

News Roundup

August–October 2005

COMPILED BY CAROL K. WANG

CENSORSHIP

YAHOO'S COMPLICITY

Yahoo came under heavy criticism from journalists and human rights groups, including Human Rights in China, following revelations that the company supplied information to the Chinese government that assisted in the indictment of journalist **Shi Tao**. Shi was convicted of “revealing state secrets” and sentenced in April to ten years in prison. Court documents revealed that Yahoo Holdings (Hong Kong) Ltd. provided details of Shi's Yahoo e-mail account to the authorities. For additional information, visit HRIC's Shi Tao case file, <http://www.hrichina.org/public/highlight/index.html>.

DISNEY DISPUTE

Disney will not build a theme park in mainland China until it secures an agreement that allows it to broadcast Disney shows on Chinese television. The entertainment giant announced its decision in early September, following a new interpretation of existing media ownership regulations issued by the PRC government on August 1 in an effort to preserve Chinese culture and curb foreign influence. The interpretation bars foreign television channels, and also makes it more difficult for foreign companies to produce shows in China even if they have local partners, effectively limiting Disney's ability to develop a customer base in markets such as Shanghai and Beijing. (NYT)

DEATHS DECLASSIFIED

On September 12, the Administration for the Protection of State Secrets announced that it would no longer treat the number of deaths resulting from natural disasters as a state secret. The Administration described this reversal of a decades-long practice as a key step in building transparent government.

HK AND TAIWAN ACCENTS BANNED

Television presenters who mimic Hong Kong and Taiwanese accents on air are threatened with job loss under new guide-

lines released by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television on September 13. The new rules for presenters' on-air conduct stipulate, “Do not use regional dialects or imitate Hong Kong and Taiwanese accents. Except in situations of special need, radio and TV hosts across the mainland should use standard Putonghua in their programs.” (SCMP)

STRINGENT INTERNET REGULATIONS

The Chinese government took new measures to tighten censorship of Internet news services and bulletin boards through the Rules on the Management of Internet News and Information Services, which were issued by the State Council Information Office and the Ministry of Information Industry on September 25. The regulations, which update those issued in 2000, require Internet operators to re-register their news Web sites and monitor them for content that may endanger “state security” or “social order.” The law stipulates fines of up to \$3,700 for Web sites that provide news without government authorization, and broadens the definition of “news” to include “reports and comments on political, economic, military, religious or foreign policy and other social public affairs,” including news of protests, marches or demonstrations. The move is seen as an attempt to centralize control of all news sources under a state regulator. (WSJ, BBC, NYT, NBC, SD)

DETAINED

Police in Hebei reportedly detained two reporters from *Baixing Magazine*, an outspoken Beijing-based magazine, while they were en route to an interview in Nanwu County, Hebei Province on September 13. The reporters, **Cao Jing** and **Zhao Xianying**, were accused of carrying fake reporter identification cards, and were only released after nine hours of interrogation. The detention is widely regarded as related to the magazine's recent reports on corruption scandals in the Hebei government. (RFA)

SUSPENDED

The *Henan Commercial News* was ordered to suspend operations from September 17 to October 16 for running stories allegedly not based on fact, in particular the newspaper's reports on a mining accident in the province on August 19. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an international

media watchdog, condemned the Henan government for retaliating against the newspaper for reporting stories in the public interest. (VOA)

BIRD FLU UNREPORTED

China has seen at least six outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of bird flue in the last half of the year, but only Western news outlets are carrying reports. In late October, an outbreak occurred in Anhui Province and another in Hunan Province. An editor with a national daily said newspapers had been told to have reports vetted by authorities, and to publish no more than instructed as a means of preventing social panic that could reduce rural incomes. The State Council Information Office declined to comment on why the story was not carried in most domestic media, adding that the Hunan outbreak was reported in the *Agricultural Daily*. (Reuters)

WANG YI'S MICROPHONE

In October, it was reported that the personal blog of dissident writer **Wang Yi** was blocked after Deutsche Welle, a German radio station, nominated the site in two categories, the “Best Blog Chinese” and the “Reporters Without Borders Special Award,” in its Best of Blog Awards. Over the past six months, Wang had used a series of servers to host his site, repeatedly changing his domain name in an attempt to elude official censors. A professor at Chengdu University in Sichuan Province, Wang posted articles on sensitive topics such as human rights, most recently covering the Taishi Village protests. Wang told Radio Free Asia that he named his blog after a song lyric, “Who has taken my microphone away? Never mind. I still have my voice.” In response to the censorship of his blog, he said, “Of course it matters that the microphone has been taken away. But vocal chords are part of one's body. And the right to speak is an inalienable one; one which is laid down in black and white in China's constitution.” (RFA)

FOREIGN JOURNALISTS HARASSED AT TAISHI

Leu Siew Ying, a Malaysian national reporting for *South China Morning Post*, and French reporter **Abel Segretin** of Radio France Internationale, were punched and slapped by guards and thugs while covering a protest in Taishi Village, Guangdong Province in early

October. The journalists believed that their attackers were connected with the local government. Village residents told Agence France Presse that many plainclothes and uniformed police have been monitoring the village around the clock. They warned locals "not to cause trouble" by speaking with outside reporters. (AFP)

