



Amnesty International

THE GREAT FIREWALL OF CHINA

A human rights education resource on internet repression in China. For use with young people aged 11–16 exploring Citizenship/PSE through ICT.

**HUMAN RIGHTS
EDUCATION RESOURCE
CHINA**

www.amnesty.org.uk/education



ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

These activities are designed as a lesson of 1 hour, suitable for students aged 11-16. They could be used as part of a theme day on China, or a cross-curricular Citizenship/PSE project or as a stand-alone lesson. The content links to Citizenship/PSE and ICT.

Students learn about patterns of electronic censorship and internet repression in China and present their findings using ICT.

Resources

A copy of the film *Over to you* which is part of the Amnesty education pack *Human rights in focus*. You can order this free at student@amnesty.org.uk or download the film on-line at www.amnesty.org.uk/humanrightsinfocus

For each student

- A copy of the information sheet, Internet repression
- A copy of the list of websites
- A piece of flip chart paper and a pen for each group

Activity 1: Danger – internet at work! (15 minutes)

Divide the class into small groups of 4 or 5 students. Tell them to imagine that they have become the all powerful rulers of a country. In this country, people are not allowed to disagree with the government and the military keep control of the people, often by force.

Tell them:

Your military intelligence reports that some of your citizens are using the internet to get information from other countries and using their computers and mobile phones to discuss the situation in your country with others. You feel that the security of your government may be under threat.

Some of your people may be visiting websites and chat rooms abroad, which are critical of your government. They may even be writing 'blogs' which express anti-government opinion. Perhaps they are picking up foreign propaganda against your government or sending or receiving secrets that could threaten your country's safety? Perhaps they are exchanging information or ideas that are politically dangerous or very rude or violent or against God or insulting to minorities or committing other thought crimes?

Ask:

How are you going to prevent your people using the internet to send or receive information or ideas which you consider to be dangerous?

What material are you going to stop?

How?

How are you going to find out which of your citizens are misusing the internet to conspire with your country's enemies?

If you catch any bloggers expressing opinions which oppose your government, what will you do to them?

Groups report back their ideas to the rest of the class

Ask the class:

Is this just fantasy, or could it happen in the real world??



Activity 2: Censorship and internet repression (10 minutes)

Give out copies of the information sheet: Internet repression.
Get students to read it. Ask for any questions

Now give out the website list.

Ask students to tick which of these websites they think that people in China can visit.

When students have made their guesses, inform them that the people in China will actually only be able to find **one** of these seven sites, <http://en.Olympic.cn>, the website of the Chinese Olympic Committee. All the other sites are blocked by the Chinese authorities.

Activity 3: Shi Tao (20 minutes)

Tell the students briefly about Shi Tao.

SHI TAO

In 2004 the Chinese journalist and poet Shi Tao, 38, sent an email from his Yahoo! account to a Chinese website based in the USA in which he described the Chinese government's instructions to Chinese journalists on how to cover the 15th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, in which the government opened fire on protesters.

The Chinese police obtained Shi Tao's details from the American Internet company Yahoo! He was arrested, charged with 'illegally providing state secrets to foreign entities' and is currently serving a 10-year prison sentence in Hunan Province.

Amnesty International considers Shi Tao to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.

Explain that students in Hackney Free School in London decided to take part in a campaign to help Shi Tao.

Show the first section of the film *Over to you* which shows students from Hackney Free and Parochial School taking action against Yahoo! Discuss:

Is the Chinese government justified in their actions to imprison Shi Tao?
Why do you think Yahoo! gave Shi Tao's email address to the Chinese government?

Are there any circumstances where you think a government *should* prevent people from sending emails or looking at certain internet sites?

Activity 4
(15 minutes)

Ask students to look at the Observer/Amnesty International websites and <http://irrepressible.info/> to find out and report back about internet repression in other countries. You could use these statements as a guide:

Name 4 other countries where internet access is severely restricted.

Which internet companies are criticised in the campaign?

What are Amnesty International and other agencies asking people to do to support their campaign against internet repression?

Homework

As homework, students prepare a presentation on cases of internet repression in China researching actual cases using the internet and preparing a short illustrated presentation about their case using Powerpoint.

Use the cases described in the information sheet, Cases of internet repression, as a starting point.



THE GREAT FIREWALL OF CHINA INTERNET REPRESSION?



New technology has given the world emails, text messages and the internet, providing people with free access to ideas, opinions and information on an enormous scale.

