



## Evidence of abuse of Twitter for Tibet propaganda

21 July 2014

Free Tibet has documented the following:

1. **The apparent establishment of large numbers of fake personal accounts, both as active tweeting accounts and as dummy followers for other accounts**
2. **The use of other Twitter users' profiles for these accounts, apparently without permission**
3. **The use of other online sources of images, including copyrighted material, apparently without permission**
4. **The use of pornographic imagery in the profiles of related accounts**
5. **The repeated use of Tibet keywords in unrelated material**
6. **The use of multiple accounts to tweet and retweet identical content and to refer users to the same websites**

The extensive nature of these abuses and apparently large number of suspicious accounts makes the provision of a definitive and comprehensive list impossible. Further, in addition to accounts and content directly related to Tibet, numerous other apparently personal "Western" accounts exist, retweeting content favourable to China and frequently sourced from Chinese websites, including official state media<sup>1</sup>. A large number of these accounts are related (ie follow or are followed by) the Tibet accounts. Free Tibet's initial investigation suggests that a very large proportion of these accounts are also fake, based on the criteria identified below.

Only selected examples of Tibet-related accounts are therefore provided below. All accounts and urls were accessed between 8 July 2014 and 17 July 2014. Screen grabs of selected accounts and content are available here <https://www.flickr.com/photos/freetibetorg/sets/72157645747389161/> and from Free Tibet on request.

The following are selected examples of each kind of abuse:

### 1. **The apparent establishment of large numbers of fake accounts, both as active Tweeting accounts and as dummy followers for other accounts**

- a. Active accounts, retweeting Tibet-related material originating from a Chinese website (see item 6, below):

<https://twitter.com/philomenarebec>  
<https://twitter.com/felixjames654>  
<https://twitter.com/olivernina567>  
<https://twitter.com/tomhugo148>  
<https://twitter.com/Chapinvgg>  
<https://twitter.com/lydiamay789>  
<https://twitter.com/alicevivian258>

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<sup>1</sup> Free Tibet has identified retweets relating to other Chinese issues of international concern (or which contain related keywords) from "Tibet" and/or other accounts: for instance Hong Kong [https://twitter.com/wib\\_t](https://twitter.com/wib_t) and ethnic unrest in Xinjiang <https://twitter.com/ChinaXinjiang/status/488933241181569024>.

*Evidence of fake status:*

- The names do not match the names of the people in the photograph and/or the profile descriptions belong to other Twitter accounts (see item 2 below).
- Names follow similar formats, usually being two first names.
- Most accounts have very similar number of followers (around 90) and follow a very similar number of accounts (around 60) to the other accounts tweeting the same material.
- Tweet identical or very similar content as other identified accounts, sometimes simultaneously.
- The content of the tweets does not appear consistent with the personal nature and “identities” of the accounts (eg regular links to Chinese Tibet-related sites to the exclusion of other content, or with minimal “personal” content; other content obtained from China websites; Chinese language content; extremely irregular posting and “random” content).
- The followers of these accounts almost all appear fake on the basis of the above criteria (see below).
- The followers of these accounts follow the same, apparently fake, accounts linked to the Tibet propaganda, forming a circle of followers.
- Most have MySpace accounts with the same or very similar followers as Twitter accounts.

b. Dummy accounts for the purpose of providing active accounts with followers

- <https://twitter.com/BantaColtoniwq/following>
- <https://twitter.com/VenitaLegner>
- <https://twitter.com/gallupirving>
- <https://twitter.com/ericlynn265>

*Evidence of fake status:*

- As above.
- Accounts follow the same, apparently fake, accounts linked to the Tibet propaganda, forming a circle of followers.
- Publish no, minimal, random or exclusively China-related content.

**2. The use of other Twitter users’ profiles for these accounts, apparently without permission:**

- *[Details of personal accounts withheld but provided to Twitter]*
- <https://twitter.com/Owingsykm>; Description taken from <https://twitter.com/QuiteBuy>

**3. The use of other online sources of images, including copyrighted material, apparently without permission**

- *[Details identifying private individuals withheld from this document but provided to Twitter]*
- <https://twitter.com/tomhugo148>  
Photograph of a model <http://www.malemodelsce.net/editorial/felipe-berto-rick-day/>
- <https://twitter.com/felixjames654>  
Photograph appears to be a stock photo (used on business sites) <http://www.nanjingexpat.com/college-translation/index.php/industries/information-technology>
- <https://twitter.com/AlaynaNewark> Photograph of actress, Erica Durrant
- <https://twitter.com/Castleberrypgx/following> Photograph of (deceased) Pink Floyd singer, Syd Barrett

#### 4. The use of pornographic imagery in related, apparently fake, accounts

- <https://twitter.com/hlj010/followers>
- <https://twitter.com/496285948>

#### 5. The repeated use of Tibet keywords (such as #Tibet or #freeTibet) in unrelated material

[https://twitter.com/wib\\_t](https://twitter.com/wib_t)  
<https://twitter.com/sulomani1/status/486458281670348801>  
<https://twitter.com/batmangame00/status/486465831115575298>  
<https://twitter.com/hlj010>

#### 6. The use of multiple accounts to tweet the same content and refer users to the same websites

- The Tibet links being retweeted come from <https://twitter.com/tibetol> which lists its website as <http://www.tibetol.cn/> (of which there's an English version <http://en.tibetol.cn/>). The tweets themselves link instead to <http://tibet.use.icp100.com/>
- Other China-related items (eg <https://twitter.com/ChinaXinjiang/status/488933241181569024> by "Lydia May") link to [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-07/15/content\\_17781066.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-07/15/content_17781066.htm)

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For further information and screen grabs of selected accounts, contact Alistair Currie, Free Tibet campaigns and media manager:

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*Free Tibet is a London-based international campaigning organisation, working for the Tibetan people's right to determine their own future, an end to China's occupation and for the fundamental human rights of Tibetans to be respected.*

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