

Chinese writers accuse Baidu of stealing

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Chinese Web search giant Baidu's head office is pictured in Beijing. Dozens of popular Chinese writers have accused Baidu of infringing their copyright and branded it a "thief" in the latest claims of piracy against the company.

Dozens of popular Chinese writers have accused search engine giant Baidu of infringing their copyright and branded it a "thief" in the latest claims of piracy against the company.

More than 40 writers, including controversial blogger Han Han, have signed a letter claiming Baidu provided their works for free to download on its online library Baidu Wenku without their permission.

"Baidu has become a totally corrupt thief company," the authors said in the letter posted Tuesday on the website of government-linked China Written Works Copyright Society.

"It stole our works, our rights, our property and has turned Baidu Wenku

into a marketplace of stolen goods," it said.

Baidu Wenku was launched in 2009 and allows users to read, share or download files and books, or their excerpts, for free. Readers can also purchase books from the online library -- at a much lower cost than the cover price.

All documents are uploaded by [Internet users](#) and as of November Baidu Wenku had stockpiled more than 10 million files and books, accounting for 70 percent of China's online file sharing market, according to the company's figures.

Baidu spokesman Kaiser Kuo said the search engine "attaches great importance to intellectual property rights protection" and had deleted "tens of thousands of infringing items" uploaded by [web users](#).

"We promised that authors or copyright holders can report problematic content found on Baidu Library to the complaint centre ... and we will delete infringing content within 48 hours," Kuo said in a statement Wednesday.

In a disclaimer on its website, Baidu said users who uploaded the files must take on all liabilities and be responsible for compensation in any copyright disputes.

However, the writers insisted Baidu should bear responsibility, claiming the company took advantage of the uploads to "enhance its own influence, boost its stock price and increase its profits".

"We do not blame the friends who uploaded (the documents). We only blame the evil platform of Baidu," they said.

Baidu has long been criticised for flouting [intellectual property rights](#)

and its MP3 search service, which provides links to free but often pirated music downloads, has drawn fire from the recording industry.

The US Trade Representative's office last month named Baidu as one of the world's top marketplaces for pirated and counterfeit goods, saying the company was enabling [piracy](#) with "deep linking" searches.

[Baidu](#) has around 75 percent of the Chinese search market, compared with the 19.6 percent held by Google, which has been losing ground since a public spat with Beijing last year over censorship, according to analysts.

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