I wanted to make sure the Uribe government was aware of the concerns raised in the report so I arranged to meet with Santos when I visited Bogotá last October. Because of Santos’ personal experience—he had been a top editor at the country’s most influential newspapers and said that journalists have been killed for their work over the past decade and, while only one murder was reported last year, journalists continue to be threatened. In the first two months of 2006 alone, CPJ documented four cases in which journalists fled their homes because of death threats, important news stories were going uncovered.

But Uribe was not in an accommodating mood, and he seemed adamant that he would not agree to the sort of public statement that we had drafted. After all, he argued, he had already spoken out in support of the press.

Then, as we pressed further, the conversation turned. If unwilling to sign off on our specific proposal, Uribe was eager to defend his press freedom record. As we took notes, he gave what amounted to a short speech in which he talked eloquently about the need for a critical press. He recognized the vital role of provincial journalists and said that journalists have the right to interview “terrorists”—his term for Colombia’s guerrillas and paramilitaries—even if the government doesn’t approve.

I pointed out that, given his personal commitment to press freedom, it would be logical to assume that any local official who interfered with the press was violating government policy. “It’s worse,” Uribe said. “They are committing a crime against democracy.”

The president, scraping his chair from beneath him, was done. He excused himself and left the room with little in the way of pleasantries. But we had gotten what we sought: an emphatic statement supporting the provincial press, acknowledging its need to cover all sides of the conflict, and condemning local officials who interfered. The statement, we hope, will set the tone for what will be a long and arduous effort to combat threats and self-censorship in Colombia. Santos, who lingered to chat, promised to conduct a series of meetings bringing together journalists and authorities to discuss the dangers of reporting in conflict areas.

By afternoon, Uribe’s comments had been distributed widely by CPJ and the president’s office. “We will not be content,” the president said, “until we can say that there is not one journalist threatened or murdered.” For our part, CPJ will continue to assist the many Colombian journalists under threat, fighting publicly for their right to report and working privately to ensure their safety.

And we will hold the president to his word.

To read “Untold Stories,” visit www.cpj.org.
A Disappearance in Nias

A reporter vanishes on an Indonesian island, pointing to the dangers facing the provincial press.

By Shawn W. Crispin

TELUK DALAM, Indonesia

The August day that Elyuddin Telaumbanua left on a reporting trip to southern Nias Island, the journalist handed his wife, Elisa, a photo of a convicted criminal. “If I do not return, find this man,” he said before heading south on his motorcycle. Nine months later, Telaumbanua has not returned home.

The man in the picture was Hakman Manao, younger brother of Hadirat Manao, an influential political figure in southern Nias. Telaumbanua, 51, had a reputation for gutsy reporting on the tropical island’s rough-and-tumble political scene in the Medan-based Berita Sore daily newspaper. He had won praise from his editors for past criminal activities, including an investigation into Hakman Manao’s past criminal activities, including armed robbery, according to his Berita Sore editors. He was also looking into the mysterious murder of one of Hadirat Manao’s former bodyguards, a man known as Bajo. Just before his abduction, Telaumbanua had left Bajo’s funeral in the village of Bawaganewo.

Telaumbanua had not been well received at the funeral, which was held at the home of Bajo’s brother, Jodi Talonovi. The brother had angrily denounced Telaumbanua with the use of an obscenity, according to a witness, a friend of the journalist named Ukrawan.

No more than 10 minutes after Telaumbanua and Ukrawan left the ceremony together, six motorcycle-riding assailants suddenly pulled alongside the journalist’s motorcycle and forced it to stop on an oceanfront road at around 5 p.m. The attackers, some of whom had attended the funeral, savagely attacked Telaumbanua, using pointed objects that caused him to bleed profusely from the nose and mouth, Ukrawan told the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Ukrawan, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, said he was also beaten but not seriously injured. He told CPJ that the assailants positioned a semi-conscious Telaumbanua on one of their motorcycles and rode away.

