



WALKING WITH A YELLOW UMBRELLA:
BEARING WITNESS TO A REVOLUTION

Walking With A Yellow Umbrella: Bearing Witness to a Revolution

Radio Free Asia

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Introduction: “Walking with a Yellow Umbrella: Bearing Witness to a Revolution”

We were there from the start, before the gathering clouds turned into a storm, before 87 canisters of tear gas were fired by police at peaceful protestors who unfurled umbrellas to protect themselves, before an act of nonviolent civil disobedience calling for democracy in Hong Kong became known worldwide as the Umbrella Revolution.

By the end of the 79 days, 955 people had been arrested, new heroes had emerged, and a generation of Hong Kongers had demonstrated to the world that they would not stand by while their political futures were decided for them.

Through it all, RFA reporters were there on the ground, documenting the city-state’s political awakening with words, photographs, and the collection of social media commentary from around the world via a [virtual solidarity wall](#). Even as news outlets were censored and harassed in Hong Kong, and virtually all information about the movement suppressed on the mainland, we were able to reach audiences both inside and outside the mainland.

We decided to publish this e-book to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the Umbrella Movement and to provide a primer for an episode that may have lasted only 79 days on the streets but whose impact may be felt for years to come.

Libby Liu
President, Radio Free Asia



Timeline of Events

Sept. 28, 2014 -

Protesters occupy Hong Kong; police use tear gas, pepper spray. Riot police in Hong Kong fired tear-gas and pepper spray on thousands of pro-democracy protesters who converged downtown Sunday as spontaneous protests erupted across the former British colony in anger at the force used by the authorities on peaceful demonstrations.



Oct. 15, 2014 -

Viral video of Hong Kong police brutality sparks concerns. Protesters surged back onto Hong Kong's streets on Wednesday in the wake of video footage showing police beating up a demonstrator of the pro-democracy movement occupying key areas of the semiautonomous Chinese territory for the third week in a row.



Oct. 1, 2014 -

Hong Kong student leaders warn of takeover of government buildings. Student leaders behind the mass pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong warned Wednesday that demonstrators may move to occupy government offices if the Chinese territory's chief executive refuses to resign, as Beijing told foreign countries not to intervene in its 'internal affairs.'

Oct. 12, 2014 -

Hong Kong students tell Xi Jinping they're willing to 'risk lives' for democracy. In a direct appeal to Chinese President Xi Jinping, students behind the mass pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong have asked him to repeal a decision restricting election reforms in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory, vowing to sacrifice their lives for political change.



Nov. 17, 2014 -

More Hong Kong students on blacklist as protesters await road clearances. The ruling Chinese Communist Party has blacklisted four more student leaders of Hong Kong's democracy protests after three leading figures in the 'Umbrella Movement' were denied access to a flight to Beijing, it emerged on Monday.



Oct. 31, 2014 -

China detains women's rights activist over support for Hong Kong democracy. Authorities in the central Chinese city of Wuhan on Friday detained a prominent women's rights activist after she organized an online activity in support of Hong Kong's Occupy Central pro-democracy movement.

Jan. 12, 2015 -

Attackers firebomb home, offices of Hong Kong pro-democracy media mogul. Arson attacks against the home and newspaper offices of Hong Kong pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai on Monday sparked renewed fears for press freedom in the semiautonomous Chinese city following a string of attacks on outspoken media figures in recent years.

Jan. 29, 2015 -

Chinese activist held over support for Occupy movement in Hong Kong. Authorities in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong have formally arrested an online activist for subversion after he publicly supported Hong Kong's Occupy Central pro-democracy movement, his wife and lawyer said.

Feb. 17, 2015 -

Divisions grow among Hong Kong students after pro-democracy movement. The withdrawal of the student union of the University of Hong Kong from the city's Federation of Students has sparked a wave of campaigns on social media for similar moves in the territory's remaining universities, student leaders said on Tuesday. Turnout was 39 percent, the *South China Morning Post* newspaper reported.

March 26, 2015 -

Hong Kong lawmakers heckle the city's chief executive Leung Chun-ying with references to North Korea and calls for 'Debate! Debate!' after Leung says any changes to the territory's electoral system must adhere to a decree laid down by China's National People's Congress (NPC) on Aug. 31.

April 22, 2015 -

Pan-democratic lawmakers walk out of Hong Kong's legislature in protest after the government tabled a set of electoral reforms within strict limits laid down by Beijing. Many shouted slogans against 'fake universal suffrage.'

June 4, 2015 -

Tens of thousands of people gathered in parks and public spaces in Hong Kong to commemorate the 26th anniversary of the military crackdown on the 1989 democracy movement in China, but also note the city's own pro-democracy movement of 2014.

June 16, 2015 -

Hong Kong gears up for tense political vote amid 'bomb plot' arrests. Authorities in Hong Kong have arrested 10 people in connection with a suspected bomb plot as police officers took up residence in the city's legislature ahead of a Beijing-backed political reform package for the former British colony.



June 18, 2015 -

Hong Kong lawmakers vote down China's controversial electoral reform plan by 28 votes to eight, with 34 pro-Beijing lawmakers walking out in an unsuccessful bid to stall the vote.

June 29, 2015 -

Umbrella Movement student leader Joshua Wong and his girlfriend are assaulted by an unidentified man as they left a movie theater in Hong Kong's gritty downtown district of Mong Kok.

July 1, 2015 -

More than 40,000 people take

to the streets of Hong Kong on the anniversary of the city's 1997 handover to Chinese rule, calling for political reform and for amendments to the city's constitution, sometimes chanting 'No to fake universal suffrage!'

July 7, 2015 -

Four Hong Kong pro-democracy activists, including Occupy Central student leader Joshua Wong, are charged with obstructing the police in the course of their duty, for setting fire to Beijing's 'white paper' on the 'one country, two systems' arrangement under which it rules Hong Kong during a June 2014 demonstration.

July 23, 2015 -

Ye Xiaozheng, an activist from the southern Chinese province of Guangdong, stands trial at the Huicheng District People's Court in Guangdong's Huizhou city for 'incitement to subvert state power' after he showed online support for last year's pro-democracy Occupy Central movement in neighboring Hong Kong.

Aug. 27, 2015 -

Hong Kong charges Joshua Wong and other Occupy Central leaders with charges of "illegal assembly" and "inciting others to take part in an illegal assembly" that could lead to them getting five years in jail.

Sept. 25, 2015 -

Founding chairman of Hong Kong's Democratic Party Martin Lee urges the Obama administration to stand up for Hong Kong in his meeting with visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping.

2014-09-28 – Protesters Occupy Hong Kong; Police Use Tear Gas, Pepper Spray



Police fire tear gas upon pro-democracy demonstrators near the Hong Kong government headquarters, Sept. 28, 2014. – AFP

Riot police in Hong Kong fired tear-gas and pepper spray on thousands of pro-democracy protesters who converged downtown Sunday as spontaneous protests erupted across the former British colony in anger at the force used by the authorities on peaceful demonstrations.

The protesters blocked key sites in the downtown Central business district, adjacent Admiralty, as well as major streets in the shopping districts of Causeway Bay on Hong Kong island, and Mong Kok in Kowloon, defying official warnings that the demonstrations were illegal.

The protests flared after students and activists camped out since late Friday outside the government complex, near the business district to oppose Beijing's decision to limit electoral reforms for Hong Kong.

Chanting "The students are innocent!" and "Give us back our human rights!," protesters sat cross-legged in the middle of the streets as buses, taxis, and mini-buses sat parked on the tarmac, unable to move forward, with some abandoned by their drivers.

Police responded with loud-hailers and banner warnings that protesters were surrounded and should disperse or risk being driven off with tear-gas or pepper spray, which officers carried in large tanks on their backs, squirting it with pumps into the eyes of protesters who got close.

Demonstrators clad in plastic raincoats used umbrellas, plastic goggles and wet towels to protect themselves against the onslaught, while others shifted barricades from the center of the highway to obstruct the police

advance.

‘Leave, leave’



A protester raises his hands in front of riot police, in an undated photo. – RFA

On a main highway between Central and Admiralty districts, protesters with both hands held high surrounded a group of police, chanting “Leave! Leave!” and eventually forcing them to retreat, a live online feed from the *Apple Daily* newspaper’s YouTube channel showed.

Hundreds more lined overhead pedestrian walkways, with others taking over flyovers normally used only by traffic.

The sit-ins began after the organizers of Occupy Central announced that the long-promised civil disobedience campaign had officially begun on Sunday, following clashes between police and students who stormed government headquarters late on Friday, which resulted in dozens of arrests.

Occupy founder Benny Tai told RFA that the group had now begun coordinating protest action with the students, who staged a five-day class boycott independently last week.

“We saw this coming, that a situation like this might arise, and that an Occupy Central movement might just occur, but we didn’t know how big it would be,” he said.

‘Turning point’

Meanwhile, Tommy Cheung, president of the Chinese University of Hong Kong student union, told the crowd to thunderous applause that where the movement goes next is up to them.

“This is a turning point in our history,” Cheung said. “We’re not just talking about the issue of universal suffrage now.”

A number of prominent student leaders including Hong Kong Federation of Students head Alex Chow and Joshua Wong, leader of the academic activist group Scholarism, were arrested during the bid to break into government headquarters on Friday, but were later released.

Clashes with police and the arrest of several student leaders brought streams of fresh supporters onto the streets

after around 150 demonstrators broke through police lines and stormed the city headquarters late on Friday night, prompting 74 arrests.

The students are now demanding the resignation of chief executive C.Y. Leung and the officials in charge of designing a political reform process which will ensure that only candidates approved by Beijing will be able to stand in 2017 elections for Leung's replacement.

They also called on the ruling Chinese Communist Party to retract an Aug. 31 statement ruling out the public nomination of candidates after 800,000 voted in favor of public nomination in an unofficial referendum organized by the Occupy movement.

Rumors

However, the student federation also advised protesters to disperse following rumors that police were planning to use rubber bullets, a rumor that a police statement later denied, and an acoustic cannon.

"We are urging protesters to retreat," the HKFS said via its Twitter account. "Stay safe. This is a long battle."

The government, and later chief executive C.Y. Leung, both issued statements calling on the crowds to go home.

In a recorded statement posted on the government's website, Leung denied rumors that the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which has a barracks close to one of the protest sites, would be deployed.

But thousands of protesters continued to gather in Admiralty, Causeway Bay, and Mong Kok in spite of the warnings. Some told local media they had felt compelled to join the protest after seeing tear-gas used on news reports.

Teachers strike

The territory's Professional Teachers' Union [PTU] has called for a teachers' strike starting on Monday in protest at the use of force against protesters.

"The police have made themselves enemy of the people," union president Fung Wai-wah told the *South China Morning Post* newspaper. "The PTU is extremely angry and strongly condemns the SAR government's and police's crazy actions."

One protester at the Central sit-in told RFA: "I am in my nineties, and I think my generation have let the students down by not fighting and achieving universal suffrage, for not winning democracy."

"Now we have left this difficult task for them," he said.

A university student surnamed Chan said any sacrifice made by the students would be worth it.

"We are now fighting for democracy for Hong Kong," Chan said.

And pro-democracy Civic Party leader Alan Leong, who was also at the scene, said he was also prepared for any outcome.

"We are prepared to be arrested," he said, adding: "There are far more people here than I expected there to be."

'Sad day'

Former second-in-command of the Hong Kong colonial-era government Anson Chan said the police use of force was "a sad day for Hong Kong."

“Pictures of our police force firing pepper spray and tear gas into the faces of unarmed protesters will shame our government in front of the whole world,” she said in a statement issued in the early hours of Monday morning, local time.

“By not fighting for the aspirations of the community for genuine universal suffrage our government has paved the way for the current crisis,” she said.

“What we need now is leadership and accountability, not violence and repression.”

Reported by Xin Lin for RFA’s Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-09-29 – Thousands Occupy Hong Kong For a Second Night in a Row



Pro-democracy demonstrators hold up their mobile phones during a protest near the Hong Kong government headquarters, Sept. 29, 2014. – AFP

Thousands of pro-democracy protesters continued to occupy major roads and intersections in Hong Kong as a massive civil disobedience protest entered its second night on Tuesday, calling on the territory's chief executive C.Y. Leung to step down, and renewing calls for genuine universal suffrage.

Live drone footage streamed online by the *Apple Daily* newspaper showed thousands settling down for another evening of protest, in what is being dubbed Hong Kong's "Umbrella Revolution," with trucks bringing in supplies and some volunteers even setting up a barbecue at the heart of the city's financial district.

Organizers handed out food and bottled water as thousands of seated protesters chanted "Leung Chun-ying, step down!" on Nathan Road in Kowloon's shopping district of Mong Kok, after hundreds of protesters were slept out overnight on major highways in the downtown business districts of Central and Admiralty and the Causeway Bay shopping district on Hong Kong Island.

The scenes were in stark contrast to the previous night, when helmeted riot police moved in to disperse mass occupations of major highways in the city, firing pepper spray into the faces of demonstrators and raining tear gas down on defiant crowds.

"We will stay here just as long as it takes," a protester who gave the nickname Ying told RFA's Cantonese Service late on Monday. "We don't know how long it will last, and it doesn't matter how long it takes."

A local shop-keeper surnamed Man said a certain amount of disruption was inevitable.

“But I can put up with it, because they’re not just acting in their own interests, but in the interests of society as a whole,” he said.

“It’s fine. It’s got to be done.”

But a local business owner surnamed Chow said her business had been decimated by the crowd.

“They can demonstrate if they want, but they shouldn’t stop other people from making a living,” Chow said. “The impact of this is huge; traffic has been paralysed.”

Change of mood



Umbrellas used to shield demonstrators from pepper spray and the sun. – AFP

By Monday evening local time, thousands had already descended on Connaught Road in Central, wearing black T-shirts and yellow ribbons, a somber change of mood from the white and yellow of the previous week’s student strike.

Police were still visible on the streets Monday, but many lacked full protective riot gear, and by midnight local time there was little sign that riot police stationed in alleyways and side-streets would be deployed to clear the streets.

However, racks of umbrellas were standing by on Connaught Road between Central and Admiralty for protesters to use in the event of further pepper spray attacks.

As camera drones swept across the crowds, protesters lit up the night sky with thousands of lights from individual smart-phone torches as students, office workers, teachers and social workers swelled their number further.

A large paper effigy of Leung with demonic teeth drew boos from the crowd, while protesters in Admiralty decked out an abandoned double-decker bus as a mock ancestral ‘shrine’ to Leung, complete with floral tributes and photograph.

Beijing reaffirms Leung support

Beijing on Tuesday threw its support behind C.Y. Leung, in spite of widespread calls for his resignation.

A spokesman from the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office said Beijing will ‘unswervingly’ support Leung’s

administration.

Occupy Central co-founder Chan Kin-man said the government's actions since Friday should be condemned in the strongest terms.

"We believe that the government's heavy handed tactics and their suppression of the demonstrations would make any person of conscience feel ashamed by association," Chan told reporters late on Monday.

"Conscientious, accountable officials and members of the administration should resign, and stand together with the citizens [of Hong Kong]," he said.

The Hong Kong Journalists' Association (HKJA) condemned the use of force against protesters.

"In using an unnecessary degree of force against peaceful demonstrators gives us considerable concern for the safety of journalists on the front line," HKJA chairwoman Sham Yee-lan told RFA.

"A lot of media organizations were providing 24-hour coverage from the scene, and they too were injured when they started firing tear-gas," Sham said.

Impeachment motion

Pan-democratic politicians said they are drafting a motion in the Legislative Council to impeach Leung, and will seek to recall legislators to debate the government's handling of the protests before the end of recess on Oct. 8.

Many protesters who turned out on Monday told reporters they had come out of anger at police over their handling of the Occupy Central disobedience movement, which began on Sunday as a mass spontaneous protest at the use of force against peaceful demonstrators.

Many schools and businesses in the affected areas were closed on Monday, and all kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools in Wanchai, Central and Western districts of Hong Kong Island would remain closed on Tuesday as well, education officials said.

"I saw a lot of police on Saturday and Sunday behaving violently towards the people of Hong Kong, spraying pepper spray into their faces, and tear-gas," a 16-year-old protester and high-school student told RFA.

"I think that was very unjust, and that's why I am here to make my voice heard."

Student groups have warned that protests and strikes could escalate still further if their demands for public nomination of election candidates and Leung's resignation aren't met by Wednesday.

But Leung's second-in-command Carrie Lam said it was "unrealistic" to expect Beijing to change its mind on the issue of public nominations of candidates in 2017 elections for the next chief executive.

The ruling Chinese Communist Party, which took charge of Hong Kong in 1997 under the terms of a treaty with the U.K., said via its National People's Congress (NPC), the country's main legislature, on Aug. 31 that any candidate standing in the poll must be vetted by a pro-Beijing committee, making the selection of any pan-democratic candidate highly unlikely.

'Fake universal suffrage'

Activists and pan-democratic politicians have dismissed the proposals as "fake universal suffrage," and hit out at Leung's administration for playing down calls for public nomination in its official report to Beijing.

On the streets, the mood appeared much lighter on Monday, with mass singalongs of homegrown hits and

protest songs, including the Cantonese-language version of “Can you hear the people sing?” from the blockbuster musical *Les Miserables*.

In the crowd near the Centre for the Performing Arts between Central and Wanchai, a second-year university student surnamed Wong said he had no regrets about the disruption.

“We may be inconveniencing some people who need to get to work, or somewhere else, but we are hoping that the majority will take part in this civil disobedience movement, so we can have an even bigger impact and put even more pressure on the government,” Wong said.

“[We want them to] genuinely listen to our demands.”

“Everyone here has the same aim, and that is to fight for genuine universal suffrage and public nomination of election candidates,” he said.

Peaceful action

Meanwhile, a university student surnamed Chan said she was fully in favor of civil disobedience.

“I am in support of peaceful action, without creating too much chaos,” she said. “We should do everything we can to use peaceful methods to fight for what we want to fight for.”

And a mainland tourist on the streets near Admiralty said they had happened to arrive in Hong Kong—a favorite shopping destination for tourists from across the internal border—on vacation ahead of the Oct. 1 National Day holiday week.

But he said he supported the Occupy campaign.

“I support it, I understand it, and...I hope they will hang in there, otherwise there will be no hope for political reform,” the tourist said.

“All this talk of security and stability; whose security and stability are we talking about? Stability is for the ruling elite,” he said.

“Now they’re worried, and they got it wrong yesterday; they went too far, because they’re afraid of the students.”

Tear gas use defended

Assistant police commissioner Cheung Tak-keung meanwhile defended the use of tear gas, which was deployed on 87 “occasions” throughout the previous night’s protests that brought traffic to a standstill on major highways and saw schools and businesses close on Monday in the worst-hit areas.

Cheung indicated that many more rounds than 87 might have been fired, adding that police had used “minimum force” in a bid to clear the area, but occupiers remained in position in most major locations through the night.

He said people couldn’t be injured by tear gas, only made uncomfortable, saying it was brought in after the pepper spray proved ineffective.

“After repeated warnings, police used the minimum force in order to maintain a distance between the protesters and the police so that injuries would be prevented,” Cheung told a news conference on Monday evening local time.

However, Cheung declined to say whether the use of force had been personally approved by Leung.

The Hong Kong government has announced it will cancel a public fireworks display in the city's iconic Victoria Harbor on Wednesday to celebrate the founding of the People's Republic of China under late supreme leader Mao Zedong.

Consultation postponed

Officials said they may also postpone a public consultation on electoral reform proposals that sparked pro-democracy protests in the first place.

It was unclear whether police planned the further use of force to clear the occupied areas on Monday. Officers in regular uniform maintained a discreet presence around protesters, but local media reports showed many more police in full riot gear waiting in side-streets and alleyways, ready for deployment.

Occupy Central co-founder Chan Kin-man called on local people to sustain the occupation until the government addresses the people's demands for public nomination of candidates in 2017 elections for the chief executive, and the resignation of C.Y. Leung.

But he said if anyone started to get hurt, the crowds should retreat.

Occupy's founders had previously only envisaged a mass civil disobedience rally in Central, and Chan said the occupations of other districts had been spontaneously decided on by citizens.

"Hong Kong people are fearless towards tear gas and think it is manageable," he said. "So I would not suggest protesters retreat at this moment," Chan said, adding that the Occupy organizers didn't consider themselves the arbiters of how long the protests would continue.

In London, a Foreign Office spokesman said the government is monitoring events in the former British colony closely.

"The British government is concerned about the situation in Hong Kong," the spokesperson was quoted as saying in a statement posted on the Foreign Office website.

"Hong Kong's prosperity and security are underpinned by its fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right to demonstrate," it said, adding: "These freedoms are best guaranteed by the transition to universal suffrage."

But it gave no indication of whether or not it considered Beijing's electoral plans for Hong Kong genuine universal suffrage.

In Washington, the State Department had said on Sunday it supports Hong Kong's well-established traditions and fundamental freedoms, such as peaceful assembly and expression.

Chinese media comment

China's official media has already dubbed the protests "illegal," saying they spoil the financial hub's international image.

"The radical activists are doomed," the tabloid English-language Global Times wrote in an editorial on Monday. "Opposition groups know well it's impossible to alter the decision of the [NPC] on Hong Kong's political reform plan."

It echoed chief executive Leung's promise that the People's Liberation Army (PLA), billeted in the former British colony since 1997, won't be involved in any operation to clear the city's streets.

It said comparisons with the PLA crackdown on unarmed student-led protesters in June 1989 were "groundless"

and designed to stir up trouble.

“China is no longer the same nation it was 25 years ago,” the paper said.

“The country now has more feasible approaches to deal with varied disturbances.”

China’s Internet censors have been hard at work deleting any social media posts relating to the Occupy movement in Hong Kong, a survey found.

The number of tweets blocked or deleted on Sina Weibo rose five-fold between Friday and Sunday, the University of Hong Kong’s Journalism and Media Studies Center censorship index found.

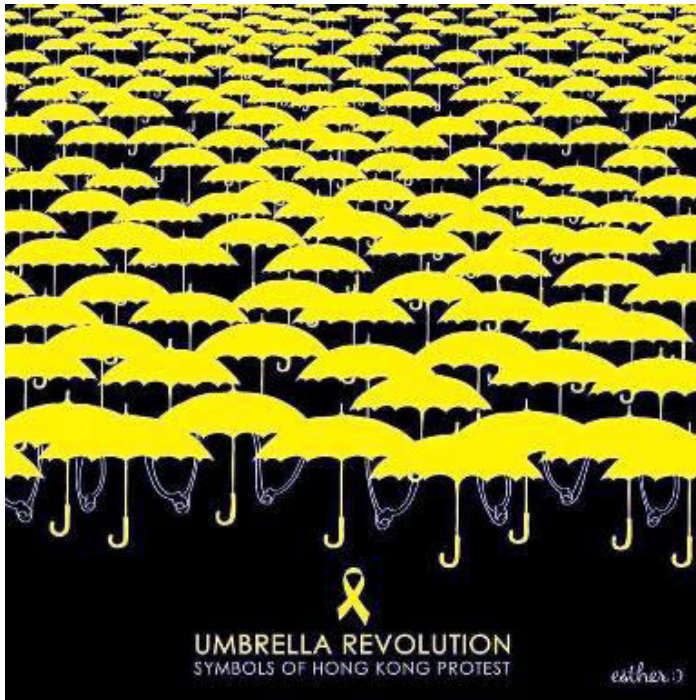
However, Beijing-based civil rights activist Wu Tianli said she had managed to find out about the weekend’s crackdown and the Occupy movement nonetheless.

“I was extremely worried for them [at first],” Wu said, drawing on her own experience of the 1989 student movement. “I went through such times here, when all the people were taking food and water...but in the end they opened fire.”

“But then I realized that the times have changed. We have the Internet now.”

Reported by Wen Yuqing, Grace Kei Lai-see, Pan Jiaqing, Lau Won, Wei Ling and Ho Shan for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Photos from Hong Kong



Symbols of the Hong Kong democracy protest. – @sheDancesTibet



A protester stands behind an umbrella used to ward off tear gas and pepper spray, Sept. 30, 2014. – Photo courtesy of an RFA listener

2014-09-30 – Hong Kong Democracy Protesters Brave Rain For a Third Night On Streets



People gather at Mongkok district during demonstrations in Hong Kong on Sept. 30, 2014. – AFP

Tens of thousands of people blocked a large stretch of a multi-lane highway near government buildings on Tuesday as the occupation of Hong Kong by pro-democracy demonstrators entered its third night on the eve of China's National Day anniversary when the crowds are expected to swell even further.

Once again, the umbrellas were out in force, but as shelter from heavy rain brought by passing thunderstorms rather than to ward off the tear-gas and pepper spray deployed by police at the weekend.

In Admiralty, where the government headquarters is based, signs warned that the occupation had become overcrowded, asking protesters to stay in Central or head to other occupation sites in the shopping districts of Causeway Bay on Hong Kong Island or Nathan Road in Kowloon, across the harbor.

Protesters once more lit up the night with their cell phones, and gave rousing choruses of popular Cantonese pop anthems, while others repeated chants calling for the resignation of embattled chief executive Leung Chun-ying.

"Forgive me, but I have a lifelong craving for freedom," the protesters sang. "And yet I still fear I could one day fall."

Near the Sogo department store in Causeway Bay, around 10,000 people set up makeshift camps of plastic bags, raincoats and the ubiquitous umbrella, which has led to the movement's being dubbed the "Umbrella Revolution."



Notices outside a university call on students to 'speak up' for democracy and 'save' Hong Kong, in an undated photo. – Photo courtesy of a foreign student

Social media

Photos and tweets via social media showed student nurses operating first aid stations in the district, while volunteers piled carefully sorted trash and recyclables high from the night before.

Protesters also shifted police barriers and water-filled red and white barricade blocks to ensure traffic was unable to approach the area, following an incident overnight when a man drove a Mercedes at high speed through the crowd of protesters in Kowloon. He was later arrested for dangerous driving.

Some protesters also gathered outside central government offices in Central, although the mood was once more relaxed, with protesters appearing unconcerned that there might be a repeat of Sunday's night's clashes with tear-gas and pepper-spray-wielding riot police.

"I'm not worried," a first-year university student surnamed Wong told RFA. "As an adult, I can take care of myself."

"Also, I am with friends, and we will all look out for each other," she said.

A second student, also surnamed Wong, said students had come out in protest spontaneously, without being encouraged by anyone else.

"This movement we are seeing now no longer has anything to do with party politics or any organization," she said. "We have no way of knowing the final outcome, but we will give it everything we've got."

Police said long stretches of a highway were blocked by around 10.00 p.m. local time on Tuesday, posing a potential problem for rescue services trying to reach the scene of fires or medical emergencies, local media reported.

'Appropriate measures'

Hong Kong Police Public Relations Branch Chief Superintendent Steve Hui declined to give details of any police plan for clearing the occupiers from the city's streets, however.

“Police will only be deployed in accordance with the actual situation,” Hui told reporters. “We will make assessments...and then take appropriate measures.”

Hui said rumors that police were planning to fire rubber bullets had come as the result of a misunderstanding with the use of a banner that read “Disperse, or we fire.”

The organizers of Occupy Central have urged people to keep up their protests, amid calls for full universal suffrage, including the public nomination of election candidates, and for Leung’s resignation.

And the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students has vowed to escalate protests further if no response is received by the end of Tuesday.

Oscar Lai, spokesman for the academic activist group Scholarism, said its members are planning a silent protest at an official flag-raising ceremony to mark the anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China by Mao Zedong in 1949 on Wednesday.

Scholarism plans to attend the ceremony wearing mourning white and yellow ribbons, which have become a symbol of the mass pro-democracy movement.

“We won’t shout any slogans, and we won’t shove forwards,” Lai said, adding that the group had staged a similar protest at last year’s ceremony. “Based on last year’s experience, we will probably just be carried away for no reason.”

Refusal to step down

Leung on Tuesday declined to step down, telling reporters that any personnel changes would result in no political reforms at all.

“Any personnel change before the implementation of universal suffrage is achieved would only allow Hong Kong to continue to pick its leader under the Election Committee model,” he said.

Leung has been repeatedly taunted by protesters for receiving just 689 votes in 2013 out of a possible 1,200 votes from a largely pro-Beijing Election Committee.

Under current proposals, his successor will be elected in 2017 by all of Hong Kong’s five million eligible voters. But Beijing ruled out the possibility of public nomination of candidates on Aug. 31, meaning that pan-democratic candidates are highly unlikely to be selected.

Leung said Beijing’s decision was final, and said he was prepared for the Occupy campaign to last “quite a long time.”

Meanwhile, U.S. Senators Patrick Leahy and Roger Wicker said they were “distressed” by the use of tear gas and pepper spray against demonstrators on Sunday, calling on the Hong Kong authorities to show restraint and engage in “good-faith” negotiations to resolve the situation.

“Hong Kong’s position as Asia’s ‘world city’ is rooted in fundamental rights, including freedoms of peaceful assembly, expression, and the press,” Leahy, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Wicker, the Senate Republican deputy whip, said in a statement.

“As democratically elected members of the United States Senate we stand united with the people of Hong Kong and support their aspirations for universal suffrage and full democracy.”

In its first direct mention of the Occupy movement since it began on Sunday, China’s state-run broadcaster hit out at the pro-democracy protests in its first direct mention of the Occupy movement since it began on Sunday.

The protests had caused “at least HK\$40 billion (more than U.S. \$5 billion) in economic losses,” the report said, citing impacts on the stock markets, property, retail, catering and tourism sectors.

“The aim of Occupy Central is to paralyse transportation, harm the rule of law and disrupt business, with a view to forcing the central and SAR governments to give in,” it said.

It said local residents were losing patience with the disruption to their daily lives. However, an online poll on the website of the English-language South China Morning Post newspaper showed that some 70 percent of respondents didn’t foresee that the tide of public opinion would turn against protesters, should they continue with the occupation for several days.

Reported by Wen Yuqing, Lam Yuet-tung, and Grace Kei Lai-see for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-01 – Hong Kong Student Leaders Warn of Takeover of Government Buildings



*Protesters gather as part of the 'Umbrella Revolution' in Hong Kong, Oct. 1, 2014.
– Photo courtesy of a witness*

Student leaders behind the mass pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong warned Wednesday that demonstrators may move to occupy government offices if the Chinese territory's chief executive refuses to resign, as Beijing told foreign countries not to intervene in its "internal affairs."

The warnings came as protests championing democratic elections in Hong Kong entered their fifth day while the ruling Chinese Communist Party celebrated its 65th anniversary.

In defiance of warnings in the official Chinese media, crowds continued to gather throughout Wednesday in the Admiralty central business district and Causeway Bay shopping districts on Hong Kong Island and Nathan Road in Kowloon, stepping up calls for the resignation of Hong Kong chief executive C.Y. Leung.

As many businesses remained shuttered on the usually lucrative public holiday, student leaders warned they will escalate protests further if Leung doesn't step down by Thursday, moving in and occupying key government buildings.

"Leung Chun-ying must step down," Hong Kong Federation of Students second-in-command Lester Shum told reporters as the crowds began to swell during the National Day holiday, which saw a small, official flag-raising

ceremony attended by Chinese and Hong Kong officials booed and heckled by the crowds.

“If he doesn’t resign by tomorrow we will step up our actions, such as by occupying several important government buildings,” Shum said, although he said any departments linked to essential public services would remain untouched.

Shum also called on Beijing to send an official to start a direct dialogue with protesters.

“We are asking them to come to the square and speak to the crowd,” Shum told reporters. “This is a movement of Hong Kong citizens, and isn’t led by any particular group.”

But he said students would reject any dialogue with Leung.

The protesters want Leung to resign over the deployment of riot police, tear-gas, and pepper spray over the weekend, in a bid to make the huge crowds disperse from several key highways in the former British colony.



‘Internal affairs’

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in Washington for talks with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, called on foreign countries to keep out of Hong Kong affairs.

“The Chinese government has very firmly and clearly stated its position. Hong Kong affairs are China’s internal affairs,” he said, Agence France-Press reported.

“All countries should respect China’s sovereignty and this is a basic principle of governing international relations,” Wang said sternly ahead of his talks with Kerry at the U.S. State Department.

