

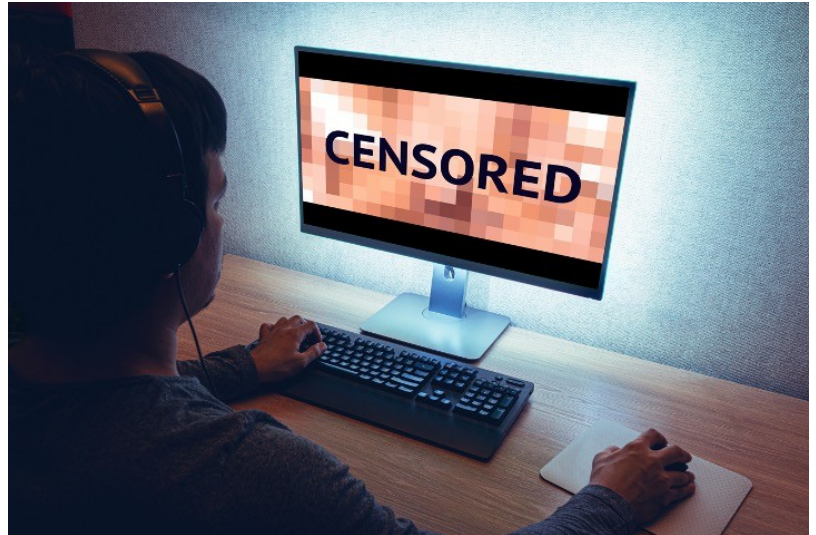


Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on June 23, 2022

China Cracks Down on Those Who Circumvent Internet “Great Firewall”

China has made clear it seeks to replace U.S. hegemony with a Beijing-centered one. What can the people of the world expect under a global system run along the Chinese model? One doesn’t have to dive deep to see that the first casualty would be freedom.

In an explicit example of how ruthlessly China’s communist regime deals with intellectual dissenters and advocates of open information, a tech expert from Shanghai and his fiancée have been held in detention for eight months for allegedly helping people circumvent the nation’s digital firewall and thereby gain access to government-prohibited information.



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As [The Epoch Times](#) reports, He Binggang, 46, the owner of an electronics firm, has been detained since October of last year. Also being detained is He’s fiancée, Zhang Yibo, who is a former business manager at Siemens Shanghai.

They both stand accused of violating Article 300 of Chinese Criminal Law, which prohibits “using a heretical organization to undermine the implementation of the law.”

According to authorities, the couple are guilty of subverting the country’s internet firewall through their association with the spiritual practice Falun Gong.

China operates a powerful tool for online censorship known as the Great Firewall, which controls internet traffic going in and out of China. In order to get around it, many Chinese use a variety of circumvention tools, including virtual private networks (VPNs).

One free-to-use suite of firewall circumvention tools, oGate, was developed by practitioners of Falun Gong, a religious movement that began in China in the early 1990s. The movement has its headquarters in New York.

Although the Chinese government initially treated Falun Gong favorably, it eventually began cracking down on the religion, seeing it as a threat due to the independent nature of its practitioners. The faith is known for its political involvement and broad range of extensions. *The Epoch Times*, in fact, was founded by Chinese Americans affiliated with Falun Gong.

In China, oGate has proven popular not only because it is free, but also because it does not require the installation of any software, resulting in millions of page views on the platform each month.

Two dozen officers from Shanghai’s Changning District Police Station arrested He and ransacked his home around 9 p.m. on October 9, 2021. Police reportedly had neither an arrest warrant nor a search warrant. They also failed to produce a list of confiscated belongings, such as He’s computers and phones.



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For the first five months that they were imprisoned, He and Zhang were denied even the ability to speak with the public through their lawyers — the only form of communication with the outside world allowed to them.

Both He and Zhang have led eventful lives individually. He showed advanced technological skills from the time he was a teenager, inventing a voice-activated system that allows the blind to use a computer. This invention earned him a top prize when he was 15.

He went on to pass the programmer's certificate exam at age 16. Then at 18 he was accepted, without the necessity of taking an entrance exam, to the prestigious Fudan University in Shanghai. Four years later, he likewise managed to get into graduate school without an exam.

But the government's crackdown on Falun Gong caused a major shift in He's fortunes. Fudan University forced him to drop out of graduate school for refusing to give up his faith. He was arrested and detained multiple times. After a six-year term in prison, he started his electronics business, which grew rapidly — even though he was under constant government surveillance.

In 2010, the government allegedly planted "illegal items" in He's business in order to put him in detention again. While detained, he was beaten so badly he developed spinal compression but was given no medical care for nearly a year.

Zhang was also arrested previously. In 2009, she and her mother, Li Yaohua, were abducted from their home by police for spreading information about Falun Gong.

This story should serve as a lesson of where government censorship can lead, no matter how innocuously it begins. In the United States, social media companies have already been striving to suppress information unfavorable to the Democratic Party.

Thankfully, Biden's Disinformation Governance Board was put on pause, as it would only be a few short steps from the Ministry of Truth to locking up anyone who helps diffuse "unapproved" information.



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