PROFESSOR'S TAISHI-RELATED SITE CLOSED

The Web site of **Ai Xiaoming**, a professor at Sun Yat-sen University, was closed after she came out in support of the Taishi villagers in their three-month dispute with the authorities in Panyu, Guangdong Province. The site was taken down on October 5 after a posting in which Ai recounted her visit to the village with two lawyers, during which one of the lawyers, Guo Yan, was chased by men on motorcycles and beaten. (SCMP)

CENSORED IN HAMBURG

On October 12, several Tibetans and their German supporters were prevented from displaying the Tibetan flag during a football match in Hamburg between Germany and China. Chinese stewards inside the AOL Stadium were monitoring the crowd for banners and placards critical of China. German security staff and police complied with the Chinese suggestion to forbid the Tibetans from displaying the flags, which were unfurled in protest against the Chinese authorities' use of the 2008 Olympics to "project a peaceful image of China to the world." (TYAE)

WIKIPEDIA BLOCKED

The Web site of independent online encyclopedia Wikipedia has been unavailable in several Chinese provinces since October 18. An error message appears when Internet users attempt to access the site, citing temporary connection problems for unknown reasons. Wikipedia was previously blocked by the Chinese authorities in June and September 2004 because of dissident political content. Censorship of the Web site coincided with the PRC's publication of its first white paper on democracy, released on October 19. (RSF)

SMS CRACKDOWN

The Ministry of Information Industry announced a one-month crackdown on mobile phone messages in October—including both short message service

(SMS) texts and voice messages. The government stated that the campaign was aimed at curbing messages containing pornographic and astrological content, as well as those with "provocative language" and that spread "subjects forbidden by the government." The notices gave no explanation of the criteria used to define provocative language or forbidden topics. Human rights activists described the move as another effort to suppress freedom of speech and other rights guaranteed by China's constitution. SMS messages have risen in number over the past year, with a predicted trillion messages to be sent in 2006. In recent months, SMS become a widely-used medium for protest organization and information dissemination. (AN)

DEATH PENALTY

Since 2003, the Supreme Court has rejected 7.21 percent of death sentences, ordering a retrial for lack of sufficient evidence, and changed 22.03 percent of the death verdicts to death with reprieve or life imprisonment. The exact numbers were not provided. (PD)

Over the last several months, there has been a series of announcements regarding the reinstatement of Supreme Court's power to review death sentences to avoid wrongful executions after the revelation this year of several of wrongful convictions. Experts say that slowing down the process and the rate at which the death penalty is administered could cut the number of executions by 30 percent. (Irish Times)

DRUG-TRAFFICKING CRIMES

Zhang Xiaoping and **Wei Jiquo** were sentenced to death by the Haikou City Intermediate People's Court in Hainan Province on August 4. Zhang and Wei were each convicted of trafficking about 2.5 kilograms of cocaine between Guangxi and Haikou. An accomplice, **Gan Xiaoming**, was sentenced to life imprisonment on the same charge. (LD)

Guo Jizong, **Peng Guowei** and **Zhang Fajian** were executed immediately after the Foshan Intermediate People's Court handed down death sentences against them on August 9. The three men were convicted of trafficking 77.9 kilograms of cocaine from Yunnan to Foshan. Two

accomplices, **Li Zhaoze** and **Wang Jiazhang**, were sentenced to life imprisonment. The drugs had been hidden inside four 12-foot high statues of the Goddess of Mercy weighing over ten tons each. Guo, Peng and Zhang had appealed the initial judgment in April 2004, but the Higher People's Court refused their appeal after investigation and questioning, and the case was sent back to the Intermediate People's Court for a final verdict. (CD)

The Sichuan Higher People's Court sentenced **Yang Dapeng** to death in late August. Yang was executed immediately after the Yibin City Intermediate People's Court handed down the final verdict. Yang was convicted of trafficking 647 grams of drugs from Burma to Guiyang, Guizhou Province in June 2004. (CRI Online)

In early September, the Fuyang City Intermediate People's Court in Anhui Province handed down death sentences against **Hou Zhanqi**, **Li Minshu**, **Hou Jinshan**, **Wang Jingzhou**, **Hou Jinji**, **Wang Xiaomei**, **Yang Lifen** and **Zhang Caiying**. Yang and Zhang were each given a two-year suspension. The individuals allegedly worked as a group led by 55-year-old Hou Zhanqi, which trafficked 22.6 kilograms of drugs from overseas to Fuyang between 2003 and July 2004. Hou's wife, son and sister were among those convicted. (LD)

On September 29, **Yang Najun**, **Liu Tianshun** and **Du Songhua** were executed following their conviction by the Xi'an Intermediate People's Court on November 18, 2004 on charges of smuggling heroin. The three were also deprived of their political rights and personal property. (XH)

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Li Jinbao, former chief executive of the Bank of China (Hong Kong), was sentenced to death with a two-year suspension by the Changchun Intermediate People's Court in Jilin Province on August 12. Liu was convicted of embezzling more than 14 million *yuan* between March 1996 and May 2003, and of taking 1.43 million *yuan* in bribes while running the Bank's Shanghai office and Hong Kong division. Several of Liu's colleagues were also given jail terms ranging from eight to 13 years. Sources say that Liu has filed an appeal; Liu's lawyers have refused to comment. (SCMP)