After the attack, Ukrawan said, he hitched a ride to the Teluk Dalam police station and tried to explain to the authorities what had happened. He said police did not take his report seriously and made him purchase a piece of carbon paper so that they could record his complaint. Police went to the crime scene only after several hours raises questions about his own role. Ukrawan said he and his family were later threatened because of what he saw, prompting him to move to northern Nias. He too, fled his home in southern Nias after getting anonymous death threats by telephone.

Hakman Manao has publicly denied any knowledge or involvement in the journalist’s disappearance. Hadirat Manao, the head of a people’s council in southern Nias, and Talonovi could not be located for comment for this story. Until March, Hadirat Manao was serving a prison sentence for disrupting elections last year.

Police told CPJ that there is no credible evidence to support allegations against either Manao brother. Talonovi was questioned, they said, but he was not held due to lack of evidence.

Shawn W. Crispin is a Bangkok-based journalist and consultant to CPJ’s Asia program.

A witness says police did not take his report seriously, making him buy carbon paper so they could record his complaint.
Telaumbanua's disappearance and the tepid response by police under-score the danger journalists face in Indonesia's often lawless and violent hinterlands. "Receiving threats is part of life for Nias journalists," said Dedy Ardiandy, head of the Alliance of Independent Journalists in Medan (AJI-Medan), said the security situation for Indonesia's provincial journalists has steadily deteriorated. "It's the definite downside to Indonesia's media freedoms."

According to AJI-Medan research, Indonesian police have threatened or harassed journalists operating in northern Sumatra in 28 documented cases since 2005. Indonesian courts have declined to hear any of the complaints, signaling the judiciary's reluctance to protect the press freedom guarantees in the national constitution. Journalists are less willing to speak out about threats from criminal elements, so accurate statistics on them are difficult to gather, Dedy said.

Many fear that Telaumbanua will eventually be added to that list of victims. With a population of about 500,000, Nias Island is perhaps one of Indonesia's most lawless and primitive territories. Rival tribes last went to war here in 1998, when scores of civilians were killed in spear-fought battles. In March 2005, a massive earthquake flattened the island, damaging 80 percent of its structures.

Decentralization measures, meanwhile, have unintentionally created a security vacuum as local elites often violently compete to assume the powers once held by departed Jakarta-appointed officials. In 2005, southern Nias' first-ever gubernatorial elections required four different rounds of voting before election officials were confident enough to declare a winner in mid-December. Violence, including arson attacks on ballot boxes and Molotov cocktails thrown into voting areas, badly marred the island's first true experiment with representative democracy. For months, international aid agencies restricted staff travel to the south, and as many as 10 people were believed to have been killed in election-related violence.

Telaumbanua, a Nias native, was a product of his environment. A former military officer and later a construction contractor, Telaumbanua turned to journalism only later in life, beginning in the 1990s. His daughter, Desi, confirmed the details of a Tempo magazine story that said Telaumbanua was imprisoned for six months between 1999 and 2000 on allegations that he was involved in the rape and murder of a young woman. He was released, she said, due to lack of evidence. Neither police nor others have cited that case as a possible motive in the disappearance.

Berta Sore editors said Telaumbanua had done well as a reporter. He had cultivated close contacts with some of southern Nias' most influential elites, including Hadirat Manao. But he did not refrain from crossing a well-culti- vated source: Telaumbanua was first to break the news that Hadirat Manao had falsified his academic records, which later contributed to Manao's disqualification from the governor race.

Even with the international atten-tion Telaumbanua's disappearance has generated, his wife and daughter fear that the case will never be solved and no one will be brought to justice. Without her husband's income, Elisa Sederhana Harahap sells a few vegetables in front of her house to try to make ends meet. That's not enough to pay the mortgage, she said, and the local bank is threatening to foreclose on the family house.

"We don't care about the money; we don't care about the house," she said, looking down at her husband's idled typewriter. "We just want to know what happened."
Sea Change?

After China shuts a Web site, the government engages in an online debate.

