

An Anti-Corruption Campaign Takes Shape in China

From VOA Learning English, welcome to As It Is! I'm Mario Ritter.

Today, we hear about the trial and sentencing of a top leader in China's Communist Party. We tell how the campaign against corruption in China is taking shape in some unexpected ways. Then we revisit a story about a program that gives young people a chance to do good in their community.

On Sunday, a former leader of China's Communist Party was sentenced to life in prison. A court found Bo Xilai guilty of all three charges brought against him. He was jailed on bribery, corruption and abuse of power charges.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has promised to fight corruption in the country. But Chinese government officials are not the only ones taking part in the campaign. China's Internet users are also involved, and that has some officials worried. Jim Tedder tells us more.

Bo Xilai received a life prison sentence after he was found guilty on bribery charges. Added to that was a 15 year sentence for the charge of corruption and seven years for abuse of power. Reports say the court seized \$3 million from the family, including a home in southern France.

Bo formerly led the Communist Party in the southwestern city of Chongqing. His trial came soon after the trial of his wife. She received a suspended death sentence for the murder of a British businessman. Both have received a huge amount of attention, both in China and internationally.

Clayton Dube is the head of the U.S.-China Institute at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. He says the Chinese people link corruption to other problems in society.

"They routinely identify corruption as one of the top one or two problems that China faces and frequently they link corruption in their minds to the other problems the widening gap between rich and poor the problems with land grabs and pollution, food safety, this sort of thing. And so corruption is a big issue."

In China, public concerns about corruption are often expressed on the Internet. VOA examined about 40 corruption cases that were reported in China since last year. More than half of them first appeared online or in the media.

Online services have also changed how quickly people share information. Within minutes, a single Web entry, or post, can be resent thousands, even hundreds of thousands of times. Chinese officials are worried about the power of online microblogging services, called Weibos. Such services let users write and share comments and links. Recently, China's government announced new rules for the Internet. Bloggers can receive jail sentences if they are found guilty of spreading unconfirmed reports online.

The new rules come after a change in the leadership of China's Communist Party. Clayton Dube says the party wants to show that it is dealing with the corruption issue and does not need help.

"The party, at the same time that it is cracking down on Bo Xilai and others that it has found to be corrupt, the party-state is also saying the rest of society: 'You don't need to help us with this.'"

The campaign against "tigers and flies," which means both high and low-level corrupt officials, may only be starting. In Bo Xilai's case, he may be able to leave prison in about 10 years because his crimes were non-violent.

Hurricane Sandy struck the eastern United States last October. The hurricane caused flooding and damage from high winds. Today some victims of Sandy are still having problems. However, there is an army of helpers that have joined the recovery effort. They are young people who are getting a second chance. Jim Tedder has more.

Young people help clear a road damaged by Hurricane Sandy at Breezy Point, New York. When the work is finished, government vehicles will again be able to get to the coast to take care of wildlife.

Other teenagers are preparing food packages for victims of Hurricane Sandy. These helpers are from New York City. They were found guilty of non-violent crimes and are now on probation -- a period of supervision instead of time in jail for former lawbreakers.

The young people are receiving help from a non-profit group called YouthWRAP. It helps teenage lawbreakers reject crime through community projects.

Vincent Schiraldi is New York City's Probation Commissioner. He says the young people and the city get something valuable out of the program.

"The more time they spend doing good, the less time they are going to spend doing bad as far as we are concerned. So part of it is for them to turn their lives around, part of it is for them to really do the work that New York City needs to recover from Sandy."

Not far away, Coney Island's Salt and Sea Mission is working with YouthWrap. The group is giving other young offenders the chance to do something good. The Mission takes care of individuals whose homes were destroyed.

"Today we are giving out green beans, macaroni and cheese, diced tomatoes, apple sauce, apple juice, pesto beans, no kidney beans, and maple and the peanut butter."

The teenagers are paid up to \$1400 dollars for the summer. But even more important is the responsibility and experience that these young people gain.

"It meant a lot because it changed the way I see life and now I see people."

Pastor Debby Santiago is the leader of the Salt and Sea Mission. She was once a drug dealer and bank robber. But now the city's Probation Department wants her to provide guidance to the young people.

"They're helping this community, most of them, I mean they're getting pleasure out of helping other people."

Hurricane Sandy recovery projects in New York City involve about 450 teens on probation. And many of them are on their way to a better life.

I'm June Simms.

On September 25th, 1789, the United States Congress approved the first 10 amendments to the Constitution. The 10 measures are known as the "Bill of Rights." They established basic freedoms and protections that cannot be taken from the people by the government.

The Bill of Rights was added to the 1787 Constitution after constitutional opponents argued that it gave too much power to the central government.

The ten articles of the Bill of Rights include guarantees of freedom of speech, press and religion. They give the people the right to assemble, or meet, make appeals to the government and possess arms. The Bill of Rights protects Americans against unreasonable searches and seizures.

And that's our show for today. Join us tomorrow for another As It Is program from VOA Learning English.