Li Shubin, an officer at the Chenzhou City Housing Pension Management Center,

was sentenced to death for taking bribes and embezzling public funds totaling ten million *yuan* between September 1999 and January 2004. The sentence was handed down by the Chenzhou City Intermediate People's Court in Hunan Province on August 24. Several of Li's colleagues were given jail terms ranging from two to 17 years. (Beijing News)

In early October, **Jin Wuneng**, chief of the mining bureau in Xingren Township, Guizhou Province, was sentenced to death for taking bribes and embezzling public funds totaling seven million *yuan* between September 1997 and August 2002. The sentence was handed down by the Intermediate People's Court in the Qianxinan Buyi and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Guizhou Province. Jin said he would appeal his sentence. (China EastDay)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ke Pengjie was sentenced to death by the Quanzhou People's Intermediate Court in Fujian Province on August 5 after being convicted of selling 44 children between 1999 and 2003. Heading a ten-person trafficking ring, Ke bought children, mainly girls, from rural villages and then sold them in Singapore and other countries. (Beijing News)

In mid-October, the Guizhou High People's Court handed down death sentences against seven leaders of a child abduction network that orchestrated the kidnapping of dozens of children in 2003 and selling them to families in other provinces. Forty-five members of the gang were arrested in 2004 after kidnapping 61 children in the street or from their homes. Only 25 of the children have been reunited with their families. (SCMP)

VIOLENT CRIMES

Yang Guoqu was executed on August 1, after the Yunnan People's High Court upheld the death sentence handed down by the Baoshan People's Intermediate Court. Yang was convicted of murdering his lover on June 14. (Beijing News)

Hu Bin, the leader of a crime ring in Anhui Province, was executed on August 2, immediately after the Anhui Provincial Higher People's Court delivered a final guilty verdict for a series of crimes including robbery and murder. Fifteen of Hu's accomplices were sentenced to jail terms ranging from six months to 19 years. (CRI Online)

The Wenzhou Intermediate People's Court in Zhejiang Province on August 12 upheld on retrial the death sentence previously handed down by the same court against **Yang Jinfu, Wang Weijian and Tu Jinan**. The three were convicted of murdering businessman **Zhou Zubao** and his niece in February 2003 and November 1999 respectively. They had appealed the initial death sentence handed down in July 2004, but in May 2005 the Zhejiang Provincial Higher People's Court ordered a retrial in the Intermediate Court. (Beijing News)

Also on August 12, **Guo Xinshun** was executed for the attempted murder of policeman Han Qianxin on May 15, 2004. The court heard that Guo tried to set Han on fire while he was receiving in-patient care at a traditional Chinese medicine hospital. Guo had previously been imprisoned for extortion and illegal possession of drugs. He was found guilty by the Intermediate People's Court of Baoji City, and the Shaanxi Provincial Higher People's Court upheld the lower court's ruling. (XH)

The Guangzhou City Intermediate People's Court sentenced a 19-year-old surnamed **Huang** to death with a two-year suspension on August 22 after finding him guilty of robbery and assault. Huang's accomplice, surnamed Li, was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment because he was under 18 at the time the crime was committed. On October 10, 2004, Huang, Li and another person robbed a young woman and threatened her with knives. When the woman attempted to escape, they cut off her hand and fled. Huang and Li were arrested sooner after the incident, while the third individual remains at large. (Ming Pao Daily)

Wang Changkun and **Yang Sunqin**, employees of an estate company in Shanghai, were sentenced to death with a two-year suspension on August 23 after being convicted of causing the death of an elderly couple. The two men and an accomplice, **Lu Peide**, had planned to burn down an old residential building as a scare tactic against residents who refused to abandon their homes for the estate company's redevelopment project. Seventy-year-old Zhu Yongkang and 71-year-old Li Xingzhi, a couple living in one of the building units, died in the fire. Lu turned himself in to the police after the fire. (Beijing News)

Chen Yao, Feng Jingqing and **Sun Shujun** were executed on August 25, immediately

after the Beijing No.2 Intermediate People's Court handed down death sentences that had been reviewed by the president of the Beijing City Higher People's Court. Chen, 26, was convicted of robbery and rape that took place between April 2003 and May 2004. He had previously served 18 months in jail for similar crimes in 1996. Feng, 29, was convicted of robbery and of murdering a 35-year-old woman on February 10, 2004. Sun, 40, was convicted of murdering a 31-year-old female friend after an argument. (CRI Online)

In early September, the Lanzhou City Intermediate People's Court convicted **Li Chunling** and two brothers, **Chen Changyin** and **Chen Changping**, of the mutilation and murder of three women in June and November 2003. The three were also accused of eating parts of their victims. The court sentenced the Chen brothers to death; two other accomplices were sentenced to 20 years in prison. (Beijing News)

Qian Junbo was executed on September 6 after the Hubei High People's Court upheld the death sentence previously handed down by the Xiangfan City Intermediate People's Court in May 2004 on charges of fraud and blackmail. In February 2004, Qian allegedly bought dozens of Mengniu brand packaged milk from supermarkets in Changsha, Hunan Province and Wuhan, Hubei Province, then injected poison into the packages, replaced them on the shelves and blackmailed the dairy company management for 200,000 *yuan*. Qian and his two accomplices were arrested in Wuhan and Shenzhen in April 2004. (CNA)

