

# From Ye Fudao to Adam Minter

Thursday, October 11, 2012

Just when Adam Minter were listing Ye Fudao's lack of Weibo updates due to anger at the media, Ye posted today on his website a correction of Adam Minter assumptions.

From: Ye FuDao

Dear Mr. Adam Minter: you have the freedom to criticize. Similarly, I also have the right to express anger at your baseless criticism and doubts! I state again: your criticism and doubts have absolutely no basis whatsoever!


<http://www.weibo.com/u/2175973444> 

Statement From China Labor Watch

Ye Fudao's Weibo said: “3G门户请不要张冠李戴，将太原富士康的罢工图片配在此次事件中!”

Minter translated this as: “Please do not confuse one thing with another, or mix up photos of the Taiyuan Foxconn strike with this one!”

However, it should be translated as: “3G menhu, please do not confuse one thing with another, or mix up photos of the Taiyuan Foxconn strike with this one!”

Ye Fudao pointed out on his Weibo that a Chinese website called “3G Menhu” ([www.3g.cn](http://www.3g.cn) ) exaggerated his reporting of the incident. He also pointed out that this website used images from the Taiyuan riot in reference to the Zhengzhou strike. The article on 3G Menhu contains a picture with the caption “image of the scene (from Weibo)”, but the image was actually taken during the Taiyuan riot incident. 3G Menhu is still using this photo. The article can be found at: [dead link]<http://news.3g.cn/ipnewscontent.aspx?nid=2081519&cin=3706&waped=9&sid=0082236FE4B>

Minter should explain clearly to the readers that Ye Fudao was expressing anger at 3G Menhu because it used of a photo from the Taiyuan riot and attributed it to the Zhengzhou incident. Minter's article and his translation suggest that Ye was angry at general media coverage of the incident. But the 3G Menhu article is the central target of this frustration. This is important because it changes the narrative that Minter had created about Ye, namely that he was angry about the general news coverage of his Weibo posts and, in extension, the China Labor Watch report of his Weibo posts. But Ye was not upset with CLW; instead, Ye was focusing on the image on 3G Menhu specifically.

In response to questions about his translation, Minter responded: “As a result of this large number of articles, and the nature of 3G as an aggregator and syndicator, I dropped '3G Portal' from my translation because - in my opinion - the use of '3G portal' is interchangeable with the phrase 'news organizations'. To keep the phrase in my translation would require an explanation of 3G's role in China's mobile communications environment, even though such an explanation would add nothing but additional wordage to my audience's knowledge of Ye's intent.”

Minter explicitly admitted changing the content of Ye's Weibo post—without having contacted Ye beforehand—because of his opinion about 3G Menhu. This is not factually sound.

Ye Fudao wrote on Weibo: “**昨郑州富士康罢工并没有暴力和群殴！而是三个厂区的品管有组织的非暴力不合作罢工！**”

Minter translated this as: “Yesterday's Zhengzhou Foxconn strike was free from violence and gang fights! Rather, quality control units of three small factories organized nonviolent, noncooperation strikes!”

This translation may lead to a misunderstanding. What Minter translated as “three small factories” would be more accurately be translated as “three production areas”, minus the “small”. Moreover, these areas contain the complete production lines for iPhone 5's at Foxconn Zhengzhou. Among the workers on these lines, at least 7000 are quality inspectors. You can imagine the consequences for the factory when many of these inspectors went on strike. We hope that Minter did not intentionally translate Ye's post in a way such so as to play down the significance of these production areas.

China Business Journal confirmed that 3,000 to 4,000 workers refused to work at Foxconn ZhengZhou

After CLW released a press release on October 5<sup>th</sup> on a strike occurred in Foxconn ZhengZhou, we received some doubts on the number of workers who participated in the strike. Today, China Business Journal published a report on the strike, they interviewed many workers in Foxconn ZhengZhou, part of this article confirmed our press release.

We translated the entire article. For more details, please have a look at this link. <http://tech.sina.com.cn/it/2012-10-14/09257700137.shtml> 

China Business Journal is a leading provider for financial news and information. it's a weekly journal, and the circulation is 850,000 every week.

