



Dick Costolo
Chief Executive Officer
Twitter Inc.

Via email 21 July 2014

Dear Mr Costolo

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. I am contacting you today regarding the systematic use and abuse of Twitter to disseminate propaganda regarding Tibet and to seek your urgent action to remediate this problem and prevent its future occurrence.

Free Tibet has identified a large range of apparent abuses of Twitter, some clearly violating Twitter's rules and others whose status is harder to address. The key issue is the use of a very large number of false Twitter accounts to tweet and retweet propaganda regarding Tibet which apparently originates with the Chinese government. These accounts steal images and profiles from genuine accounts and other online and copyrighted sources without permission. The specific abuses we have identified are itemised in the attached appendix, with examples provided.

Free Tibet recognises the challenge Twitter faces dealing with fake accounts and other abuses but a company of Twitter's size and high profile must take responsibility for failing to prevent abuse on this scale for the political purposes of an authoritarian regime. These accounts are not the exercise of free speech but an act of cynical deception designed to manipulate public opinion regarding an occupied and brutally repressed country. Tibetans within Tibet are completely denied the right to speak to the world online. They face even greater restrictions on their online activity than China's own citizens and are frequently denied all access to the internet. Tibetans can receive sentences of up to life imprisonment for online or email content criticising China's regime. China has the power and resources to use Twitter for its own ends and Tibetans do not. In the words of concentration camp survivor Elie Wiesel, "neutrality helps the oppressor, never the oppressed".

As you may be aware, the human rights situation in Tibet is grave. The US State Department describes repression in Tibet in 2013 as "severe". The human rights bodies of the United Nations have raised repeated concerns about human rights in Tibet, including torture, arbitrary detention, religious suppression, abuse of children's rights, freedom of speech and minority rights. Freedom House's 2014 world report identified Tibet as one of the world's twelve worst countries for civil and political rights, giving it a "lowest-of-the-low" rating. Since March 2011, more than 125 Tibetans have set themselves alight in protest against Chinese rule and policies in Tibet. Within the last year, demonstrators have been fired on with live ammunition, at least three Tibetans have been killed in police custody, punitive sentences have been handed down for exercising freedom of speech and convincing reports of torture are widespread.

Free Tibet calls on you in the first instance to:

1. Immediately suspend all accounts we have identified which contain stolen or copyrighted material;
2. investigate the followers of all these accounts and suspend any which are not authentic and/or which have taken personal or copyrighted material without permission;
3. identify the IP addresses from which all suspended accounts originate and make public their country of origin;
4. ban these IP addresses from opening future Twitter accounts;
5. treat all personal, non-Chinese accounts which retweet content from <http://www.tibetol.cn/>, <http://en.tibetol.cn/> and <http://tibet.use.icp100.com/> as suspicious, investigate their authenticity and suspend all fake accounts.

Secondly, Twitter must, as a matter of priority:

1. establish a policy to ensure the identification and removal of fake accounts used to promote propaganda regarding Tibet;
2. evaluate personal accounts retweeting Chinese website-originated material relating to Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tiananmen Square for authenticity and suspend any violating Twitter's rules;
3. establish a policy to ensure the identification and removal of fake accounts used for political propaganda by regimes which abuse human rights.

I am sure you will share our concern about this flagrant abuse of your brand and product. Thank you for your consideration of these matters and I look forward to your urgent response. I may be contacted at Eleanor@freetibet.org or at the address below.

Yours sincerely



Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren
Director

Cc: Vijaya Gadde General Counsel; Colin Crowell, VP Global Public Policy