Wang Xike, 29, was sentenced to death by the Beijing No.2 Intermediate People's Court on September 6, after he was found guilty of murdering two school teachers. Wang was found to have broken into the home of the married couple, surnamed Li and Liu, on August 9, 2004, stealing cash in the amount of 1,100 *yuan*, as well as electrical appliances, then stabbing the couple when they discovered him. (LD)

Fu Hegong, 31, was sentenced to death by Beijing's No.2 Intermediate People's Court on September 9 on charges of murder, theft, rape and molestation committed between 2002 and 2004. Fu was found to have broken into a kindergarten on October 21, 2004 with the intention of burgling it, but then smothering a teacher and killing a 5-year-old boy with a fire extinguisher when

he was interrupted. Fu was also convicted of killing two other people with bricks and knives during an argument in 2002, and of stabbing a security guard to death during a robbery in 2004. (AP)

Lu Lei, 22, was executed immediately after the Sichuan High People's Court overturned his appeal on September 10. A teacher in primary school in Mianyang City, Lu was convicted of raping 32 girls and engaging in obscene acts in front of children during their physical education classes and after school. Parents of the victims became aware of the crimes in May 2004. The Mianyang City Intermediate People's Court handed down a death sentence after Lu's first trial in December. (AFP)

Dai Baogan, 28, was sentenced to death by the Fuzhou City Intermediate People's Court in Fujian Province on September 11 after being found guilty of murdering a 50-year-old doctor, Dai Chunfu. Dai Baogan had accused the doctor of malpractice in treating his illness, which he alleged had become more serious after taking what the doctor prescribed. Dai Baogan allegedly went to the hospital where Dai Chunfu worked and stabbed him to death on August 12. Dai has lodged an appeal to the High People's Court. (XH)

Lang Guanzhong and **Wei Jin** were executed on September 22 immediately after the Hohhot City Intermediate People's Court in Inner Mongolia convicted them of murdering Lang's mistress in April 2004. Lang, former chief of the Public Security Bureau in Hohhot City, had allegedly argued with his mistress, surnamed Li, after Li demanded that Lang divorce his wife and marry her. Lang was found to have murdered Li with Wei's assistance on April 14 after breaking into Li's house. (XH)

Wang Gongzuo, a 25-year-old man from Jiangsu, was sentenced to death on September 29 after the Beijing No. 2 Intermediate People's Court found him guilty of killing a retired Filipino oil company executive and his teenage daughter in Tiananmen Square in April 2005. The victims, Emmanuel Madrigal and Regina Mia, were visiting Beijing on a package tour. The motivation for the attack, undertaken in broad daylight, is not known, but according to a report posted on the Court's internal website, Wang, a farmer from Jiangsu Province, attacked his victims "to vent his anger against society." Wang waived his right to appeal after the sentenc-

ing. Four Filipino diplomats attended the trial. (China Post, SCMP)

The former Party Secretary of Xi'an's Ma'e Township, **Guo Tianjing**, was sentenced to death on October 8 after the Xi'an Intermediate People's Court found him guilty of murder. The court found that in mid-January, Guo went to a conference held in Xi'an, where he met Kou Shengfa, chief of a local drug supervision bureau in Lin Tong County. The court heard that on January 19, Guo drove Kou to a park to settle some personal dispute, and stabbed Kou to death after arguing with him. (SCMP)

Jiao Shouhui, a migrant worker in Beijing, was sentenced to death on October 12 after the Beijing No. 2 Intermediate People's Court found him guilty of murder. The court heard that Jiao stabbed his girlfriend to death in March after she demanded to break up with him. Jiao attempted to kill himself at the time, but was saved. (PD)

Also on October 12, the Meishan Intermediate People's Court in Sichuan Province sentenced 19 members of an arms-dealing gang on charges of rape, murder, extortion and illegal gambling committed between 2000 and 2004. The head of the gang, **Ren Bing**, and five henchmen, **Tian Zhi**, **Luo Zhengquan**, **Ma Jie**, **Chen Xiaoping** and **Yan Chenghong** were given death sentences, while the 13 others received sentences ranging from one to 10 years. (XH)

On October 13, the Intermediate People's Court of Haidong Prefecture in Qinghai Province handed down death sentences against four smugglers, **Ma Zeying**, **Ma Qi**, **Li Zhi** and **Tan Zhenming**, after convicting them of smuggling more than 1,000 guns from Pakistan to China between 1995 and 2004. Five accomplices of the group were given jail terms of 14 to 15 years, and four others were sentenced to death with two years' reprieve. (XH)

Wang Binyu, 27, a migrant worker from Gansu, was executed on October 19, after the Ningxia High People's Court approved the death sentence handed down by the Shizuishan Intermediate People's Court in June. Wang had been a construction worker for building contractor Chen Jiwei in Shizuishan for more than a year when he resigned on May 11 and complained to the city's labor bureau over 5,000 *yuan* in wages he was owed. The bureau brokered a meeting between Wang and Chen's repre-

sentative, Wu Xinguo, to settle the dispute. Wang and Wu argued over the terms of the settlement, and Wang ended up killing Wu and three family members. (SCMP)

COMPENSATED

She Xianglin, a man wrongfully convicted and imprisoned for 11 years on a murder charge, was award compensation of 460,000 *yuan* (\$56,700) by the Jingmen Intermediate People's Court on August 31. The compensation was for wrongful imprisonment, but did not include damages for mental suffering to She or his family, nor did it address the beatings he suffered in jail. She Xianglin had applied to the central government for compensation of more than 4.3 million *yuan* (\$530,000) in May, but later postponed the application because the current State Compensation Law has no regulations regarding compensation for mental harm. (CD)

