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Asia - China

Release

Investigative reporter freed on bail after a year in pre-trial detention

6 August 2014

He still faces trial on a defamation charge for drawing attention to corruption, but his release confirms the weakness of the prosecution case

Reporters Without Borders welcomes newspaper reporter **Liu Hu**'s release on bail after a nearly year in detention on trumped-up defamation charges designed to silence him. His release on 3 August demonstrates the weakness of the prosecution case against him.

A resident of the southwestern city of Chongqing, Liu worked for the Guangzhou-based newspaper *Xin Kuai Bao* (*Modern Express*). He [was arrested on 24 August 2013](#) for "spreading false rumours" after urging the authorities to investigate a local official – Chongqing chamber of commerce and industry deputy director and former vice mayor Ma Zhengqi – for alleged professional "neglect."

[Formally charged with defamation](#) after being held for 37 days, he was the victim of an "anti-rumour campaign" used to crack down on anyone daring to draw attention to corruption despite the Communist Party's pledge to combat this problem.

Liu's investigative reporting led to his being singled out for punishment by the authorities, and to his being included in the Reporters Without Borders list of [100 "information heroes."](#)

"We are delighted by Liu Hu's release, even if it comes 344 days too late, and now the judicial authorities must drop all the charges against him," said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk.

"We call for an end to the persecution of journalists and bloggers who expose cases of corruption and for the release of those who are still detained, such as [Yin Yusheng](#), [Dong Rubin](#) and [Xu Zhiyong](#). The lack of evidence against them shows the hidden political motive for their detention."

Announcing Liu's release, his lawyer, Zhou Ze, said the authorities "were unable to proceed with his case in the allotted time frame." He added that certain conditions would undoubtedly be attached to his release. After his release from Beijing detention centre No. 1, Liu returned to Chongqing.

[This directive](#) was sent to the Chinese media: "Do not investigate, report, or comment on Modern Express reporter Liu Hu's receipt of a written guarantee [of release] pending trial."

At least 30 journalists and 75 netizens continue to be detained in China, which is ranked 175th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

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