

China's main microblog restricts user posts

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File photo shows a woman checking the Chinese microblogging site Weibo at a cafe in Beijing. Weibo has introduced new terms and conditions punishing those who post comments deemed offensive, as it comes under government pressure to clamp down on bloggers.

China's best-known microblogging site has introduced new terms and conditions punishing those who post comments deemed offensive, as it comes under government pressure to clamp down on bloggers.

Sina Weibo's new system, introduced this week, will sanction its 300 million users for "spreading false news", "divulging private information" and "launching [personal attacks](#)", the company said on its website.

The move comes amid government jitters over the growing influence of China's weibos -- microblogs similar to [Twitter](#) that have taken the country by storm in recent years.

Their popularity is posing a huge challenge to [government efforts](#) to control the flow of information in the one-party state, which has the world's largest population of Internet users at more than half a billion.

Beijing regularly blocks [Internet searches](#) under a vast online censorship system known as the Great Firewall of China and has placed Sina and its main competitor, Tencent, under pressure to restrict what their users post online.

But the authorities have struggled to control microblog postings -- from information about protests to rumours about political leaders, a particularly sensitive subject in the run-up to a leadership change due later this year.

In March, authorities closed 16 websites and arrested six people for spreading rumours about a military coup in the wake of rising political star Bo Xilai's dismissal as party head of Chongqing city.

Sina and [Tencent](#) were ordered to stop [web users](#) from posting any comments for several days after the speculation.

Under the new terms and conditions, Sina Weibo users will each be allocated 80 points, and will have points deducted by the firm each time they post something that contravenes the rules.

If their points fall below 60, they must avoid any further infringements for two months, and if they fall to zero, their accounts will be erased.

Many have used ingenious ways in the past to circumvent the [censors](#) -- such as using code words to discuss sensitive subjects.

Some used the Chinese characters for "Shawshank" to refer to the case of the blind lawyer Chen Guangcheng, who recently fled house arrest

and is now in the United States.

"The Shawshank Redemption" was a 1994 film about an escape from an American prison.

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