



For Immediate Release

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HKDC Condemns Detention and Charges Against 47 Pro-Democracy Leaders

Group charged over LegCo primaries in largest political case since the 1997 Handover

WASHINGTON, DC (March 4, 2021) - In response to today's court decision to deny bail to 32 of the 47 leading pro-democracy figures charged with "conspiracy to commit subversion" under the National Security Law, and the government's decision to immediately appeal the successful bail applications of the remaining 15 - thus resulting in all 47 defendants remaining in custody, HKDC releases the following statements:

From Samuel Chu, managing director, HKDC:

"What took place in the courtroom was a political purge and a stunt. The once highly-regarded Hong Kong judiciary was hijacked and used as propaganda for the National People's Congress 'two sessions' beginning Thursday. The decision to detain the 47 en masses was made to set the stage for further assaults on the electoral system already announced by Beijing.

The landslide victory in the 2019 district council elections and the high turnout in the 2020 LegCo primaries shook the confidence of Beijing to maintain control. Despite the advantage of an election system rigged for pro-Beijing interests and against any opposition, the CCP is so fearful of Hong Kongers exercising their free will that they canceled and delayed elections, disqualified pro-democracy lawmakers and candidates, and have now moved to imprison the entire political leadership of the movement in one fell swoop.

Seeking to deny bail to practicing physicians and lawyers, former lawmakers and duly elected district councilors, and even an expecting father is unconscionable. The prosecutor tried to paint a picture of a grave and grand conspiracy of violent rebellion, but the fact remains that the only 'crime' the 47 have been accused of is taking part in a public and open primary election that drew over 600,000 Hong Kongers. There was nothing secret and violent about what they have done.

The prosecutor's decision to immediately appeal the court's decision to grant bail to 15 of the 47 follows a disturbing pattern and the precedent set by the bail case of Jimmy Lai - who himself remains in custody months after multiple appeals on his own bail application. The NSL has fundamentally altered the rule of law and remade the courtrooms in Hong Kong in the image of the court in mainland China.

Hundreds of Hong Kongers gathered over the marathon hearing of four days to show their support. At one point, the supporters chanted 'Liberate Hong Kong; Revolution of our Times' - the protest slogan banned under

the NSL - so loudly that they could be heard inside the court building. The message Hong Kongers sent to the CCP is clear and unequivocal from both inside and outside the courtroom: 'Hong Kongers are not afraid. The only one who is afraid is the CCP.'

The world must condemn these charges in the strongest terms possible. This is not the time for the US or any free nation to grow numb or to give the CCP and Hong Kong government a pass because of economic or other political interests. The US must lead a joint response with like-minded partners to:

- Coordinate sanction schemes against official responsible for and involved with the political persecution and arrests of activists and undermining Hong Kong's autonomy, political system, and the rule of law;
- File a case before the International Court of Justice to hold the PRC accountable for violating its commitments in the Sino-British Joint Declaration;
- Urge the United Nations to appoint a UN special mandate holder to report on Hong Kong's human rights developments;
- Adopt and coordinate 'Safe Harbor' policies to protect all Hong Kongers fleeing persecution;
- Consider a boycott of the 2022 Olympic Winter Games, urging the International Olympic Committee to rebid the 2022 Games, and all Olympic sponsors and athletes to learn about and speak out against China's gross rights violations.

We demand the immediate and unconditional release of the 47 - democratic participation is not a crime."

From Glacier Chung Ching Kwong, Research Fellow, HKDC:

"The arrest and prosecution of the 47 reflect the fact that Beijing wants to completely dismantle all three components of the Movement in 2019-- protests, international lobbying, and the local legislature. Protests are 'local terrorism,' international lobbying is 'colluding with foreign forces,' and running for the Legislative Council is 'conspiracy to commit subversion.' Beijing is gaining full control over the city at the cost of the facade of 'one country, two systems.'

I have had the great fortune to know many among the 47 personally. I have watched them willingly choose and accept their arrests and prosecutions as their fate. Gwyneth Ho told me before today that she is merely playing her part in the democratization of Hong Kong, and she asked me to play my part--in exile. I do not know if I will ever see her again, but I know our hearts will stay connected as long as we hold to our shared beliefs.

Even with almost all the prominent figures of the pro-democracy movement either in custody, in jail, or in exile, our fight is far from over. And it is not just a fight for Hong Kongers, but rather a global fight against authoritarianism and in defense of democratic values. The CCP is good at divide and conquer by luring each country with economic interests to weaken their connections. China must be confronted by an effective democratic coalition. Cross-national consensus and strategies are needed more than ever."

***Hong Kong Democracy Council (HKDC)** is a Washington, DC-based nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Hong Kong's basic freedoms, the rule of law, and autonomy.*

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