October 14, 2012 09:25 China Business Journal

(Translated from Chinese)

As the riot at Foxconn Taiyuan on September 23 was still under heated discussion, more news broke out about several thousand workers going on strike at Foxconn Zhengzhou during the 2012 National Holiday in China. Why on Earth do management problems occur so frequently at the world's largest supply company known for being careful about management?

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, a large worker strike occurred at Zhengzhou Foxconn. Although Zhengzhou Foxconn denied quickly that the strike had several thousand workers involved and instead attributed the incident to 'three to four hundred workers expressing appeals in the form of intentional absenteeism, for a period of time only lasting two hours'. My investigation has revealed that there were several hundred workers directly involved in the conflict and another three to four thousand workers insisted on not showing up for work as a form of protest. The whole strike lasted almost two days. As for the reason of the conflict, it was a result of the managerial disorder and pressure from performance assessments.

### Forced overtime

In the southern part of Zhengzhou, near the Xingzheng International Airport, is a 10-square kilometer area that has become the largest investment project in recent years---Foxconn's Zhengzhou factory. It is one of the three factories that were constructed when Foxconn decided to build plants in He'nan province in July 2008. Foxconn Zhengzhou is also the largest of the three. There were 120,000 workers there when this factory welcomed a visit from Apple CEO Tim Cook in March of this year. Two other factories, in the Zhengzhou Economic and Technological Development Zone and Zhongmou County, had a total of 60,000 workers. Judging from its production operations, Foxconn Zhengzhou is primarily producing Apple phones.

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, when the news about 'thousands of workers striking at Foxconn' was still a hot issue being reprinted all over the place, Foxconn's Zhengzhou campus, a source of news, had already calmed down.

On the scene, CBJ reporters saw on that, as usual, there were many recruitment booths around the factory gate broadcasting recruitment policies and advantages of working at Foxconn, accepting inquiring groups of twos or threes. The managers of the booths were staff from the local government's labor department completing their recruitment duties as well as staff from Foxconn.

Wang Chunpei, who has worked at Foxconn for more than seven years, belongs to the second type of staff mentioned above. "Recruiting is more relaxing than working in the factory," he said, "but the task of recruiting 300 new employees each month is still a huge challenge. It's not easy to complete."

Wang Chunpei received some phone calls and messages on October 6 from some workers on strike in the campus, requesting him not to employ new workers and to join the strike. Wang said there were three to four thousand workers that refused to work overtime. He told the reporter, until the night of October 6, there were still many people that protested by refusing to work. Until 12 AM, striking employees were "suppressed" by assistant security guards at Foxconn. Several workers who led the strike were forced to resign, and the line leader who first initiated the verbal conflict with workers "cannot work here any more".

On October 6, Foxconn spokesperson Liu Kun told the media, "the labor union has been trying its best to communicate, and this situation has essentially calmed down." However, he did not explain the specific causes of this strike.

After interviewing several Foxconn workers, this reporter learned that this conflict originated from the fact that the three-day break for the national holiday in Foxconn was not implemented in all production facilities. Some production facilities had no day off during the holiday, including some production lines in Area K (there are eight areas, including A, K, B, E, C, F, D, L, and Area K, F, and L are all assembling iPhones).

A Foxconn worker helped this reporter calculate the following. In Foxconn, according to regulations, working overtime during the holiday for one day (including the prolonged overtime hours that day) would equal a daily income of almost 400 RMB (\$62.5), and work during the three-day holiday would lead to around 1,000 RMB (\$156.3) in wages. However, if calculated as a normal working day, there would be a huge gap in wages for Foxconn's workers.

As confirmed by several workers, the reasons above led to the conflict initially that broke out in a production line on the second floor in building 06 of Area K right before noon on October 5. A crowd of workers flooded into the offices of Foxconn management to protest. The circumstance reached a climax on the 6<sup>th</sup>: some employees personally saw "the beating of a line leader dressed in red".

### The system makes way for performance

The official employment policy of Foxconn shows that the basic monthly wage of a newly-hired worker is 1,800 RMB (\$281.3). If calculated as normal working hours—8 hours a day, 22 days a month—and after deducting a pre-wage dormitory fee of 150 RMB (\$23.8), the daily price of a worker's labor is 75 RMB (\$11.7), or around 9 RMB (\$1.4) an hour. If they work less than 22 days, then the 75 RMB (\$11.7) a day would be reduced (the social security and insurance fees would be deducted before getting the monthly wage, too).