“I believe for any country, for any society, no one would allow those illegal acts that violate public order. That’s the situation in the United States and that’s the same situation in Hong Kong.”

Kerry however renewed U.S. calls for restraint by the Hong Kong authorities in tackling the protests.

“As China knows, we support universal suffrage in Hong Kong, accordant with the Basic Law,” Kerry told reporters, standing alongside Wang.

“We believe in an open society with the highest possible degree of autonomy and governed by rule of law is

essential for Hong Kong's stability and prosperity," Kerry said.

President Barack Obama and his National Security Adviser Susan Rice later met Wang, expressing the hope that differences between Hong Kong authorities and protestors be "addressed peacefully," according to a White House statement.

Wang threw Beijing's support behind the Hong Kong authorities saying that they had the "capability to properly handle the current situation in accordance with the law."

Separately, senior U.S. lawmaker Ed Royce called for "genuine dialogue" to end the Hong Kong impasse.

"For nearly two decades, Hong Kong has thrived as a free society under 'one country, two systems,'" Royce, the Republican chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, said in a statement.

"This freedom is now eroding as Beijing appears to undermine its promise to allow genuine democratic elections in Hong Kong," he said. "A managed choice is no choice at all."

Royce, who would lead a delegation to Hong Kong this year, called on all sides to exercise restraint, maintain the promise of the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini constitution, and solve the issue through dialogue.

Teaching democracy

A Hong Kong protester surnamed Au who brought his four-year-old daughter to join protests occupying Kowloon's Tsimshatsui shopping district said Wednesday he wanted her to understand what the protests were about.

"I wanted her to see so many brothers and sisters here on the front line who are speaking out," he said. "She may be little, and she doesn't understand what's going on, but I wanted to play a support role and help out."

"It doesn't matter whether that's picking up trash or handing out ribbons—she may want to help the next generation when she grows up too," Au said.

A mainland Chinese tourist surnamed Shen said he wasn't inconvenienced by the demonstrations.

"Here, under one country, two systems, Hong Kong people will rule Hong Kong for 50 years," he said. "Hong Kong people have their own ideas; places are all different."

Meanwhile, a tourist from neighboring Guangdong province surnamed Liu said it was her first time in Hong Kong, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997 under the terms of a 1984 Sino-British treaty promising the city a "high degree of autonomy."

"It doesn't look good to the outside world," Liu said. "Perhaps they could make it quieter; will they resolve the issue this way?"

Meanwhile, Leung said in a speech at the flag-raising ceremony that Hong Kong had better stick to Beijing's plan for electoral reform, which rules out public nominations for the 2017 race for chief executive, saying candidates must be approved by a 1,200-seat pro-Beijing committee.

He ignored heckles from bystanders calling on him to resign, instead raising glasses of champagne with Chinese officials, including Beijing's representative in Hong Kong, Zhang Xiaoming.

"Hong Kong and the mainland are closely linked in their development. We must work hand in hand to make the Chinese dream come true," Leung said.



Protesters set up a place to hang blessings for Hong Kong in the Admiralty district, Oct. 1, 2014. – RFA

Protesters warned

Riot police were withdrawn from the scene on Monday after widespread public anger brought thousands more protesters pouring onto the streets in solidarity with students and veteran pro-democracy campaigners.

Police were visible but remained well back from the occupying crowds on Wednesday, who have set up their own internal traffic systems and first-aid and supply posts.

Protesters are using a locally networked chat app to communicate across the massive crowds that have amassed in several key areas of the city.

Occupy co-founder Chan Kin-man on Wednesday made a tearful apology to residents for the disruption to their daily lives.

“With this short-term inconvenience, we hope to bring about a fairer system,” he said.

But an editorial in the party’s official *People’s Daily* newspaper issued an ominous-sounding warning to protesters.

“If this extreme minority of people insists on violating the rule of law and stirring up trouble, they will wind up suffering the consequences of their actions,” the paper said in an unsigned staff commentary, an indicator of official policy.

“‘Occupy Central’ will place obstacles in the path of the smooth development of a democratic system in Hong Kong,” the paper said, warning of “unimaginable consequences” if the protests are allowed to continue.

It said public nominations had been ruled out in the interest of “safeguarding national sovereignty, security, development and to maintain the long-term prospering and stability of Hong Kong.”

State broadcaster CCTV said all Hong Kong residents should support the “decisive” deployment of police to enforce the law and “restore social order.”

And President Xi Jinping vowed in a National Day speech to “steadfastly safeguard” Hong Kong’s prosperity and stability.

Show of support

In Taiwan, a democratic island that has been governed separately and has rejected Beijing's bid to reunify since the 1949 founding of the People's Republic, thousands of people gathered in downtown Taipei in a show of support for the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement.

"The people of Hong Kong have already stood up," student leader Lin Fei-fan, a key figure in the student occupation of the island's Legislative Yuan in March, told the crowd.

"We have seen in the past how people power can decide the future," Lin said. "We democratic neighbors must resist the Chinese Communist Party's penetrating influence on every front, whether it be their economic or their military power."

In London, colonial-era governor Chris Patten called for dialogue to resolve the stand-off between protesters and the authorities.

"I think we've got to see dialogue replacing tear gas and pepper spray," Patten told a BBC news program, radio's World At One program, adding that China was reneging on its promises of a high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong.

"In order to save face for Beijing, and for the Hong Kong government, the right thing to do is to embark on a new period of consultation, make it genuine consultation," said Patten, who was dubbed "guilty for 1,000 years," and "a whore" by pro-China media after he launched a last-ditch bid to boost the number of democratically-elected seats in Hong Kong's Legislative Council in the last years of British rule.

Celebrities from Hong Kong's normally neutral entertainment industry also spoke out in support of the Occupy movement on Wednesday.

International movie star Chow Yun-fat, who hails from the offshore island of Lamma, said Leung "cannot run away" from the demands that he accept responsibility.

"The students are very clever and rational," Chow told reporters.

"This is a peaceful protest. Why did [they] have to resort to the violent use of tear-gas?"

Meanwhile pop legend and movie star Andy Lau called on his official website for demonstrators to stay safe.

"Don't be provoked," he wrote in comments translated by the *South China Morning Post* newspaper. "No tear gas. No violence. No senseless arguments."

"Students and protesters, please be safe."

The comments came after a number of other local stars were spotted in the crowd, supporting the protests, the paper said.

Reported by Wen Yuqing, Ho Shan and Pan Jiaqing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-01 – China Detains Dozens of Netizens For Supporting Hong Kong Protests



Mainland Chinese supporters of Hong Kong's democracy protests gather in Beijing, Sept. 29, 2014. – Photo courtesy of a Chinese democracy activist

International rights groups called on Wednesday for the release of dozens of activists being held across China for showing support for Occupy Central's mass pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong.

At least 20 people have been detained by police in a number of mainland Chinese cities after they posted photographs of themselves with shaved heads as a message of support for the protests, which are calling for genuine universal suffrage in 2017 elections in the former British colony.

At least 60 more have been called in by state security police for questioning, Amnesty International said in a statement on its website.

"The Chinese authorities must immediately and unconditionally release all those detained for peacefully showing support for pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong," the group said.

The ruling Chinese Communist Party's censorship machine, known colloquially as the Great Firewall, has blocked and filtered keywords linked to the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong and banned the photo-sharing service Instagram in a bid to keep its more than 600 million netizens in the dark about developments there.

Among those detained or held under guard at their homes to prevent them from traveling to Hong Kong to join the demonstrations were Hunan activist Ou Biaofeng and Shenzhen-based Wang Long, detained on criminal charges of "picking quarrels and stirring up trouble," it said.

In the southern city of Guangzhou, police seized dozens of activists and citizens who gathered in the Martyr Memorial Gardens to show support for the Hong Kong protests on Tuesday, the overseas-based Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) group said in an e-mailed statement.

The group, which monitors and collates reports from rights groups inside China, said an estimated 20 people were detained and taken to unknown locations.

Luo Xiaoxiang, another activist from Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province which borders Hong Kong, was also detained, while Xie Dan and Luo Yaling are being held in the southwestern megacity of Chongqing, Amnesty said.

Shanghai-based Chen Jianfang and Shen Yanqiu were also named, along with Song Ningsheng, Gong Xinsheng and Chen Maosen from the eastern province of Jiangsu.

In Beijing, police have imposed tight domestic surveillance on Liu Huizhen, Li Dongmei, Guo Zhiying, Chen Lianhe, Wu Xiaoping, Han Shuzhen, Cui Baodi and Zhang Chonggang, Amnesty reported.

Circumvention software

While the complex system of filters, blocks and human censorship severely limit what Chinese netizens are able to see online, activists and intellectuals are increasingly making use of circumvention software and virtual private network (VPN) services to “scale the Wall” and read blocked content.

The result has been a slow filtering of news back into China’s civil rights and activist community, and a growing wave of support for Hong Kong’s bid for full democracy.

Online activist Wu Bin, known by his online nickname Xiucan Jianghu, said accounts on popular social media platforms in China are consequently being close left and right.

“A lot of accounts are being shut down; it’s really serious,” Wu said.

“I shaved my head in support of Hong Kong, took a photo and posted it online.”

He said the Twitter-like service Sina Weibo had immediately shut down his account.

“A lot of my friends have had their accounts closed as well,” Wu said. “It’s much worse than it used to be.”

Messaging app

In the eastern province of Shandong, civil rights campaigner Li Shufen said she had learned about the Hong Kong protests via the messaging app WeChat, which is hugely popular in mainland China.

“Everyone is very supportive of the Occupy Central campaign for democracy in Hong Kong,” Li said.

She added: “They don’t really report it. All the news here is the government’s point of view.”

“We have to go online to read about it.”

Amnesty International China researcher William Nee said China is merely demonstrating what Hong Kong has to fear from Beijing.

“The rounding up of activists in mainland China only underlines why so many people in Hong Kong fear the growing control Beijing has in their city’s affairs,” Nee said in a statement.

“The fundamental freedoms being exercised by hundreds of thousands of people in Hong Kong continue to be denied to those in mainland China.”

CHRD said some of those detained in China had made plans to join the protests in person.

“Police in China have harassed and warned activists in many cities, concerned that they may try to travel to Hong Kong or take to streets to protest,” the group said.

“The occupation of several areas in Hong Kong, including parts of its financial and political center, has inspired many Chinese on the mainland and encouraged them to speak up for democracy,” it said.

Reported by Yang Fan for RFA’s Mandarin Service, and by Pan Jiaqing for the Cantonese Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Support from Tiananmen Square



Rose Tang (唐路) @rosetangy · 5h

據說是PS的，但我還是喜歡這張天安門傘花照片。我們25年前 [#佔領天安門](#)，相信香港 [#雨傘革命](#) [#和平佔中](#) 給國人帶來啟發、希望，為中國民主運動注射強心針。我們會回到天安門！ Yellow umbrellas in [#Tiananmen](#)

👤 欧彪峰, 看看中国, Hu Jia 胡佳 and 7 others

Supporters of the Hong Kong democracy movement gather in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, in an undated photo. – @rosetangy

2014-10-02 – Hong Kong Chief Refuses to Resign As Protesters Besiege Government



Hong Kong's Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying (R) and Chief Secretary Carrie Lam (L) hold a press conference at Leung's official residence in Hong Kong, Oct. 2, 2014. – AFP

Hong Kong's embattled leader Leung Chun-ying on Thursday refused to resign, minutes ahead of a deadline issued by organizers of mass pro-democracy protests which entered their fifth consecutive day with crowds besieging key government buildings.

As he spoke, thousands of demonstrators, many of them young people, gathered outside central government offices, Leung's offices and police headquarters, calling for genuine universal suffrage and for the chief executive's resignation.

The students have threatened to escalate their protests by occupying government buildings if Leung refuses to resign over police use of tear-gas and pepper spray on demonstrators last weekend.

However, Leung promised his second-in-command Carrie Lam would meet with students' representatives "soon" to discuss political reforms.

"I won't resign because I must carry out the universal suffrage work," said Leung, referring to electoral reforms in which China ruled out public nomination of candidates in the 2017 elections for his successor.

He warned of potentially "serious consequences" if protesters tried to storm government buildings.

Leung also once more ruled out any change in an Aug. 31 ruling by China's National People's Congress (NPC), which said candidates must be vetted by a pro-Beijing election committee.

“Only by following the Basic Law and the [NPC] decision, will we have universal suffrage in 2017,” he told reporters. Pan-democratic politicians and democracy campaigners have dismissed Beijing’s reform plan as “fake universal suffrage.”



A pro-democracy protester holds anti-government placards demanding justice for the people in Hong Kong, Oct. 2, 2014. – RFA

Police action

As Leung spoke, hundreds of police in regular uniforms stood guard behind steel barricades outside government offices in the Central district, as authorities issued megaphone warnings to the crowd to move away from a street serving government headquarters.

Your action is causing obstruction to other road users,” the announcement said. “Please return to the pavement as soon as possible.”

Protesters and police sources told local media that police had earlier unloaded several boxes of supplies from a truck, including rifles designed to fire tear-gas, tear-gas canisters and other riot-fighting equipment.

The crowd chanted “Explain! Explain!” as the supplies were carried into the building, sparking fears that further force could be deployed in the event of a bid to occupy government buildings.

Meanwhile, Occupy Central founder Benny Tai said the movement has lacked central leadership until this point, but that organizers are now considering their options carefully.

“It has been spontaneously carried out by a lot of citizens and various groups,” Tai said. “But nobody’s orchestrating it.”

“We are still trying to think of a way to taking the movement forward, but we are only considering methods that the participants will agree to.”

Senior police superintendent Steve Hui said police would take action in accordance with the law if the protesters tried to enter government buildings.

“Whenever there are violent and major incidents and crimes such as fighting and any other situation that jeopardizes safety and public order, police will take resolute and firm action to restore public order,” Hui told reporters, who had asked how police would respond.

“You can be sure that the police will have enough manpower to deal with any sort of situation,” he said.



Pro-democracy demonstrators attend a protest near the Hong Kong government headquarters, Oct. 2, 2014. – RFA

Mass sit-ins

Thousands, at times hundreds of thousands, of protesters have staged mass, peaceful sit-ins on major highways and intersections in the Central business district, adjacent Admiralty and the Causeway Bay shopping district of Hong Kong Island.

Across the harbor, mass protests have also blocked Nathan Road in major shopping districts of Kowloon.

The Hong Kong government and police, who have taken a generally less aggressive approach since being strongly criticized over Sunday’s crackdown, called on Thursday for an end to the protests.

“Protesters have been gathering around these buildings and operations have already been affected,” it said in a statement published on the government website.

It said some 3,000 civil servants would be returning to work on Friday.

“In order to continue with its services to the general public, the Central Government Offices will need to be in operation as usual tomorrow,” it said.

“If the siege continues and worsens, the access, normal operation and security of the above government offices will be seriously affected,” it said. “This will eventually affect social order, [and] the Government ... has the responsibility to protect these government offices.”

A protester outside the central government buildings said their demands seemed to be falling on deaf ears.

“We have protested for so many days in a row, and yet [Leung] pays no attention,” she said. “I think we need to set up in a different place; maybe his office.”

“He’s got to get to work, right?”

In Admiralty’s Harcourt Road, a technical college student surnamed Gong said she wasn’t adamant that Leung should resign, however.

“The HKFS doesn’t represent me; I, we have our own ideas,” she said. “It’s not important whether C.Y. Leung

Walking With A Yellow Umbrella: Bearing Witness to a Revolution

steps down or not. The most important thing is that we want freedom and democracy.”

“We want genuine universal suffrage.”

But she said Leung should “recognize his mistakes” regarding the use of force against protesters at the weekend.

Popular support

Meanwhile, exiled democracy activists and former student leaders of the 1989 protests that led to bloodshed at the hands of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), said the protesters would only be safe for as long as they enjoyed popular support.

Near the Kowloon ferry terminal in Tsimshatsui, an elderly man surnamed Wong said he was against the protests.

“These young people have never known want or need; they have faced no major difficulties in life, and they think that all of these things just come naturally,” Wong said.

“It’s not going to happen,” he said. “What they’re asking for is nonsense.”

Nearby, a group of some 100 protesters in white shirts and blue ribbons, in contrast to the Occupy Central campaign’s yellow, shouted “We support the police! Enforce the law with a clear conscience!”

“Thank you, police!” the protesters shouted.

Another bystander surnamed Wong said: “I’m not against their campaign; as long as it’s lawful and doesn’t stop people from earning a living.”

“But if they think the Hong Kong government’s going to give in, then what’s the point of the rule of law at all? I think the Occupy Central protesters should think about that.”

While Beijing has yet to make a public comment on the Occupy movement, an editorial in the ruling Chinese Communist Party’s *People’s Daily* newspaper warned against “chaos” in the city,

It said Beijing fully supports Hong Kong’s police force “in handling these illegal protests according to the law.”

Meanwhile, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama said he is praying for a peaceful resolution to the stand-off between protesters and police in Hong Kong.

The Dalai Lama, who said he is “closely watching” the situation, declined to predict how things might turn out, however, saying only: “Very difficult to say. Very difficult.”

Reported by Wen Yuqing and Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-03 – Protesters in Hong Kong Clash With 'Fierce' Anti-Occupy Group



A group of men in masks beat up a man (R) who tried to stop them from removing barricades from a pro-democracy protest area in the Causeway Bay district of Hong Kong, Oct. 3, 2014. – AFP

Pro-democracy protesters in downtown Hong Kong clashed with groups opposing the mass Occupy movement on Friday, while the government stepped up its rhetoric against protesters who blocked government headquarters.

The clashes prompted Hong Kong student leaders among those behind the protests to call off talks with the government aimed at bringing an end to mass rallies.

The student leaders accused police of failing to promptly act to stop the violent attacks on the protest camps of the Occupy Central, the group pushing for genuine universal suffrage in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

The Occupy crowds shrank sharply after talks between organizers and the government on constitutional reform were announced late on Thursday, and only around 200 demonstrators were left to face a much larger group of anti-protesters in the Kowloon shopping district of Mong Kok.

The anti-protesters, some of whom complained to local media that their livelihoods have been affected by the mass occupations which have lasted since Sunday, had started to dismantle barricades protecting the crowd.

Some comments suggested the anti-demonstration was ultimately backed by pro-Beijing forces, while others said they were just local people angered by the continuing disruption to daily life.

An eyewitness surnamed Choi said the anti-protesters were apparently trying to get the road open to traffic

again.

“I saw a student get dragged away by a bunch of people, and a blue tent toppled over,” Choi said. “The student just lay there and offered no resistance.”

“I thought they were horrible people. I don’t know who they are, but they were very fierce,” she said.

She said one group shouted “Clear the area!” while the Occupy group responded with a chant of “Stay calm!”

The clashes led to a rapid swelling of the Occupy crowd, as more supporters arrived at the busy intersection, where crowds have blocked traffic for nearly a week.

Widespread support

But a bystander in Mong Kok surnamed Wong told RFA that the Occupy movement still enjoys widespread public support.

“They are working for freedom and democracy for Hong Kong, so most ordinary people would support them,” Wong said. “This is definitely a good thing [they are doing].”

He said the week-long movement has already made a huge impact, and that ordinary Hong Kong citizens would likely turn out again in huge numbers if they thought the Occupy protesters were in danger of police violence.

“I think they would, because people always support the underdog,” Wong said. “Students are at the core of this movement, and their slogan is the peaceful occupation of Central.”

Hong Kong’s main student union said it was walking away from negotiations with the government after police appeared to ignore what it claimed was orchestrated violence carried out by paid thugs sent by authorities to stir up trouble, with the aim of discrediting the protesters.

“There is no other option but to call off talks,” Agence France-Presse quoted the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS), one of several groups driving a campaign for free elections, as saying Friday.

“The government and police turned a blind eye to violent acts by the triads targeting peaceful Occupy protesters,” the union added.

Pan-democratic politicians also issued a statement calling on protesters to remain calm, so as to avoid police action to clear the area.

And Civic Party leader Alan Leong called on the government to use constructive dialogue to resolve the impasse with protesters, instead of trying to discredit the movement.

Meanwhile, the Occupy Central group said via its Twitter account that its website and email account had been attacked by unknown hackers.

“OCLPHK official website hacked by Anonymous Asia & email account for donations attacked, ‘about to be blocked,’” the group tweeted on Friday.

The website of the pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) also appeared to have been attacked by the same group, the South China Morning Post reported.

‘Blocking access’

On Hong Kong island, hundreds of campaigners blocked access to key government buildings and street outside

central government offices, preventing thousands of civil servants from reporting for duty normally, the government said in a statement.

“Some 3,000 ... staff cannot return to their workplaces as usual,” the government said in a statement on its website. “All activities for visitors and other external activities have been postponed or cancelled.”

It hit out at protesters for “blocking access” to the east wing of the government headquarters in the Central business district.

“Blocking access roads to the [offices] is a serious offence and will affect the staff working [there],” a government spokesman said in a statement.

“The Government condemns the protesters for setting up obstacles at the entrance to the second floor of the East Wing at the CGO this morning, leaving government staff unable to return to their workplace.”

Police on Sunday fired tear gas and pepper spray at crowds who had occupied major highways in downtown Hong Kong, sparking widespread public criticism and calls for chief executive C.Y. Leung to resign.

Late on Thursday, Leung refused to step down ahead of a student-imposed deadline, but agreed to student proposals for talks with his second-in-command Carrie Lam.

In Hong Kong Island’s Causeway Bay shopping area, crowds had dwindled from tens of thousands to a few dozen on Friday, while police had already removed barricades from major highways in other key protest areas, local media reported.

Reported by Wen Yuqing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Qiao Long for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-05 – US Senators Call For De-Escalation of Hong Kong Political Standoff



Pro-democracy protesters gather near the Hong Kong government headquarters in Admiralty, Oct. 4, 2014. – RFA

Two key U.S. senators called Sunday for a “de-escalation” of the one week standoff between the authorities in Hong Kong and pro-democracy protesters, saying “good faith” negotiations were key to breaking the stalemate over election reforms for the former British colony.

The call came as a Monday government deadline loomed for demonstrators to clear Hong Kong’s streets with the semiautonomous Chinese territory’s Beijing-backed Chief Executive C.Y. Leung claiming the mass protests occupying key areas risked “serious consequences” for public safety.

The protesters have demanded the right for the residents of Hong Kong to nominate who can run as the territory’s next leader in 2017 elections while Beijing insists that only candidates it has screened will be able to participate in the polls.

“As democratically elected members of the United States Senate, we strongly support the Hong Kong people’s aspiration for universal suffrage and full democracy,” U.S. Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy and Republican Senator Roger Wicker said in a statement.

“We urge all parties to follow the path of restraint, de-escalation, and good faith dialogue in pursuit of that goal,” said Leahy, the President pro tempore of the Senate, and Wicker, the Republican Deputy Whip.

Leahy, the most senior senator who is the third in the presidential line of succession, and Wicker also condemned

the “violent attacks” against peaceful demonstrators in Hong Kong.

Two of Hong Kong’s busiest shopping districts plunged into chaos on Friday as angry opponents clashed with protesters, tearing down their tents and barricades, amid allegations by pro-democracy crowds that triad criminal gangs backed by Beijing had been brought in stir up trouble.

On Saturday, fresh clashes occurred in Mong Kok, a densely packed working-class district of shops and apartments, with complaints of sexual assaults and attacks on journalists in the crowds.

‘Dismayed’

“We are dismayed that Hong Kong authorities have not taken necessary steps to protect peaceful protesters from these cowardly attacks by individuals who seek to deny their right of peaceful assembly,” the senators said.

“The people of Hong Kong must be applauded and supported for their remarkable courage and determination in extraordinarily challenging circumstances.”

The senators said the “Umbrella Movement” has shown the world the inspirational power of free expression in defense of the fundamental right to choose one’s leaders.

Protesters had used umbrellas to deflect pepper spray and tear gas fired by police last Sunday when the government moved to disperse the crowd.

Reports on Sunday said student protesters occupying the area outside Hong Kong’s government headquarters have agreed to remove some barricades that have blocked the building’s entrance during the weeklong pro-democracy protests, the Associated Press reported.

Television footage from the scene showed a protest representative shaking hands with a police officer.

It was not immediately clear whether all the students had decided to withdraw from the scene, AP said. The move appeared to be part of a strategy to regroup in another part of town.

Reported by RFA’s Mandarin and Cantonese Services. Written in English by Parameswaran Ponnudurai.

Supporting Statements from Officials

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 9, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We write to you regarding the United States' policy towards Hong Kong.

As democratically elected members of the United States Senate, we strongly support the Hong Kong people's aspiration for universal suffrage and full democracy. Hong Kong's economic prosperity and position as Asia's "world city" is rooted in fundamental rights, including freedoms of peaceful assembly, expression, and the press.

The people of Hong Kong should be applauded and supported for their remarkable courage and determination despite extraordinarily challenging circumstances in recent days. The "Umbrella Movement" has shown the world the inspirational power of free expression in defense of the basic right to choose one's leaders freely. In the wake of the Chinese Communist Party's public threats and recent physical attacks against peaceful demonstrators, we encourage you to speak out personally in support of the Hong Kong people's right of peaceful assembly.

The United States and Hong Kong have enjoyed a strong relationship with close cultural, economic, and financial ties for over two centuries. We believe that at this critical time it is appropriate and necessary for the United States to help advance universal suffrage, full democracy, and the rule of law in Hong Kong:

- This December marks the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, which stipulated that Hong Kong would be governed by "One Country, Two Systems" until at least 2047. At the request of the People's Republic of China and the United Kingdom, the United States expressed support for the Joint Declaration as an instrument of international law.

- The United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 [P.L. 102-383] states that it is United States policy to help preserve Hong Kong's unique status and to support democratization in Hong Kong. As you know, the Act also authorizes you to suspend trade and economic provisions should Beijing not provide sufficient autonomy for Hong Kong as outlined by the Joint Declaration.

Beijing's backsliding on its commitments under the Sino-British Joint Declaration poses a significant threat to Hong Kong's position as a center of international trade and finance and adds to concerns about China's commitment as a responsible participant in the international system. Over the past week, the people of Hong Kong have reminded the world what is at stake. We urge you and your administration to take demonstrable, meaningful steps to help ensure that Beijing maintains its commitments to the people of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

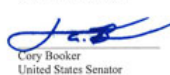

Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator


Marco Rubio
United States Senator

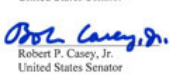

Ted Cruz
United States Senator


John McCain
United States Senator


Roger W. Wicker
United States Senator


Cory Booker
United States Senator


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator


Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator


John Cornyn
United States Senator


Richard Burr
United States Senator

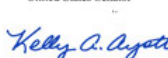

Lindsey Graham
United States Senator


Thad Cochran
United States Senator


James M. Inhofe
United States Senator


John Thune
United States Senator


Mark L. Leland
United States Senator


Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator


Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator


Al Franken
United States Senator


Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Barbara Boxer
United States Senator


Carl Levin
United States Senator


Jack Reed
United States Senator

A letter in support of the Umbrella Movement from US lawmakers to President Barack Obama.

Wicker, Leahy Statement on Hong Kong's Ongoing Pro-Democracy Demonstrations

WASHINGTON - U.S. Senator Roger Wicker, R-Miss., Senate Republican Deputy Whip, and U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., Senate President Pro Tempore, today issued the following joint statement regarding the ongoing pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong:

"We condemn the violent attacks against peaceful demonstrators in Hong Kong. We are dismayed that Hong Kong authorities have not taken necessary steps to protect peaceful protesters from these cowardly attacks by individuals who seek to deny their right of peaceful assembly.

The people of Hong Kong must be applauded and supported for their remarkable courage and determination in extraordinarily challenging circumstances. The "Umbrella Movement" has shown the world the inspirational power of free expression in defense of the fundamental right to choose one's leaders.

As democratically elected members of the United States Senate, we strongly support the Hong Kong people's aspiration for universal suffrage and full democracy. We urge all parties to follow the path of restraint, de-escalation, and good faith dialogue in pursuit of that goal."

A statement from US Senators Roger Wicker and Patrick Leahy on Hong Kong's pro-democracy demonstrations.

Message of Vaclav Maly to protesters in Hong Kong
Prague, October 6, 2014

Dear young friends,

your non-violent protests under the sign of umbrella you succeeded to convene in so peaceful way in Hong Kong has a profound sense not only for you, for your country, but also for us who live in different continent. Your example of steady determination in this fight for freedom and for the respect of human dignity is captivating.

I measure how difficult decisions you are about to take.

More than twenty five years ago, in my own country, former Czechoslovakia, many initiatives and protests were preparing a coming of a new political system based on the respect of freedom and of fundamental human rights. All together, we succeeded to bridge our differences and create a force that challenged those who tried to erase our voices.

I am really not in a position to give you any advices. Let me only assure you of our prayers to the Almighty Lord. That He protects you and your beloved, encourages you, help to reinforce friendship and solidarity, and gives you His light.

Mgre Vaclav Maly,
auxiliary bishop of Prague

Bishop Vaclav Maly was born on 21 September 1950 in Prague, in 1976 ordained a priest and served in parishes of Vlasim and Plzen.

In February 1977 he signed the *Charter 77*, document inspired by Vaclav Havel, calling for justice and liberty in the Communist Czechoslovakia. In 1978 he joins the underground *Committee for Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted*.

From 1979, his "*State Approval of the Priestly Service*" was taken off and he could work only as low qualified worker. In May 1979 he was arrested for subversive activities against the regime and held for trial until December. After his release, during 6 years on, he was in charge of heating in several hotels in Prague.

In 1981-1982 he was *Charter 77* spokesman. In 1989 he is appointed spokesman of the *Civic Forum* (OF), platform which became major political institution during the years of transition to democracy.

In 1990, he was allowed to serve as priest again. Seven years later, he was ordained auxiliary bishop of Prague.

Message from Vaclav Maly to protesters in Hong Kong, Oct. 6, 2014.

 initiativesforchina.org

<http://www.initiativesforchina.org/>

We Stand With You: A Statement of Solidarity with Hong Kong Protesters from a Tibetan, Uyghur, Southern Mongolian and Chinese

Peace Hong Kong Initiative

For Immediate Release:

To contact one of the spokespeople, email solidarityhongkong@gmail.com or call Tenzin Dorjee on +1 (646) 7 0748 or Yang Jianli on +1 (857) 472-9039

We Stand With You: A Statement of Solidarity with Hong Kong Protesters from a Tibetan, Uyghur, Southern Mongolian and Chinese

October 3 2014

As a Tibetan, Uyghur, Southern Mongolian and Chinese – people who have all suffered from the oppressive p of the Chinese Communist Party – we express our deep admiration for and solidarity with the movement for democracy and rights in Hong Kong. We have all dedicated our lives to restoring rights and freedom to our pe and we salute the people of Hong Kong for refusing to remain silent as Beijing reneges on its promise of univ suffrage and democratic reforms.

The events unfolding in Hong Kong highlight the deep and enduring problems the Chinese Communist Party f as it tries to maintain draconian control over all the territories it rules within the People's Republic of China. Ju Hong Kongers are refusing to accept a sham version of democracy with leaders pre-approved by Beijing. Tibe Uyghurs, Southern Mongolians and Chinese refuse to accept the pervasive restrictions on our fundamental ri and freedoms. We hold a common desire for genuine democracy; a desire shared with millions around the wo Unless the Chinese government takes the necessary steps to devolve political power to the people, it is inevit that the people's uprising we see in Hong Kong today will one day spread across Tibet, East Turkestan, South Mongolia, and China itself.

The citizens of Hong Kong have mounted a remarkable challenge to Beijing, who now face an unanticipated dilemma. Thanks to the freedom of press that exists in Hong Kong – unlike anywhere else in the PRC – the w closely watching Beijing's response. We call on the Chinese authorities to refrain from use of force against the peaceful protesters, and in particular appeal directly to security forces to refuse unconscionable orders from t superiors if they come.

We call on world governments to also convey this message to the Chinese authorities in the strongest possibl terms, and we remind them that, should tensions grow, to remain silent or passively stand by is to support the oppressor. Let no one forget that the Party machine that justified rolling the tanks out against a similar group c students and youth in 1989 remains in power and continues to inflict brutal repression against anyone who challenges its authority.

