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Taiwanese TV satellite operator refuses to continue relaying New Tang Dynasty signal

RSF (25.05.2011) / HRWF Int. (31.05.2011) – www.hrwf.net - Reporters Without Borders has asked the Taiwanese authorities to explain why the country's leading telecom company and TV satellite operator, Chunghwa Telecom (中華電信), is refusing to continue relaying *New Tang Dynasty Asia Pacific (NTD-AP, 新唐人電視臺)*, a TV station that broadcasts programmes in Mandarin, mainly to Taiwan but also to mainland China.

The press freedom organization has written to Prime Minister Wu Den-yih expressing its concern that Chunghwa Telecom is discriminating against *NTD-AP*.

In an 11 April letter, Chunghwa Telecom told *NTD-AP* that it would not be able to renew their relay contract when it expires on 9 August because of "insufficient bandwidth" on its new satellite, ST-2, which is about to replace the existing one, ST-1.

"The contradictions in the reasons given by Chunghwa Telecom for not renewing the contract and the supposed limitations of the new satellite's technical capacity suggest that the real reasons lie elsewhere," Reporters Without Borders said. "The similarities of this dispute and the dispute between *NTD-AP*'s parent station, *NTD-TV*, and the [French satellite operator Eutelsat, make us fear the worst](#).

"In the latter case, it was established that the Chinese authorities were involved and had pressured Eutelsat to stopping relaying *NTD-TV*, which they have repeatedly criticized. If it turns out that the same has happened with *NTD-AP*, the credibility of the Taiwanese government, which has a controlling share of Chunghwa Telecom, will be badly damaged."

Ever since its creation in August 2007 *NTD-TV*, which claims to have 3.7 million subscribers in Taiwan, has broadcast programmes that are very different from those carried by the official Chinese media. In particular, it has programmes about human rights, repression in Tibet and harassment of religious groups in China such as Falun Gong and Christian churches. Eutelsat stopped relaying its signal in 2008.

Taiwan is ranked 48th out of 178 countries in the 2010 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

After Sylvia Feng was ousted as president of Taiwan's Public Television Service (PTS) last October, [Reporters Without Borders reminded the government](#) of its undertakings to respect the state-owned media's independence.