The reality at Foxconn is, the more overtime you work, the more money you earn. An income without overtime hours is small. Although visible regulations indicate that Foxconn employees have to have one day off each week, working overtime depends entirely on the willingness of workers. However, the workers admit that when hurrying out orders, there will be some forced overtime practices.

Some workers told this reporter, "everyday (I) start work at 8 am and get off at 6 pm. With 2 more hours of overtime, I will stay on campus for 12 hours. Within the Foxconn working hour design, most of the workers tacitly consider overtime as 'normal working hours'. If there is someone who does not want to work overtime, there will be 'a little bit of trouble' from lower management."

A line leader, Fu Wenjie, in charge of a dozen of workers, told this reporter that if the daily quota was not achieved, they would be

scolded or even be moved to other places. His team is in charge of smearing protective agents onto the aluminum magnesium alloy frame of the iPhone 5 in order to eliminate the probability of scratches. According to the performance of his production line, he will receive a year-end bonus of from 2,000 RMB (\$312.5) to almost 10,000 (\$1562.5) RMB.

Fu Wenjie said he would rather see the workers work overtime together, because once there are workers not willing to work overtime, he will need to report to supervisors and apply for workers to be transferred from other lines. Fu said that on a production line, absence of workers means that products will be squeezed on the production line. Once one link begins to lag, it might delay the ability of other links to match up, finally bringing about poor performance marks of the whole production line.

In addition, workers on every production line have repeated the same simple operation for months, almost operating unconsciously. The skilled, highly-efficient operation brought about from such mechanical repetition is not possessed by those who are transferred temporarily from other lines.

Although most workers are willing to work overtime for more money, taking leave or absenteeism still sometimes occurs. This brings about friction between lower-level management line leaders and young, volatile workers, which are not uncommon among Foxconn's lower-level management. As for the large strike that just occurred, Wang underplayed it saying, "it is actually very common."

### The mess of recruiting

As a matter of fact, ever since August, when Foxconn received the order from Apple, it has faced a hunger for labor. According to information from He'nan provincial government, Foxconn Zhengzhou will need 200,000 workers (with 180,000 currently) by the year's end to complete the production order of 100,000,000 iPhones for Apple within the year.

"16 to 45 years old," When replying to an inquiry about employment qualifications at Foxconn, Guo Xiangming, general manager at Zhengzhou Haogongyou Human Resource Co., Ltd. said, "as long as they aren't lacking arms or legs, anyone could be employed."

Haogongyou is a local labor agency in Zhengzhou. Compared to dispatching workers through other channels, recruiting for Foxconn will bring additional benefits to the agency. Each time a worker is found by Haogongyou and employed by Foxconn, Haogongyou will receive a 400 RMB (\$62.5) allowance. This allowance is the special preference granted by Foxconn to all local departments of labor in He'nan province, but the labor departments always seek the help of social labor agencies. Therefore, agencies like Haogongyou all work for Foxconn.

As the largest investment project in He'nan, Foxconn agrees to be located in Zhengzhou on the condition of several types of preferential treatments. Among them is that the He'nan government assists in recruiting for Foxconn. As decided at the He'nan Governor's Office Conference on August 4, He'nan province will assist in the employment of 200,000 workers for Foxconn. This assignment was assigned to 18 local governments from around He'nan province, and those local counties or cities that could not complete the assignment would be criticized.

Ever since Foxconn got the order from Apple to produce the iPhone 5 in August, Foxconn employees' idle working status in June and July has been replaced by a tense status. A labor agency staff member who does not want to disclose their name told this reporter that currently some production lines have shifted from having one day off every 20 days to having one day off every 30 days. And based on the hot sales of Apple products in the past, Foxconn will sustain such an intense working status until the end of the year.

Foxconn workers now work on 'two shifts', and production is rushed day and night to fully use the production potential of the production lines, pushing out more products.

In order to help Foxconn recruit enough labor, the He'nan government has carried out a subsidy policy, giving each employee a one-time subsidy of 200 RMB (\$31.3) to work at Foxconn. Even given this, all local labor departments have expressed that pressure to recruit is really high and that the recruitment quota is difficult to achieve.