LABOR

DISASTERS

A total of 693 miners were reported dead or missing in more than 218 mining accidents over a six-week period from the beginning of July to mid-August, according to the State Administration of Work Safety. This represented a 70 percent increase over the same period last year. (Reuters)

Twenty-four miners suffocated to death as a result of a gas buildup at the Xingfa Coal Mine in Wenshu Township, Yuzhou City, Henan Province on August 2. Of the 19 survivors, five were treated for gas poisoning. Repairs are underway in the colliery's shafts. (CD)

Flooding trapped 123 miners inside the Daxing Coal Mine in Xingning City, Guangdong Province on August 7. Many of the trapped miners were migrant workers from Hunan, Jiangxi, Guizhou and Hubei. The mine owner, who did not have a mining license, disappeared after the accident, but was apprehended by local police on August 10 and taken into custody along with the mine's manager, board chairman and chief technician. Sixty-nine officials related to mine operation at Daxing were ordered to report to central government investigators by August 10. The government initiated a top-level investigation, which was to continue over two to three months. (SCMP, FT)



Children mourn their father, He Wanfu, killed in the Daxing Colliery flood.

Photo: China Photos/Getty Images

A blast in a Shanxi Province mine on September 6 killed 17 miners and injured two. The accident occurred in the Zhike Township Coal Mine in Zhongyang County, which provincial records show had been closed for failing to meet safety production standards. Only 9 of the 26 miners on duty at the time of the accident survived. (CD)

A flooding accident on September 11 trapped 13 of 39 miners working underground at the Dahao Coal Mine in Tianzhu County, Guizhou Province. State media reported that the coal mine, which is licensed, produces 30,000 tons of coal annually. (CD)

Also on September 11, an explosion killed 14 miners at the Jinyuan Coal Mine in the Baoshan District of Shuangyashan City, Heilongjiang Province. Sixteen miners escaped, while one remained missing. Investigation determined that overheated cables sparked a fire that caused the explosion. (XH)

Twelve people were killed and 66 homes damaged by a "funnel-shaped" explosion in Mile County, Yunnan Province on the evening of September 12. Local authorities arranged for the provision of housing and other necessities for more than 320 villagers who were made homeless. (CD)

Ten migrant workers died from inhaling an unidentified gas in the Xiaomagou Molybdenum Mine in Gangtun Township, Huludao City, Liaoning Province. Nineteen migrants entered the mine illegally around 8 p.m. on October 2. While transporting

molybdenum ores to the entrance early the next morning, they fainted from breathing large amounts of unknown toxic gas. Nine of the workers revived around 1 p.m. on October 4, and reported the incident to the authorities. (XH)

At least 34 out of 53 miners were killed in a mining accident before dawn on October 3 in the No. 2 Coal Mine of Hebei Coal Industry (Group) Corporation Ltd, a large state-run enterprise in Hebei, Henan Province. The company is registered as being worth 4.6 billion *yuan*, running eight major mines with annual production of over seven million tons and revenues last year totaling 1.7 billion *yuan*. All of the mine workers had workplace injury insurance, entitling them to about 75,000 *yuan* (US\$9,000) in compensation. (AFP; SD, CD)

A coal mine explosion in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region on October 4 killed 14 miners. The victims were from Shaanxi Province, Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality. Twenty-five miners were on duty at 10:47 a.m. when the gas blast hit the joint-stock coal mine in Yatuer, Baichung County, on the southern slope of Mount Tianshan. Eleven survivors were treated at the county hospital for minor injuries. The mine, licensed with an annual capacity of 30,000 tons, was contracted to a private businessman two years ago. According to state regulations, the mine was supposed to be shut down by the end of 2005. (XH)

Also on October 4, at least 12 miners

died in a flood in the Longtan Coal Mine in Xiaojing Township, Guang'an City, Sichuan Province. Thirty-two miners were working underground around 9 p.m. when drilling struck a water-eroded cave or underground river. Only four miners escaped, while 16 remained missing. Built in June 2003, the mine is run by the Guang'an Energy Group Co. Ltd. of Sichuan Provincial Coal Industry Corporation, and has an annual production capacity of 550,000 tons. (XH)

Fifteen workers died in a blast at the Zhongxing Colliery in Qinglong County, Guizhou Province on October 23. Eight of the 41 miners on duty were killed immediately, while seven were trapped underground and assumed dead when rescue crews were unable to reach them after 20 hours. (AP)

Nine miners were killed and seven reported missing on October 27, after an explosion at the Dianzhangou Zhongxing Coal Mine in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. (AFP)

DISPUTES

Two elderly women were killed and 24 other people injured on October 7 when police suppressed a worker demonstration against the Chongqing Steel Plant. Workers were requesting severance pay of 2,000 *yuan* per person from the bankrupt steel plant, formerly one of China's top 500 industrial companies. China Labour Bulletin reported that an estimated 400 police officers attempted to halt the protest outside the Chongqing municipal government headquarters, kicking and beating some protesters after a police vehicle was overturned. Three protesters were detained. The police crackdown ended a series of protests that began on August 12, with participation by up to 2,000 workers. The former employees blamed corrupt management for causing the company's bankruptcy. (Kyodo News)