But a growing number of governments are trying to control the internet. In China and more than 20 other countries, chat rooms are being monitored, blogs deleted, websites blocked and search engines restricted for political reasons. Internet users are being arrested and imprisoned for sharing information, criticising their governments, calling for press freedom, or discussing human rights abuses online.

Internet use in China is huge. In 2008 there are over 215 million internet users in China – more than in the USA. The Chinese government promotes internet use for education and business, but it prevents people from seeing anything that it considers critical of China or indecent. Filters limit access to foreign websites.

Software stopping people getting access to ‘harmful’ material has been installed in all of China’s 110,000 Internet cafes. Internet surfers are at risk. 30,000 cyber cops are monitoring them live. One website in 10 is being blocked. People emailing messages or trying to get hold of politically sensitive material from inside China risk arrest and jail. In February 2008 the organisation Reporters Without Borders was campaigning for the release of more than 81 internet users in China imprisoned or held in labour camps for criticising their government in emails, including students, people in the Falun Gong spiritual movement, workers, writers, lawyers, teachers, civil servants, former police officers, engineers, and business people.

Some of the biggest IT companies in the world, that benefit a great deal from business in China, have built surveillance and censorship equipment for them. Yahoo! supplied private information about their email users to the Chinese authorities, leading to their prosecution and wrongful imprisonment. Microsoft, Nortel and Google also censor their Chinese customers.

WEBSITE LIST

WHICH OF THESE WEBSITES CAN THE PEOPLE OF CHINA FIND ON THE WEB?



1. www.amnesty.org.uk (Amnesty International's website about human rights)
2. www.youtube.com (a site where people put up their own videos)
3. www.chinatimes.com.tw (a Chinese website based in Taiwan)
4. <http://en.olympic.cn> (a website of China's Olympic Committee)
5. www.wikipedia.org (a free encyclopedia)
6. www.falundafa.org (a website of the Falun Gong spiritual movement)
7. www.rsf.org (Reporters Without Borders — an international organisation which campaigns for freedom of the press)

CASES OF INTERNET REPRESSION



Background notes on five Chinese cases of internet repression for students to investigate on the web and prepare a Powerpoint presentation.

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LIU DI

Psychology student Liu Di is a young internet user who was arrested in November 2002 and secretly imprisoned in solitary confinement without trial for over a year after she wrote essays and articles posted on online discussion forums using a false name 'Stainless Steel Mouse'. She had criticised the jailing of an internet user who criticised the government, Huang, called for greater freedom of expression and made jokes about some actions of the Chinese Communist Party

LI YUANLONG

45, worked for the *Bijie Ribao* daily newspaper in Guizhou Province, SW China. Li, a Microsoft MSN Hotmail customer, wrote articles under the false name 'Wolf Howling in the Night' and posted them on the internet. His articles criticised shortcomings of modern Chinese society, calling for more freedom and democracy, and highlighting the hardships experienced by the poor people in the Chinese countryside.

In 2004 he was sentenced to two years in prison for writing what were described as 'fabricated, distorted and exaggerated facts, inciting people to subvert the state and trying to overthrow the socialist system'.



ZHAO CHUNYING

In 1999 there was a crackdown in China against the spiritual movement, Falun Gong, Ms Zhao Chunying, 57, from Jixi City, Heilongjiang Province, was arrested doing Falun Gong exercises in a public park. She was sent to a *laogai* (Education Through Labour Camp) in Wanjin where she was reportedly subjected to a form of 4-point torture known as *di lao* (death bed) where the victim is held under tension, chained to a metal bed frame. When she came out of detention, Zhao Chunying wrote an account of her experiences and posted it on the internet. In 2003 she was arrested and detained for what she had put on the Internet. A month later she was found beaten to death in Jixi No 2 Detention Centre.

NEW YOUTH STUDY GROUP

Xu Wei, 30, a reporter for the Beijing newspaper *Consumer Daily*, Jin Haiké 30, a geologist and writer, computer engineer Yang Zili, 31, and freelance writer Zhang Honghai, 30, belonged to an informal group called 'Xin Qingnian Xuehui' (New Youth Study Group). They were arrested on charges of 'subverting state power' by publishing articles they had written about political and economic inequalities in China on the internet. They were sentenced in 2003, Xu and Jin being sent to prison for 10 years, Yang and Zhang to 8.