To the students and youth of Hong Kong, we pledge to stand with you as long as it takes to achieve true democ

The world has witnessed mass street protests to oust rulers in many countries over the past four years and we know that structural, not just cosmetic, changes are essential in order to cement the gains made by grassroots uprisings and ensure that authoritarian forces cannot prevail over time. Whatever the coming days bring, change is inevitable, whether it happens in this moment or in the months and years ahead.

Five generations of Chinese Communist Party leaders have failed to quash – or buy off – the aspirations of the people of Hong Kong, Tibet, East Turkestan, Southern Mongolia and China for democracy and liberty. Our collective resistance will endure until we all – or our children or even our children's children – experience the sweet taste of freedom.

Signed:

Yang Jianli Teng Biao Tenzin Dorjee Rebiya Kadeer Enghebatu Togocho

Biographies

Mr. Yang Jianli is a leader of China's democracy movement and President of Initiatives for China. He has been involved in the pro-democracy movement in China since the 1980s and was forced to flee China in 1989 after the Tiananmen Square massacre. He spent 5 years in a Chinese prison between 2002 and 2007 after travelling to China on a friend's passport to investigate labour unrest. He has met with His Holiness the Dalai Lama on many occasions.

Mr. Teng Biao is a Chinese human rights activist and lawyer, and the co-founder of Gongmeng or the Open Constitution Initiative. He has been a vocal supporter of human rights activists such as Chen Guangcheng and Hu Jia and was arrested in March 2008 and again in February 2011. He is currently a visiting scholar at Harvard Law School and President of China Against the Death Penalty.

Mr. Tenzin Dorjee is a Tibetan writer, activist and musician, and Researcher and Strategic Advisor for Tibet Action Institute. He is the former Executive Director of Students for a Free Tibet. He was arrested and briefly detained in Tibet in 2007 after protesting against the Beijing Olympics at Everest Base Camp.

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer is the leader of the Uyghur Democracy Movement and President of the World Uyghur Congress. An activist and businesswoman, she was imprisoned from 2000 – 2005 for her relentless political and human rights activism and now lives in exile in the United States. She's been awarded the Rafto Prize for Human Rights and in 2012 was included in the list of '500 Most Influential Muslims'.

Mr. Enghebatu Togocho is the Director of the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC), a New York based human rights organization dedicated to protection and promotion of the Mongolian people in Southern Mongolia.

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Statement of solidarity with Hong Kong protesters from a Tibetan, Uyghur, ethnic Mongolian and Han Chinese.

Vietnam civil society: A statement of support for the civil disobedience campaign conducted by the students and people of Hong Kong

VRNs (Oct 06th, 2014) - Saigon - To the people of Hong Kong and the people of Vietnam everywhere,

In the past two weeks, the peaceful protest against the Chinese government for denying Hong Kong the right to autonomy have sent a shock wave around the world and have attracted mostly support and admiration. This is the peak of a long struggle since Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, and since 2012 when Beijing gradually going back on the promise to allow Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy with real democracy within 50 years. Apart from widening the gap between rich and poor which makes life difficult for the people of Hong Kong, the Chinese government also wants to take away the people's right to nominate and to vote for their representatives, and to poison the youth with a brain-washing education.

In accord with many people and organisations in many countries and in Vietnam who are showing their support in many forms to the Hong Kong people, the following civil society organisations hereby declare:

1. We admire the peaceful attitude, the commitment, the organising skills, the cool-headedness, the discipline, and the civilised manner shown by Hong Kong students (numbering more than 100,000 secondary and university students) as they conduct the civil disobedience campaign. They are showing their opposition to the communist regime while facing a local government that is totally controlled by Beijing and a police force that is prepared to use violence (tear gas and pepper sprays).

2. We wholeheartedly support the teachers and parents who share the journey with young Hongkongers in their quest for democracy. The adults showing their understanding and support of the demonstrating youth means they share the same sense of duty and destiny. The support from the religious and spiritual leaders for their young followers means religions cannot be remote from the fight for justice.

3. We are very concerned about strangers committing violent and provocative acts in the commercial district of Mong Kok against demonstrating students who had been very peaceful and orderly. The common view is that the violent mobs were sent in by Beijing to cause troubles and spoil the demonstrations. We who have staged demonstrations in Vietnam understand this very well. We welcome your calm, non-violent response and your decision to cease dialogue with the government.

The current situation in Vietnam is much worse than Hong Kong. Our struggle is many time tougher. So to our Vietnamese people we'd like to send this message:

1. We wish Vietnamese youth have deep awareness of democracy, great courage, a broad spirit of unity and like to see many committing themselves to changing the status quo which is a thousand time more undemocratic and hostile to human rights than Hong Kong.

2. We wish that Vietnamese parents, teachers, and leaders know how to promote the love of freedom, the spirit of independence, to cultivate the democratic mindset in our young people, and are ready to support them in their initiatives and actions to reclaim human rights and civil right that have been wholly taken away by Vietnamese communists.

3. We strongly object to the advice issued by Vietnam Ministry for Foreign Affairs that Vietnamese citizens "should not go to areas with demonstrations to avoid complicated situations" and "hope that Hong Kong government will soon find a solution to stabilise the situation". This is just an echo of Beijing's declaration that "all Hong Kong issues are internal affairs of China" and warned other countries not to interfere. Vietnamese government's statement is clearly to show support for Beijing in Hong Kong crisis, as a continual support for their master. This dependency is dangerous in international relation. It also shows the Vietnamese government's panic reaction when they see the widespread support for Hong Kong peaceful demonstrations among Vietnamese people. The regime is desperately trying to block the wind of democracy that is blowing across China mainland to Vietnam.

4. We implore the people of Vietnam to learn from the struggles by young people from Eastern Europe at the end of the last century, in recent years from nations in Northern Africa and in the Middle East, and now in Ukraine, Xinjiang, Tibet, and right now in Hong Kong where young people are showing the spirit and the mettle of the Tiananmen generation. Those peoples have determined to show the world what they thought and wanted. With the heroic and indomitable spirit of the Vietnamese people, we should be united and brave in charting a new course for the nation and search for a new destiny for ourselves. We are facing the clear danger of losing Vietnam to Communist China, which is being supported by a significant section of the Vietnamese Communist leadership.

We wish the civil disobedience campaign of Hong Kong people achieve all its major aims, and thus serve as an inspiration for the people in mainland China, and for the democracy movement in Vietnam.

Young people of Hong Kong, be the hope of the whole world!

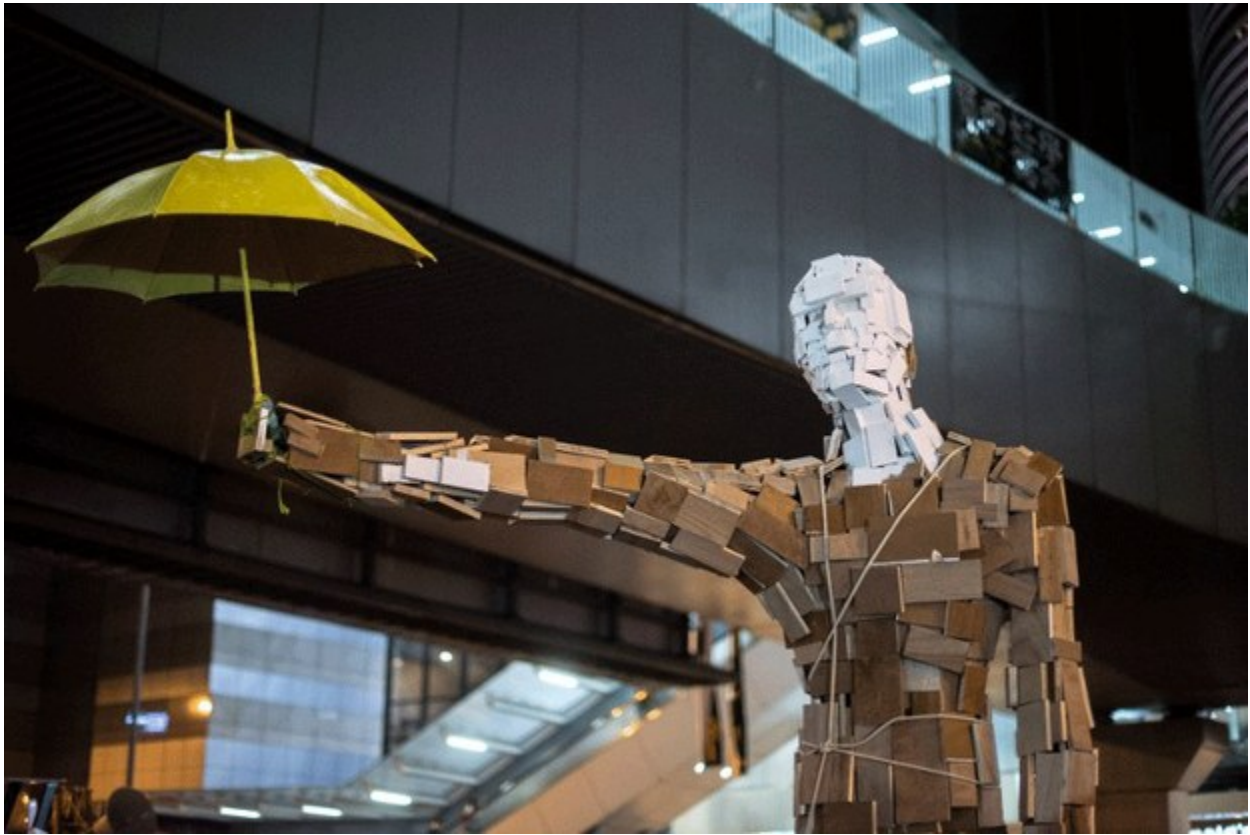
Vietnam, October 05th, 2014

1. Bach Dang Giang Foundation: Pham Ba Hai (MBE)
2. Bauxite Vietnam: Prof. Pham Xuan Yem, Prof. Nguyen Hue Chi
3. Civil Society Forum: Nguyen Quang A (Ph.D.)
4. Democratic Bloc 8406: Engineer Do Nam Hai

5. Cao Dai Church: Mrs. Bach Phung
6. Vietnam America Lutheran Church: Pastor Nguyen Hoang Hoa
7. Thuan Tuy Hoa Hao Buddhists church: Mr. Le Quang Liem
8. Independent Mennonite Church in Vietnam: Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang
9. Friendship association of Political and religious prisoners: Nguyen Bac Truyen (LLB)
10. Brotherhood for Democracy: Lawyer Nguyen Van Dai
11. Association to protect freedom of religion: Ms. Ha Thi Van
12. Gourd and Squash Mutual Association: Mr. Nguyen Le Hung
13. Former Vietnamese Prisoners of Conscience: Dr. Nguyen Dan Que
14. Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam: Pham Chi Dung (Ph.D.)
15. Vietnamese Women for Human Rights: Ms. Huynh Thuc Vy
16. Chuong Bo Evangelical Protestant: Pastor Nguyen Manh Hung
17. Viet Labor: Ms. Do Thi Minh Hanh
18. Network of Vietnamese Bloggers: Ms. Pham Thanh Nghien
19. Nguyen Kim Dien Group: Catholic Priest Phan Van Loi
20. Oppressed Petitioners Solidarity Movement: Ms. Tran Ngoc Anh
21. Delegation of Vietnamese United Buddhists Church: Ven. Thich Khong Tanh.
22. Justice and Peace Office of Vietnam Redemptorists: Catholic Priest Dinh Huu Thoai

Statement in support of Hong Kong protests by Vietnamese civil society organizations.

2014-10-05 – Hong Kong Protesters Ignore Government Warnings to Clear Streets



The statue 'Umbrella Man,' made by the Hong Kong artist known as Milk, is set up at a pro-democracy protest site next to the central government offices in Hong Kong, Oct. 5, 2014. – AFP

Thousands of pro-democracy protesters remained in occupation of key roads and intersections in downtown Hong Kong on Sunday, ignoring a warning by authorities to clear the areas they have blockaded for the last week.

Some 2,000 protesters gathered, some lying down or huddled under large umbrellas, on the main road near the office of embattled Hong Kong chief executive C.Y. Leung in Admiralty district, live video footage from the Apple Daily media group showed.

Meanwhile, a similar number gathered under a makeshift shelter in Kowloon's Mong Kok shopping district, where protesters of the Occupy Central civil disobedience movement were assaulted Friday by those who oppose them.

Tens of thousands of protesters have gathered in key areas of the semiautonomous Chinese territory since last Sunday demanding that Leung step down and that Beijing allow them the right to vote for a leader of their choice in 2017 elections.

While all of the former British colony's five million voters will have a vote, candidates must be vetted by Beijing, making the selection of a pro-democratic politician highly unlikely.

Preliminary talks



A crowd behind an anti-Occupy banner in Mong Kok, Oct. 5, 2014. – RFA

Protest leaders have held preliminary discussions with government officials in the wake of an ultimatum set by Leung, who had vowed to “take all necessary actions to restore social order” for civil servants to resume work and students to return to schools by Monday morning local time.

Protest groups such as the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS), Occupy Central and the academic activist body Scholarism issued a joint statement saying that the 3,000-odd civil servants have always been able to access their offices at the heart of the government district.

“The civil service department can tell its staff to return to their normal workplace, and would the government please stop misleading the public,” the statement said.

HKFS leader Alex Chow said he was confident the protest organizers could “leave a passage clear for civil servants” on Monday, if the occupation of major roads continued.

“Civil servants are already able to get into the main building, so I think we have already responded to the government’s demands,” he told reporters.

Photos of the two entrances to the brand new government office complex in Admiralty showed one blocked by metal barricades, while protesters camped near the other had left a narrow walkway to allow civil servants to return to work, according to the South China Morning Post website.

‘Proper handling’ of standoffs



Pro-democracy protesters cheer in the Mong Kok district, Oct. 5, 2014. – AFP

The protesters are also demanding the “proper handling” by police of any standoff between Occupy and anti-Occupy protesters, after clashes and reports of sexual assault over the weekend sparked criticisms that police didn’t do enough to protect demonstrators from attack. About 20 people have been arrested over the clashes, including at least eight suspected to have links to criminal groups, commonly known in Hong Kong as triads, reports have said.

They added that the government shouldn’t make withdrawal from main occupation sites a prerequisite for further dialogue. The government and protest leaders have both said they were willing to enter negotiations aimed at ending the impasse but imposed certain conditions

So far, officials haven’t agreed to the protesters’ framework for talks.

Instead, Leung has repeatedly called for protesters to ensure that things to “go back to normal” on Monday, or risk the use of further police force.

A technical college student among the small crowd outside government headquarters said he hoped to minimize the impact on the daily life of Hong Kong.

“Of course there will be some impact with a movement like this, because that is one of the ways in which it exerts pressure,” the student said.

“But I think we will do our best to minimize the impact on the people who work here.”

Growing tensions



Pro-democracy messages are plastered on walls in Hong Kong's Admiralty district, Oct. 5, 2014. – RFA

However, the weekend saw increasing calls for an end to growing tensions between government and protesters.

Two of Hong Kong's busiest shopping districts plunged into chaos on Friday as angry opponents clashed with protesters, tearing down their tents and barricades, amid allegations by pro-democracy crowds that triad criminal gangs backed by Beijing had been brought in stir up trouble.

On Saturday, fresh clashes occurred in Mong Kok, a densely populated working-class district of shops and apartments, with complaints of sexual assaults and attacks on journalists in the crowds.

Violence flared again in the early hours of Sunday in Mong Kok district as riot police used batons and pepper spray to fight back demonstrators who accused officers of cooperating with gangsters, agency reports said.

Meanwhile, two key U.S. senators called on Sunday for a "de-escalation" of the week-long standoff, saying "good faith" negotiations were key to breaking the stalemate.

And former top ruling Chinese Communist Party aide Bao Tong, who served a seven-year jail term in the wake of the student-led pro-democracy protests of 1989, said the Occupy Central movement might consider "taking a break."

"If I were one of the protesters, I would probably want a rest from the debate for a while," Bao wrote, while calling on China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC) to rescind an Aug. 31 decision ruling out public nomination of election candidates.

Great deal achieved

He said the Occupy movement had already achieved a great deal.

"The seeds have already been sown, and they need time to lie fallow," Bao wrote in a commentary for RFA's Mandarin Service.

Bao has been under house arrest at his Beijing home since his release from prison.

"No great task can be achieved all at once; they all need some time to gestate," he wrote. "Take a break, for the

sake of future room to grow. For tomorrow.”

But a technical college student surnamed Zhao at the Admiralty occupation late on Sunday said the movement needed to keep up momentum.

“I think if you’re going to protest, you have to do it to the bitter end,” the student said. “I want to continue to protest until we get genuine universal suffrage.”

Pro-democracy campaigners and pan-democratic politicians have dismissed Beijing’s electoral reforms as “fake universal suffrage.”

“I think we should be allowed to elect a chief executive who has the genuine support of our citizens,” Zhao said.

“I think that I and others will remain here in protest, as long as the police don’t use violence to clear the area.”

Rubber bullets

Occupy Central co-founder Benny Tai has called on protesters to withdraw immediately if there is any use of rubber bullets or worse.

And HKFS’ Chow has said whether or not to withdraw is ultimately for individuals to decide.

A protester in Admiralty who gave only a nickname A Moon said she had come out in anger after police fired tear-gas and pepper spray at protesters last Sunday.

“There is also what happened in Mong Kok two days ago,” she said.

She said she recognized the disruption to daily life caused to Hong Kong. But she said: “It shouldn’t be up to some violent individuals to clear the area of protesters.”

The use of umbrellas by Occupy protesters as a defense against pepper spray, as well as shelter from passing thunderstorms and downpours, has earned their movement the nickname “the Umbrella Movement.”

Support for students

Meanwhile, a woman surnamed Wong said she supported the students.

“These students are adults, and they can make their own decisions, so if they want to leave, they can, and if they want to stay, I don’t think the heads of the universities can make them leave,” she said.

“I work in Central, and the government says that this will affect traffic, but I don’t get that feeling.”

“I am very angry and sad that the government has responded in this way to peacefully protesting students,” she said.

More than 80 academic staff from all of Hong Kong’s universities on Sunday called on the government to engage the students in rational dialogue, respond with “concrete action,” and show restraint in handling the protests.

“We are opposed to the use of brutal force on our people, whose pure intention is to seek rational dialogue with the government,” the scholars said in a statement sent to local media.

“If indeed the authorities are to go down the path of brutal suppression, not only will the current political stalemate continue, but it will also trigger further escalation of conflicts in this community and bring about more rigorous counter-action,” it said.

Time-frame for talks

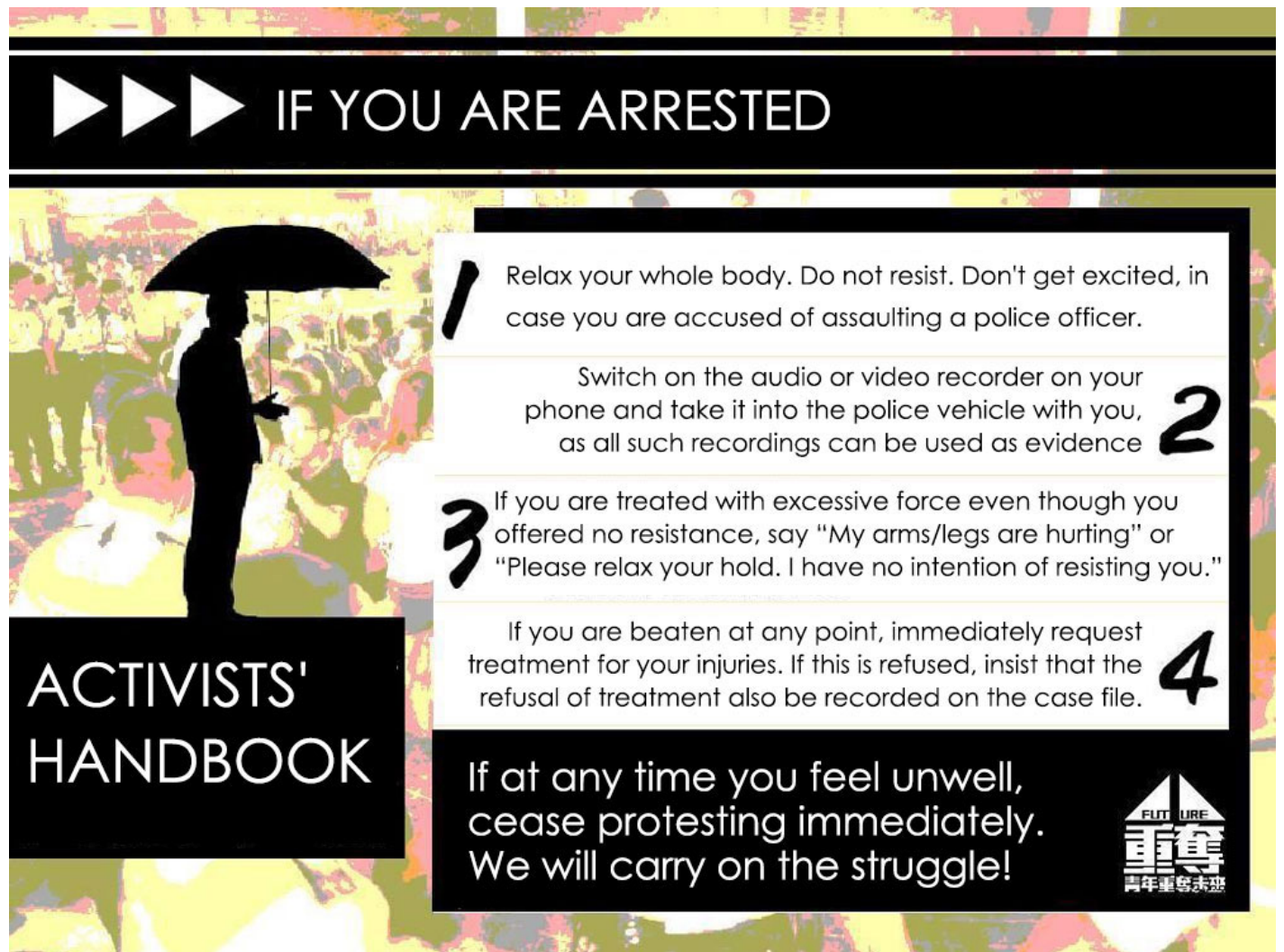
Academics have called for a committed time-frame for discussions between Occupy supporters and the government, the South China Morning Post reported.

Meanwhile, a top professor at the Hong Kong University's medical school refuted earlier police claims that tear-gas is harmless to human health.

"I am very surprised that the police force who are in possession of potentially lethal or harmful weapons seem to have no knowledge of the possible harms of these weapons," Ronnie Poon wrote on his Facebook page.

He said that tear-gas can result in injuries or cause acute lung problems, depriving parts of the body of oxygen.

Reported by Lin Jing and Hai Nan for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.



▶▶▶ IF YOU ARE ARRESTED

1 Relax your whole body. Do not resist. Don't get excited, in case you are accused of assaulting a police officer.


Switch on the audio or video recorder on your phone and take it into the police vehicle with you, as all such recordings can be used as evidence **2**

3 If you are treated with excessive force even though you offered no resistance, say "My arms/legs are hurting" or "Please relax your hold. I have no intention of resisting you."

If you are beaten at any point, immediately request treatment for your injuries. If this is refused, insist that the refusal of treatment also be recorded on the case file. **4**

ACTIVISTS' HANDBOOK

If at any time you feel unwell, cease protesting immediately. We will carry on the struggle!



The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong. It shows a large crowd of people walking on a street at night, many holding yellow umbrellas. In the foreground, two women are walking away from the camera; one is holding a black umbrella. The scene is illuminated by streetlights, creating a hazy, atmospheric effect.

ACTIVISTS' HANDBOOK



Don't upload all of the photographs and videos you shoot.

Save your photos and videos to an independent drive, tagging them with the date, time and other identifying information, so as to make it easier to find them and to offer them as evidence, should they be needed.

2

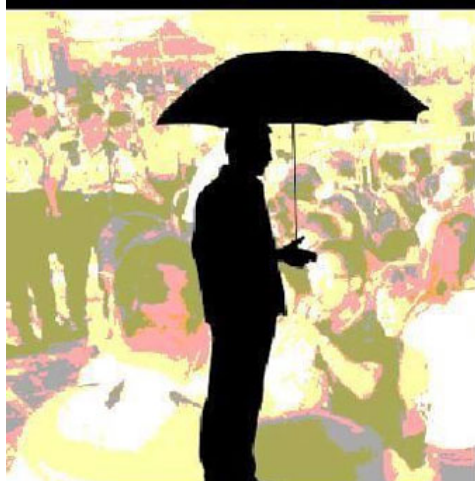
FUTURE
重奪
青年重奪未來



PHOTOGRAPHS &
EVIDENCE

示威者
\$15,000

▶▶▶ 被捕時



行動者 自護手冊

1 放鬆身體，不要反抗，不要激動，
以免變成襲警

開定電話的錄音／錄影，
直至帶上警車（所有錄影都可作為證供） **2**

3 如在毫無反抗亦受過份暴力，
可大叫「唔好屈手」「我對腳好痛」
「我唔會反抗請你放鬆」

任何時間如果被打，立即要求驗傷
如被拒絕，要求將「被拒絕」一事紀錄在案 **4**

緊記

中途身體有不適
請立即停止行動。
我哋要鬥長命㗎！



行動者 自護手冊

1 不要全數上載拍到的片段和照片

把拍到的片段和照片
用獨立的 Drive 儲存好，
標好日子、時間等識認，
以便有需要時可以翻查、指證。

2

照片和證據

2014-10-06 – Hong Kong Protests Shrink as Government Buildings Unblocked, Schools Open



A screen grab from a video shows Occupy protesters in the Kowloon district of Mong Kok, Oct. 6, 2014. – RFA

The number of protesters occupying areas of downtown Hong Kong shrank to just a few hundred on Monday, as civil servants returned to work at government headquarters amid growing calls for talks between student demonstrators and the government over universal suffrage.

A handful of protesters remained encamped outside central government headquarters in Hong Kong's Admiralty district on Monday, but they made no attempt to obstruct some 3,000 government staff as they showed up for work.

A few hundred occupiers continued to block a section of highway connecting Admiralty and the Central business district after more than a week of continuous occupation by thousands, at times hundreds of thousands, of protesters calling for public nomination of candidates in 2017 elections for the chief executive.

Across the harbor, some 500 Occupy Central campaigners remained at an intersection in the busy Kowloon shopping district of Mong Kok late on Monday, the scene of violent clashes between Occupy and anti-Occupy protesters—some of whom were found to have links to Hong Kong's criminal "triad" organizations—over the weekend.

Protesters sat in groups discussing politics, and occasionally bursting into popular songs of the Occupy movement.

A volunteer at the protest site said demonstrators are keen to keep the mood light following widespread media

coverage of sometimes violence clashes between Occupy and anti-Occupy protesters at the weekend.

“If anyone comes to mess with us, we sing Happy Birthday, because we figure that will make them lose interest in causing trouble,” he said.

A university student surnamed Fung said she had previously attended protests in Admiralty.

“I came over here today because [those who quit] don’t represent everybody,” she said.

A local resident surnamed Tse, who was handing out face-masks to the protesters, said she wanted to help after being angered by the use of pepper spray by police.

Meanwhile, a local business owner said he had shut up shop early to avoid any trouble later in the evening.

“I haven’t had much business in eight days,” he said. “None of these people walking by are buying anything; they are here because of the action; genuine customers stay away when they see the situation here.”

And some 200 people remained camped out in the Causeway Bay shopping district on Hong Kong island.

Police presence

Police have maintained a discreet uniformed and plainclothed presence at the protests since being strongly criticized for the use of riot squads, tear-gas and pepper spray on Sept. 28.

Student leaders and Occupy Central founders have continued to press the government for talks on electoral reforms, in spite of warnings from the Chinese parliament that candidates in the 2017 race for chief executive will be popularly elected, but must be vetted by a committee approved by Beijing.

Pan-democratic politicians and Occupy campaigners have dismissed the proposals as “fake universal suffrage,” and are calling for dialogue with government officials.

But Hong Kong chief executive Leung Chun-ying has said China’s ban on public nominations can’t be reversed.

“We ... want it to be a substantive dialogue, not just a casual chat or a consultative session,” HKFS deputy leader Lester Shum told a news conference on Monday.

He said officials have told the protesters that the framework set out by China’s rubber-stamp parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), must be adhered to.

Hong Kong’s undersecretary for constitutional affairs Lau Kong-Wah said that more than one meeting will be held with protesters this week, however.

Lau said he was “hopeful” that a meeting between students and Leung’s second-in-command Carrie Lam will take place this week.

Call for debate

A student surnamed Lam at the Admiralty protest said he was upset by opposition to the protests, which are being dubbed the “Umbrella Revolution” after protesters used umbrellas to defend themselves against pepper spray last week.

“I think they could come and debate it with us, or write a leaflet or something,” he said.

A second student at the scene surnamed Yip said it was hard to see where the protests could go in the absence of a

meaningful response from the government.

“It would be a shame if it just dragged on and on like this with no result,” Yip said. “The main problem we face now is that people need to go to work, or class, so gradually there are fewer and fewer people left here.”

“The people staying behind are hoping for some sort of concrete result: at the very least, a dialogue with the government.”

Meanwhile, Britain’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Monday said there would be “few long-term economic effects” from the Occupy movement in Hong Kong.

It said in a report that while retail and tourism sectors had been affected, there were few signs of capital flight from Hong Kong, and that the rest of the economy appeared to be functioning normally.

Secondary schools near the Occupy protests on Hong Kong island re-opened on Monday, while primary schools are scheduled to re-open on Tuesday.

The ruling Chinese Communist Party has yet to make an official comment on the Occupy protests, but has repeatedly called them “illegal” and unpopular with the general public via its tightly controlled official media.

Reported by Grace Kei Lai-see, Pan Jiaqing and Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-07 – Hong Kong Protests Hang on Ahead of Formal Talks on Democracy



Pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong's Admiralty district, Oct. 7, 2014. – RFA

Leaders of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong and government officials have agreed to open formal talks on election reforms this week after 10 days of mass protests, which dwindled to a few thousand on Tuesday.

After several days of preparatory talks, the two sides announced they will begin negotiations on Friday.

But leaders of student groups which spearheaded the mass protests against Beijing's decision to restrict Hong Kong election reforms said they are disappointed that the government is not willing to address their core demands.

Joshua Wong, leader of the academic activist group Scholarism, called on protesters to stay on the streets in order to keep up pressure on the government for the right to nominate who can run as Hong Kong's next leader in 2017 elections.

Beijing insists that only candidates it has approved should stand in the polls.

Wong hit out at Hong Kong's leader, Chief Executive C.Y. Leung for "not daring" to come and meet protesters in person.

"He just makes a video of himself every day, which is aired in the media," Wong said. "Is Leung Chun-ying our chief executive, or is he a newsreader?"

Call for support

*Walking With A Yellow Umbrella: Bearing
Witness to a Revolution*

Wong called on demonstrators to gather on Friday afternoon in Admiralty, where the government headquarters is located on Hong Kong Island, to support the students in their talks with officials.

Lester Shum, deputy head of the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS), said he was disappointed at the attitude of officials in a preparatory meeting on Tuesday.

The government wants the talks to focus on “the basis for political development and the legal implementations of these political reforms,” Lau Kong-wah, the government’s undersecretary of constitutional and mainland affairs, was quoted saying by Reuters news agency after the preparatory talks, referring to plans for the 2017 election of the Chief Executive.

Student leaders said the talks are expected to be limited in scope.

But Shum said students have decided to go ahead with the meeting with Leung’s second-in-command Carrie Lam on Friday in a bid to force the government to face them directly.

“If they [government officials] do not try to face our demands or propose ways to solve the political problems directly, we may end the dialogue,” Shum told reporters.

He said more protesters could once more take to the streets, where two key areas remain under occupation by demonstrators sleeping out in tents.

“People are ready to come out again if the government fails to demonstrate sincerity [in] solving the political crisis,” he said, in comments reported by the *South China Morning Post* newspaper.