PETITIONS AND PROTESTS

According to government figures, 3.6 million people took part in 74,000 "mass incidents" in 2004, an increase of more than 20 percent on 2003. Most of these protests were disorganized and concentrated on local issues, such as land ownership, official corruption and environmental destruction. The increase, however, continues to alarm the authorities. (Guardian)

PLA PROTESTS

On the 78th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army's founding on August 1, veterans protested outside the army's General Political Department office, calling for reform to the social security system. Police reportedly took away hundreds of the retired servicemen later that day. This incident follows an unprecedented protest in April, when several thousand PLA veterans gathered outside the same office to demand better benefits and pensions from the state. (SCMP)

PETITIONERS IMPRISONED

In early August, the Jiyuan City People's Court in Henan Province handed down prison terms to four rural residents, **Yang Xingliang**, **Jiu Aiquo**, **Zhang Hu** and **Du Qun**, for petitioning in Beijing during the meetings of NPC and CPPCC in March and for attempting self-immolation in Tiananmen Square on March 12. The peasants had complained that a hospital in their locality had used the same needle for multiple patients, leading to the transmission of the Hepatitis B virus to their children. The court said that the peasants had already been compensated for the hospital's negligence. Yang was sentenced to three years in prison, while Jiu, Zhang and Du were given jail terms ranging from one to two years. (CNN)

DAYE INSTABILITY

Thousands of residents of Daye in central China rioted on August 4, ransacking government offices, attacking a police station and obstructing roadways. Some 10,000 people had gathered to protest the use of police dogs to break up an earlier protest by nearly 100 residents over plans to downgrade Daye's status from that of a city to a district. The government urged the people to maintain stability and warned that it would "resolutely and severely" punish anyone involved in the attacks. (Reuters)

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTEST

Dozens of people were injured after police attacked villagers who staged a protest over pollution from the Tian Neng Battery Factory in Meishan, Zhejiang Province on August 20. One witness said that some children in the area had died of lead poisoning, and the demonstration may have been led by angry parents. (Reuters, SCMP)

TAISHI LAND DISPUTE

Some 1,500 residents of Taishi Village in Guangzhou's Panyu district clashed with more than 500 armed police on August 16 after the local government detained a village leader who had called for the removal of the village chief, **Chen Jinsheng**, accused of embezzling village funds. Twenty-two-year-old **Feng Weinan** was seized by several plain-clothed police officers in Taishi Village that afternoon. Thousands of villagers assembled to demand the release of Feng, blocking three government cars, and armed police were called in to disperse the crowd. Dozens of villagers were injured in the clash, with two left in serious condition, including a woman in her 80s who suffered three broken ribs. After residents staged a hunger strike on August 31, police detained 18 women early on September 1, releasing them around noon after questioning. Taishi villagers had expressed their discontent with their village chief in late July, when they applied to the district Civil Affairs Bureau for permission to set up a committee to dismiss him, and presented a petition letter bearing 400 signatures calling for Chen's removal. The villagers have been anxious that local officials might cover up allegations of corruption and that their demands would not be addressed.

Feng Weinan was released after 15 days in custody, but most of September remained taken up by protests in Taishi. Panyu publicity section chief **Zhang Zhiming** later apologized for the way the situation was handled after intervention from the Guangzhou Information Office, the Guangdong Foreign Affairs Office and the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office. However, he claimed that the villagers "were out to destroy the village," and that action had to be taken to resolve the problem. On September 3, a declaration by lawyers, scholars and human rights activists urged the central government and the Guangdong Provincial People's Congress to examine the complaints of Taishi residents. On September 12, police stormed the village and used high-pressure water hoses to expel residents from a government building, which they had occupied to protect papers that documented the chief's illegal actions. Nearly 50 people, mostly elderly villagers, have been arrested in connection with the protests. (RFA, SCMP)

Guo Feixiong, a lawyer assisting the

Taishi villagers in their land dispute and anti-corruption campaign, disappeared in September and was formally arrested at the beginning of October. Gao Zhisheng, the head of Guo's Beijing-based Zhisheng Legal Office, told journalists that Guo had been arrested on the charge of "gathering crowds to disturb social order." (AFP)

Lü Banglie, a leading peasant activist, was beaten on October 8 and taken away by thugs, thought to be hired by the Taishi village officials to suppress the anti-corruption protests. Lü was abducted while attempting to take Benjamin Joffe-Walt, a reporter for *The Guardian* (UK), into Taishi. After being assaulted, Lü was taken back to his hometown of Zhijiang, Hubei Province, hundreds of miles away. Local propaganda department officials state that there had been no violence against Lü, despite eyewitness accounts by a *Guardian* reporter and Lü's own description of his treatment. His lawyer, Gao Zhisheng, said legal action was being considered against the attackers. (Guardian)

JUSTICE AT TIANANMEN

More than 50 petitioners demanding that the government stand up for justice were detained after clashing with armed police at Tiananmen Square early on September 4. Observers suggested that the government wanted to silence the petitioners in order to create a peaceful atmosphere in the run-up to celebrations for the 60th anniversary of victory in the Second World War. (Dajiyuan)

OPEN LETTER

One thousand petitioners signed an open letter to Hu Jintao in mid-September, urging the president to bring social justice to the people. They also urged the government be tough on corruption, reform the petitioning system and offer space for democratic monitoring of the government's performance. (VOA)

PETITIONERS DETAINED

More than one hundred petitioners were detained in Shanghai over the course of several days starting on September 14. The petitioners were threatened with forced psychiatric treatment if they did not cooperate. **Zhang Fenfen** and **Wu Xiewei** were among those arrested and later released.

