#CHINESEFEMINISM

#FEMINISTVOICES #NÜQUANZHISHENG #女权之声 #LÜPIN #FEMINISTFIVE #FREETHEFIVE #FREECHINESEFEMINISTS #709CRACKDOWN #FREEXUEQIN #SUPPORTYOURLOCALFEMINISTS #YEHAIYAN #HOOLIGANSPARROW #METOOCHINA #METOOINCHINA #米兔 #CAONIMA #草泥马 #GRASSMUDHORSE #GB #GIRLBOY #6B4T #XIAOMEILI

With nearly 940 million netizens and 67% internet penetration, The People's Republic of China (PRC) leads the world in internet use (CNNIC 2020). As an authoritarian state, the PRC heavily regulates its domestic cyberspace by way of the Golden Shield Project, commonly known as the Great Firewall of China (GFC). This sophisticated apparatus aims to surveil and censor digital content, especially if foreign and user-generated, and can be circumvented by using a VPN (China Digital Times a).

#Chinesefeminists are active inside and outside the GFC in both the Chinese and English languages. With the expansion of mobile usage and social media such as Douban, Sina Weibo and WeChat since around 2010, #chinesefeminism has paired offline with online activities to raise awareness and improve women's rights and gender equality (Wang and Driscoll 2019). While adopting a generally non-radical approach (Xiao Han 2018), intersectional feminist groups and individuals promote their activism online, including in connection with #LGBTChina, in the form of literature (Chang and Hao 2020), art (Bald Girls) and theatre (see the success of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, Huang 2016).

#Feministvoices *#nüquanzhisheng* #女权之声, a pioneering and leading feminist platform on Weibo and WeChat dedicated to women's advocacy was founded in 2009 by the US-based feminist activist #LüPin. When user numbers reached 250,000 in 2017, it was forcibly shut down (Lü Pin 2019). Inspired by #feministvoices, feminist activists working in several provinces around the country launched a series of public protests, such as Occupy Men's Toilet in Guangzhou in 2012, and in 2015 five of them, #feministfive, were arrested and detained for 38 days as a result of their campaign against domestic violence on public transport in Beijing. National and international online appeals for their liberation – #freethefive, #freechinesefeminists – increased the exposure of the feminist struggle in the PRC (Fincher 2018). Since then and in connection with the #709crackdown on human rights activists and lawyers in 2015,

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#chinesefeminists have been particularly visible on a global scale. Similarly, in 2019 #HuangXueqin, a prominent Chinese feminist journalist and activist, was imprisoned for three months after she openly criticised the Central Government over the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. Campaigns for her release circulated on national and global social media as #freeXueqin connected to #supportyourlocalfeminists (Hernández 2020).

_____In 2013, the prominent feminist activist #YeHaiyan a.k.a. #HooliganSparrow, a target of state intimidation on several occasions (see the eponymous biopic film by Wang Nanfu 2016), exposed the practice of sexual abuse in Chinese schools. This anticipated the #metoo movement, which gathered momentum in the PRC in 2018 and further uncovered culturally ingrained misogyny and patriarchal behaviours. #Metoochina or #metooinchina created hashtags with word puns exploiting the sound of English and the homophonic nature of Chinese language. The Chinese hashtag #米兔, which reads *mi tu* and means #ricerabbit, uses a playful combination of common words which sound like sensitive and censored ones in order to divert the attention of online policing. This tactic has been employed at least since 2009 to bypass censorship by pro-democracy activist groups spreading memes such as #caonima #草泥马 #grassmudhorse, a word pun which in Chinese is a homophone with 'fuck your mother' and is generally used against the Central Government (China Digital Times b). The ongoing #metoochina movement has seen hundreds of Chinese female users, especially university students, denouncing sexual harassment, rape and abuse in both online and offline actions. This has increased sexist trolling against #chinesefeminists, including in the wake of offline offenses (see the aggressive incident involving the prominent feminist #XiaoMeili, Davidson 2021), the systematic closure of feminists' accounts in social media, and the regular deletion of sensitive hashtags, such as the popular #gb, meaning #girlboy, and #6B4T, which stems from a Korean feminist thread and campaigns against stereotypical normative gender expectations imposed on women (Li 2021).

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