Any police action to clear existing protest sites could also result in an end to talks, he said.

Police threaten action

Across the harbor in Kowloon, thousands of people were gathered on a section of the busy Nathan Road shopping street in Mong Kok, scene of violent clashes between Occupy and anti-Occupy protesters on Friday.

Protesters were discussing where the movement should go next at a political forum held in a makeshift tent.

Police once more warned that they will take action in Mong Kok at an “appropriate time”.

Chief police superintendent Steve Hui said Mong Kok had become a “high risk area,” prone to clashes and emotional confrontations.

He said the ongoing protests were causing traffic congestion and “disturbing other people’s lives.”

A Mong Kok resident surnamed Lee agreed.

“It doesn’t matter whether it’s right or wrong any more,” Lee said. “It’s wrong to mess up the lives of local residents.”

“Walking along the street, using public transportation, and going to work [are all affected],” he said. “The worst hassle has been the obstruction for older people and those with disabilities.”

But he said he wanted to see a peaceful resolution.

“The best thing is for everyone to sit down and discuss things,” Lee said.

However, a student protester in Mong Kok, also surnamed Lee, said she intends to stay.

“I don’t think it would be good to expand it any further, but I think we should remain in occupation of our existing positions,” she said.

“It’s better to be in Mong Kok for educational reasons; most of the people here are regular working people,” Lee said.

No change seen

Hong Kong and Beijing officials have repeatedly warned there will be no change to an Aug. 31 decision from China’s rubber stamp parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), ruling out the public nomination of candidates.

Under current plans, candidates in the 2017 election for Leung’s successor must be selected by a 1,200-strong pro-Beijing committee, although all five million of Hong Kong’s voters will be able to cast their ballot to choose among them.

NPC delegate Rita Fan said on Tuesday there is little chance the NPC will change the framework it has decided on, in spite of calls for a new framework from the Occupy movement.

She said changes to the framework can only be made if there are “compelling new arguments” over electoral reform or “substantial changes” in Hong Kong.

Wang Juntao, a former leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing, said some form of protest would likely continue if the government sticks to its current position.

“It’s the same the whole world over,” Wang said. “The people who are in the movement will hang on in the face of government oppression or use of force, to keep the territory they have gained.”

“If the government just drags their feet, the people will immediately come back onto the streets again,” he said.

Reported by Wei Ling, Wen Yuqing, and Ho Shan for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan and Qiao Long for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Tweets from Hong Kong

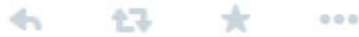


Emily Ching
@Emchingman



Follow

banner: Civil servants support #OccupyHK
#umhk



RETWEETS

11

FAVORITES

6



5:43 AM - 28 Nov 2014

Civil servants carrying banners lend their support to the Occupy Central movement, Nov. 28, 2014. – @Emchingman



HKDemoNow

@hkdemonow

+ Follow

High school students joining the Admiralty
1-month anniv rally in their
uniforms&yellow ribbons.

#UmbrellaRevolution



RETWEETS

33

FAVORITES

7



4:23 AM - 28 Oct 2014

High school students wearing uniforms and yellow ribbons attend a rally to mark the one-month anniversary of protests in Hong Kong's Admiralty district, Oct. 28, 2014. – @hkdemonow

2014-10-09 - Hong Kong Government Cancels Talks, Tells Protesters to Clear Streets



Hong Kong chief secretary Carrie Lam holds a press conference in Hong Kong, Oct. 9, 2014. – RFA

The Hong Kong government on Thursday called off scheduled talks with pro-democracy student leaders aimed at ending nearly two weeks of a mass civil disobedience campaign calling for universal suffrage, and told protesters to clear the streets.

Hong Kong chief secretary Carrie Lam said student leaders' calls to step up protests if they did not win concessions at the talks planned for Friday had damaged trust in the basis for the meeting.

"The basis for constructive dialogue has been undermined," Lam, second-in-command to chief executive C.Y. Leung, told reporters. "It's not possible to have a constructive dialogue tomorrow."

Lam, who was to have led the talks on the government side, instead called for an end to the "illegal occupation" of the city's streets by student and civil campaigners loosely grouped under the banner "Occupy Central."

Asked if police would now move to clear sites in Admiralty, Causeway Bay and Mong Kok of protesters, Lam said the government was closely monitoring the situation.

"We will take appropriate action at the appropriate time," she said, adding that the government had noted a "downward trend" in the numbers turning out to support the Occupy movement, now in its 12th day.

Lam once more warned that there would be no going back on an Aug. 31 edict from China's rubber stamp parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), which ruled that candidates in 2017 elections for the chief

executive must be vetted by a pro-Beijing committee.

The government had wanted the talks to focus on “the basis for political development and the legal implementation” of the election reforms. Student leaders felt the talks were limited in scope, and didn’t allow for discussion of their core demand.

Protesters respond

Occupy leaders responded to Lam’s announcement by calling for the movement, which has blocked highways in at least three busy downtown areas of the city as well as government headquarters since Sept. 28, to continue.

“Without a just explanation and concrete ideas of how to settle the current dispute, Hong Kong people will not retreat,” Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) leader Alex Chow told a joint news conference in response to the announcement.

He said the students had hoped for a genuine dialogue with the government, but rejected Lam’s accusation that students had tried to swell the protests ahead of the talks.

“I don’t believe we made a wrong move,” Chow said. “Civil disobedience was the only method we had for forcing a concession from the government.”

“The government is just making excuses,” he said.

In an earlier interview with RFA, Chow said protesters were used to threats of police action, and had made “mental preparation” before taking to the streets.

“The Occupy movement must be ongoing,” Chow said, suggesting that protesters might extend their protests. “The students will go into different occupy areas,” he said.

But he said the aim of the protests isn’t to overthrow the government.

“The point is ... to reform the political system,” he said. “It’s up to the government to come up with a set of proposals to end this situation.”



Protesters hold out in Hong Kong’s Admiralty district, Oct. 9, 2014. – RFA

Flagging movement

Some 5,000 protesters gathered in Admiralty late on Thursday to listen to speeches from student leaders calling for the movement to continue.

An Occupy supporter at the Admiralty protest surnamed Chan said he believed no political change is possible in the absence of continued protests.

“I support [Occupy Central], because the government won’t make changes without it,” Chan said. “Right from the start, the students have been doing this for the good of everyone.”

But he said many Hong Kong residents are growing tired of the ongoing disruption to their daily lives.

“I think that when the government makes a concession, that will be the right time to leave,” Chan said.

Occupy Central co-founder Benny Tai said the protests would likely swell in response to the government’s decision to cancel talks.

Joshua Wong, leader of the academic activist group Scholarism, had earlier also called on protesters to stay on the streets to continue to pressure the government to modify Beijing’s plans for the 2017 elections.

An office worker surnamed Wong said the situation appears to have reached an impasse.

“I don’t think ... the government is very sincere,” Wong said, in an interview recorded before the talks were cancelled.

But she said most protesters would make up their own minds about whether to continue.

“This has never been a movement led by any particular individuals, and I think people can exercise their own judgement about whether to stay or go,” Wong said. “This is an expression of public opinion, and if people stay, then the government will need to hold more talks with us.”

Mong Kok protesters

Across the harbor in Mong Kok, scene of violent clashes between Occupy and anti-Occupy protesters last week, some student protesters remained in possession of a makeshift tent at a busy intersection.

Sporadic verbal confrontations between unidentified passers-by and protesters continued.

“What do seven million Hong Kong people count for?” one man shouted at protesters in Mong Kok in mainland-accented Cantonese. “You would drown if we all spat at you.”

He added: “You are clueless, with no social responsibility; may your families all drop dead!”

The student protesters replied by singing “Happy Birthday” to the man.

Meanwhile, pan-democratic legislators said they are planning their own civil disobedience campaign inside the chamber of the territory’s Legislative Council (LegCo), government broadcaster RTHK reported.

Embattled leader

The cancellation of the talks came as pressure mounted on Hong Kong’s embattled chief executive C.Y. Leung following a report alleging that he failed to disclose a U.S. \$6.5 million payout from an Australian company, prompting opposition lawmakers to consider impeachment proceedings against him.

Beijing-backed Leung, who has been facing calls to resign over his handling of pro-democracy protests,

“pocketed millions in secret fees from a listed Australian company in return for supporting its Asian business ambitions,” Fairfax Media, which owns the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* newspapers, reported following its own investigation.

The paper cited a “secret contract” between Leung and Australian engineering company UGL, signed and dated Dec. 2, 2011, three months before Leung was chosen by a 1,200-strong pro-Beijing election committee in March 2012 by a margin of just 89 votes.

While there was nothing apparently illegal about the contract itself, Leung didn’t disclose it during his election campaign, the paper said.

Hong Kong’s Justice Department on Thursday handed an investigation report of the business payout to prosecutors.

Part of the brief includes “considering and deciding whether prosecution action is warranted” against Leung, who has refused to stand down in recent weeks over protesters’ calls for Beijing to keep its promise of universal suffrage, Reuters news agency reported.

The department said its decision was aimed at avoiding “any possible perception of bias, partiality or improper influence.”

Hong Kong current affairs commentator Camoes Tam said the investigation is unlikely to have much impact on the outcome of the Occupy movement, but Leung’s political career is likely over.

“The central government has made it very clear that Leung has no way of resolving the problem, so the task of dealing peacefully with the Occupy movement has been given to Carrie Lam,” Tam said.

“C.Y. Leung is effectively a lame duck chief executive right now,” he said. “They just want to make sure he doesn’t go off message.”

China supporters

Beijing’s ruling Chinese Communist Party leaders have ruled Hong Kong since the 1997 handover using the “one country, two systems” formula, which allows wide-ranging autonomy and freedoms not enjoyed by cities on the mainland.

While the territory’s mini-constitution, the Basic Law, specifies universal suffrage as an eventual goal, Beijing’s interpretation is at odds with that of pan-democratic politicians and democracy campaigners, who have dismissed it as “fake universal suffrage.”

Across the border in China, the authorities have detained more than 40 activists who showed public support for the Hong Kong protesters, rights groups said on Thursday.

The overseas-based Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) group, which translates and collates reports from rights groups inside China, said it has documented more than 40 detentions in total, including 11 criminal detentions and two administrative detentions.

A total of 31 individuals remain in police custody and at least three have gone into hiding, the group said in an emailed statement.

“Police have harassed and intimidated countless others by visiting their homes and issuing warnings or taking them to police stations for questioning,” it said.

It called on the Chinese government to “immediately release the detained individuals and respect their

constitutional rights and right to freedom of expression.”

Among those criminally detained is a group of 10 artists from the Songzhuang artists’ village in Beijing and a journalist covering their poetry reading in support of Occupy Central, it said.

All but one are being held at the Beijing No. 1 Detention Center, and seven are being held on suspicion of “picking quarrels and stirring up trouble,” it said.

Reported by Pan Jiaqing, Lau Won, Wen Yuqing and Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Qiao Long and Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-10 – Government Withdrawal From Talks Sparks Mass Rally in Hong Kong



Protesters rally in Hong Kong's Admiralty district, Oct. 10, 2014. – RFA

Tens of thousands of pro-democracy protesters surged back onto the streets of Hong Kong on Friday after the government cancelled talks with protest leaders, as the mass civil disobedience movement over electoral reforms in the former British colony entered its 13th consecutive day.

The protesters gathered on a major road in Hong Kong's downtown Admiralty district after student leaders called on them to show the government that the Occupy Central movement pushing for full democracy in the semiautonomous Chinese territory still had some steam.

Some sang the familiar protest songs that have become the refrain of the movement calling for public nomination of candidates in 2017 elections for the position of chief executive, Hong Kong's top leader, in spite of an Aug. 31 ruling by Beijing that it must vet candidates before they can run.

Others brought tents and made ready to spend the night on the two-mile (3.2-kilometer) stretch of Harcourt Road that has become the focus of the mass pro-democracy movement since Sept. 28.

Hong Kong's second-in-command, chief secretary Carrie Lam, pulled out of the talks on Thursday, citing a lack of trust over calls for further mass rallies by student leaders Alex Chow and Joshua Wong.

Chow, who heads the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS), took to the podium to call on protesters to keep up the pressure on embattled chief executive C.Y. Leung and his administration.

“[The protesters] can see that the government has given them a false hope, by saying they would hold a dialogue ... and then terminating that dialogue when they saw fit,” Chow told the crowd.

“This will only serve to ... bring more people back onto the streets, because they see the government is constantly backtracking,” he said.

He said if the government hadn’t agreed to restart talks by Sunday, protesters would take action to “force the government to face the people.”

Call for apology

Chow was followed by Joshua Wong, leader of the academic activist group Scholarism, who called on the government to apologize for the use of tear-gas against protesters on Sept. 28.

“We have noticed that the government still hasn’t apologized for the firing ... of tear-gas,” Wong said.

“Since the government lacks sincerity, we must further expand the Occupy movement,” he said.

A protester surnamed Leung, who was putting up a tent at the Admiralty site on Friday evening local time, said many in the crowd had come out in response to the cancellation of talks.

“We get the feeling they are just messing us around,” Leung said. “I am really very angry about this. It’s unacceptable.”

“If there is no room for dialogue [with the government], then this is all we can do,” she said.

A technical college student surnamed Chow said she would stay overnight, though she hadn’t had time to buy a tent.

“I came here because I heard that Carrie Lam had cancelled the talks,” she said. “I think the fact that they just cancelled the dialogue like that has brought even more students out onto the streets.”

Smaller protests

By contrast with the Admiralty rally, much smaller protests of some 200 people each were reported in other Occupy locations in Causeway Bay and Mong Kok, the scene of violent clashes last week.

In Mong Kok, Wong Ka-pang, a protester in his nineties said he had kept vigil at the protest site for several days.

“We have no dialogue, and the government won’t cooperate with our demands for universal suffrage,” he said. “I have been forced here by the [ruling] Chinese Communist Party, who won’t agree to it.”

“My entire family was wiped out by the Communist Party, by their policies, if not by them personally,” Wong said. “The Communist Party has killed countless people.”

HKFS deputy leader Lester Shum said the students would look at the numbers attending protest sites over the weekend and decide how to proceed from there.

US support

Meanwhile, China hit out at a U.S. congressional report supporting the Occupy protest and calling on the

administration to monitor the development of democracy in Hong Kong.

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) called in the report published on Thursday for enhanced exchanges with the region and for senior U.S. officials to be sent there.

“We firmly oppose it,” Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei told a regular news briefing in Beijing. “We demand that the committee stop damaging China-U.S. ties.”

Hong said the report was “biased” and constitutes an attack on China’s human rights record. He said Hong Kong’s affairs are a purely internal matter for China.

“Foreign governments, organizations and individuals are urged to act prudently and not to provide support for the illegal occupation,” Hong said.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang meanwhile said he was confident that social stability isn’t under threat in Hong Kong.

While he avoided mentioning the demonstrations directly, he said preserving Hong Kong’s “long-term prosperity and stability” is not just in China’s interest but in that of its residents.

“I am convinced that Hong Kongers, with their wisdom, are in a position—and that the [Hong Kong] government has the authority—to preserve the prosperity of the city and also social stability,” said Li, speaking through an interpreter.

He said the regional government “will also protect the inhabitants of the city from injury or material damage.”

‘One country, two systems’

The “one country, two systems” principle formed part of a 1984 Sino-British treaty promising a high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong, and the continuation of its traditional freedoms and judicial independence, as well as progress towards universal suffrage.

Li said Beijing had always implemented the “two systems” approach “and it will stay that way.”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who met with Li on Friday in Berlin, has called for freedom of speech to be protected in Hong Kong.

And Taiwan president Ma Ying-jeou called on Beijing to allow full democracy in Hong Kong.

Democratic Taiwan, which has been governed separately since the nationalists fled there in 1949 after losing a civil war to Mao Zedong’s communists on the mainland, has been pressed to reunify with China under the “one country, two systems” principle.

“During reforms and opening up 30 years ago, Deng Xiaoping famously said ‘let some people get rich first,’” Ma said on the anniversary of the Oct. 10, 1911 nationalist revolution led by Sun Yat-sen.

“So why can’t they allow some people to get democratic first, thereby fulfilling the promises made to the people of Hong Kong 17 years ago?” he said.

Reported by Wen Yuqing, Lin Jing and Chung Kuang-cheng for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan, Qiao Long and Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-12 - Hong Kong Students Tell Xi Jinping They're Willing to 'Risk Lives' for Democracy



A pro-democracy protester shouts slogans in the Mong Kok district of Hong Kong, Oct. 12, 2014. – AFP

In a direct appeal to Chinese President Xi Jinping, students behind the mass pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong have asked him to repeal a decision restricting election reforms in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory, vowing to sacrifice their lives for political change.

As the protests entered its third week, the Hong Kong Federation of Students and activist group Scholarism said in an open letter to Xi that they had “high hope” for him “to take this matter closely,” blaming Hong Kong’s embattled leader C.Y. Leung for not being “honest” to Beijing about the people’s aspirations for democracy.

“For the sake of a democratic political system, fellow students are willing to give up their studies or even risk their lives” to back their key demand for public nomination of candidates in 2017 polls for the post of Hong Kong chief executive, the city’s top leader, according to an English translation of the letter posted on the HKFS website.

Thousands in Hong Kong have taken to the streets to protest an Aug. 31 decision by China’s main parliamentary body, the National People’s Congress (NPC) that while Hong Kongers will be able to vote for Leung’s successor in 2017, only two or three vetted candidates will be allowed to stand — an arrangement the protesters dismiss as “fake universal suffrage.”

The letter charged that the NPC decision was based on an “untrue report” by Leung, who the student groups said failed to consider the wishes of 700,000 Hong Kong residents who voted in an online referendum supporting public nominations for the chief executive’s position.

“If the Hong Kong government had been honest about public opinion, they would have confessed to their fault,

rectify and, most importantly, include Hong Kong people's genuine wishes in the direction of electoral reform," the letter said.

Legal



Anti-Occupy group members shout slogans as they take part in a protest march, Oct. 12, 2014. – AFP

The letter reminded Xi that in mainland China, voters could nominate their local governments.

"Civil nomination, therefore, has its legal ground. There can be no reasons for the Hong Kong government to fear practicing civil nomination."

Beijing's ruling Chinese Communist Party leaders have administered Hong Kong since its 1997 handover from Britain, using the "one country, two systems" formula, which allows wide-ranging autonomy and freedoms not enjoyed by cities on the mainland.

The student groups in their letter moved to allay concerns in Beijing that a vibrant democracy in Hong Kong could lay the groundwork for similar demands in mainland China that may cause a possible breakup of the country.

"The occupy movement today in Hong Kong is definitely not a color revolution or its alike, but rather a movement for democracy," they said.

At the weekend in Hong Kong, demonstrators continued to occupy key sections of the regional financial hub, blocking major roads as they camped out in dozens of tents.

They vowed to continue their protests until the government responds to these demands.

Leung's office last week decided to call off scheduled negotiations with students, whose key demands are full democracy and his resignation.

Defiant

Leung remains defiant in the face of the demands, saying in a Sunday television interview that the pro-democracy protesters have an "almost zero chance" of reversing Beijing's decision on election reforms, and maintaining that he would not resign.

He told local channel TVB Sunday that the protests had “spiraled out of control” and police may use a “minimum amount of force” if the protests sites had to be cleared.

Calls for Leung to step down escalated after police used tear gas, pepper spray, and batons on demonstrations two weeks ago.

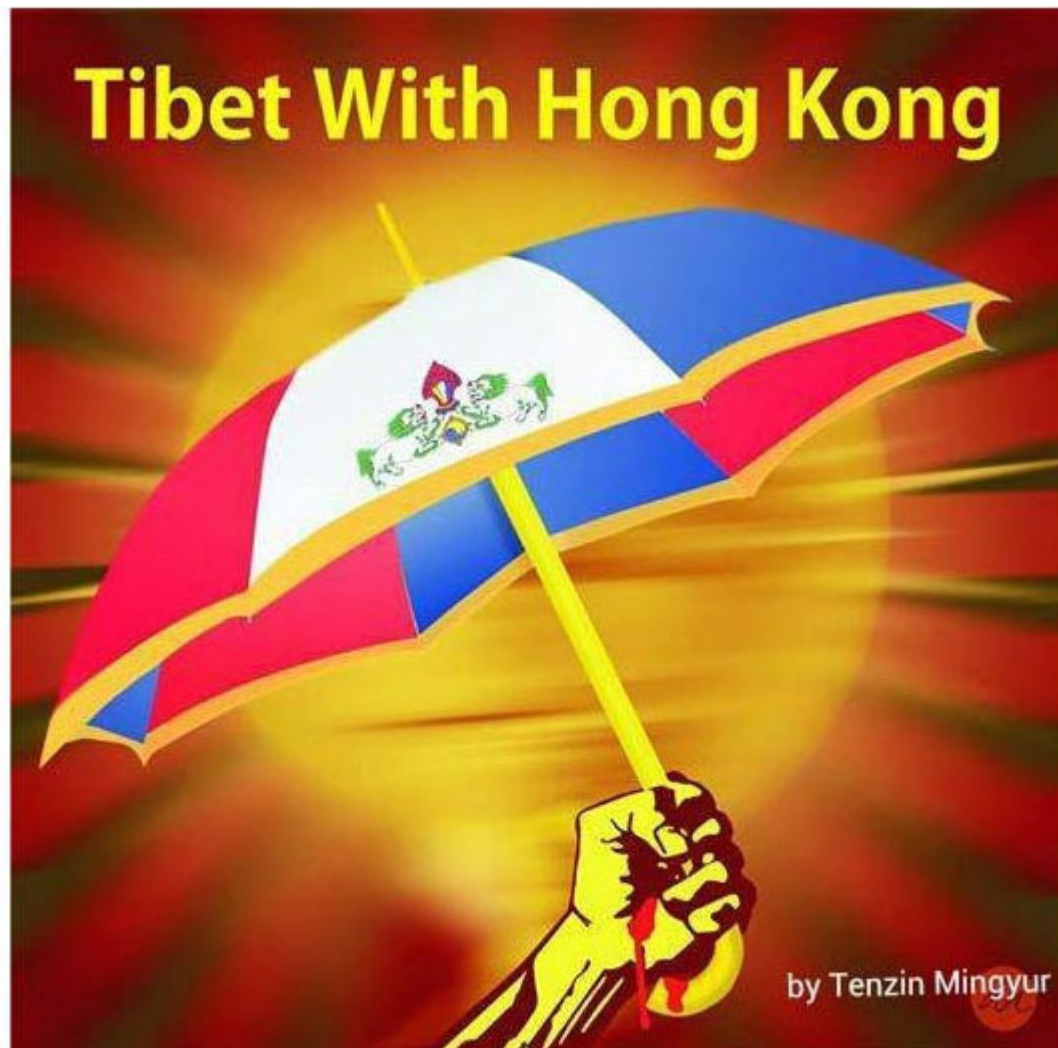
Meanwhile, a Hong Kong pro-government group has set an ultimatum to the authorities to dismantle three sites the protesters have closed to traffic by Tuesday night.

“If the HK government will not do that, we’re planning to surround those people who occupy Mong Kok, Causeway Bay and Admiralty,” Tsoi Hak-kin, vice chairman of the pro-government movement told Agence France-Presse.

“Hong Kong people have suffered too much,” Tsoi said, without giving further details of how or when the group would surround sites that have attracted tens of thousands in the past two weeks, far outnumbering the turnout of counter-protesters.

Reported by RFA’s Cantonese and Mandarin Services. Written in English by Parameswaran Ponnudurai.

Support From Tibetans



Tibetan in occupied **#Tibet** are **#Solidarity** with **#HongKong** people & **#OccupyCentral** **#UmbrellaRevolution**

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Hu Jia 胡佳, Maya Wang 王松莲, Shao Jiang 邵江 and 2 others



RETWEETS

9

FAVORITES

4



Signs expressing Tibetan Support for Hong Kong protesters are hung outside a Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, in an undated photo. – @JigmeUgen

2014-10-13 – Hong Kong Protests Rebound After Clashes



Police officers arrest an anti-occupy protester (C) in the Admiralty district of Hong Kong, Oct. 13, 2014. – AFP

Authorities in Hong Kong began moving to clear barricades blocking streets occupied by pro-democracy protesters on Monday, while a prominent student activist called on citizens to boost numbers at key protest sites following further clashes with anti-Occupy groups.

Hong Kong police said they would continue removing barricades, though, after moving to free sections of road in the Central business district and the busy Kowloon shopping district of Mong Kok.

By late Monday, thousands of protesters had gathered at the main Occupy site in Admiralty, listening to speeches and music and setting up rows of brightly colored tents on Harcourt Road for the night.

“We will not eliminate the possibility of using minimal force or arrest actions,” police senior superintendent Steve Hui told a news conference on Monday.

Earlier, police arrested three men, one for assault and two for carrying offensive weapons, after anti-Occupy groups stormed barricades in Mong Kok and Admiralty in a bid to remove obstacles to traffic.

Taxi-drivers sounded their horns in protest at the continuing occupation of major highways, which entered its third week of campaigning for public nomination of candidates in the territory’s planned one-person, one-vote elections for the chief executive in 2017.

“There were about 100-200 of them, carrying pliers and stuff like that,” an Occupy protester said after clashes broke out between both sides and police. “They were wearing masks, and they dragged away a lot of the barricades.”

“When the police saw they were carrying [potential] weapons, they went and stopped them.”

An Associated Press report said some of the group were carrying box-cutting knives, which they used to cut the plastic ties holding the barricades together.

An anti-Occupy protester defended the group’s actions, however.

“They are getting in a lot of people’s way, and we can’t use the road unless we remove the barricades,” he told RFA. “I’m not a triad member, don’t get me wrong. I’m acting on my own behalf.”

Chief executive criticized

Protesters led by the Occupy Central group, the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS), and the academic activist group Scholarism said on Sunday that chief executive C.Y. Leung had failed to give an accurate report of public consultations on the election process to Beijing.

They want the ruling Chinese Communist Party to change its mind about an Aug. 31 ruling by its rubber stamp National People’s Congress (NPC) that limits candidates to two or three people, hand-picked by a pro-Beijing committee.

Pro-democracy politicians and protesters alike have dismissed the NPC plan as “fake universal suffrage,” because they mean a pro-democratic candidate is highly unlikely to be selected.

Demonstrators meanwhile have repeatedly called for Leung’s resignation, with students saying Leung has failed to take into account the wishes of 700,000 people who voted in an unofficial online referendum in support of public nominations.

HKFS leader Alex Chow said criminal “triad” gangs were likely behind the clashes. “Of course we condemn the violent actions against Occupy protesters,” he said.

“It seems that this was a concerted move that had been planned beforehand,” Chow said, adding, “I don’t know if anyone orchestrated it.”

“But it’s a bit suspicious that it happened [on both sides of the harbor] at the same time.”



Police form a line in the Admiralty district of Hong Kong, Oct. 13, 2014. – AFP

Protest numbers grow

Scholarism convener Joshua Wong meanwhile called on Hong Kong people to come out and swell the crowds of protesters after numbers dwindled in the early hours of Monday morning.

Wong, who celebrated his 18th birthday on Monday, called on his fellow protesters to continue the fight for “true universal suffrage.”

On his Facebook page, Wong listed three birthday wishes: “Safety for family members, my girlfriend, and other fellow students,” as well as “willpower” to his fellow protesters.

The number of people occupying both sites grew by Monday evening, while verbal confrontations between demonstrators and those who oppose them continued, particularly in Mong Kok, where the protest site is more accessible to passersby.

Hundreds of protesters at Mong Kok left hundreds of small yellow paper umbrellas bearing messages at the site.

“I wrote four characters: making history,” one protester said after hanging up their own personal message. “I thought of it on the spur of the moment, and just wrote it.”

But he said he wasn’t a long-term occupier at the site. “I just got here,” he said. “I have been here once before as well.”

A second Mong Kok protester said he was digging in until the government gives in.

“I’ll stick it out until the government gives us genuine universal suffrage,” he said.

Call to clear the roads

Associations of taxi-drivers and private minibus and goods vehicle drivers have hit out at the continuing protests, saying they will seek a court injunction to clear protesters from the highways.

“I think the students can understand the legal logic, and we hope that the court will grant us an injunction,” Frankie Yick, transportation and logistics industry lawmaker, told reporters.

“Our aim is simply to stop them from obstructing the highway. As for damages, whom would we pursue?” Yick said. “We will be taking detailed legal advice on this.”

Meanwhile, Phyllis Kwong, President of the Asia Pacific Law Association, said she is pursuing seven defendants in a bid for a court injunction, including the three organizers of Occupy Central, as well as the leaders of the HKFS and Scholarism.

Pro-democracy lawmakers hit out at the government for allowing ‘mobs’ to attack protesters.

“This is one of the tactics used by the communists in mainland China from time to time,” Democratic Party lawmaker Albert Ho told Agence France-Presse.

“They use triads or pro-government mobs to try to attack you so the government will not have to assume responsibility.”

And Civic Party lawmaker Claudia Mo said she suspected the police moved the barricades to make it easier for the anti-Occupy groups to get through.

Reported by Wen Yuqing, Luo Bote, Dai Weisen and Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Qiao Long and Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-13 – China Steps Up Crackdown on Supporters of Hong Kong Protests



Police cordon off an area where pro-democracy demonstrators have gathered in the Admiralty district of Hong Kong, Oct. 13, 2014. – AFP

The ruling Chinese Communist Party has stepped up action in mainland China against anyone showing public support for Hong Kong's Occupy Central pro-democracy demonstrations, detaining activists on public order charges and censoring authors.

China's media regulatory body has now issued an internal notice requiring that books by Chinese-American author Yu Ying-shih and Taiwan writer Giddens Ko, known by his pen-name "Nine Knives," be taken off the shelves of all booksellers, according to social media posts and an official media commentary on Monday.

Also listed as being on the publishing blacklist were Zheng Shiping, known by his pen-name "Ye Fu," Mao Yushi, outspoken Beijing University legal expert Zhang Qianfan, pro-democracy activist Chen Ziming, and Hong Kong commentator Leung Man-tao.

Yu has been outspoken in his support for the "Sunflower" student protest movement that occupied Taiwan's legislature in March, and has openly encouraged Hong Kong students' participation in the Occupy Central movement, which entered its third week on Monday.

In what online comments have compared to a Qin dynasty book-burning campaign targeting Confucian writings and scholars, the blacklist ensures that no one on the list can now be published in mainland China.

"Some on the list are foreign nationals but active in Chinese politics, including openly supporting Hong Kong's Occupy Central movement or 'Taiwan independence,'" the *Global Times* newspaper, which has close ties with

party mouthpiece the *People's Daily*, said in a commentary on Monday.

“Some are Chinese mainland scholars but are opposed to the country’s political system,” it said.

‘Push-back’ warning

It said the authors concerned should be prepared for “push-back” when adopting views that oppose the government.

“If one has positioned himself at odds to the country’s mainstream political path, he shouldn’t expect his influence to keep on rising without disruption,” the paper said.

Taiwan current affairs commentator Chen Yuen-chun said that those on the list are among the best contemporary writers in the Chinese language.

“Nowadays, [writers] can’t touch upon anything to do with democracy, freedom, universal or humanitarian values, or human rights,” Chen said, adding, “In the past it was possible to allude to such things in a roundabout manner, but there’s not even room to do that now.”

She said the authors on the list are all regarded as very moderate in their views.

According to Taiwan-based former Chinese media commentator Xiao Shu, the Chinese government directives were sparked by comments by China Academy for Social Sciences (CASS) president Wang Weiguang, who has called for a renewed “class struggle.”

“We’re nearly back to the age of the Cultural Revolution [1966–1976] now, as it was under the direction of [hard-line Gang of Four member] Zhang Chunqiao,” Xiao said.

“If things continue this way, I think it will mean that the Cultural Revolution has returned, in the form of utter domination in the realm of ideology, and the dictatorship of the proletariat,” he said.

“Such is the political philosophy of the Communist Party.”

Activists detained

Meanwhile, authorities in the Chinese capital detained two activists who had traveled to Hong Kong to join the protests, Agence France-Presse reported.