Hundreds of petitioners were rounded

up in preparation for the PRC's National Day holiday on October 1. HRC learned that Beijing authorities detained at least 100 petitioners from Shanghai while they were asleep in their hostels and took them to a detention center in Majialou District for processing before sending them back to Shanghai. Petitioners from other localities were also detained at their hostels or squatter camps and expelled from the city. Witnesses claimed that this year's roundup was more extensive than in previous years.

POLITICAL DISSIDENTS

APPEAL

In late August, the mother of dissident writer **Shi Tao** filed for a trial supervision review at the Supreme People's Court on the grounds of "serious procedural defects in Shi's appeal hearing." Shi, 37, was convicted of leaking state secrets to an overseas organization and was sentenced to 10 years in prison by the Changsha Intermediate People's Court in Hunan Province on April 27. The Higher People's Court rejected Shi's appeal without a hearing. Shi was convicted for posting what was alleged to be an internal document on the Internet. Shi has denied that the document contained state secrets.

CHARGED

Journalist **Ching Cheong**, 55, was formally charged with espionage on August 5. State media reported that Ching had confessed to obtaining and passing on secret political, economic and military information to a foreign organization on May 31. The Hong Kong Journalists Association and international press watchdogs have urged Beijing to give Ching a fair and open trial. On August 17, mainland authorities rejected an application by Ching's family to seek legal representation for him, on the grounds that the case was still under investigation. (SCMP, RSF)

DETAINED

Feng Bingxian, 60, a leading figure in the protest against the Shaanxi government's nationalization of oil wells, was detained by local police in late July. Feng was an outspoken representative of the protesting group and often spoke on its behalf to media and government officials. Feng's

son, Feng Yanwei, was not notified of his father's detention, but confirmed the news through sources in the Shaanxi government on August 8. According to Feng Yanwei, his father was detained in Wuhan, where he had gone for an interview with Central China Television. (VOA)

Chen Guangcheng, 34, a rural activist engaged in a legal campaign against forced sterilization and abortion, was detained in Beijing on September 6 by police from Shandong Province. Chen launched a class action lawsuit after the Linyi Municipal government began a family planning crackdown in March, requiring couples with two or more children to be sterilized, and forcing abortions on women pregnant with a third child. Chen, whose whistleblowing had resulted in the arrest and sacking of several health workers, had arrived in the capital for meetings with lawyers, journalists and senior government officials who had indicated support for his cause. Following his release 38 hours later, Chen was put under effective house arrest in Linyi. He was beaten by unidentified men on October 4, along with three Beijing lawyers who had come to Linyi to see him, and again on October 24, when two friends attempted to visit him. Radio Free Asia reported that Chen's lawyers were also harassed and taken to a police station. (RFA, WP, Telegraph)

Tan Kai, an environmental activist who attempted to form an independent monitoring group by the name of "Green Watch" (*luse guan*), was detained along with five others on October 19 by the Hangzhou Public Security Bureau. While **Lai Jinbiao**, **Gao Haibing**, **Wu Yuanming**, **Qi Huimin** and **Yang Jianming** were released later that day, Tan Kai was placed in criminal detention. The group had come together informally to organize Green Watch after complaints by local residents in Huashui Town, Dongyang City, Zhejiang Province in April 2005 that a chemical factory was causing serious environmental pollution resulting in birth defects and destruction of crops. Protests by the villagers in late March and April culminated in a violent conflict with local police on April 10, in which more than 400 police officers were reportedly deployed and many people injured. One member of Green Watch, Lai Jinbiao, was placed under criminal detention from April 12 until May 11 on the charge of "illegally providing intelligence overseas."

RELEASED

Dissident writer and PEN-China member **Chen Shaowen**, 43, was released from prison on August 5 after serving a three-year sentence in Hunan. The Hunan Province State Security Bureau charged Chen with inciting subversion of the state on August 6, 2002. At the time of his arrest, Chen was a columnist for the U.S. newspaper *Pacific Times*. (Peacehall)

Wu Shishen, a journalist who was arrested in October 1992 and convicted in April 1993 of "illegally divulging state secrets abroad," was released early from prison in Beijing. Once a journalist with the Xinhua News Agency, Wu will be deprived of his civil and political rights for eight additional years. Reporters Without Borders reported in early August that he was in Beijing with friends and colleagues, who had campaigned for his freedom. (RSF)

Mao Hengfeng, an activist detained in a labor camp for "disturbing public order" through her protests against the one-child policy, was released on September 12 after serving her full sentence. Mao was reportedly bound and beaten while in detention. Following her release, Mao and her husband **Wu Xuwei** were harassed, beaten and placed under house arrest from September 23 to 27. Wu was one of more than 100 petitioners reported detained on September 15 for participating in a demonstration protesting evictions in Shanghai. He was released on six months' bail on a charge of "illegal assembly." (AFP, LifeNews)

