

Smog documentary blocked by China after becoming viral hit

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A woman and child wear masks on a polluted day in Beijing on November 26, 2014

A hard-hitting video investigation into China's grave air pollution problem has been pulled from mainstream video sites, days after it garnered more than 100 million hits online.

"Under the Dome", an independent documentary produced by former

Chinese state media journalist Chai Jing, was no longer available on popular mainland video sites, including Youku and iQiyi, as of Saturday afternoon.

A link on Youku's website that previously led to the video now prompts the message: "We're very sorry, Youku was unable to find the page you requested."

The 103-minute documentary — hailed by some as China's "Inconvenient Truth"—remains available on YouTube, which is blocked in China.

Versions of the video racked up more than 155 million views on mainland Chinese video streaming sites in just one day after its release last Saturday.

In the video, Chai, who previously worked as an anchor for state-run China Central Television, detailed causes of atmospheric pollution in the country, including slack government supervision and lenient penalties for polluters.

She has described the video as her "personal battle" against air pollution after her daughter was born with a benign tumour.

The removal of the documentary underscores the ruling Communist Party's sensitivity to public debate over China's notorious smog problem.



China's cities are often hit by heavy pollution, blamed on coal-burning by power stations and industry, as well as vehicle use

It also represents a sharp turnaround by Chinese authorities, who only days ago encouraged ubiquitous coverage of the video in official print and broadcast media.

China's newly-appointed environmental protection minister, Chen Jining, praised the video earlier this week, telling Chinese reporters that it should "encourage efforts by individuals to improve air quality".

The video's disappearance comes as the country's top annual political meeting, the National People's Congress (NPC), is underway in Beijing, under thick white skies and with the city's air quality registering as "very unhealthy", according to a US embassy reading.

Online discussions related to the video remain unblocked on China's

popular social networks, and users of China's Twitter-like Sina Weibo on Saturday voiced frustration with the government's abrupt censorship move.



Pollution has become a major source of popular discontent with the Communist Party

"Chai Jing's documentary, 'Under the Dome', has already been 'harmonised' on all of the mainstream [video](#) sites," wrote one user on Sina Weibo, using an ironic term for authorities' blocking of objectionable content. "Why? Give us a reason first!"

"When will this country be able to face the attitudes of its own people?" another Sina Weibo user wrote.

China's cities are often hit by heavy pollution, blamed on coal-burning

by power stations and industry, as well as vehicle use, and it has become a major source of popular discontent with the Communist Party, leading the government to declare a "war on pollution" and vow to reduce the proportion of energy derived from fossil fuels.

Chen, the environmental protection minister, is expected to address reporters later Saturday in a press conference on the sidelines of the NPC.

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