Zhang Xiuhua and Li Lirong were detained by police last week on charges of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” after they gave interviews to a foreign media organization while at a mass rally.

Chinese authorities have detained more than 40 people nationwide in the last two weeks for openly supporting the Occupy movement in Hong Kong.

And a Chinese scholar and rights advocate who founded the influential nongovernmental Transition Institute think tank has been detained on similar charges, his lawyer said.

Guo Yushan played a key role in the escape from house arrest of blind rights activist Chen Guangcheng in 2012, and has been supportive of the Occupy movement.

But his lawyer Xia Lin said the reasons behind his detention on a generic charge of “picking quarrels and stirring up trouble” were still unclear on Monday.

“We aren’t really sure, and his family don’t know either,” Xia said.

Measured, moderate

Guo was taken from his home in the early hours of Oct. 9, and his home searched and belongings confiscated.

“His family received the notification [of his criminal detention] in the evening of Oct. 9,” Xia said. “He had been initially taken away on the pretext of a summons for questioning.”

Xiao said Guo had always been a measured and moderate critic of government policy, and had carried out his scholarly activities entirely within the law.

He said political tensions in China are on a knife-edge as Occupy protesters continue to block Hong Kong streets ahead of an annual party meeting.

“I think things are getting more and more crazy because the Fourth Plenum [of the 18th Party Congress] is nearly here,” Xiao said.

“These next two weeks will be the craziest of all,” he said.

Reported by Luo Bote and Dai Weisen for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-14 – Police Clear Protesters from Key Hong Kong Area; 45 Arrested



Police officers spray a pro-democracy protester in the face with pepper spray in Hong Kong, Oct. 15, 2014. – AFP

Hundreds of Hong Kong police in riot gear violently cleared pro-democracy protesters from a key area in the financial hub in the worst clashes since a mass movement was launched about two weeks ago against Beijing's bid to restrict election reforms in the semiautonomous Chinese territory.

In the early hours of Wednesday local time, the police used pepper spray to clear the defiant demonstrators from a main road next to the city's government headquarters, wrestling some to the ground and arresting them, and tearing down barricades that have been erected, according to reports, citing injuries on both sides.

Forty-five protesters were detained on charges of unlawful assembly and obstructing police, police said.

Many protesters were taken away with their hands tied with temporary handcuffs as police with bolt-cutters and riot shields moved in a phalanx to clear barricades blocking Lung Wo Road near the offices of embattled chief executive C.Y. Leung in Admiralty, live footage streamed online by the Apple Daily media group showed.

Occupy Central, the pro-democracy civil disobedience campaign, tweeted a video captured by the local broadcaster TVB "of 6 policemen carrying [a] protester to [a] corner & beating him for almost 4 [minutes] while he is on ground."

Press not spared



A police officer shouts at a pro-democracy protester after he was hit with pepper spray, Oct. 15, 2014. – AFP

Journalists were also not spared of the violence, believed to be the most serious since Sept. 28, when riot police fired tear gas and pepper spray at largely peaceful crowds calling for full universal suffrage.

Daniel Cheng, a reporter for an online news portal, told the Agence France-Presse news agency that police caught and severely beat him.

“(Police) grabbed me, more than 10 police, and they beat me, punches, kicks, elbows. I tried to tell them I’m a reporter but they didn’t listen.”

Cheng sported cuts to his lip and bruises on his neck and back, AFP reported. Cheng said he was later released after showing his press card.

AFP journalists also saw police using batons and their gloved fists to beat back protesters, some of them clutching the umbrellas that have become a symbol of their push for the right of Hongkongers to nominate who can run as their next leader in 2017 elections.

The pre-dawn crackdown came days after the government abruptly cancelled a dialogue with student leaders who have been leading the protesters, their number having fallen off sharply from a peak of about 100,000 last week.

Reminder

On Tuesday local time, Hong Kong police had reminded protesters through megaphones not to push against police lines during a raid on barricades blocking traffic along Queensway in downtown Hong Kong Island.

Traffic flow had been hampered in key areas in the city center for the last two weeks.

An eyewitness and student protester surnamed Yau said she had no intention of confronting police, however.

“Actually, I’m worried that other people will think we’ve gone too far, if even ambulances can’t get through,” Yau said. “Perhaps we will get complaints from non-protesters.”

Hong Kong’s transportation and haulage industry has hit out at the blocked roads as contributing to economic losses, while the tram-drivers’ union said their members are paid by the hour, and have been unable to make an adequate wage after tram-lines were blocked by Occupy protests.

A second protester surnamed Wong said the protesters had remained “calm and reasonable” throughout the police operation, however.

“We won’t try to stop the police from using force to disperse protesters, but I want the general public to know that we aren’t here to obstruct everyone’s daily lives,” Wong said.

“We are here for freedom and democracy for Hong Kong for the next few generations,” he said.

Some 100 protesters remained at the Hong Kong Island shopping district of Causeway Bay, although police removed some tents and barricades there, too.

Too fast

A protester surnamed Lam at the Admiralty site said police had moved too fast in the early hours for protesters to stop them.

“They were very fast today,” Lam said. “They saw that there weren’t so many people here, so they moved in.”

“They were organized, while we are self-organizing, so we were never going to be quick enough.”

Protest coordinator Alex Chow, who heads the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) said protesters who remained at the Causeway Bay site are likely more vulnerable to disturbances from anti-Occupy protesters, who have repeatedly faced off with the Occupy Central movement in verbal and physical clashes in recent days.

Joshua Wong, head of the academic activism group Scholarism, said before the crackdown that protesters aren’t afraid of further police action, however.

“I am confident that we will be able to continue this movement using our principles of peaceful and non-violent protest,” Wong told RFA.

Across the harbor in Mong Kok, around 200 protesters gathered at a busy intersection, expecting further police action in the coming days.

A student protester surnamed Hui told RFA said the protesters had already moved to strengthen the barricades protecting them to prevent a sudden move by police to clear the area.

“The students will hang on here to the last possible minute,” Hui said.

Police claim transparency

Senior police superintendent Steve Hui told reporters that the police had acted with great transparency.

“The police operation was carried out very openly ... with warnings given beforehand, and reassurances that the police weren’t attempting to force protesters to clear the area,” Hui said.

“If we move to clear the protests, we will inform people in advance, to give citizens a chance to leave.”

Meanwhile, anti-Occupy protesters blockaded the gates of the pro-democracy *Apple Daily* newspaper offices in Tseung Kwan O industrial estate, delaying delivery of the paper by a couple of hours for a second day in a row, live online footage from the *Apple Daily* showed.

Journalists questioned the anti-Occupy protesters, who spoke with accents from across the internal border in neighboring Guangdong province, asking if they were being paid for the blockade.

The protesters faced off with journalists in an altercation that lasted more than 20 minutes, asking them for their press passes, and daring them to “come over here and say that,” the footage showed.

“However well-organized the Occupy movement is, it’s still going to have to put up with increased surveillance and threats from other people,” Joseph Cheng, politics professor at Hong Kong’s City University, told RFA.

“Everyone knows that if you face off with such a huge organization as the Chinese Communist Party, you can’t prevent this,” he said.

He said details of meetings of his Alliance for True Democracy campaign group frequently leaked outside.

“For the past few years, whenever Hong Kong democracy activists have held a meeting, we put all our cell phones in a different room,” Cheng said. “It’s not just now.”

Cyberattacks

He said cyberattacks on pro-democracy websites in Hong Kong have been ongoing for many months, and have only been stepped up since the Occupy protests began.

“We had them before, but now they’re much, much more serious,” Cheng said, adding that most campaigners won’t be put off, because they are expecting a “long and difficult struggle.”

Protesters want the ruling Chinese Communist Party to change its mind about an Aug. 31 ruling by its rubber stamp National People’s Congress (NPC) that limits candidates to two or three people, hand-picked by a pro-Beijing committee.

Pro-democracy politicians and protesters alike have dismissed the NPC plan as “fake universal suffrage,” because they mean a pro-democratic candidate is highly unlikely to be selected.

Students say Leung failed to take into account the wishes of 700,000 people who voted in an unofficial online referendum in support of public nominations.

But according to HKFS leader Chow, any sort of compromise is unlikely from Leung and his administration.

“C.Y. Leung isn’t going to make any concessions at all,” Chow said. “But it’s not the people who are to blame, here. It’s the government.”

Reported by Lin Jing and Pan Jiaqing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Qiao Long, Xin Lin and Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated by Luisetta Mudie. Written in English by Luisetta Mudie and Parameswaran Ponnudurai.

2014-10-15 – Viral Video of Hong Kong Police Brutality Sparks Concerns



Social workers protest in front of police headquarters in Hong Kong over the alleged beating of Ken Tsang, Oct. 15, 2014. – RFA

Protesters surged back onto Hong Kong's streets on Wednesday in the wake of video footage showing police beating up a demonstrator of the pro-democracy movement occupying key areas of the semiautonomous Chinese territory for the third week in a row.

Hundreds of people protested outside police headquarters in downtown Hong Kong, while some 2,000 gathered late on Wednesday at the main protest site occupying a stretch of highway in Admiralty district, near the headquarters of the city government led by embattled chief executive C.Y. Leung.

Video footage filmed live at the scene by local journalists showed Civic Party member Ken Tsang being beaten and kicked by a group of police officers in a dark area while they were clearing a main road of protesters in a violent crackdown.

Tsang later showed journalists his injuries and vowed to sue the seven officers—two inspectors and five constables—who police have identified as those in the video, and who have now been transferred to different posts.

“You should have seen the TV footage of a number of police officers brutally assaulting me, while I was ... utterly defenceless,” he said, in comments translated by the *South China Morning Post* newspaper.

“Prior to that I had already been assaulted, and was later yet again assaulted in the police station.”

A student surnamed Tsang, who was at Lung Wo Street in the early hours of Wednesday morning, said the

police had moved in at around 3:00 a.m. local time, row upon row of them.

“There were probably only about 100 of us, so we had no way to resist them,” Tsang said. “When they reached us ... we used our umbrellas to fend them off.”

“[But] they beat us with their riot shields, so we retreated back to government headquarters,” he said.

Police chief superintendent Steve Hui expressed “serious concern” over the TV footage. “If there is any criminality revealed, we will proceed with the case in accordance with the law,” he told reporters.

Pan-democratic politicians have called on Hong Kong’s Legislative Council security panel to set out clear guidelines for police handling of protesters.

Journalist coverage

Meanwhile, some 20 journalists at broadcaster TVB said management had edited out a voice-over from the video footage of the alleged assault explaining what was happening.

They said the voice track had provided a neutral description of what was taking place, rather than commenting on it, and called on their bosses to allow journalists to report events accurately.

Hong Kong Journalists’ Association chairwoman Sham Yee-lan said the journalists had acted “bravely.”

“This is the biggest news story involving mass protests we have ever seen in Hong Kong’s history,” Sham told RFA. “The journalists were simply describing what was happening, and this made a very strong story taken together with the video footage.”

“I think that for the editors to take out the report from the scene amounts to self-censorship.”

Chief executive Leung, who is himself under investigation over whether an undeclared payout in a business deal with an Australian company in 2012 constitutes wrongdoing, said the government would take the complaints seriously.

“We have an effective system and due process for achieving a just result for all,” Leung said. “The SAR [Special Administrative Region] government will use this system and this process to deal with this matter.”

Pan-democratic politicians slammed the police actions as depicted in the video.

Speaking at a news conference during which some shouted “Lawlessness! Private justice!”, Civic Party Legislative Councillor Alan Leong said the police had used extrajudicial methods that were totally unacceptable.

“The officers concerned should be arrested,” he said. “It’s not enough to simply transfer them.”

Civic Party chairwoman Audrey Eu agreed. “They should be suspended and placed under immediate investigation,” she told reporters. “And if there is sufficient evidence, they should be subjected to criminal proceedings.”

She called on the police to release the full names of the officers concerned. “That way, the victim will also be able to pursue a civil claim for compensation,” Eu said.



Ken Tsang is taken away by policemen before being allegedly beaten up by police forces outside the central government offices in Hong Kong, Oct. 15, 2014. – AFP

Possibility of talks

Meanwhile, a top government official said the government is trying to revive the possibility of talks with protest leaders through a “well-respected middleman” after the government called off a planned dialogue with students last Friday.

The government’s secretary for constitutional affairs Raymond Tam said he is hopeful he will be able to make an announcement on talks with students in the next few days.

There have been growing calls from prominent voices in academia, and the legal, religious and social welfare sectors for the government to talk to the protesters, who are demanding public nomination of candidates in the 2017 election for a replacement for Leung.

At a protest site on a busy road in Kowloon’s shopping district of Mong Kok, a handful of protesters vowed to maintain their sit-in despite frequent verbal face-offs with anti-Occupy protesters and angry passers-by, and in spite of the possibility of violent clashes with police.

“It’s pretty dangerous here ... It’s pretty predictable that if the police come to clear the area, we will probably get beaten up,” a protester surnamed Cheung told RFA.

He said police were already preparing to clear the Mong Kok Occupy site in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

“There were a lot of police getting ready to move in and clear the area in a sidestreet over there,” Cheung said. “But after things got out of hand at Lung Wo Street, they didn’t come.”

Protester demands

Protesters coordinated by the Occupy Central group, the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) and the academic activist group Scholarism want the ruling Chinese Communist Party to review its Aug. 31 ruling limiting candidates to two or three people to be hand-picked by a pro-Beijing committee.

They have also repeatedly called for Leung’s resignation over the police use of tear-gas and pepper spray on Sept. 28, and say he failed to give an accurate report of public consultations on the election process to Beijing.

Pro-democracy politicians and protesters alike have dismissed the Beijing election plan as “fake universal suffrage,” because they mean a pro-democratic candidate is highly unlikely to be selected.

Students say Leung failed to take into account the wishes of 700,000 people who voted in an unofficial online referendum in support of public nominations.

Political commentator Wei Pu said the decision last week by Leung’s second-in-command Carrie Lam to cancel planned talks with students had likely been against her own wishes.

“It’s clear that this wasn’t her idea, and that it probably wasn’t C.Y. Leung’s, either,” Wei wrote in a commentary broadcast on RFA’s Cantonese Service.

He said Leung’s warning that there is “almost zero chance” of any change in the Aug. 31 ruling suggests that this is Beijing’s bottom line.

“The real policy-makers are the central government in Beijing,” Wei wrote. “And their manner of dealing with Occupy Central is obsolete.”

“The real question is, will Xi Jinping, who is already bathed in the blood of June 4, 1989, also get stained with the blood of Occupy Central?” he wrote.

Reported by Dai Weisen and Wen Yuqing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Qiao Long for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-17 – Protesters Retake Hong Kong Street After Police Warnings



Pro-democracy protesters and bystanders gather at an intersection in the Mong Kok district of Hong Kong on Oct. 18, 2014. – AFP

Pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong surged back onto the city's streets early Saturday local time, rebuilding barricades torn down by police in a raid a day earlier, while police in riot gear used batons and pepper spray in a bid to control a growing crowd.

Thousands gathered, wielding the now-familiar umbrellas as a defense against pepper spray, on Argyle Street in the busy Kowloon shopping district of Mong Kok, a live video feed streamed online by the pro-democracy Apple Daily newspaper showed.

In a campaign that has lasted nearly three weeks, the protesters led mostly by students are pushing for free elections in Hong Kong and the resignation of the city's leader Leung Chun-ying after Beijing offered what they called "fake" universal suffrage.

The renewed protests came even as Leung's administration agreed to meet students for a dialogue over their demands for public nomination of candidates in 2017 elections for Leung's successor.

Tuesday Talks

Alex Chow of the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) on Friday confirmed that his group and the government have agreed to meet next Tuesday in a debate that will be aired live by government broadcaster RTHK.

"Make way! Make way!" the crowd chanted in the densely populated area of Mong Kok as volunteers clad in face-masks and black T-shirts ran back and forth with iron traffic barriers, fastening them together with plastic

ties to build fresh barriers across the street.

Rows of police in riot helmets, carrying batons and shields, some with dogs, faced off with protesters, but were forced to retreat further down the street, before dozens of reinforcements arrived at the scene.

Local television showed footage of police beating protesters who tried to build barricades with batons, and holding up banners saying “Stop Charging or we Use Force.”

But the crowd, part of the Occupy Central pro-democracy civil disobedience movement, eventually forced the police to retreat two blocks down Kowloon’s busy shopping street, Nathan Road. Several males were detained by police during the clashes, Cable TV reported.

Inverted umbrellas

Protesters passed inverted umbrellas over the heads to those nearest the barricades as protection against pepper spray, before breaking into a chant of “Real universal suffrage!” and “Triads!” in a reference to Hong Kong’s criminal gangs accused by protesters of mounting attacks on Occupy supporters.

“The police were trying to push the protesters back onto the sidewalk, and raised the red flag warning of pepper spray,” a student surnamed Chow who was at the scene told RFA.

“The police used their batons to hit people; this was really an excessive use of force to disperse the demonstrators,” Chow said. “The protesters behaved in a very peaceful manner, and didn’t fight back.”

He said he and his fellow students would hang onto the territory they’d gained for as long as possible.

“I and my fellow students and friends will definitely be staying in Mong Kok,” Chow said. “Mong Kok is a very important [Occupy] site.”

A protester surnamed Tung said more and more citizens seemed to be turning out in Mong Kok.

“I don’t think it’s a question of how much territory we hold as how many people there are,” Tung said. “It doesn’t matter how much territory we hold; if enough people turn out we can [gain ground].”

Photos posted to Twitter during the melee showed a police minibus “driving into the crowd,” according to a tweet from Hong Kong-based journalist Ivan Broadhead.

“Crushing them/us against a barricade,” the tweet said. A later tweet said police “have totally lost control of situation. Megaphones, yelling.”



*Police use batons to hit pro-democracy protesters (L) using raised umbrellas for protection during a clash in the Mong Kok district of Hong Kong, Oct. 17, 2014.
– AFP*

Clearance operations

The clashes came after police warned protesters not to return and try to occupy Nathan Road after the clearance operation in the early hours of Friday.

A section of the northbound lanes of Nathan Road in the district were reopened to traffic following a police operation early Friday morning.

“Police officers will take resolute action against anyone who tries to reoccupy the section,” senior superintendent Steve Hui told reporters on Friday.

Journalist detained

Meanwhile, a foreign journalist was detained in Mong Kok while covering the protests, the Foreign Correspondents’ Club (FCC) of Hong Kong said in a statement on its website on Friday.

Photographer Paula Bronstein was detained while covering the protests in Mong Kok, it said.

“The FCC condemns the detention tonight of award-winning Getty photographer Paula Bronstein,” the statement said.

It said police had also threatened other journalists at the scene.

“One was told he would be beaten with a baton if he tried to cross the road,” the statement said, adding that such tactics are “a flagrant violation” of the media’s right to cover an unfolding news story.

“We demand the immediate release of Ms Bronstein and an end to such intimidation,” it said.

Admiralty

Across the harbor, a large crowd of protesters surged onto Lung Wo Street near government headquarters in Admiralty, on Hong Kong Island, which was cleared by police amid violent clashes in the early hours of Friday morning.

Traffic was still moving on one lane of the road in the early hours of Saturday, with rows of police trying to

prevent the crowd from surging onto the main carriageway, once more blocking traffic, live video footage showed.

Leung has said there is “zero chance” that Beijing’s National People’s Congress (NPC) will change its Aug. 31 decision ruling out public nomination of candidates, although all of Hong Kong’s five million voters will elect the next chief executive.

But Leung has hinted that there could be changes made to the make-up of the nominations committee that screens candidates.

A student at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology surnamed Cheung said she had little faith that the talks would yield any results, however.

“I don’t think the government has any sincerity when it says it will hold a dialogue with us,” Cheung said. “Because at the same time they say that, they send in the police to clear the protesters [from Occupy sites], or the next day the triads come to hurt us.”

“We are very angry, and that’s why we are going to continue [with the protests], to protect our democracy,” she said.

Reported by Wen Yuqing, Lin Jing, Ho Ka-wah and Pan Jiaqing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan and Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-22 – Hong Kong Students Call For Direct Talks With Beijing Officials on Democracy



Hong Kong residents protest Leung Chun-ying's comments that a full democracy would place too much power in the hands of those who earn less than US \$1,800 a month, Oct. 22, 2014. – RFA

A student leader of a mass pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong called on Wednesday for direct talks with the ruling Chinese Communist Party following a live televised debate on Tuesday in which local officials offered minor concessions but rejected protesters' demands for genuine universal suffrage in 2017 elections.

Alex Chow, leader of the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS), told RFA that student leaders of the Occupy Central campaign, which has blocked major highways in the semi-autonomous city since Sept. 28, want to know exactly how far Beijing would let Hong Kong go.

He said the protesters have no plans to leave the occupied sites any time soon, but called for direct dialogue with Chinese officials instead, possibly with a member of China's National People's Congress (NPC) standing committee.

"I'm talking about ... allowing citizens to question them directly," Chow said. "Hong Kong officials say they can't [make concessions], but can they really not? Can this be at least on the table?"

Protesters have repeatedly called on embattled chief executive Leung Chun-ying to resign, and want an open nomination process for elections for his replacement in 2017.

An Aug. 31 ruling by Beijing said Hong Kong's five million-strong electorate will each get a vote in the poll, but that their options will be limited to two or three "patriotic" candidates approved by a nominating committee likely to be stacked with pro-China and pro-establishment members.

Leung's second-in-command Carrie Lam on Tuesday said the 2017 poll must stay within the framework laid down by the NPC standing committee that controls China's rubber-stamp parliament, which has had the final power to interpret Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, since the 1997 handover.

But she said the government, which ignored calls for public nominations in a July report to Beijing, would file a fresh report to Beijing and consider further changes to election procedures after 2017.

She also invited the students to take part in a "platform" for the exchange of views on further constitutional and political change, post-2017.

Students respond

But the students said Lam's offers were too vague, and pledged to continue the Occupy movement and to boycott classes.

"About whether there will be talks in the future, this is something that isn't decided," Chow told reporters on Wednesday.

"The government has to come up with some way to solve this problem, but what they are offering does not have any practical content," Chow said.

He said it was hard to see the point of a fresh report from the Hong Kong government to Beijing, as it is unlikely to affect the NPC standing committee's Aug. 31 edict.

Joshua Wong, head of the academic activism group Scholarism, said he had no intention of taking part in Lam's "platform."

"We're not even done talking about 2017 yet, so why are they thinking about a platform to discuss the post-2017 political framework?" he said.

"Who else would take part in it? What would it discuss? I think that the government needn't bother inviting us if this platform won't be discussing the 2017 political reforms," Wong said.

The students' comments came as sporadic clashes erupted once more between frustrated taxi-drivers and protesters who have barricaded themselves into a major intersection in the bustling working-class district of Mong Kok.

Police stepped in to prevent physical violence after scuffles and slanging matches broke out.

File for injunction

Meanwhile, a bus company and two transportation industry associations filed a writ with Hong Kong's High Court, in an attempt to win an injunction ordering protesters camped in hundreds of tents on Harcourt Road in Admiralty district to leave.

The Court has already granted injunctions brought by the transportation industry in Mong Kok, but it remains to be seen whether its bailiffs feel able to enforce them.

"This isn't the first time people have come to protest, and if they try to demolish our barricades today, we will take measures to stop them," an Occupy protester surnamed Lee told RFA. "They are using recent court injunctions as an excuse to try to clear the barricades."

He added: "We will only accept [the injunctions] if the government agrees to public nominations."

A fellow Mong Kok protester, also surnamed Lee, said many local people claim they are suffering economic losses from the blocked roads.

“But this is a very short-sighted view,” she said. “I’m not afraid, even if the government were to move in suddenly and arrest me.”

“Freedom is priceless; it can’t be bought with money.”

Anger over comments

Dozens of protesters marched to Leung’s residence, once the home of British colonial governors, on Wednesday in anger at his comments to overseas media in which he said full democracy would give too much power to those “who earn less than U.S. \$1,800 a month.”

Pan-democratic lawmaker and trade unionist Lee Cheuk-yan said Hong Kong’s electorate will gain very little from Beijing’s proposed electoral framework and that the nominating committee will likely represent the interests of the current political elite, as it always has.

“It has always been about the four main sectors,” Lee said. “Everyone can see that this isn’t about balanced participation.”

He said Beijing had already ensured that this bias is written into Hong Kong’s mini-constitution, the Basic Law, which has laid down the territory’s political framework since the 1997 handover.

“Leung made this very clear; it’s biased to exclude poor and low-income people. The dominant ideology of Leung, the ideology in the Basic Law, is about ensuring that the majority don’t get to decide elections,” he said.

He said the promise of a fresh government report to Beijing would only be meaningful if it was considered by the NPC standing committee, with a view to amending its ruling.

Taking sides

A recent opinion poll found a modest increase in popular support for Occupy Central, compared with the level of support before the campaign began.

Hundreds of thousands of people had taken to the streets in anger in early October at the police use of tear gas and pepper spray on protesters on the first day of the occupation campaign, Sept. 28.

A total of 37.8 percent of 802 respondents polled in early-to-mid October said they supported the pro-democracy movement, compared with just 31.1 percent in early September, a Chinese University of Hong Kong poll found.

“Mathematically speaking, neither side has really represented the majority,” pollster Francis Lee told the *South China Morning Post* newspaper.

“Also it does not show that public opinion has become more polarized and extreme than before,” he said.

The poll also found that 42.2 percent of respondents thought that police tactics during clashes with anti-Occupy protesters were inappropriate, while 26.7 percent said police had acted appropriately.

And 53.7 percent of people said it was inappropriate of the police to have used tear gas, while just over 22 percent said it was appropriate.

Opposition to the Beijing-backed electoral reform plan polled at just over 48 percent, while some 36 percent supported it.

Party stance

Communist Party mouthpiece the *People's Daily* on Wednesday reported the dialogue in its overseas edition, saying Hong Kong people were hoping that the talks would end the Occupy Central movement, which has “disturbed” the city.

It quoted analysts as saying that the Occupy movement had been a protest movement from the start, and had never aimed at dialogue, repeating its claim that “foreign forces” are trying to instigate a “color revolution” in Hong Kong.

Joseph Cheng, politics professor at Hong Kong's City University and leader of the Alliance for True Democracy campaign group, expressed skepticism over Lam's proposal for a fresh report to Beijing.

“Everyone is very doubtful that this additional report on popular opinion will do any good at all,” Cheng said. “Everyone knows that President Xi Jinping already gets daily reports from Hong Kong.”

He said expectations of the “platform” were equally low. “The government's behavior at the last round of public consultations was very disappointing, and they were very unfair,” Cheng said.

“The views of the pan-democratic camp were totally neglected.”

Reported by Wen Yuqing and Lin Jing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Supporting Messages from China

“Recently Hong Kong students have been demonstrating for universal suffrage, I support them. Hong Kong and Taiwan are China’s future.” China – Oct. 20, 2014.

“When the Occupy Central protests erupted, the Chinese media branded them as being ‘illegal.’ But they didn’t dare to air actual, on-the-scene field reports of the demonstrations. So we don’t know why the Hong Kong students want to occupy the Central district and why that was supposed to be ‘illegal.’ Apparently, the truth is much more simple: the protesters want democracy.” Hebei, China – Oct. 15, 2014.

“Hong Kong Occupy Central may not bring Hong Kong people genuine universal suffrage, but this is not important. The important thing is Hong Kong people bravely fight for their own future and fate. Mainland Chinese should learn from them to fight for democracy and freedom with love and peace.” Guangzhou, China – Oct. 13, 2014.

“The Hong Kong protest reflects the wish of not only HK people but also mainland China. I also object to the increased jamming of RFA since Xi took power.” Shaanxi, China – Oct. 13

“Because of Chinese propaganda, many mainlanders believe that those who took to the streets in HK are outlaws. Chinese official media never explains why so many people took to the streets. Chinese official media always misleads the people.” Shanghai, China – Oct. 8, 2014.

“China deprives people of their right to know information. On the contrary, RFA’s programs are informative and fascinating. I can’t imagine how I would have lived if I had not discovered RFA. I must have been living like a drunkard in a daze.” Jilin, China – Sept. 29, 2014.

“I want people in Hong Kong to understand that they are not lonely. When joining the protest, we want people in Hong Kong to have the rights to choose their leader, rights to saying ‘No’ to Beijing government.” Hong Kong – Sept. 30, 2014.

2014-10-23 – UN Human Rights Body Backs Hong Kong Calls For Public Nominations



*A sign urges the people of Hong Kong to remain calm amid ongoing protests in Kowloon's Mong Kok district, Oct. 23, 2014.
– RFA*

The United Nations human rights body on Thursday called on the ruling Chinese Communist Party to allow the people of Hong Kong to nominate candidates for elections, as pro-democracy protesters occupied stretches of the semiautonomous city's streets for a fourth consecutive week.

A panel of 18 independent experts working for the U.N. Human Rights Committee said Beijing's insistence on vetting electoral candidates in the 2017 race for the post of Hong Kong's chief executive was in violation of international human rights treaties.

Hong Kong has signed and ratified the U.N.'s International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, passed by the General Assembly in 1966, while Beijing has signed but not ratified it.

"The need to ensure universal suffrage ... means both the right to be elected as well as the right to vote," committee chairman Konstantine Vardzelashvili told the panel in Geneva on Thursday.

"The main concerns of committee members were focused on the right to stand for elections without unreasonable restrictions," he said in comments concluding the meeting.

Hong Kong Democratic Party chairwoman and lawmaker Emily Lau welcomed the statement from the

committee.

“The committee was clear that what is proposed by China is not compliant with the Covenant,” Lau told Reuters. “It is not universal suffrage.”

“One person, one vote, but the problem is the people who will stand is very limited,” she said.

Panel member Christine Chanet said the committee is against the filtering of election candidates.

“The problem is that Beijing wants to vet candidates ... We have now put some pressure, but not too heavily, as we absolutely need China’s cooperation,” she told Reuters.

Ongoing protests

Pan-democratic politicians and Occupy Central campaigners in Hong Kong have dismissed an Aug. 31 edict by China’s rubber-stamp parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), ruling out public nomination of candidates as “fake universal suffrage.”

Thousands of protesters have taken to the streets of Hong Kong since Sept. 28, calling for the resignation of embattled chief executive Leung Chun-ying and for the NPC ruling to be withdrawn.

Student leaders held live televised talks with Hong Kong officials on Tuesday, but have dismissed government offers of minor changes to a 1,200 nominations committee as “too vague,” vowing to remain in occupation of streets near government headquarters in Admiralty and in the busy Kowloon shopping district of Mong Kok.

Hong Kong civil servants made an anonymous statement via Facebook in support of the Occupy Central movement, which has also garnered growing public support since it began, recent opinion polls showed.

Officials from the government information service, the police and the judiciary posted pictures of their ID cards with their names blacked out, after a group of 1,300 civil servants said they disagreed with the public sector union’s criticism of the movement.

As hundreds of protesters geared up for another night behind the barricades on the Occupy protest sites, a group of climbers unfurled a giant banner from Kowloon’s iconic Lion Rock.

The huge yellow banner bearing an umbrella logo and the slogan “I want genuine universal suffrage” was unfurled by climbers abseiling down the cliff face, a video posted by protest group “Hong Kong Spidie” to YouTube showed.

Group spokesman Andreas told local media that more than a dozen people had taken part in the operation, which took a week to prepare.

“What can we see when we look with the spirit of Lion Rock?” he told government broadcaster RTHK, in a reference to the rock’s symbolism of Hong Kong’s “can-do” spirit.

“What we see is an opportunity slipping away; it’s clearly not in keeping with the spirit of Lion Rock,” he said.

“We want people to know that this movement is very important to the people of Hong Kong ... because it represents a chance at fairness.”



A large pro-democracy banner is displayed on Lion Rock Hill in Hong Kong, Oct. 23, 2014. – AFP

Kenny G

Meanwhile, China hit out on Thursday at U.S. smooth jazz musician Kenny G, who is hugely popular in China, after he tweeted about his visit to the site of Occupy Central protests in Admiralty on Wednesday.

“Kenny G’s musical works are widely popular in China, but China’s position on the illegal Occupy Central activities in Hong Kong is very clear,” foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters in Beijing.

