

China court moves to tighten grip over 'disorderly Internet'

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China's top court is putting pressure on Internet service providers to provide the personal details of Web users suspected of "rights violations", state media said Friday.

The move by the Supreme People's Court, outlined in a judicial guideline issued Thursday, is the latest effort by the Communist Party to exert control over China's popular online social networks.

According to the state-run China Daily newspaper, the country's highest court is also moving to curb paid Internet postings and deletions—tactics that Beijing itself employs in seeking to "guide [public opinion](#)" and tamp down on dissent.

"Some posters, as well as workers at network [service providers](#), often use their computer skills to make money, and that leads to a disorderly Internet," court spokesman Sun Jungong told the paper.

Personal information such as home addresses, health conditions and crime records must also not be posted online, the paper said, although it did not give further details.

China maintains a tight grip on information, with the media controlled by the government and [online social networks](#) subject to heavy censorship.

Hundreds of bloggers and journalists have since last year been rounded up in a government-backed campaign against "Internet rumours".

According to the official Xinhua news agency, the Supreme People's Court has called for the punishment of Internet service providers that refuse to hand over the real names, IP addresses and other information of users who have committed "rights violations".

The court also deemed that well-known Internet commenters—dubbed "Big Vs"—will be held to a higher standard than ordinary online posters.

"If you are a verified celebrity, your obligations when re-posting online

information are greater than those of the general public," senior SPC judge Yao Hui told Xinhua.

In addition to legions of censors, Chinese authorities employ "wu mao" (50-cent) web commenters paid by the message to spread the official party line.

In 2010, the state-run Global Times newspaper reported that Gansu province alone was looking to recruit 650 full-time web commentators "to guide public opinion on controversial issues".

Private companies that seek to do the same, however, will be punished according to the new [court](#) regulation.

Such paid Internet postings "can boost reputations by creating the impression that the online voices are genuine, when in truth the voices are purchased," the China Daily reported.

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