

Food shortages and growing public anger boils over as Beijing-ordered lockdowns shut down major Chinese cities

Anger and anxiety over the Shanghai lockdown, now in its fourth week, has posed a rare challenge for China's powerful propaganda apparatus, which is central to the Communist Party's ability to stifle dissent.

As the Omicron variant continues to spread across the country, officials have defended their use of widespread, heavy-handed lockdowns.

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Since Shanghai's lockdown began, residents there have railed against the harsh measures, which have led to [food shortages](#), [delayed medical care](#), [shoddy quarantine conditions](#) and even [physical fencing](#) around residents' homes. Officials have responded with their usual playbook, censoring critical posts, inundating state media with positive stories and blaming foreign forces for fanning false ones. But far from stemming the anger, they have fueled it.

Residents have compiled footage from their daily lives, showing rotting food or shouting matches with local officials, rebutting the authorities' story of a tidy, cheery outbreak response. They have banded together to repost deleted content with a speed and savvy that for a time overwhelmed censors' ability to keep up. Even some members of the political and academic elite have [suggested](#) that the government's propaganda about Shanghai is hurting its credibility.

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