“We hope that foreign governments and individuals will speak and act cautiously and not support the Occupy Central and other illegal activities in any form,” she added.

The saxophonist, whose real name is Kenneth Gorelick, later claimed via social media that his visit hadn’t been intended to show support for the protests, a claim refuted by those who met with him, the *South China Morning Post* reported.

“I was in Hong Kong as a stop on my way to perform at Mission Hills and happened to walk by the protest area

as I was walking around Hong Kong as a tourist,” he wrote.

“Some fans took my picture and it’s unfair that I am being used by anyone to say that I am showing support for the demonstrators.”

“I am not supporting the demonstrators ... Please don’t mistake my peace sign for any other sign than a sign for peace,” he said.

China’s official media has also repeatedly called for homegrown Hong Kong celebrities who publicly supported the Occupy protesters to be banned from working in mainland China, across the internal border.

Injunctions

Several hundred protesters remained at Occupy sites late on Thursday, ready to stay in spite of High Court injunctions brought by public transportation groups ordering them to remove obstructions to traffic.

“We will carry on like this, occupying this place,” a student protester who gave the name Simon told RFA. “This has nothing to do with the injunctions.”

“I have already been here a long time, and this is already a civil disobedience movement that breaks the law,” he said. “I just think this is a feint on their part, but ... I am prepared to accept being found guilty by the court.”

Senior police superintendent Steve Hui once more called on protesters to comply with the injunctions, although the police have no mandate to enforce them.

“The injunctions are a civil matter, so the police won’t directly enforce them,” he said.

And legal expert Eric Cheung said enforcing the injunctions could be difficult, because it is hard to sort out exactly who among protesters and bystanders is responsible for the barricades.

Reported by Lin Jing and Wen Yuqing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan and Yang Jiadai for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-27 - Hong Kong Protest Vote Canceled Amid Warnings, Attacks on Journalists



A man looks at a banner made by pro-democracy protesters showing a manipulated photo of Chinese President Xi Jinping holding a yellow umbrella at a protest site in the Mongkok district of Hong Kong, Oct. 27, 2014. – AFP

Organizing groups behind Hong Kong's Occupy Central pro-democracy protests have called off a planned referendum on how the five-week-old movement should proceed, amid warnings that those who defy ongoing court orders to leave occupied protest sites in the semiautonomous Chinese city risk arrest.

Amid an apparent lack of consensus over the largely spontaneous movement's response to government offers of further talks, Occupy Central founder Benny Tai said the announcement of the poll had been made "in haste," without adequate consultation of protesters encamped on major highways in the former British colony.

"There was a lot of disagreement about the voting method, the content of the motion on the ballot paper, so we are canceling the vote because of this," Tai told reporters on Monday.

"But this doesn't mean we are stopping the entire movement," he said. "If anyone was planning to come to vote today, please come anyway to any of the three Occupy sites, so everyone can think together about what direction we should develop in."

Joshua Wong, head of the academic activist group Scholarism, said the lack of a vote doesn't mean the students have no intention of responding to offers made at talks last week with Hong Kong government officials.

"It has been nearly a week since the federation of students met with the government, and we hope that the government will respond soon to our suggestions about a political discussion platform," Wong said.

Growing frustration

Occupy Central was launched on Sept. 28 amid growing frustration after China's parliament on Aug. 31 ruled out public nominations of candidates for 2017 elections for Hong Kong's chief executive.

While Hong Kong's five million voters will each cast a ballot in the poll, China says candidates must be "patriotic" and will be vetted by a committee stacked with Beijing's supporters, a plan which pan-democratic politicians have dismissed as "fake universal suffrage."

Alex Wong, head of the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) said: "The Hong Kong government should reject the Aug. 31 ruling by the National People's Congress (NPC)."

Hong Kong's High Court last week granted injunctions ordering protesters to leave formerly busy roads in Kowloon's Mong Kok district, and away from areas opposite government headquarters in Admiralty district.

The civil court orders were granted after transportation groups showed they had suffered greater losses to their business than the general public, but protesters have remained in spite of them.

Government lawyer Jin Pao told the court that police stand ready to arrest anyone continuing to defy the injunctions, the *South China Morning Post* newspaper reported on Monday.

Attacks on journalists

The warnings came as journalists and pan-democratic politicians hit out at attacks on journalists covering an anti-Occupy rally on Saturday.

A woman reporter was dragged to the ground, while a male reporter had his glasses knocked off and tie yanked, the *South China Morning Post* reported.

One cameraman was also grabbed by the neck and another was pushed to the ground, while all were scratched around their torsos and faces, the paper said.

"Anyone who saw the mob violence against RTHK and TVB reporters last night in Tsimshatsui would think that this is extremely inappropriate," Civic Party leader Alan Leong told RFA on Monday. "The people responsible for beating people up must be severely punished."

"Press freedom is very important to Hong Kong, and we rely on our journalists to be our eyes and ears, so we must protect them," he said.

The Hong Kong Journalists' Association (HKJA) also condemned the attacks in a statement on its website.

"Journalists from a number of media organizations were assaulted while covering an anti-Occupy Central rally in Tsimshatsui on the night of Oct. 25," it said.

"Six news unions and associations ... strongly condemn these attacks and the people behind them," it said, adding that the violence had "trampled on press freedom and threatened journalists' personal safety."

The HKJA said violence against journalists has been growing in Hong Kong, sparking fears for traditional press freedoms in the city, which was promised a "high degree of autonomy" under the terms of its 1997 handover to China.

"The organizers of the anti-Occupy faction have turned a blind eye to the assaults, [which] were in no way 'isolated incidents,'" it said.

New sense of unity

At the main Occupy site in Admiralty, protesters marked a full month since police used tear gas and pepper spray on tens of thousands of protesters, who used the now-symbolic umbrellas to defend themselves.

A student protester who gave only his nickname Kenny said the movement had created a new sense of unity among the people of Hong Kong.

“I think it has reminded us who are still in occupation to remember that time, when the government used force against us,” Kenny said.

“I think this event will boost people’s courage and morale.”

Meanwhile, Monday also saw the launch of a book using interviews with leading pan-democratic politicians to chart the course of the pro-democracy movement since 1997.

But the book’s author, Beijing-based artist Yang Weidong, was prevented from leaving for Hong Kong and Taiwan by Beijing police, and was unable to attend, he told RFA.

Reported by Wen Yuqing and Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan and Qiao Long for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-30 – Students Deny Reports of 'Divisions' in Hong Kong Democracy Movement



A protester group holds a rally in Kowloon's Mong Kok district, in Hong Kong, Oct. 30, 2014. – RFA

One of the main student figures at the heart of Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests has denied reports that cracks are appearing in the organizers' unity over how to keep up momentum in the five-week-old civil disobedience campaign.

Many of the students and die-hard protesters who have occupied major highways in the former British colony for nearly five consecutive weeks have vowed to remain until the government meets its demands for full universal suffrage in 2017 elections for the chief executive.

But Hong Kong's *Ming Pao* newspaper on Thursday reported "serious divisions" within the Occupy movement, with some arguing for an "early surrender" in the face of Beijing's refusal to change an Aug. 31 ruling on electoral reform.

The concept of "surrender" apparently refers to a tactical decision by protesters to turn themselves in to the authorities at sections of highway currently under High Court injunctions.

Lester Shum, deputy head of the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS), said any divisions weren't apparent in the students' union, however.

"There is no division within the ranks of the HKFS," Shum told RFA's Cantonese Service on Thursday. "No one

is talking about an early surrender.”

The *Ming Pao* also said a meeting was planned for Sunday, to discuss the next step for the movement, which has already held talks with Hong Kong government officials without winning major concessions.

But Shum said he knew nothing of Sunday’s reported meeting.

“I haven’t been informed about it,” he said. “Because the HKFS has no intention of withdrawing [from the occupied sites].”

He said students and other leaders of the movement already hold frequent discussions about how to proceed. “But there is no timetable for wrapping the movement up so far,” Shum said.

Meanwhile, Joshua Wong, convener of the academic activism group Scholarism, issued a warning to Hong Kong’s political establishment.

“The protest movement may not ultimately bear fruit,” Wong wrote in a commentary in *The New York Times*. “But, if nothing else, it has delivered hope.”

“I would like to remind every member of the ruling class in Hong Kong: Today you are depriving us of our future, but the day will come when we decide your future,” Wong said.

“No matter what happens to the protest movement, we will reclaim the democracy that belongs to us,” he wrote in an article translated from Chinese.

And HKFS leader Alex Chow told government broadcaster RTHK that students are considering the possibility of traveling to Beijing for next week’s Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leadership summit.

Chow said “various groups” are discussing the viability of the plan, but indicated that the group hadn’t made any concrete plans to meet with officials of the ruling Chinese Communist Party in Beijing.



Barricades in Hong Kong’s Admiralty district, Oct. 30, 2014. – RFA

Long-term process

Some protesters are beginning to argue that a lot of the spontaneity that captured world headlines and spurred the

movement in the days immediately following police attacks with tear gas on Sept. 28 has now dissipated into a more predictable, long-term process.

“The line between a spontaneous protest and a civil disobedience movement is increasingly blurred now,” a protester surnamed Hui told RFA.

“I hope that the Occupy organizers can come together to discuss things, and give some of us here a clearer direction,” she said.

“Would we be ‘surrendering’ so as to protest another day?” she said. “If it’s just a symbolic thing, I don’t see the point in doing it.”

A Hong Kong University student surnamed Lee said she has been camping on the Occupy site in Admiralty since the early stages of the campaign.

“We feel as if we don’t know where we are going, and we are just waiting here, because if the government doesn’t do anything, we can’t do anything,” Lee said.

“Some of the Occupy organizers have gone back to class, so we are under a lot of pressure right now,” she said. “People will probably say, if the organizers are getting on with their normal lives, then why are you still here blocking the road and obstructing our normal lives?”

But Lee said she still planned to remain until the protesters’ demands are met.

“If we were to leave now, I’d be worried that there would be less freedom of speech and freedom of association in future,” she said.

An older protester surnamed So said withdrawing now wouldn’t necessarily constitute a failure, however.

“A lot of younger people have been very touched by this movement,” So said. “I think the young people of the future will speak out even more loudly for greater democracy in Hong Kong’s political system in the future.”

The *Ming Pao* cited interviews with 210 Occupy protesters, saying that 48 percent wouldn’t take part in any surrender, while 38 percent are undecided.

Some 95 people who spoke to the paper said they didn’t believe they were in breach of the law, but are simply exercising their right to freedom of association promised under international rights treaties and the promise of a “high degree of autonomy” following the 1997 handover to Chinese rule.

‘Fake universal suffrage’

Beijing has repeatedly said the Occupy Central movement is “illegal,” but Hong Kong officials have taken a more diplomatic stance since police use of tear gas brought hundreds of thousands of people out onto the streets to swell the movement, and sent video and social media accounts of the Sept. 28 clashes streaming live around the world.

Since then, the mostly peaceful protests have occupied major highways and intersections near government headquarters in Admiralty district and in the busy shopping districts of Causeway Bay and Mong Kok, amid sporadic clashes with police and anti-Occupy protesters.

The Occupy Central movement, also known as the “Umbrella Movement” after protesters used umbrellas to ward off police attacks with tear gas and pepper spray, is calling on Beijing to allow public nomination of candidates in 2017 elections, and for the resignation of embattled chief executive Leung Chun-ying.

China's rubber-stamp parliament the National People's Congress (NPC) announced on Aug. 31 that while all of Hong Kong's five million voters will cast a ballot for the first time in the 2017 poll for a new chief executive, they may only choose between candidates vetted by a pro-Beijing nomination committee.

Pan-democratic politicians and Occupy protesters have dismissed the Aug. 31 ruling as "fake universal suffrage," and called on the Hong Kong government to renegotiate the election arrangements with Beijing, demanding Leung's resignation over the use of tear gas.

But Anson Chan, former Hong Kong second-in-command, said the Occupy Central movement is at heart about far more than just an electoral reform plan.

"The social pressures that have led to this eruption of anger and defiance of authority have been building for years," said Chan, who now heads a civil think tank campaigning for democracy. She said the students feel that Hong Kong's core values are threatened by Beijing's hold on the city.

The students are "fighting for their future, a future they see threatened by a steady erosion of ... core values and freedoms," she wrote in a commentary in the *South China Morning Post* newspaper.

Chan said Leung's administration has "lost all moral authority to govern" after it misrepresented the views of Hong Kong people in its report to China's NPC.

She called on his second-in-command Carrie Lam to make a fresh report on public opinion to Beijing, and to come up with a new set of proposals that allow all voters a say in the make-up of the 1,200-strong nominating committee, within the bounds of the Aug. 31 ruling.

She said the government has also greatly underestimated popular support for the abolition of corporate and sectoral "functional constituencies" in Hong Kong's Legislative Council, hitting out at Leung's recent comments on preventing the city's poorest people from dominating its politics as "unbelievably insensitive."

Leung told overseas journalists last week: "If it's entirely a numbers game and numeric representation, then obviously you'd be talking to the half of the people in Hong Kong who earn less than U.S. \$1,800 a month."

He said the election committee that chose him narrowly with a total of just 689 votes in 2012 had been weighted to protect the interests of "minority groups."

Reported by Wen Yuqing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-10-31 – China Detains Women's Rights Activist Over Support For Hong Kong Democracy



Activist Su Changlan criminally detained by Guangdong police for her involvement in Hong Kong-related activities, in an undated photo. – Photo courtesy of Chinese Human Rights Defenders

Authorities in the central Chinese city of Wuhan on Friday detained a prominent women's rights activist after she organized an online activity in support of Hong Kong's Occupy Central pro-democracy movement.

Ye Haiyan, who founded the Women's Rights Workshop, was taken away by police in her home district of Xinzhou after her home was searched, a Beijing-based rights lawyer told RFA.

"Police went to her home and confiscated some of her things," rights lawyer Tang Jitian said. "I am guessing it's because she organized some activities on and offline."

"I can't say for sure, but it is likely to have at least something to do with her support for Occupy Central," Tang said.

Ye's boyfriend Ling Haobo said around a dozen police officers had arrived at her home at around 11.30 a.m. local time on Friday, and had confiscated two notebook computers, three cellphones, and an external hard drive.

"I was at the door when the police came knocking," Ling said, adding that police had stayed around 20 minutes. "Then they told Ye Haiyan to go with them to the police station, but they didn't produce any documentation," he said.

"They didn't say whether it was for questioning, or whether it was criminal detention," he said. "They just took her away, and left five officers behind to go through her things."

He said Ye had recently joined an online movement in which participants shaved their heads to show support for Occupy Central.

"Several dozen people in mainland China shaved their heads," Ling said.

Supporters held in China

The overseas-based Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) group, which collates and translates reports from rights groups inside China, says it has documented 72 cases of detention of people showing public support for the Occupy Central movement.

Of those, 27 people were criminally detained and three were handed administrative detentions, while 32 remain in custody without charge. A further 11 were released, it said.

It said the most recent detention was that of Guangdong-based activist Su Changlan, who is being held by Foshan municipal authorities on suspicion of “incitement to subvert state power” after she took part in Hong Kong-related activities in the province.

But Tang said the true number of Hong Kong-related detentions may be much higher.

“It’s more than 100 so far, although we haven’t yet updated those numbers,” he said.

Beijing has repeatedly said the five-week-old Occupy movement is “illegal,” but Hong Kong officials have taken a more diplomatic stance since police use of tear gas brought hundreds of thousands of people out onto the streets to swell the movement, and sent video and social media accounts of the Sept. 28 clashes streaming live around the world.

Since then, the mostly peaceful protests have occupied major highways and intersections near government headquarters in Admiralty district and in the busy shopping districts of Causeway Bay and Mong Kok, amid sporadic clashes with police and anti-Occupy protesters.

‘Fake universal suffrage’

The Occupy Central movement, also known as the “Umbrella Movement” after protesters used umbrellas to ward off police attacks with tear gas and pepper spray, is calling on Beijing to allow public nomination of candidates in 2017 elections, and for the resignation of embattled chief executive Leung Chun-ying.

China’s rubber-stamp parliament the National People’s Congress (NPC) announced on Aug. 31 that while all of Hong Kong’s five million voters will cast a ballot for the first time in the 2017 poll for a new chief executive, they may only choose between candidates vetted by a pro-Beijing nomination committee.

Pan-democratic politicians and Occupy protesters have dismissed the Aug. 31 ruling as “fake universal suffrage,” and called on the Hong Kong government to renegotiate the election arrangements with Beijing, demanding Leung’s resignation over the use of tear gas.

Meanwhile, student leaders were debating on Friday whether to try traveling to Beijing to press their case for public nomination of candidates with the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

“To go would be to tell the world, the Hong Kong government, and Beijing that the Aug. 31 ruling must be rescinded,” Hong Kong Federation of Students chief Alex Chow said.

But he said there is no guarantee the group will be allowed across the border. While Hong Kong residents have a special internal pass allowing them to visit mainland China, the authorities have refused entry to critics of Beijing in the past.

“We just want a dialogue with the authorities,” Chow said. “If Beijing doesn’t let us in, they will be sending the message to Hong Kong that the Aug. 31 framework isn’t willing to take the opinions of Hong Kong people into account.”

‘Very brave thing to do’

A university student surnamed Chan encamped at an occupied stretch of highway near government headquarters in Hong Kong's Admiralty district said he is in favor of the plan.

"But I would be afraid for my safety if it was me," Chan said. "Nobody knows what could happen, once you get into mainland China."

But he added: "I think that this would be a very brave thing to do, that might take the whole movement forward another step."

A second protester surnamed Auyeung said little would be gained from such a trip, however.

"They wouldn't necessarily be allowed across the border, and officials might refuse to meet with them even if they did," he said.

"And even if they got a meeting, the chances of a result are very slim."

He said dwindling numbers at the three main Occupy sites make the likelihood of police action to clear the protests more likely.

Comparison to slavery

Meanwhile, thousands of people signed an online petition denouncing reported comments by an HSBC Holdings board member in which she likened Hong Kong protesters' demands for democracy to the emancipation of slaves.

Laura Cha, who is also a member of Hong Kong's cabinet, the Executive Council, chairwoman of the city's Financial Services Development Council, and a member of the NPC, told an event in Paris:

"American slaves were liberated in 1861 but did not get voting rights until 107 years later. So why can't Hong Kong wait for a while?"

Cha's comments were reported in the English-language *Standard* newspaper on Thursday.

Her boss, HSBC's Asia-Pacific chief Peter Wong said he had "noticed" Cha's remarks, but that he would "refrain from commenting on political items and issues" in line with the bank's policy.

Some 6,000 people had signed the English-language petition protesting Cha's comments and demanding an apology by Friday evening local time.

Reported by Qiao Long and Yang Fan for RFA's Mandarin Service, and by Wen Yuqing for the Cantonese Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-04 – Hong Kong Student Group Tops Opinion Poll Amid Pro-Democracy Movement



A man takes pictures of tents as he crosses a highway where a pro-democracy protest site is set up in the Admiralty district of Hong Kong, Nov. 4, 2014. – AFP

Since Hong Kong's mass pro-democracy protests began on Sept. 28, the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) has emerged as the most popular political group in the semi-autonomous Chinese city, a new opinion poll has shown.

The University of Hong Kong's public opinion research center found that student group's role in the protests appears to have eclipsed that of the Occupy Central civil disobedience movement established earlier in the year to push for universal suffrage in the 2017 elections for the chief executive of the former British colony,

The HKFS, led by Occupy protest figureheads Alex Chow and Lester Shum, had previously never reached the top 12 rankings for recognition or popularity. Now, it is the best-known political group.

The poll also found that the popularity of every other political group has fallen since June.

The pan-democratic Civic, Democratic and Labour Parties fell nine points in the poll, while the pro-Beijing labor group the Federation of Trade Unions dropped more than eight points in the poll.

Meanwhile, the academic activist group Scholarism, led by Joshua Wong, now ranks as the fifth most popular political organization, according to the poll in which more than 1,000 respondents participated between Oct. 20 and 23,

Debating the future

*Walking With A Yellow Umbrella: Bearing
Witness to a Revolution*

Student leaders had debated Hong Kong's political future with government officials on live television on Oct. 21.

Last month, a study carried out by the Chinese University of Hong Kong found growing support for the pro-democracy movement.

But a smaller poll by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University found that 70 percent of people believe that those camped out at three protest sites on major highways should now leave.

Social policy researchers polled 554 people during the weekend, and found that while embattled chief executive Leung Chun-ying is still the main figure shouldering the blame for the political standoff, 70 percent of people believe the occupiers should withdraw.

Occupy protesters are still encamped on three main sites in the former British colony, but numbers have dwindled from a peak of hundreds of thousands after tear gas was deployed on Sept. 28, and especially since talks between protesters and the government reached an apparent stalemate last month.

Anti-Occupy protesters say they are gaining wider support among the general public, which has indicated that it wishes to see a return to business as usual.

Meanwhile, protesters face the possibility of forced eviction from their campsites, should police move to clear barricades from the highway following civil injunctions brought by the transportation industry.

Going to Beijing

The students confirmed on Tuesday that they planned to travel to Beijing on Saturday ahead of next week's Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leadership summit in a bid to plead their case with Chinese officials.

Alex Chow told reporters it is still undecided who will go, and an announcement is expected on Thursday.

However, it is unclear whether the students will be allowed into mainland China, as officials have previously barred entry to activists and government critics.

Leung warned protesters on Tuesday not to ignore civil injunctions ordering the removal of barricades blocking highways near government headquarters in Admiralty, and in the busy shopping districts of Mong Kok and Causeway Bay, to be removed.

"Some people are saying that they can ignore these injunctions because they are a civil [not criminal] matter," Leung said. "But that is very dangerous, because huge sums of money are involved [in lost business]."

He said Hong Kong's standing as an international financial center could be damaged by the protests, although financial analysts have reported no damage to markets so far.

Staying the course

At the main Occupy site in Admiralty, protesters vowed to stay until they had achieved genuine universal suffrage, with public nomination of candidates in the 2017 elections.

China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), announced on Aug. 31 that the next chief executive will be chosen by individual votes from Hong Kong's five million registered voters, but only from a shortlist approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

"Everyone has their own personal bottom line," an Occupy protester surnamed Chan told RFA on Tuesday. "We are very clear that what we are asking for is genuine universal suffrage."

“We are here not just for ourselves but also for the next generation; for the future,” she said.

Hong Kong lawmaker Tam Yiu-chung, adviser to the NPC and chairman of the pro-China Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, said he would use his position as a middleman to put the protesters’ case to Beijing officials—if they retreat from the current Occupy sites.

But Chan said she had little trust in promises by officials to relay protesters’ concerns to Beijing.

“The government promised that Hong Kong wouldn’t change for 50 years [after the 1997 handover to Chinese rule] ... but they keep adding all sorts of unreasonable conditions to universal suffrage,” she said.

“It’s hard for me to trust this government or politicians now,” Chan added.

A second student protester, also surnamed Chan, said he would consider leaving the site if the government made significant concessions to protesters’ demands.

“But it would depend on the manner of our leaving, if the government wanted to use force or bring in the police to clear the area or not,” he said.

“But we will only leave when the government shows a bit of sincerity when it comes to a dialogue, and then everyone can reach some kind of consensus,” Chan said.

Reported by Dai Weisen for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-07 – Call For Pressure On China Over Detention of Hong Kong Protest Supporters



Student leaders of the Occupy protests present a letter to former chief executive Tung Chee-Hwa outside the gates of his private residence in Hong Kong, Nov. 7, 2014. – RFA

As world leaders gear up to travel to Beijing for an economic summit on Monday, rights activists and democracy activists hit out at the ruling Chinese Communist Party for its continued detention of dozens of people who publicly supported the Occupy Central movement in Hong Kong.

Chinese authorities are holding “scores” of people around the country for publicly supporting Hong Kong’s “Umbrella Movement,” which has been encamped on three major highways and intersections in the city in a campaign for universal suffrage in 2017 elections, Amnesty International said.

In a statement on its website, the London-based rights group called on world leaders to put pressure on China to release the Occupy supporters, who number “at least 76,” it said.

“APEC leaders must end their recent silence on the crackdown against mainland Chinese activists expressing support for Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters,” the group’s East Asia research director Roseann Rife said in a statement on the group’s website on Friday.

“Political convenience should not trump principled action,” Rife said.

“The leaders should ... urge President Xi to ensure all those detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are immediately and unconditionally released,” she said.

Amnesty said it had been able to confirm the continued detentions of 76 people, mostly in Beijing, the eastern province of Jiangsu, and the southern cities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen, which border Hong Kong.

Rights lawyers previously told RFA “more than 100” people had been detained, often for posting photos online of themselves holding a banner, or with a shaved head, in support of the Occupy Central protests that have gripped Hong Kong for nearly six weeks.

Others have been detained for traveling to Hong Kong, giving interviews to the media, or held after the authorities found out they were planning such a trip, activists say.

China’s tightly controlled state media has dubbed the Occupy movement an “illegal protest,” while pro-Beijing politicians said on Friday the movement could “harm the city’s security,” although they didn’t elaborate.

The government’s army of Internet censors have deleted photos and blocked any positive comment on the protests on China’s social media platforms, as well as blocking the BBC website and Instagram since protests began.

‘Rule of law’

The detentions came as the ruling party issued a communique following its Fourth Plenum last month, announcing it would implement the “rule of law” in a bid to improve its record.

But Rife said the authorities don’t appear to have changed their approach to human rights.

“[The crackdown] makes a mockery of Xi’s recent claims that the rule of law and human rights will be fully respected in China by 2020,” Rife said.

Hong Kong-based rights groups have also called for the release of mainland-Chinese Occupy supporters.

Hong Kong’s Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China, the Catholic Diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission, the China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group, and the Independent Chinese PEN Center marched to Beijing’s representative office in the former British colony on Wednesday, brandishing yellow umbrellas and calling for the release of the prisoners.

The groups said in a statement that the Umbrella Movement has “frightened the Chinese Communist Party,” calling on China’s leaders to improve the country’s rights record.

“The world leaders at the APEC meeting in Beijing should demand China fulfill its international obligations and respect human rights,” Alliance deputy chief Richard Choi told reporters.

Meanwhile, student leaders of the Occupy protests presented a letter to former chief executive Tung Chee-Hwa, the first leader of the city to be approved by Beijing after the 1997 handover to Chinese rule, asking him to arrange an audience with top-level officials in Beijing.

Wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the words “Freedom Now,” the students presented the letter outside the wrought-iron gates of Tung’s private residence.

Tung, who is a vice-chairman of the parliamentary advisory body, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, has previously made a personal appeal to those occupying Hong Kong’s streets to go home.

Demand for meeting

The influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) wants a meeting with Beijing officials to circumvent the administration of embattled Hong Kong chief executive Leung Chun-ying, whose officials say China will never back down on the issue of electoral reform.

HKFS leader Alex Chow told reporters they are prepared to meet with Chinese officials either in Beijing or

Hong Kong, after the group dropped plans to show up in Beijing during the APEC summit.

But he warned that future protests would continue to arise if China refuses to listen to the people of Hong Kong.

“In going to Beijing we would hope to send the message that the Aug. 31 decision must be knocked down, if our umbrella movement is not to be replayed over and over again,” Chow said.

“Even if the occupiers left today, they would be back again another day, but would Hong Kong be able to cope with them when they did?”

He said the students are seeking a long-term solution to the standoff.

“At the root of the problem is the fact that Hong Kong people must have a true voice under ‘one country, two systems’,” Chow said, referring to the formal promises of a high degree of autonomy and continued traditional freedoms made by Beijing under the terms of a 1984 Sino-British treaty.

He hit out at Hong Kong and Chinese officials for “misrepresenting” public opinion in the Special Administrative Region.

“This is the main cause in the weakening of ‘one country, two systems,’” he said.

Many protesters remain in tents clustered near government headquarters in Admiralty, and at major intersections in the shopping districts of Causeway Bay and Mong Kok, saying they won’t leave unless Beijing withdraws an Aug. 31 ruling by the National People’s Congress (NPC) that protesters and pan-democratic politicians have dismissed as “fake universal suffrage.”

Some protesters are calling for the resignation of Leung over the use of tear gas and pepper spray on umbrella-wielding protesters, after which the Occupy protests swelled to hundreds of thousands at their height.

Leung also raised hackles last month when he said the system must be weighted to prevent people on a low income from dominating Hong Kong politics.

Choosing candidates

The NPC announcement said that while all five million Hong Kong voters will cast a ballot in the election for Leung’s successor, they will only be allowed to choose between two or three candidates approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

The 1,200-strong election committee, which voted Leung to power in 2010 with just 689 votes, has just 7.5 percent representation of pan-democratic politicians, far less than the broad popular support those groups enjoy.

Current pan-democratic lawmakers in the territory’s Legislative Council (LegCo) were voted in with some 56 percent of the popular vote, compared with just 44 percent won by pro-Beijing politicians.

However, recent polls suggest that wider public support for the Umbrella Movement is on the wane, confirming claims from anti-Occupy protesters that they are gaining momentum.

Meanwhile, protesters face the possibility of forced eviction from their campsites, should police move to clear barricades from the highway following civil injunctions brought by the transportation industry.

A student protester surnamed Yip, who remains at the Occupy site in Admiralty, said he didn’t pay much attention to opinion surveys.

“I think that it’s mostly fake, because these media [that report the polls] are already under [China’s] influence, and

they are just putting out some propaganda,” Yip told RFA on Friday.

He said the HKFS wasn’t a key factor in many of the protesters’ decision to maintain the mass civil disobedience movement.

“There’s no chance that we will leave just because the federation of students tells us to,” he said. “The only way to get us to leave is to change the NPC proposals.”

“That is what the people want now.”

Reported by Wen Yuqing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie

International Media Coverage of the Movement



Screenshot from Comedy Central's Daily Show with Jon Stewart, Oct. 7, 2014.

2014-11-11 - 'No Room' For Further Dialogue With Students: Hong Kong Government



Hong Kong civil servant Benny Mok, a 51-year-old diabetic man, ended his 40-day hunger strike at Admiralty in support of the student-led pro-democracy demonstrations, Nov. 11, 2014. – RFA

The Hong Kong government on Tuesday ruled out further dialogue with student leaders of a mass pro-democracy protest that has blocked major roads in the former British colony for six weeks, as a court gave the green light to police to arrest anyone blocking roads it has ordered cleared.

Carrie Lam, second-in-command to embattled chief executive C.Y. Leung, called on protesters who remain encamped on the highway near government headquarters in Admiralty, as well as those occupying busy intersections in the shopping districts of Causeway Bay and Mong Kok, to leave peacefully.

She hit out at the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) for “hardening” its stance following the live televised debate during which Lam and fellow officials offered to file a fresh report to Beijing taking the Occupy Central movement’s call for universal suffrage into account.

“The [Hong Kong] government went into the two-hour dialogue on Oct. 21 with sincerity, and promised to work to move things forward,” Lam told a news conference. “The student federation didn’t show the same level of sincerity; in fact their position hardened after the debate.”

She said the students’ insistence that China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC) withdraw an Aug. 31 decision ruling out the public nomination of candidates in 2017 elections for the chief executive “is not in

keeping with” Hong Kong’s mini-constitution, the Basic Law.

“So I don’t think that there is any room for dialogue with us for the time being,” Lam said.

Cold water

Lam also poured cold water on plans by the HKFS to send a delegation to meet with officials in Beijing.

“Even if the students insist on traveling to Beijing, officials there will only reiterate the same position they have held all along, so it seems unnecessary,” she said.

But she invited the students to submit any “fresh” proposals to a second round of public consultation on the government’s electoral reform proposals.

“We will keep the door open for communication regarding the student federation’s participation in the working group on [post-2017] political reforms,” she added.

The Aug. 31 NPC standing committee ruling said that while all five million Hong Kong voters will cast a ballot in the election for Leung’s successor, they will only be allowed to choose between two or three candidates approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

The 1,200-strong election committee, which voted Leung to power in 2010 with just 689 votes, has just 7.5 percent representation of pan-democratic politicians, far less that the broad popular support those groups enjoy.

Current pan-democratic lawmakers in the territory’s Legislative Council (LegCo) were voted in with some 56 percent of the popular vote, compared with just 44 percent won by pro-Beijing politicians.

