



## China Reform Monitor No. 1350

October 31, 2018 **Joshua Eisenman**

**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; China; Taiwan

### MAKING AN EXAMPLE OUT OF A MOVIE STAR

China's biggest movie star, Fan Bingbing, who vanished for months from public view, reemerged last week owing \$129 million to the tax bureau. Fan apologized profusely in an online letter but said nothing about where she's been for the past four months. The star was released from "residential surveillance at a designated location" about two weeks ago and returned to Beijing as authorities completed their investigation. Fan, who appeared in the X-Men and Iron Man film franchises, is the biggest star incriminated under a government crackdown launched in the summer on tax evasion among high-earning celebrities. (*South China Morning Post*, October 4, 2018)

### INTERPOL HEAD IN BEIJING'S CROSSHAIRS

Meng Hongwei, China's vice minister for public security and president of Interpol, has been detained in China, making him "the highest-level official to be investigated since the Supervision Law took effect." China's National Supervisory Commission — a new all-encompassing anti-corruption body — confirmed it is investigating Meng on suspicion of "violating laws." In France, Meng's wife showed reporters the knife emoji that he sent just before going silent. (*Global Times*, October 8, 2018; ABC Australia, October 8, 2018)

### TAIPEI LOOKS FOR ALLIES...

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen hosted Paraguay's President, Mario Abdo Benitez, to observe joint land and air training exercises simulating an attack from Chinese forces. A Defense Ministry spokesman said the exercises "helped strengthen the friendship between the two countries." China claims Taiwan as its territory and this year whittled away another three countries from the self-governing island's pool of diplomatic allies, leaving it with just 17, including Paraguay. Last month, Washington recalled envoys to the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Panama after they cut ties with Taipei in favor of diplomatic relations with China. (ABC News, October 9, 2018)

### ...AMID GROWING INTIMIDATION FROM THE MAINLAND

Taiwan's President, Tsai Ing-wen, has given a National Day speech condemning China's "intimidation and diplomatic pressure" and threatening peaceful stability in Taiwan Strait. Tsai said the island would use all methods to prevent infiltration: "As the entire world is dealing with the expansion of Chinese influence, the government that I am leading will show the world Taiwan's strength and resilience. The best way to defend Taiwan is to make it indispensable and irreplaceable to the world. I am calling on the authorities in Beijing - as a responsible major power - to play a positive role in the region and the world, instead of being a source of conflict." This year, China conducted encirclement drills around Taiwan. (Al-Jazeera, October 10, 2018)

### CHINESE NATIONALISM NO LAUGHING MATTER

Yang Kaili, a 20-year-old online personality with more than 44 million social media followers, was detained for five days for violating China's national anthem law. Yang was imprisoned for a video in which she mimics a conductor while singing China's national anthem. The live-streaming platform, Huya, took the video down and banned her. "The national anthem is a symbol of the country, all citizens should respect and safeguard [its] dignity. Live-streaming platforms are not above the law," said the Shanghai Police Department. In China, singing the anthem in a "distorted or disrespectful way" can land you in jail for up to 15 days. "My action has deeply hurt everyone's feelings. Sorry, sorry to my motherland, sorry to my fans, sorry to netizens, sorry to the (live-streaming) platform," Yang pleaded on her Weibo account. (*The Independent*, October 16, 2018)