DENOUNCED

Rebiya Kadeer, a Uighur human rights activist, has been denounced as a "terrorist" by the Chinese government. At a press conference in Beijing in early September, Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan accused Kadeer of being involved in a conspiracy to launch an attack on October 1, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Released this year as a result of international pressure after six years' imprisonment, Kadeer was allowed to leave for the U.S. on medical parole. Since her release, she has been active in the U.S., briefing the State Department on the conditions of her imprisonment, providing testimony before the U.S. Congress on human rights violations in Xinjiang and conducting numerous interviews with BBC, Voice of America and

Radio Free Asia. She has also been campaigning globally, recently paying visits to London and Berlin. Members of her family remaining in Xinjiang, including five sons, are regularly monitored and harassed by Chinese police. (CIC)

EVICTED

Hou Wenzhou, the founder of the Empowerment and Rights Institute, was evicted from her Beijing apartment on September 30 by Beijing authorities attempting to impede her work assisting peasants and petitioners. Hou, who was educated at Harvard Law School and Oxford University, said that she had already been evicted from a previous residence, and that officials had shut down her Beijing office in an attempt to prevent her activities. The Institute is funded by the U.S.-based National Endowment for Democracy. The eviction appeared to be part of preparations for the National Day holiday on October 1, which usually include police sweeps to rid the capital of organized protests and petitioners. (AP)

INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE AGAINST ZHAO YAN

In early October it was revealed that the Chinese authorities have twice attempted to indict **Zhao Yan** on suspicion of leaking state secrets, but have thus far been unsuccessful. A news assistant in the *New York Times* Beijing bureau, Zhao has been detained since September 2004 for allegedly providing the newspaper with information regarding Jiang Zemin's retirement, although the *Times* has consistently denied that Zhao was involved with the story. Jerome Cohen, a China expert and lawyer who has been involved in the case, stated that the prosecutor does not appear to have enough evidence to indict Zhao. (Reuters)

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

DETAINED

Police arrested a 56-year-old Uighur teacher, **Aminan Momixi**, and 37 students while they were studying the Koran at her home in Xinjiang on August 1. Momixi was accused of "illegally possessing religious materials and subversive historical information." Most of the students were primary and secondary school students aged

between 7 and 20. Police also confiscated 23 copies of the Koran, 56 textbooks on the Koran, a hand-written manuscript and other religious materials. Police confirmed the detentions but did not say when the group would be released. (AFP)

Authorities in Xinjiang's Yili Autonomous Prefecture announced on August 19 that the Sala branch of Islam had been banned because of its "dangerous" doctrines. The announcement was made in the government-run *Yili Daily*. One hundred and seventy-nine followers of Sala were arrested for illegal gatherings, illegally collecting money, obstructing government control of religious affairs and endangering social stability. Some of those arrested were released after paying fines, though many others remained in custody.

Police detained 10 Muslim Uighurs on August 24, alleging that they were engaged in separatist activities in the region. The detainees were subsequently charged with separatism. (VOA)

Hubei police detained two American theology students and 41 underground church pastors and worshippers during preparations for a religious service on August 2. The American students, believed to be from Westminster Theological Seminary campuses in Texas and California, were reportedly handled roughly and handcuffed. They were released after a seven-hour interrogation at the Zaoyang City No. 2 Detention Center, but some of their belongings, including bibles and other books, were confiscated. According to an official at the detention center, the Christians were detained for "illegal evangelism." Thirty have since been released, while the rest remained in custody. (VOA)

Pang Yongxing, an underground priest from Hebei, and his assistant, **Ma Yongjiang**, were reportedly detained by police on September 2. Pang's family was notified of the arrest two days later. Pang previously spent three years in a re-education through labor (RTL) camp for "disturbing public order" and offences under the Anti-Cult Law in 2001. (VOA)

Hua Huiqi, a member of an underground church in Beijing, was reportedly taken from his home by State Security officers on October 10. Hua had been supportive of Christians traveling to Beijing to petition. According to Hua's wife, State Security officers wanted to ask Hua about a Gansu peti-

tioner, Sun Xiaodi, to whom Hua had allegedly offered help. (VOA)

SENTENCED

The Intermediate People's Court in the central Tibetan city of Shigatse sentenced three Tibetan men to jail terms of up to four years on August 1. According to a court document, the men were arrested in July 2001 and charged with illegal entry and separatism for bringing in photos and audio-taped teachings of the Dalai Lama, as well as other documents that could "harm socialism and damage of the unity of the people." One of the men, a 22-year-old known as **Jigme**, received a two-year sentence, while the other two men, **Lungtok** and **Aku Tennam**, were each given four-year sentences. (RFA)

RELEASED

Zhang Yinan, a prominent activist in China's underground Protestant church, was released from a labor camp near Zhengzhou on September 25 after serving a two-year sentence. Zhang, 47, was sentenced in 2003 without trial on charges of attempting to subvert China's government and political system. Following his release, police confiscated Zhang's identification card to restrict his movement. (VOA, AP)

ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Agence France Presse
AN	Asia News
AP	Associated Press
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CD	China Daily
CIC	China Information Center
CN	China News
CNN	China National News
CNA	China News Agency
CYD	China Youth Daily
FT	Financial Times
LD	Legal Daily
NYT	The New York Times
PD	People's Daily
RFA	Radio Free Asia
RSF	Reporters Without Borders
SCMP	South China Morning Post
SD	Shanghai Daily
VOA	Voice of America
WP	The Washington Post
WSJ	The Wall Street Journal
XH	Xinhua News Agency