Won’t leave

Many of the protesters who remain in tents at the three Occupy Central sites say they won’t leave unless Beijing withdraws the ruling, which protesters and pan-democratic politicians have dismissed as “fake universal suffrage.”

Other activists are calling for Leung to resign over the use of tear gas and pepper spray on umbrella-wielding protesters on Sept. 28, after which the Occupy protests swelled to hundreds of thousands at their height.

Leung also raised hackles last month when he said the voting system must be weighted to prevent people on a low income from dominating Hong Kong politics.

Amid polls suggesting growing support for anti-Occupy protesters, the protesters now face forced eviction from their campsites, after Hong Kong’s High Court ruled that police could take action to clear the roads under civil injunctions brought by the transportation industry, which is losing business due to the blockage of regular bus and tram routes.

Student union leader and HKFS committee member Tommy Cheung denied that the students had “hardened” their stance in the wake of the dialogue, however.

“There has been no hardening of our position,” Cheung told RFA. “That has always been our position, all along.”

“We just didn’t think that the government’s offer of a new report on public opinion and a discussion platform [for post-2017 reforms] was much of a concession,” he said. “Perhaps we should aim for talks with central government officials now.”

At the Admiralty protest site, a technical college student surnamed Ho agreed.

“If anything, we thought that the HKFS was in a bit too much of a hurry to resolve things,” Ho said. “They went into it with plenty of goodwill. It was the government’s position that was hard-line, with no room for compromise.”

Hong Kong’s High Court has extended injunctions against occupiers in Mong Kok and Admiralty, and Lam warned the protesters that police would arrest anyone obstructing court bailiffs clearing the roads of barricades.

Some 7,000 police officers could be deployed in a major operation to help bailiffs enforce the injunctions which relate to a parts of Nathan Road and Argyle Street in Mong Kok and the area outside Citic Tower, government broadcaster RTHK reported.

But police won’t be deployed to clear protesters from areas not covered by the injunctions, it said, adding that clearance operations will take place on Thursday “at the earliest.”

‘Zero chance’

Priscilla Lau, a Hong Kong delegate to the NPC said on Monday that a meeting between students and Beijing officials has “zero chance” of becoming reality.

Hong Kong political affairs commentator Poon Siu-to said Lam’s comments showed the government is keeping its options open in the hope of an end to the standoff.

“Their handling of the movement has been terrible, what with tear gas and so on, which not only didn’t solve the problem but brought even more people out onto the streets,” Poon said. “Their use of force drove people to the side of the Occupy Central movement.”

“Now they are looking for an exit strategy that has a legal basis,” he said. “They want to use the injunctions as a pressure point to achieve a breakthrough.”

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-12 – China's President Slams Hong Kong Democracy Movement As Police Prepare to Move



Lee Cheuk-yan, chairman of Hong Kong's Labor Party, writes 'I want genuine universal suffrage' on a yellow banner in the city's Admiralty district, Nov. 11, 2014. – RFA

Chinese president Xi Jinping on Wednesday denounced the pro-democracy Occupy Central movement in Hong Kong as an “illegal” campaign, in his first public comment on the protests that have blocked major highways in a bid for genuine universal suffrage over the past six weeks.

“Law and order must be maintained according to law in any place, not just in Hong Kong, but anywhere in the world,” Xi said during a joint news conference with visiting U.S. President Barack Obama that wrapped up the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leadership summit.

Xi also repeated allegations of “foreign interference” in the protests, a claim that has been made repeatedly by commentators in the ruling Chinese Communist Party’s tightly controlled media.

Obama denied any U.S. involvement, although he said Washington will continue to make the case for fair and transparent elections in the former British colony, which was promised a “high degree of autonomy” under the terms of its 1997 handover to Chinese rule.

“I was unequivocal in saying to President Xi that the U.S. had no involvement in fostering the protests that took place in Hong Kong,” Obama told reporters after their formal talks.

“These are issues ultimately for the people of Hong Kong and China to decide,” he said.

In Hong Kong, student leaders of the Occupy Central protests said they would extend their occupation to roads surrounding the city’s British consulate in anger at a lack of support from London since the campaign began on Sept. 28 with police using tear-gas and pepper spray.

Hong Kong officials have told the protesters to leave, saying that Beijing won’t withdraw an Aug. 31 decision ruling out the public nomination of candidates in the 2017 election for chief executive.

China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), said that while Hong Kong’s five million voters will cast a ballot to elect the next chief executive, they may only choose between two or three candidates approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

Protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who currently only have around seven percent of the nominating committee vote compared with 56 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative election, have dismissed the proposed electoral reforms as “fake universal suffrage.”

Hong Kong activists are angry at the British government for failing to stand up to Beijing over what they say are breaches of a 1983 treaty setting out the terms of the handover.

“We are angry at the way that the British government has for many years denied that China has actually breached the declaration by interfering with Hong Kong politics,” Anna-Kate Choi, coordinator of the Occupy British Consulate group, told Agence France-Presse.

“They have the responsibility to make sure that the joint declaration has been implemented properly and that democracy and the high degree of autonomy of Hong Kong have been protected,” Choi said.

British consulate

Activists have put up large posters around the protest areas announcing the consulate occupation on Nov. 21. The British consulate has declined to comment on the plan.

Some posters for the British consulate occupation read: “China breaches the [1984] Joint Declaration: U.K. government respond now!” with the pro-democracy movement’s umbrella symbol emblazoned with the British flag.

Hong Kong’s High Court has extended civil injunctions calling for the removal of barricades and other obstructions at two out of three sites where Occupy protesters are encamped in tents and have vowed to remain until the Aug. 31 ruling is rescinded.

Some are also calling for the resignation of embattled chief executive Leung Chun-ying, now deeply unpopular over the use of tear gas on Sept. 28 and his comments about preventing those with low incomes from dominating Hong Kong politics.

Police have been authorized to arrest anyone obstructing court bailiffs, who are expected to start a clear-out operation on specific stretches of highway in Kowloon’s Mong Kok shopping district and near government headquarters in Admiralty district.

Local media reports say thousands of police officers have been put on standby over the weekend after transportation industry groups successfully extended the injunctions, saying they are losing business because key tram and bus routes are blocked.

Public support

Meanwhile, anti-Occupy protesters say public support is growing for an end to the protests.

Last week, the anti-Occupy Alliance for Peace and Democracy handed a petition containing 1.83 million signatures of Hong Kong citizens who oppose the protests, saying it reflects mainstream public opinion and a desire for the restoration of public order.

But Kwok Ka-ki, a lawmaker who represents Hong Kong's medical profession, said many of the signatures collected were dubious, including obviously joke names.

"I don't have much faith in this poll," Kwok told RFA on Wednesday. "It's not accurate, not scientific, and those who signed it don't represent Hong Kong people."

He said the basic desire of Hong Kong for genuine universal suffrage had been largely ignored by the city's political establishment.

"To take these signatures as support for the 'fake universal suffrage' proposals of Aug. 31 is to mislead the public and the citizens of Hong Kong," Kwok said.

Pan-democratic lawmaker Leung Yiu-chung said pro-democracy campaigners still have other options open to them and called on the government to include such actions in future reports to Beijing.

"We can vote, we can march and stage political actions," Leung said. "I don't think that petition was representative of the voice of the majority in Hong Kong."

"The students and other citizens are using the Occupy movement in the hope that Beijing will understand and respond to their demands."

Attack on media mogul

Meanwhile, anti-Occupy protesters threw rotting animal parts at pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai, whose outspoken *Apple Daily* newspaper has already been repeatedly targeted by hacker attacks, an eyewitness told RFA.

Three men ambushed Lai, cursed at Lai and told him to "drop dead" before they threw several bags of animal organs at his head.

"Some people threw some stuff at Mr. Lai," an eyewitness told RFA. "It really stank; it was rotten offal."

"Then they left, and the police chased after them."

A police spokesman said two men had been slightly injured in the assault, and one had been taken to the hospital, but that no arrests had been made.

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Supporting Messages from Around the World

Nguyen Hoang Thanh Tam of pro-democracy organization Viet Tan: “We are by your side. Whatever happens tonight, we will still be here. Vietnamese and people around the world stand by you.” **Joshua Wong:** “Thank you so much. It means a lot to us here. Please keep up your support. We really need it.” Hong Kong – Oct. 3, 2014.

“I think the Occupy Central protests are similar with the Tiananmen protests in 1989 which I participated. The Chinese authorities used exactly the same scheme to deal with it: committing bad things and then blaming the student protesters.” Japan – Oct. 15, 2014.

“As a citizen, I don’t want communism. I want democracy. Democracy is so important for people. In a democracy, people are the owners of their country, not the government or politicians.” Thy Sovantha, Cambodia – Oct. 9, 2014.

“We, the Vietnamese people, hope for your victory in Hong Kong. We also hope the same for our Vietnam. You inspire us.” Vietnam – Oct. 7, 2014.

“I have a dream that someday Vietnam’s police will treat their youths and students civilly just like how Hong Kong’s police are treating their youths ... God bless the Vietnamese youths.” Posted by Dean Nguyen on RFA’s Vietnamese Facebook Page – Oct. 7, 2014.

“I want to tell all the students and comrades in Hong Kong that democracy will win. With nonviolent ways and perseverance you should keep up fighting for your rights. As a former student protester in 1988 pro-democracy uprisings, I would like to say we are with you all the way.” Ko Ko Gyi, 88 Generation pro-democracy group leader and former political prisoner, Myanmar – Oct. 5, 2014.

“Not just us but the whole world is supporting the students and people in Hong Kong in this movement. The people of Hong Kong won’t give up. We must show our solidarity with people by every means.” Min Ko Naing, 88 Generation pro-democracy group leader, Myanmar – Oct. 4, 2014.

“Hong Kong has never been able to elect their own leaders since colonial period. Now they are striking for their rights to choose their own destiny. Hong Kong protests this time will give a huge history lesson to people of mainland China. This is not 18th or 19th century. In this 21st century, we are asking political culture of 21st century. We are with them all with our hearts and souls.” New York City, US – Oct. 3, 2014.

“From the other side of the globe, we are expressing our sympathy and strong support to the students and people of Hong Kong who have been bravely struggling for democracy and freedom. We were citizens of the Republic of Vietnam who fled the country to seek freedom in the USA after North Vietnam occupation in 1975. As for us, the victims of the tyranny of the communist regime, we understand how tough the life and environment you have been enduring in Hong Kong after it was returned to Communist China.” Virginia, US – Oct. 3, 2014.

2014-11-14 - Planned Hong Kong Protest Trip to Beijing 'Not a Challenge': Student Leaders



Alex Chow (R) announces his plan to travel to Beijing along with fellow student union leaders Eason Chung (L) and Nathan Law (not pictured), Nov. 13, 2014. – RFA

Student leaders of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement say they are planning to travel to Beijing on Saturday in a bid to get a meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang.

Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) leader Alex Chow told protesters encamped near government headquarters in the downtown Admiralty district that he would head to China along with fellow student union leaders Eason Chung and Nathan Law.

"In traveling to Beijing, the student federation is seeking to challenge the authority of the central government," the HKFS said in statement.

"We just want to talk about two things: electoral reforms and 'one country, two systems'," it said, referring to the formula conceived by late supreme leader Deng Xiaoping to allow Hong Kong to return to China.

The statement hit out at pro-Beijing politicians and government officials in Hong Kong for failing to "exercise their constitutional duty" and act as a bridge between the "two systems."

"They have failed to provide a channel for the views of Hong Kong people to be heard under 'one country, two systems,'" it said.

The move comes after the Hong Kong government said there is "no room" for further dialogue with student protest leaders following a two-hour live television debate between students and Hong Kong officials on Oct. 21.

Protest demands

*Walking With A Yellow Umbrella: Bearing
Witness to a Revolution*

Occupy Central protesters have been encamped on three major roads and intersections in Hong Kong since Sept. 28, when police use of tear-gas and pepper spray against umbrella-wielding protesters brought hundreds of thousands of citizens onto the streets at the movement's height.

But Hong Kong officials have repeatedly told the protesters to leave, saying that Beijing won't withdraw an Aug. 31 decision ruling out public nomination of candidates in the 2017 election for the chief executive.

China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), said that while Hong Kong's five million voters will cast a ballot to elect the next chief executive, they may only choose between two or three candidates approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

Protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who currently only have around seven percent of the nominating committee vote compared with 56 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative election, have dismissed the proposed electoral reforms as "fake universal suffrage."

Hong Kong activists are also angry at the British government for failing to stand up to Beijing over what they say are breaches of a 1983 treaty setting out the terms of the handover.

Chinese president Xi Jinping called the protests "illegal" earlier this week, while President Barack Obama has denied any U.S. involvement in the movement, following accusations in the ruling Chinese Communist Party's official media.



A banner which reads 'determined to fight' is displayed at a protest encampment in Kowloon's Mong Kok district, Nov. 14, 2014. – RFA

Hope for meeting

Chow said the three student representatives are traveling to Beijing in the hope of meeting with Premier Li Keqiang.

However, repeated attempts to set up meetings with Chinese leaders via pro-Beijing politicians from Hong Kong have failed, and it is unclear whether the three will even be allowed to cross the internal border to mainland China.

Hong Kong was promised a 'high degree of autonomy' and the preservation of traditional freedoms of speech and association under the terms of its 1997 handover from Britain to China.

Its citizens are issued with a special travel permit for trips to mainland China, but border guards have been known

to deny entry to Hong Kong-based critics of Beijing in the past.

Protesters have clashed sporadically with anti-Occupy protesters, who claim growing public support.

And they face possible clearance of barriers blocking roads they are camping on, under civil injunctions granted by the city's High Court to transportation industry groups, who say they are losing business because of blocked bus and tram routes.

Injunctions

On Thursday, the High Court rejected a bid by protesters to delay implementation of injunctions, leading to accusations of bias from Occupy protesters.

"I think this is very bad," one protester surnamed Leung told RFA. "I feel as if the court has been supporting the other side all along."

"I am very worried, because the court has authorized police involvement in clearing the barricades," Leung said. "I am worried they will try to force us to leave."

Police have been authorized by the High Court to arrest anyone obstructing court bailiffs in unblocking the roads, but a lawyer for the transportation groups said the injunctions won't be enforced before next Monday.

Even political commentators have been divided on the protesters, with older pro-democracy voices calling for a strategic withdrawal.

"To say that they will stay there until Hong Kong has universal suffrage sounds very courageous, but what they're really saying is they will interfere with other people's daily lives until Hong Kong has universal suffrage," Hu Ping, editor of the U.S.-based online political magazine Beijing Spring, said in a recent commentary carried by RFA's Mandarin Service.

"The freedom to protest is a basic freedom, like the freedom of speech and publication, but people don't usually infringe on other people's freedoms in exercising it," he said.

"In this respect, Occupy Central is unlike other peaceful gatherings."

He said parallels between the pro-democracy movement and the civil rights campaign in the U.S. are strained, because black civil rights activists deliberately disobeyed segregation laws that discriminated against them.

Xi to blame

But Hu Shaojiang, a former banker and Hong Kong-based political commentator, placed the blame on President Xi, saying the protesters are only asking for promises made by Deng Xiaoping to be kept.

"Xi Jinping should implement this promise, because it won't harm China's international interests to do so," Hu wrote in a commentary for RFA's Cantonese Service.

"The problem is that China's ruling party can't tolerate a leader of Hong Kong who doesn't do as they are told," he said.

"The only route left open to them is to revoke the promise of Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong."

Reported by Fung Tze-yue for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Supports from Canada



Singing supporters in Vancouver, Canada, Oct. 5, 2014. – @hoksze



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2014-11-15 - China Bars Hong Kong Student Leaders From Boarding Flight to Beijing



Federation of Students representatives Nathan Law Kwun-chung (L), Alex Chow Yong-kang, (C) and Eason Chung Yiu-wa (R) leave the Cathay Pacific counter after being prevented from boarding a plane to Beijing, at Hong Kong International Airport, Nov 15, 2014. – Eyepress News

China on Saturday revoked the travel permits of three leaders of Hong Kong's six-week-long pro-democracy movement, effectively denying them permission to board a plane to Beijing in a bid to speak to leaders of the ruling Chinese Communist Party about their demands for free elections.

Alex Chow, leader of the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) and two fellow HKFS activists, Eason Chung and Nathan Law, were unable to board the Cathay Pacific flight at Hong Kong's International Airport.

"Airline officials informed [them] they did not have the required travel documents to get on the plane," Lester Shum, deputy secretary general of HKFS, told reporters.

A Cathay Pacific staff member told the three students that their travel passes—issued to citizens of Hong Kong and Macau wishing to cross the internal border into mainland China—had been canceled, footage aired by Hong Kong's Cable TV showed.

"We have received information from relevant departments on the mainland that the Home Return Permits of the passengers in question have been canceled," the staff member said.

Afternoon flight

The three had booked on a flight departing Hong Kong at 3.00 p.m. local time, but were told their documents had been revoked after exiting Hong Kong and before entering China, Chow told Cable TV.

“The police asked us to come back into the exit hall to deal with our tickets,” he said.

“After that, a staff member of the airline told us that our Home Return Permits had been revoked, and that they therefore couldn’t issue us with boarding passes,” Chow was quoted as saying on the broadcaster’s website.

While the permits are available to all citizens of Hong Kong and Macau, China has previously denied entry to outspoken critics of Beijing who are carrying them.

The student leaders had gone to the airport amid large numbers of supporters of the Occupy Central movement, also known as the Umbrella Movement, waving yellow umbrellas and banners calling for “genuine free elections.”

Call to explain

Chow told reporters before attempting to board the plane: “Dialogue is important for resolving the current situation, but it depends on whether Beijing has the initiative to start talks with the students.”

After the failed bid to travel to Beijing, he called on the government to explain the cancellation of their permits.

“Perhaps the authorities really don’t want to hear the voices of the next generation,” Chow told Cable TV. “It seems as if the door to dialogue has been closed.”

Hong Kong and mainland China operate separate immigration and border controls, under the terms of the city’s 1997 return to Chinese rule.

Hong Kong immigration officials appeared to have played no part in preventing the student leaders from leaving the former British colony.

However, airlines generally check the immigration status of passengers before allowing them to board, under international aviation agreements and local legislation.

Dangerous message

Vice-chairman of the League of Social Democrats Avery Ng, who was among the Occupy supporters at the airport on Saturday, said Beijing had sent a potentially dangerous message by denying entry to the three students.

“Hong Kong people will continue to feel great anger and frustration, and the pressure will continue to build up in the next few months,” Ng warned.

“If Beijing continues with this hard-line attitude, social tensions in Hong Kong will reach breaking point.”

And an unnamed Occupy protester said he had held out little hope for the Beijing trip, however.

“Initially I thought it was within the bounds of possibility, but later, when I saw that the pro-establishment didn’t want to act as go-betweens, [I changed my mind],” the protester said.

“But it would have shown Beijing that people here in Hong Kong can stand up and speak rationally with them, neither servile nor aggressive.”

Meanwhile, protest organizers on Saturday called on the Occupy Central movement to continue with nonviolent protest as a means to call for public nomination of candidates in 2017 elections for Hong Kong’s chief executive.

China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), ruled on Aug. 31 that while all five million of Hong Kong's voters will cast a ballot in the poll, they will only be able to choose between two or three candidates pre-selected by Beijing.

'Fake' democracy

Occupy protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who won 54 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative elections, have dismissed the proposed reform package as "fake universal suffrage."

Protesters have been encamped on three major highways and intersections since Sept. 28, when an initial bid to clear the area by police wielding tear gas and pepper spray failed.

However, Hong Kong's High Court has granted civil injunctions to transportation industry associations who are losing money from blocked bus and tram routes, and police have been authorized to prevent anyone from interfering with attempts to clear barricades around protest sites.

Clearance of the areas listed in the injunctions is expected to start next week.

Speaking after warnings from Hong Kong's police chief that protesters shouldn't interfere with the clearance operations, Occupy co-founder Benny Tai said police are trying to use the civil injunctions as an excuse to clear the Occupy protest camps.

"I hope that, when the clearance operations begin, Occupy protesters will still hold to the principle of nonviolence," he said.

"If the police were resolute about clearing the camps, then they would already have sufficient authority under [current law]," Tai told reporters.

"This is proof that the police and the Hong Kong government know that they have very limited power to deal with what is happening," he said.

The 'real' question

Hong Kong police commissioner Andy Tsang ducked questions on Saturday about whether police would resort to further force if protesters obstructed the removal of barricades.

"The real question here is, are the protesters prepared to abide by the law?" he told reporters.

"Or will they continue to pay no heed to the law, and to wreak havoc with Hong Kong's rule of law?"

Protesters have said repeatedly they won't leave until Beijing withdraws its Aug. 31 ruling, while others call for the resignation of embattled chief executive C.Y. Leung.

Hong Kong was promised a 'high degree of autonomy' and the preservation of traditional freedoms of speech and association under the terms of its 1997 handover from Britain to China.

Many Occupy protesters have said they aren't just fighting for public nominations, but against the steady erosion of the city's core values and freedoms.

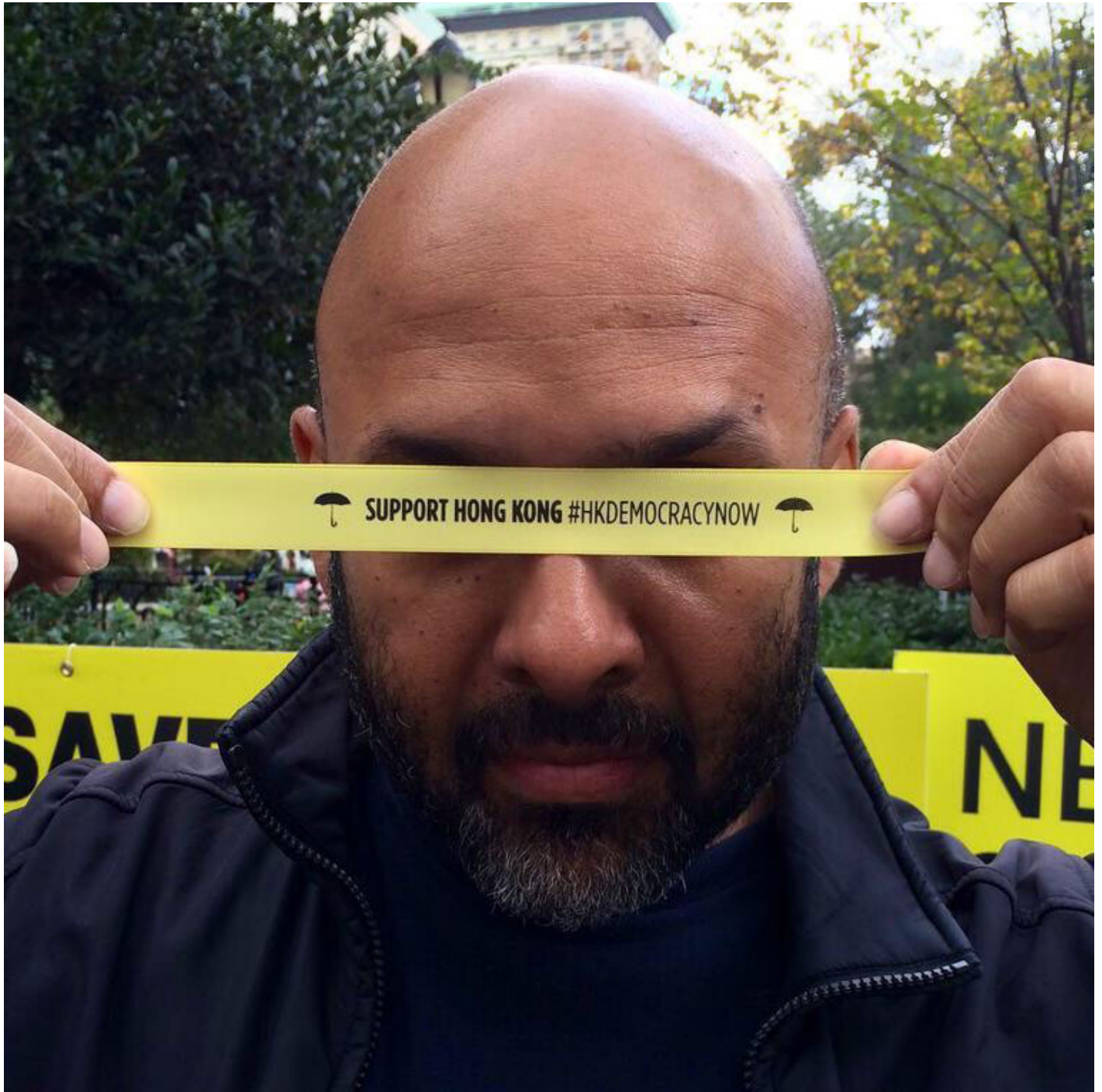
Journalists' groups have hit out at a slew of recent attacks—physical and online—on pro-democracy media outlets and websites in recent months.

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Supports from New York, Boston



A Hong Kong democracy supporter in New York City, in an undated photo. – @NY4HK



A supporter in New York City, in an undated photo. – @NY4HK



David Popa (Davo)
@BumbingHappens

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RETWEETS

37

FAVORITES

16



8:09 PM - 19 Oct 2014

Graffiti supporting Hong Kong protesters in Boston, Oct. 19, 2014. – @BumbingHappens



Tom Grundy
@tomgrundy



Following

#OccupyHK graffiti spotted in
Massachusetts, US. (via FB).



RETWEETS

77

FAVORITES

47



Graffiti showing the faces of Hong Kong protesters in Boston, Oct. 22, 2014. – @tomgrundy

2014-11-17 – More Hong Kong Students on Blacklist as Protesters Await Road Clearances



Federation of Students representatives Nathan Law (L), Alex Chow (C), and Eason Chung (R) leave Hong Kong International Airport after being prevented from boarding a plane to Beijing, Nov. 15, 2014. – EyePress News

The ruling Chinese Communist Party has blacklisted four more student leaders of Hong Kong's democracy protests after three leading figures in the "Umbrella Movement" were denied access to a flight to Beijing, it emerged on Monday.

"We must first ask the people concerned whether or not they are willing to have their identities made public," said Nathan Law, one of three Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) representatives who tried to travel to Beijing on Saturday.

Law said the HKFS would make a "unified statement" on the blacklisting of the unnamed four student leaders after discussing it.

Chinese authorities have already revoked the travel permits of HKFS leaders Alex Chow, Law and Eason Chung, effectively denying them permission to board a plane to Beijing in a bid to speak to leaders of the ruling Chinese Communist Party about their demands for free elections.

Chow, Chung and Law were unable to board the Cathay Pacific flight at Hong Kong's International Airport, because their "home return permits" issued by China had been revoked.

The travel passes are issued to all citizens of Hong Kong and Macau wishing to cross the internal border into mainland China, but Chinese border guards have refused entry to prominent critics of Beijing in the past.

Immigration blacklist

Law called on Beijing to act “according to the law.”

“In other countries...you can’t just cancel things on a whim,” he said.

Chow told reporters on Monday there are now fears that the majority of Occupy Central student leaders, who are calling for public nomination of candidates in the 2017 elections for the next chief executive, may end up on China’s immigration blacklist.

“We are currently plan a mass border-crossing to establish if there are any other students who aren’t able to cross into mainland China,” Chow said.

Hong Kong and mainland China operate separate immigration and border controls, under the terms of the city’s 1997 return to Chinese rule. Hong Kong immigration officials apparently played no part in preventing the student leaders from leaving the former British colony.

But airlines generally check the immigration status of passengers before allowing them to board under international aviation agreements and local legislation.

Still on highways

The Occupy Central protesters have been encamped on major highways and intersections in downtown Hong Kong since Sept. 28, in a bid to win universal suffrage with no interference from Beijing.

China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), ruled on Aug. 31 that while all five million of Hong Kong’s voters will cast ballots in the election, they will only be able to choose between two or three candidates pre-selected by Beijing.

Occupy protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who won 54 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative elections, have dismissed the proposed reform package as “fake universal suffrage.”

Protests swelled to hundreds of thousands at their peak after an initial bid to clear the area of umbrella-toting protesters by police wielding tear-gas and pepper spray failed.

Hong Kong NPC delegate Rita Fan said on Monday that any country in the world can deny entry to individuals wishing to cross its borders.

“I believe that the HKFS members who had their home return permits revoked had committed illegal acts in Hong Kong,” Fan said.

“It is likely that the decision to deny them entry came from central government,” she said.

Civil injunctions

Meanwhile, protesters faced potential clearance from their campsites under civil injunctions granted by Hong Kong’s High Court to transportation industry associations who are losing money from blocked bus and tram routes, and police have been authorized to prevent anyone from interfering with attempts to clear barricades around protest sites.

Occupy protesters encamped near government headquarters in Admiralty district said they weren’t planning to leave, however.

“Our behavior is reasonable, and the government has made us no sort of offer,” a protester surnamed Lio told

RFA.

“But I am worried [that police will clear the site with force],” he said.

A second protester surnamed Hong said his bottom line was the abolition of all functional constituencies in the city’s Legislative Council, industrial groupings that dilute the influence of pan-democratic lawmakers.

A third student protester said she would leave if forced to, but that any attempt to clear the Occupy camp would be “unfair.”

“If they clear the area, we won’t offer any resistance,” she told RFA on Monday. “We will just find other ways to protest afterwards.”

She said she believed the protesters’ demands were fair and reasonable.

“Hong Kong is only a part of China with a relatively small population,” she said. “We just want to elect a chief executive who will work for the people, not one that is [Beijing’s] lapdog.”

Meanwhile, public support for the Occupy protests has been dwindling, according to a new opinion survey published last weekend.

More than 67 percent of people surveyed said the activists should clear the streets immediately, the Chinese University of Hong Kong poll found.

During the polling period spanning Nov. 5 to Nov. 11, those against the movement rose to 43.5 percent from 35.5 percent in October, it said.

Reported by Yang Fan and Xin Lin for RFA’s Mandarin Service, and by RFA’s Cantonese Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-18 - Occupiers Pull Back as Barricades Are Removed at Hong Kong Protest Site



Security personnel remove a barricade near a pro-democracy protest site in the Admiralty district of Hong Kong, Nov. 18, 2014. – AFP

Workers and protesters have removed some of the barricades near a major Occupy Central pro-democracy encampment in Hong Kong, meeting no resistance from pro-democracy campaigners after an initial debate was resolved.

In the first of a series of actions aimed at enforcing civil injunctions granted by the former British colony's High Court, workers began cutting plastic ties holding metal barricades together, while protesters removed barricades on their side, taking them away for future use.

"Please could anyone who remains within the area covered by the injunction please immediately pack up their things and leave," the bailiff told protesters through a megaphone, adding that anyone who failed to comply could be held in contempt of court.

However, protesters had already moved their tents before the bailiff arrived, and had gathered to watch proceedings, making no attempt to obstruct the removal of barricades, online video of the incident showed.

Meanwhile, pan-democratic lawmaker Albert Ho negotiated with lawyers from Golden Investment, the joint venture controlled by Chinese state-owned Citic Group, which owns the 33-storey Citic Tower building opposite government headquarters in Admiralty district.

After winning lawyers round to his point of view, Ho told local media he was pleased to have avoided a conflict between workers and student activists campaigning for full democracy in 2017 elections for the territory's chief

executive.

He said pedestrians and vehicles can now enter the area, fulfilling the terms of the court injunction. Any further action by the authorities would be “politically motivated,” he told the *South China Morning Post* newspaper.

Some barricades remain

However, injunctions remain unenforced in the busy shopping districts of Mong Kok and Causeway Bay, while injunctions applying to roads elsewhere in Admiralty—at the heart of the main site known as “Umbrella Square”—may yet be granted.

Joshua Wong, leader of the academic activist group Scholarism, said on Monday that protesters are willing to restore access to the main entrance of the building.

“That is now open, but if they want to remove any more of the barriers, that I think that would be politically motivated, and the bailiffs should do something about it,” he told RFA.

A protester who asked to remain anonymous said the remaining barricades are important as a way of preventing cars from approaching the main encampment on Admiralty’s Harcourt Road.