By Sophie Beach

I
n March, a popular literary and news Web site called Aegean Sea was ordered closed by authorities in eastern China’s Zhejiang Province. The closure of a Web site in China is hardly news these days. Since President Hu Jintao assumed power in 2003, his administration has launched a crackdown on an increasingly outspoken media and online community. But what transpired in the aftermath of Aegean Sea’s closure shows that the battle for control of China’s Internet may be shifting. Soon after the closure a debate raged online between the Web site’s supporters and provincial authorities who, in an unprecedented move, posted a lengthy reply to critics on an overseas news site, which itself is on the government’s list of banned sites.

Sophie Beach is the executive editor of China Digital Times, a news Web site covering China’s social and political transition and its emerging role in the world.

Authorities have taken the rare step of offering a public defense of Internet control.

many of which appeared on Boxun, a U.S.-based Chinese-language news site that often posts commentaries by pro-democracy advocates.

On March 15, another posting on Boxun caught the attention of Aegean Sea supporters. A lengthy unsigned statement, clearly written by a Zhejiang provincial official, accused the site of failing to register with authorities before posting news content, as required under the “Rules on the Administration of Internet News Information Services.” The letter further declared: “On March 9, it was learned that ’Aegean Sea’ Web site had been closed according to law by the relevant Zhejiang province authorities. Online, we can see that a small number of people are hyping the situation, spreading false rumors and misleading some people who don’t understand the truth. …

“To manage the Internet according to law and to close illegal Web sites is a customary international method. In terms of legislation, Germany promulgated an ‘Information and Telecommunications Services Law,’ Australia promulgated an Internet Censorship Law,’ and the United States passed a ‘Communications Decency Act,’ and ‘Children’s Internet Protection Act’ and other laws. When the relevant authorities penalized the Aegean Sea Web site and stopped the illegal behavior, it should not be criticized but should be supported.”

Such public official comment on the closure of a Web site was unprecedented. Notorious for their lack of transparency, propaganda officials in China commonly give verbal orders of censorship to avoid any paper trail. When Web sites are closed down, there is no means of recourse for the editors and no institutionalized process to appeal.

Yet in the past year, as Chinese Internet users and the international community have become more outspoken, government authorities have taken the rare step of offering a public defense of Internet control. In February, an official who supervises Internet affairs for the information office of the State Council declared, “If you study the main international practices in this regard you will find that China is basically in compliance with the international norm.” The following month, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao addressed the issue at a press conference, saying that China’s “Internet management was ‘consistent with the established international practice.”

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T
o many in China and elsewhere, this argument rings hollow. Soon after the Zhejiang official’s posting appeared, supporters of Aegean Sea posted angry responses, including an essay by “New Observer” that said: “You so admire the laws of Germany, Australia, America, and France, but have you looked into their democratic systems? These are the world’s most representative free democratic countries. You are so eager to strike up a comparison, but are you really confident enough to do so?”

Such a bold and direct challenge to authority can be a dangerous move in a country where political dissidents are harassed, threatened, or thrown in jail. But the Internet has given Chinese citizens some degree of anonymity and the support of close-knit online communities. “As long as you take care not to overstep certain political boundaries—whose location is never entirely clear—you have a great deal of freedom to express yourself in all kinds of ways, and to do all kinds of business,” said Rebecca MacKinnon, a fellow at Harvard University’s Berkman Center for Society and the Internet who studies the Internet in China. “You just have to take care that whatever your activities are, you don’t accidentally anger or threaten somebody who has a lot of power.”

Clearly Aegean Sea overstepped a boundary, and the editors do not expect the site to be reopened. Asked why the site was closed, Editor Lin Hui told Taiwan’s Central Broadcasting System: “They are afraid, afraid of expression and of the spirit that expression represents. … But the most important thing is not that the site was closed. Most important is that citizens awaken to realize their own rights—inhabit human rights, the right to free expression, and the right to publish.”

An Internet cafe in Beijing is filled with rows of computers and users. With 111 million of its citizens online, China’s government faces resistance in censoring the Internet.

Opposite: A pro-democracy demonstration in Beijing. The Internet has become a daily necessity for personal and professional use for young, educated people online, the Internet has hardly news these days. Since President Hu Jintao assumed power in 2003, his administration has launched a crackdown on an increasingly outspoken media and online community.
NORTH KOREA

"It's either the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday paper."