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For China, Censorship Is More Important Than Human Life

03/27/2020 BAI LIN

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As the world fights the coronavirus pandemic, CCP expels foreign media representatives, silences citizen journalists, and awards those who help to bury the truth.

by Bai Lin



Xinhua News Agency journalist Liao Jun and late doctor Li Wenliang.

On March 18, the CCP government ordered to expel 13 journalists from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*, stating in a statement that they “will not be allowed to continue working as journalists in the People’s Republic of China, including its Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions.” The



A few weeks before the announcement, **the government praised a journalist from China's official state-run Xinhua News Agency, Ms. Liao Jun**, for her “heroic” reporting about the coronavirus. In her article in early January, Liao Jun wrote about eight people who were “spreading rumors” about the virus, repeating China’s health authorities’ official line that there was no evidence of human-to-human transmission. One of the mentioned whistleblowers was Dr. Li Wenliang, who was the first to openly warn about the dangers of the virus but was silenced and died on February 7 after contracting COVID-19.

As the epidemic was claiming human lives, Ms. Liao’s reports became the cause of criticism among China’s netizens, who called her articles “fake news” that “mislead people.” One of them wrote about the canceled trip to Wuhan after the news on the mysterious virus started circling on social media in late December but decided to go reassured by Liao Jun’s articles. The person was trapped in Wuhan for a long time.

Many other people made fatal decisions trusting her reports, losing their lives, or those of their loved ones as a result.

On March 8, International Women’s Day, *Guang Ming Daily*, a national newspaper under the direct leadership of the CCP’s Central Propaganda Department, praised Liao Jun, saying, “We give a salute to you, a female journalist going against the current.” At a press conference that day, held by the Information Office of the State Council, she was named one of the seven “female COVID-19 frontline workers.” Accepting the award, Liao Jun spoke about “China’s morale and power,” without mentioning Dr. Li or acknowledging her mistakes.

“Accurate and timely information is especially important now when thousands of people’s lives are endangered,” a journalist from mainland China told *Bitter Winter*. “Had the CCP media reported the truth, the spread of the epidemic could have been prevented. The CCP will never acknowledge being in the wrong. Instead, it continues suppressing press freedom.”

As foreign journalists are being expelled, and the national media only serves the government, the role of citizen journalists in China has become of crucial importance for the outside world to understand what is happening there. Sadly, these people have also become the CCP’s key targets; **many citizen journalists reporting about the coronavirus have been punished or disappeared.**



divulging state secrets,” a *Bitter Winter* reporter from mainland China commented.

According to a *Bitter Winter* correspondent who used to report from the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, residents become very cautious when they are asked about the CCP’s persecutions. Most do not dare to speak their minds for fear of being imprisoned or endangering the safety of their families. Others are afraid that those asking questions could be undercover government officials investigating their opinions about the state.

“The government has installed surveillance equipment in my home to monitor what is being said,” an imam from a state-approved mosque in Ningxia told *Bitter Winter*. “I have to report to the government every time a stranger knocks on my door.”