

As Virus Spreads, Anger Floods Chinese Social Media | The New York Times

By Raymond Zhong

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SHANGHAI — Recently, someone following the coronavirus crisis through China’s official news media would see lots of footage, often set to stirring music, praising the heroism and sacrifice of health workers marching off to stricken places.

But someone following the crisis through social media would see something else entirely: vitriolic comments and mocking memes about government officials, harrowing descriptions of untreated family members and images of hospital corridors loaded with patients, some of whom appear to be dead.

The contrast is almost never so stark in China. The government usually keeps a tight grip on what is said, seen and heard about it. But the sheer amount of criticism — and the often clever ways in which critics dodge censors, such as by referring to Xi Jinping, China’s top leader, as “Trump” or by comparing the outbreak to the Chernobyl catastrophe — have made it difficult for Beijing to control the message.

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