Guo told this reporter that at present, there is a labor shortage at Foxconn and employment qualifications are not strict. From less-educated migrant workers to third- or lower-tier vocational college students who are arranged into internships by their schools, are all working at Foxconn. There is a huge difference in ages of the workers, and they also come from different parts of China. Foxconn's hunger for labor as well as the individual cultural differences among its workers might be important, difficult-to-neglect reasons for the successive collective events that have occurred in such a short period of time at Foxconn.

Update: October 12

This is a relatively comprehensive report from The Economic Observer (China). This report interviewed many workers in Foxconn Zhengzhou, including some workers who participated in the strike on October 5th. According to this report, because some of the quality inspectors were beaten up, they start to organize this strike from October 2nd. The strike started on October 5th. The following is a weblink to the article. We are translating this article.

<http://www.donews.com/it/201210/1677708.shtml> 

According to the information CLW received from workers in Foxconn Zhengzhou, After the strike, Foxconn is taking measures to resolve the conflicts between production line workers and quality inspectors. They have increased the number of workers on production line.

From Adam Minter to China Labor Watch

From: Adam Minter [shanghaiscrap@gmail.com](mailto:shanghaiscrap@gmail.com)

Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2012 10:27 AM

To: [bessie@chinalaborwatch.org](mailto:bessie@chinalaborwatch.org)

Cc: [zkessler@bloomberg.net](mailto:zkessler@bloomberg.net)

Subject: Re: Request of official response from China Labor Watch

Bessie:

Zara Kessler, my editor at Bloomberg view, has forwarded me your email of October 11.

Please allow me to respond to the first paragraph of your note.

The Sina Weibo microblogger who use the name Ye Fudao posted three weibos on October 6. You can find them [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Allow me to be very clear: not one of these weibos contains a link to the article that CLW alleges that Ye claims that I saw. In fact, not only do they fail to link to the article CLW and Ye allege, they don't link to anything at all.

The first of Ye's weibos was posted at 11:03 AM on October 6. In addition to a brief comment by Ye that makes no mention of Taiyuan, it includes a forwarded weibo from the Caijing weibo account. That forwarded weibo contains no link of any kind, much less the link that CLW and Ye now forwards to my editor's attention and claims that I saw.

In Ye's second tweet, posted at 13:15 on the 6th, he directly mentions the 3G portal and asks that they not mix Taiyuan photos with the Zhengzhou strike. However, he does not link to a story. This is particularly problematic because 3G does not generate its own content. Rather, it is China's largest mobile computing platform, and in this capacity it both aggregates and syndicates news generated by many, many other content generators, including news organizations. By 13:15 on October 6, 3G had already posted tens of articles about the alleged Zhengzhou strike, including statements from Foxconn disputing that the strike had occurred, several stories alleging mass violence, and several stories (at least) that appeared to include photos from the Taiyuan strike. Among the organizations published on 3G who included photos of Taiyuan was Netease. There are several other such articles.

As a result of this large number of articles, and the nature of 3G as an aggregator and syndicator, I dropped "3G Portal" from my translation because - in my opinion - the use of '3G portal' is interchangeable with the phrase "news organizations." To keep the phrase in my translation would require an explanation of 3G's role in China's mobile communications environment, even though such an explanation would add nothing but additional wordage to my audience's knowledge of Ye's intent. To be clear: the 3G platform represents many, many content generators, and accusing it of wrongdoing is to suggest wrong-doing by several - not one - of its aggregated content generators

Finally, Ye's final weibo of the 6th was posted at 22:15. In it, he mentions "certain media" who have exaggerated his facts. As I noted above, there are several organizations that exaggerated Ye's weibos (as translated by CLW), and it was impossible to know who - precisely - he meant without a specific weibo.

Please note that I will not communicate further with CLW in regard to information that the organization alleges is being forwarded to it by Ye Fudao. However, if Ye cares to communicate with me directly, I would of course be happy to engage in that dialogue.

Sincerely,

Adam Minter

China Labor Watch | 147 W 35 St, Ste 406, NYC, NY 10001  
+1-212-244-4049 | [clw@chinalaborwatch.org](mailto:clw@chinalaborwatch.org)  
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