“We’ll stay as long as we can, and take it day by day,” the protester said.

Meanwhile, Alex Chow, leader of the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS), said protesters wouldn’t allow total clearance of all protest sites, where campaigners have been encamped since riot police tried to disperse them with tear gas and pepper spray on Sept.

28.

The crackdown by police swelled protest numbers to the hundreds of thousands in the days that followed.

“Our members will stay with other protesters to the last minute,” Chow told reporters, adding that many protesters were ready to risk arrest.

Police told reporters that bailiffs were unlikely to move to clear the Mong Kok injunction area before Thursday at the earliest.

Call to leave the sites

The Occupy Central movement began after China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), ruled on Aug. 31 that while all five million of Hong Kong’s voters can cast ballots in elections scheduled for 2017 for Hong Kong’s chief executive, they will only be able to choose between two or three candidates preselected by Beijing.

Occupy protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who won 54 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative elections, have dismissed the proposed reform package as “fake universal suffrage.”

But Occupy Central co-founder and sociology professor Chan Kin-man on Tuesday called on protesters, now mostly students, to leave the main sites or consider scaling back their protest.

The chances that Beijing could have a change of heart are slim, and public opinion has clearly turned against the Occupy movement, Chan wrote in a newspaper article published in Hong Kong on Tuesday.

“The priority now should be to minimize the disturbance the movement is causing to people’s daily lives in order to win their support,” Chan wrote.

A survey by the Chinese University of Hong Kong conducted last weekend found that more than two thirds of respondents think it is time to end the protest.

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-19 - Democracy Campaigners Condemn Smashing of Hong Kong's Legislature



Workers repair damage at the Legislative Council building in Hong Kong, Nov. 19, 2014. – RFA

Leaders of Hong Kong's long-running pro-democracy movement on Wednesday condemned an overnight attempt by unidentified men to break into the city's Legislative Council (LegCo).

Student leaders of the Occupy Central protests, which have taken over stretches of major highways in the former British colony since Sept. 28, and pan-democratic politicians said they were "heartbroken" by the attempt to smash through the glass-paneled entrance of the building in the early hours of Wednesday by protesters wielding broken paving stones.

"The violent acts have violated the principle of peace and nonviolence underlying the Umbrella Movement," Civic Party leader Alan Leong told reporters, in comments translated in the *South China Morning Post* newspaper.

"We feel the [break-in] will have a negative impact on the movement. We're heartbroken," Leong said.

Labour Party lawmaker Fernando Cheung told local media he saw several masked men smashing the glass doors of the building with metal barriers.

He said the attack on the building could have been the result of rumors that an Internet censorship bill would be debated on Wednesday, adding that no such meeting would take place.

Police made six arrests at the scene at around 3:00 a.m. local time.

‘Tired of waiting’

One of the men arrested said at the time that activists had grown tired of “waiting around for the police to clear the protests.”

“We wanted to seize back the momentum ... because even though we’re causing an obstruction to others, that’s the only way you can achieve anything,” the unnamed activist said.

But Occupy supporter Wong Wing-kei, who also witnessed the attack, said those who carried it out didn’t look like typical democracy activists, and didn’t represent the rest of the protesters.

“There was a gang of more than 20 people with no respect for the law,” Wong said, adding that they were tattooed and looked like criminal gang members.

“They took paving stones and threw them, one after the other, at the glass,” he said.

“[At Occupy Central], we like to express our views in a safe and peaceful manner,” Wong said. “If we were going to commit acts of violence, we’d have done it a long time ago.”

Bewildered by violence

One protester in Hong Kong’s Umbrella Square, where campaigners have been camping peacefully on a major highway near government headquarters in a bid for free elections in 2017, said the attack had left him bewildered.

“I don’t understand why they have suddenly carried out such an attack, and a violent one at that,” the student occupier surnamed Loh told RFA.

“Our movement has always emphasized using peaceful methods of protest.”

However, a second protester said there should be some escalation of the protest, which has dwindled since peaking in the hundreds of thousands after police used tear gas on protesters on Sept. 28.

“We haven’t escalated the protests in more than a month now,” the student, surnamed Wong, told RFA. “We should have done it much earlier.”

‘An act by rioters’

The Hong Kong government strongly condemned the violence, describing it as “an act by rioters.”

Justice secretary Rimsky Yuen said nobody should think they can escape after breaking the law.

And Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) spokesman Lester Shum said the activists had acted on the basis of “false reports.”

“When they were done smashing the glass, they scattered, with no regard for any of the other activists,” Shum said.

“We have no wish to see actions like this,” he said.

Hong Kong police chief superintendent Steve Hui said officers at the scene had been forced to use a “minimum amount of force” after protesters ignored police warnings to stop their activities.

Three police officers were injured in the clashes, while others had helmets and a baton stolen, Hui said.

The Occupy Central movement began after China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), ruled on Aug. 31 that while all five million of Hong Kong's voters can cast ballots in elections scheduled for 2017 for Hong Kong's chief executive, they will only be able to choose between two or three candidates preselected by Beijing.

Occupy protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who won 54 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative elections, have dismissed the proposed reform package as "fake universal suffrage."

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-20 – China Arrests Activist For Supporting Hong Kong Democracy Movement



Activist Su Changlan's husband (C) is accompanied by two lawyers, Li Fang (L) and Wu Kuiming (R), in an undisclosed location, Nov. 18, 2014. – Photo courtesy of Li Fang

Police in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou have formally arrested a third activist on subversion charges after he publicly supported the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement.

Wang Mo has been formally arrested on suspicion of “incitement to subvert state power” after he took part in an activity in support of Hong Kong’s Occupy Central movement, which has taken over sections of highway in the former British colony in a campaign for free elections in 2017.

His family received notification from police on Monday, a fellow activist who gave only a nickname Xiao Biao told RFA on Thursday.

Wang is currently being held in the Guangzhou No. 1 Detention Center.

Guangdong authorities are also holding Foshan-based activist Su Changlan on suspicion of “incitement to subvert state power” after she took part in Hong Kong-related activities in the province.

Su was criminally detained on Oct. 27 and is currently being held at Guicheng Police Station in Foshan city.

Also in Foshan, activist Jia Pin has been placed under tight surveillance by police the city’s Nanhai district after being held under criminal detention for more than a month, according to fellow activist Yang Chong.

And in the eastern province of Shandong, Occupy Central supporter Sun Feng is also being held under criminal detention.

Sun was criminally detained on Nov. 17, and is being held in an unknown location in Shandong's Zibo city, the overseas-based Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) group reported on Thursday.

"These are definitely linked to Hong Kong," Xiao Biao said.

Documented cases

The CHRD says it has documented 104 cases of detention by Occupy Central supporters across the internal border in mainland China.

Of those, at least 31 individuals remain in some form of police custody.

"Police have harassed and intimidated countless others by visiting their homes and issuing warnings, or putting them under house arrest," the group said in a statement on its website.

It said several activists have gone into hiding, the statement said.

'Fake' reform package

Hong Kong's Occupy Central protests, also known as the Umbrella Movement after protesters used umbrellas to protect themselves from tear-gas during Sept. 28 clashes, have taken over stretches of major highways in protest at China's plans for electoral reform in the territory.

China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), ruled on Aug. 31 that while all five million of Hong Kong's voters can cast ballots in elections scheduled for 2017 for Hong Kong's chief executive, they will only be able to choose between two or three candidates preselected by Beijing.

Occupy protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who won 54 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative elections, have dismissed the proposed reform package as "fake universal suffrage."

China's ruling Communist Party is extremely nervous that citizens in mainland China could gain inspiration from the movement to launch a popular movement of their own.

In response, it has assiduously censored reports, tweets and photos of the protests on its side of the Great Firewall.

"They want to send a warning to Occupy Central, for fear that the movement breaks across the border into mainland China and creates an impact here," Xiao Biao said.

"That's why there have been so many of these arrests; maybe the ones who are formally arrested are the ones who have the strongest attitude," he added.

Reported by Wen Yuqing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Qiao Long for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-24 – China Fires Journalist Who Tweeted In Support of Occupy Central



Pedestrians and pro-democracy activists walk past tents at a protest site in Hong Kong's Admiralty district, Nov. 24, 2014. – AFP

A journalist on a newspaper controlled by the ruling Chinese Communist Party has been fired after he spoke out in support of Hong Kong's Occupy Central pro-democracy movement.

Wang Yafeng, who wrote editorials for Communist Party mouthpiece the *Jiaxing Daily* in the eastern province of Zhejiang, lost his job after sending out tweets highly critical of state media's line on the Hong Kong protests on his personal microblog account.

"People who, without understanding the situation, launch their invective at Hong Kong's citizens' protest deserve to spend the rest of their lives as slaves," Wang tweeted last week.

His tweet was quickly deleted, but not before he was reported by large numbers of pro-government paid commentators known as the "50-cent" brigade, Hong Kong's English-language *South China Morning Post* reported.

Wang also tweeted that "to follow the party is to go down a road of no return."

According to a former colleague, Wang had kept a low profile since joining the paper four years ago, but had been fired for "crossing a red line."

"We have already terminated his employment contract," the employee, who declined to be identified, told RFA on Monday. "He made some inappropriate comments on his verified microblog account."

“You can read about this yourself in Chinese media reports; the reason for it is explained very clearly,” the employee said.

A second member of the editorial staff at the *Jiaxing Daily* who also asked to remain anonymous said they weren’t surprised by the response.

“You probably don’t understand this there in Hong Kong, but here in China, there are some things that it’s not permissible to say,” the employee said.

Occupy Central

Hong Kong’s Occupy Central protests, also known as the Umbrella Movement after protesters used umbrellas to protect themselves from tear-gas during Sept. 28 clashes, have taken over stretches of major highways in protest at China’s plans for electoral reform in the territory.

China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), ruled on Aug. 31 that while all five million of Hong Kong’s voters can cast ballots in elections scheduled for 2017 for Hong Kong’s chief executive, they will only be able to choose between two or three candidates preselected by Beijing.

Occupy protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who won 54 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative elections, have dismissed the proposed reform package as “fake universal suffrage.”

Beijing is extremely nervous that citizens in mainland China could gain inspiration from the movement to launch a popular movement of their own.

In response, it has removed reports, tweets and photos of the protests on its side of the “Great Firewall,” a complex system of blocks, filters and human censorship of online content.

At the same time, tightly controlled state media outlets have repeatedly styled the movement “illegal,” and instigated by “hostile foreign forces.”

More than 100 activists in mainland China have been detained in connection with their support for the movement, while least 33 are still believed to be in detention, according to overseas rights groups.

‘Spouting nonsense’

Sichuan-based rights activist Huang Qi, who founded the Tianwang rights website, said the administration of President Xi Jinping has been strengthening the role of the official media as party mouthpiece since taking power in 2012.

“It’s as if a lot of people working in the Chinese media live double lives, spouting a lot of fake nonsense against their will, and suppressing their true knowledge of events and opinions about them,” Huang said.

In Hong Kong, independent journalist Oiwan Lam, co-founder of the Inmediahk news website, said Wang is by no means the first person to feel the wrath of Beijing over public support for the Occupy movement across the internal border in Hong Kong.

“The censorship has been very strict indeed, and even the microblog accounts of very famous people have been shut down,” Lam said.

“At the same time, there is anti-Occupy splashed across the pages of all the pro-Beijing media and across the Internet,” she said. “Under such tight controls, it’s very hard to say whether the Chinese public is genuinely against the Occupy Central movement.”

Under the terms of its 1997 handover to Beijing, Hong Kong was promised a high degree of autonomy and the preservation of its existing freedoms of speech and association, as well as continued judicial independence.

But Beijing has recently added Occupy Central student leaders to a blacklist, revoking their travel passes that enable Hong Kong citizens to visit mainland China.

Reported by Ho Shan for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-25 – Police Fire Tear-Gas to Clear Hong Kong Democracy Protesters



Police try to disperse crowds in Kowloon's Mong Kok district, Nov. 25, 2014. – EyePress News

Riot police in Hong Kong used tear-gas and pepper spray to disperse hundreds of pro-democracy protesters on Tuesday as they stepped in to assist court officials in clearing a section of highway in the busy Kowloon district of Mong Kok.

Protesters wearing construction helmets and masks formed a shield-wall of umbrellas against police, in what has become the icon of the Occupy Central movement, which is calling for more democracy than Beijing has said it will allow in the semiautonomous Chinese city.

Thousands of police were deployed to the scene, while a police spokesman said officers had arrested more than 80 protesters.

Police shouted warnings by megaphone: “You must stop causing an obstruction or impeding the bailiffs and those assisting them.”

“This will be the last warning issued by police, who will use the minimum amount of force, if necessary,” it said.

Other warnings said that any who continued to block the streets being cleared under a High Court order would be arrested “on suspicion of contempt of court.”

Three police officers were injured in the clashes, while many protesters were hit by tear-gas sprayed from high pressure hoses from step-ladders, a police statement said late on Tuesday.

Earlier, workers had dismantled wooden barricades from the street, while protesters responded by peacefully packing up their tents and belongings.

‘Things got chaotic’

An eyewitness surnamed Lam who said he has been to the Mong Kok camp daily since the first day of protests, said it was only later that the mood became more tense.

“When the police came, the protesters got up and left peacefully; the young people behaved in a very orderly manner,” Lam said.

“[Then] things got pretty chaotic,” Lam said. “The police treated protesters very roughly and rudely. They were very unfriendly.”

As the operation proceeded, Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) leader Yvonne Leung questioned court officials over whether police were enforcing the clearance of streets beyond the area covered by the injunction, brought by a bus company that said the blockages were hurting its bottom line.

However, the majority of protesters shouted slogans, but made no attempt to resist arrest, and several were taken away in one of dozens of police vans parked in nearby streets, local media reports said.

Photos of the stand-off posted on Twitter showed a number of uniformed high-school students in helmets and masks, at the center of the crowd.

Argyle Street near the busy shopping drag of Nathan Road was cleared of occupiers and their tents, although several hundred protesters continued to gather in nearby Portland Street, online live video feed by the Apple Daily media group showed.

Reports said that skirmishes between protesters and police in Mong Kok continued well into the early hours of Wednesday morning.

Likely to stay

Embattled Hong Kong chief executive Leung Chun-ying, who has faced repeated calls from protesters for his resignation, said activists who remained encamped on sections of Nathan Road which looks set to be cleared later this week, should go home.

Lam said he believed many protesters would remain at the site nonetheless.

“Young people are unhappy with the current government,” he said. “We want to fight for freedom, justice and an equitable society.”

“I have been here for 59 days, and I have seen everything that has happened in Mong Kok,” said Lam, who is retired.

“I’m a bit older, so I don’t take part; but I come every day to see what’s going on.”

Police spokesman Kong Man-keung said police lines blocking Argyle Street, the focus of the court injunction, should be respected.

“We appeal to those who are illegally assembled there to exercise restraint, and not to try charging the police lines,” Kong told reporters.

A second Occupy protester at Mong Kok surnamed Soong said protesters are still concerned that existing

encampments in Mong Kok will be targeted next.

“But if we leave, then Hong Kong will have no future,” Soong said. “So I will be staying. Because if the chief executive isn’t elected by us, then they can do exactly as they please.”

“We have a duty to protect Hong Kong,” he said.

Meanwhile, some protesters said they were already planning to move their tents and belongings to the main Occupy site near government headquarters in Admiralty, on Hong Kong Island.

Two months of protests

The gritty working class district of Mong Kok has seen sporadic clashes and mob violence since the Occupy movement was launched on Sept. 28, often between anti-Occupy protesters accused of criminal gang connections and the occupiers, many of whom are students.

Occupy Central protesters have been encamped on three major roads and intersections in Hong Kong since Sept. 28, when police use of tear-gas and pepper spray against umbrella-wielding protesters brought hundreds of thousands of citizens onto the streets at the movement’s height.

But Hong Kong officials have repeatedly told the protesters to leave, saying that Beijing won’t withdraw an Aug. 31 decision ruling out public nomination of candidates in the 2017 election for the chief executive.

China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), said that while Hong Kong’s five million voters will cast a ballot to elect the next chief executive, they may only choose between two or three candidates approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

Protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who currently only have around seven percent of the nominating committee vote compared with 56 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative election, have dismissed the proposed electoral reforms as “fake universal suffrage.”

Hong Kong activists are also angry at the British government for failing to stand up to Beijing over what they say are breaches of a 1984 treaty setting out the terms of the handover.

On Tuesday, a group of British MPs canceled a planned visit to Shanghai after one of their number was denied a visa after organizing a parliamentary debate on Occupy Central, the *Guardian* newspaper reported.

Conservative MP Richard Graham had called for a probe into possible breaches by Beijing of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration promising the territory a high degree of autonomy.

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-26 - Hong Kong Police Clear Democracy Protest in Mong Kok, Arrest Leaders



Hong Kong Police in Mong Kok prepare to clear out pro-democracy protesters, Nov. 25, 2014. – RFA

Hong Kong police moved in the early hours of Wednesday morning to clear pro-democracy protesters encamped on a major highway since late September, arresting two of the Occupy Central movement's most prominent student leaders and clearing away tents and barricades.

Clashes continued through the night as police deployed thousands of officers in riot gear to help enforce a court order brought by the transportation industry.

Lines of Occupy Central protesters wearing construction hats, goggles, masks and wielding umbrellas against helmeted riot police with shields and batons in the early hours of Wednesday on Shantung Street in Mong Kok.

Some threw trash and empty water bottles, as the crowd chanted angrily, lit up by constant camera flashes, while every scuffle was filmed by dozens of cameras, large and small.

Protesters, including Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) spokesman Lester Shum and Scholarism leader Joshua Wong, were carried away unresisting for continuing to obstruct a section of the busy Nathan Road shopping street following megaphone warnings that those who remained could be held in contempt of court.

"If you resist you face possible imprisonment," the police warned the crowds through a megaphone. "We warn you to immediately stop resisting," only to be met with jeers and slogans.

Police had earlier deployed tear-spray on crowds gathered in Argyle Street, forcing them to retreat, although

many occupiers had already begun packing up tents and personal belongings when court officials arrived on Tuesday.

Warning

Police on Wednesday warned protesters against trying to re-establish barricades in areas already cleared.

“Police reiterate that if anyone blocks reopened roads or other roads, police are duty bound to take resolute actions to safeguard public order and public safety,” the city’s police department said in a statement.

Police arrested 148 people during the past two days of clearance operations in Mong Kok, a spokesman told reporters on Wednesday.

“[The arrests were] on suspicion of contempt of court, illegal assembly and similar charges,” he said.

League of Social Democrats activist Raphael Wong was also detained at the same time as Shum and Joshua Wong. All three men were taken to cells in Kwai Chung police station, where they were charged with contempt of court and with obstructing official duty, according to the HKFS.

The three will be held until appearing in court for charges to be read on Thursday.

Before being arrested, Shum told reporters: “By standing here on this street, we risk being charged with contempt of court or obstructing a police officer.”

“Nevertheless, we will stay here and stand with everyone until the last possible minute.”

Level of force

A bystander surnamed Chan said he was shocked at the level of force used to clear the area.

“This was definitely not minimal force, so they lied about that,” Chan told RFA after traffic began flowing freely down some previously blocked roads in the busy working class district of Mong Kok.

“I and my friends all thought that the police were abusing their power.”

He said he was against the deployment of police to enforce a civil injunction. “[This] was unreasonable,” Chan said.

Occupy Central protesters are still encamped on roads and intersections near government headquarters in Admiralty district and the Causeway Bay shopping district.

Some Mong Kok protesters said they would go and swell the ranks at the main “Umbrella Square” Admiralty site after the Mong Kok site was cleared.

Mong Kok has seen sporadic clashes and mob violence since the Occupy movement was launched on Sept. 28, often between anti-Occupy protesters accused of criminal gang connections and the occupiers, many of whom are students.

Meanwhile, there are signs of splits within the pro-democracy movement, with students acting independently of its three older founders and radical protesters calling for an escalation after talks with the government yielded no result last month.

Two months ago

Occupy Central began on Sept. 28, when police use of tear-gas and pepper spray against umbrella-wielding protesters brought hundreds of thousands of citizens onto the streets at the movement's height.

But Hong Kong officials have repeatedly told the protesters to leave, saying that Beijing won't withdraw an Aug. 31 decision ruling out public nomination of candidates in the 2017 election for the chief executive.

China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), said that while Hong Kong's five million voters will cast ballots to elect the next chief executive, they may only choose between two or three candidates approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

Protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who currently only have around seven percent of the nominating committee vote compared with 56 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative election, have dismissed the proposed electoral reforms as "fake universal suffrage."

Reported by Lin Jing and Ho Shan for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-26 – Journalists Beaten, Held As Police Clear Hong Kong Protest Site



A local Hong Kong journalist collapses in agony after being hit in the face with pepper spray by police in the Mong Kok district of Hong Kong, Oct. 17, 2014. – AFP

More than 25 journalists have been injured in clashes with police during the Occupy Central movement, a Hong Kong journalist group said on Wednesday, as one reporter described being held down and kicked by police officers while shooting the clearance of protest sites in Mong Kok.

“To date, more than 25 journalists have been injured in clashes when police have used force in major operations,” the Hong Kong Journalists’ Association (HKJA) said in a statement on its website on Wednesday.

“Police have not just used force to disperse protesters, but also against people who are clearly identified as being in the media,” it said, adding that repeated meetings with police officials to complain about the issue appear to have had scant effect.

The group also hit out at the arrest early Wednesday of a member of a Hong Kong television crew during the operation to clear barricades and encampments from a major shopping street in Mong Kok district.

The Now TV employee—a broadcast engineer—was set upon by several police officers, who shoved him to the ground, pinning him there, according to video footage shot by the Now cameraman at the scene.

The engineer sustained injuries to the head and body, and later sought treatment at a nearby hospital, Now reported.

The station later issued a statement saying the police actions, which were claimed to be in response to an attack

from the man, were “a serious violation of press freedom.”

The HKJA statement said: “We are shocked and outraged that a media worker has been detained without reason in the course of carrying out their reporting duties.”

HKJA spokeswoman Shum Yee-lan said the man had been setting up for a live broadcast of the clearance operation when he was arrested.

“In the confusion of the situation, there was probably some bodily contact, but you can’t make the case that the engineer was clearly trying to attack the police officers,” she said.

Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor Director Law Yuk Kai said he thought the officers overreacted.

“I don’t think there is very much evidence to support [the police claim that he had attacked them],” Law told RFA. “From a common-sense point of view, it’s hard to understand.”

“People shouldn’t get arrested so lightly for so-called attacks on officers. It’s pretty arbitrary,” Law said.

Beating claim

In an interview with RFA on Wednesday, New Zealand journalist and documentary filmmaker Nick Wang described being pinned to the ground, kicked and beaten by police officers during the Mong Kok standoff.

Wang, who is operating in Hong Kong on a freelance basis for New Zealand-based media outlets, said he was filming the police operation to clear Mong Kok when he was told to leap over a barricade to leave the area.

“It was quite high, about chest-height, and I said I couldn’t get across there, that only a dog could climb over it,” Wang told RFA at a nearby hospital while awaiting treatment for injuries to his back and knees.

“As soon as I said that, the police started shoving me and hitting me, so I nearly fell,” Wang said. “I said, ‘stop hitting me,’ but they didn’t take any notice.”

“They shoved me over, so I lay on my back, while I had continued to film them this whole time,” he said. “Then the police pinned me down and wouldn’t let me move.”

“Then they started kicking my legs with those big leather boots until another police officer came over and helped me up.”

Wang said he was given a card with a number to call for the Mong Kok deputy police chief and a piece of paper saying “beaten by police.”

“I will be sending it to the New Zealand Press Council,” he said.

Wang hit out at the attack as an abuse of police power. “I never expected this while I was working in Hong Kong; it’s as if the police went crazy and don’t care if you’re a journalist any more.”

He said the clashes with protesters overnight in Mong Kok were largely the result of police aggression.

“Why did they have to charge like that? The students were acting very peacefully,” Wang said. “Are they a force for civilization or for backwardness and corruption?”

‘Darkest days’

Under the terms of its 1997 handover to China, the former British colony was promised the continuation of its

existing freedoms and a “high degree of autonomy.”

But journalists and political commentators say Hong Kong’s formerly free press is seeing its “darkest days” yet in what is likely a harbinger of further erosion of the city’s traditional freedoms.

In a recent annual report, the HKJA pointed to a series of “grave attacks, both physical and otherwise in the past 12 months,” including an attack on former Chinese-language *Ming Pao* chief editor Kevin Lau, the sacking of Commercial Radio talk-show host Li Wei-ling and the removal of other prominent journalists from senior editorial positions.

Advertising boycotts by major companies and the refusal of licenses to pro-democracy media, and a major cyberattack on the Apple Daily website in June, have also been cited as reasons for concern.

Occupy Central protesters are calling for fully democratic elections for Hong Kong’s chief executive in 2017, instead of a limited race between candidates pre-approved by Beijing.

***Reported by Xin Lin and Yang Fan for RFA’s Mandarin Service, and by Ho Shan for the Cantonese Service.
Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.***

2014-11-27 – Hong Kong Student Leaders Slam Police Violence, Mull Further Action



Student leader Joshua Wong (L) speaks to reporters outside a courthouse after he was released on bail in Hong Kong, Nov. 27, 2014. – AFP

Hong Kong's police force came under fire on Thursday in the wake of its clearance of a pro-democracy camp in Mong Kok, as student leaders said they were subjected to violent treatment during arrest on public order charges.

Joshua Wong, 18, who heads the academic activist group Scholarism, told reporters after being bailed out from his arrest for contempt of court, that police who dragged him away from the Mong Kok street held by Occupy Central protesters until early this week had used violence.

“Around 10 police officers, including those in blue uniforms and helmets, rushed towards me and pushed me to the ground, so as to limit my range of movement,” Wong said. “I was injured in the neck and elsewhere.”

“They hurt me six or seven times, including in my private parts.”

Wong, who has become one of the key figures in the Occupy Central movement since it began on Sept. 28, hit out at the use of violence, saying that police had also taunted and cursed at him during his overnight stay in Kowloon's Kwai Chung police station.

Wong, who was also pelted with eggs by two unidentified men outside the court, is now banned from entering the area that was the scene of Wednesday night's clashes, during which at least two journalists were arrested and one beaten, as a condition of his bail.

Similar experience

*Walking With A Yellow Umbrella: Bearing
Witness to a Revolution*

Fellow student leader Lester Shum, who was arrested at the same time, reported a similar experience.

“I was carried away by several police officers, who punched me and kicked me,” Shum told reporters after being bailed out. “Some of them pulled my hair and pinned me to the ground.”

Pan-democratic politicians also criticized the operation.

Labour Party chairman and lawmaker Lee Cheuk-yan said the government, which ruled out further dialogue with students earlier this month, should have worked harder to find a political solution to the stand-off.

“Political problems shouldn’t be resolved with police violence,” Lee said in a statement.

And lawmaker Dennis Kwok, who represents the legal profession in Hong Kong’s Legislative Council (LegCo), said police had failed to comply with correct procedures by not explaining the High Court injunction to people when they and court bailiffs began clearing barricades and encampments at the start of a two-day operation that saw at least 148 people arrested.

“I think the police action has not followed the procedures ... to explain the gist of the injunction order to the people at the scene, before they start the arrests,” Kwok told reporters.

The Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) said the operation was a bid by the government of embattled chief executive C.Y. Leung to clear protests in the name of a civil injunction brought by transportation groups.

Leung’s administration had “attempted to borrow the name of the injunction to carry out what is in effect a clearance,” the group said.

Police entitlement?

But Hong Kong justice secretary Rimsky Yuen defended the clearance operation, saying that police were entitled to carry out their duties in accordance with other ordinances aside from those stipulated in the High Court.

“If there is any person who takes the view that the bailiffs are not performing their duty properly, I am sure they can take the matter to the appropriate venue,” Yuen said.

Some 6,000 police officers have been assigned to the cleared streets and nearby areas in Mong Kok until Sunday to prevent any attempt to re-take the area by Occupy Central protesters, the English-language South China Morning Post reported.

Official Chinese media applauded the clearance of Mong Kok.

“There was some inevitable confusion at the site, but the clearance was conducted as smoothly as expected,” the tabloid Global Times newspaper, which has close ties to the ruling Chinese Communist Party, said in an editorial.

“With its goals appearing ridiculous and public support quickly diminishing, the Occupy Central campaign has failed,” the paper said.

“Their radical illusion of reshaping Hong Kong is like tilting at windmills,” it said. “It will never come to pass.”

‘Further actions’

Meanwhile, student leaders threatened to target government buildings in response to police violence in Mong Kok.

“I think we have made it very clear that if [the police] continue the violent way of clearing up the place, we will

have further actions,”

HKFS spokeswoman Yvonne Leung told government broadcaster RTHK.

“The further actions include a possibility of some escalations pointed at government-related buildings or some government-related departments,” she said.

Leung, who also heads the University of Hong Kong students’ union, said further details would be released soon.

The students’ plans appear to be increasingly at odds with the strategies proposed by the three older founders of Occupy Central, Benny Tai, Chan Kin-man and Chu Yiu-ming, who have said they plan to turn themselves in to police next month in a sacrificial gesture to win public support for the movement they started.

More radical protesters have called for further escalation of protests in a bid to put further pressure on the government to give in to Occupy Central’s core demands.

Occupy Central, or the “Umbrella Movement,” began on Sept. 28, when police use of tear-gas and pepper spray against umbrella-wielding demonstrators brought hundreds of thousands of citizens onto the streets in protest at the movement’s height.

But Hong Kong officials have repeatedly told the protesters to leave, saying that Beijing won’t withdraw an Aug. 31 decision ruling out public nomination of candidates in the 2017 election for the chief executive.

China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), said that while Hong Kong’s five million voters will cast ballots to elect the next chief executive, they may only choose between two or three candidates approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

Protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who currently only have around seven percent of the nominating committee vote compared with 56 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative election, have dismissed the proposed electoral reforms as “fake universal suffrage.”

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-11-30 – Fresh Clashes in Hong Kong As Protesters Converge on Government Buildings



Thousands of Hong Kong pro-democracy activists, mainly students, clash with police as they try to encircle government headquarters, Dec. 1, 2014. – EyePress News

Hundreds of pro-democracy activists clashed with police in Hong Kong on Sunday after student leaders of the Occupy Central movement called on supporters to encircle government buildings in the former British colony.

Protesters wearing hard hats and masks chanted “Surround Government HQ!” and “Make Way! Make Way!” as they converged on Central Government Offices in the semiautonomous Chinese city, while police fired pepper spray in a bid to disperse the crowd.

More people began streaming towards the entrances and fire exits of the government building after a call from Nathan Law of the academic activist group Scholarism to supporters to join in.

The ubiquitous umbrellas, which became a symbol of the “Umbrella Movement” because of their widespread use to ward off pepper and tear-gas spray, were once more out in force.

The crowd had swelled to “several thousand,” by 10.00 p.m. local time, according to RFA journalists at the scene, after Hong Kong Federation of Students leader Nathan Law addressed the main occupation site on nearby Harcourt Road, calling on them to join in.

But Scholarism’s Oscar Lai warned protesters to stick to the principle of non-violent action, and not to provoke or charge at police.

“We can’t provoke the police or charge at them, because we are fighting for their basic right to vote and to seek

election as well,” Lai said.

“They are Hong Kong people too,” he told the crowd in a speech as the action was launched in “Umbrella Square.”

“I want today’s action to be a mass action, not a dozen people hanging around at a street corner,” he said. “If that happens, it’s much harder for us to support you and ensure your safety.”

He added: “Today’s protest has an aim; and that is to force the government to pay attention to the will of the people.”

Police warning defied



Hong Kong police confront pro-democracy activists, Dec. 1, 2014. – EyePress News

Sunday’s protest came in spite of a police warning against such a rally, after which some 3,000 officers were deployed to the scene.

“If anyone obstructs the police in carrying out their duty, charges the police line violently, or tries to blockade central government offices, police will take resolute action,” police spokesman Kong Man-keung told reporters.

A City University student surnamed Ng said she would be swelling the ranks of Sunday’s protests, in spite of police warnings.

“I probably won’t stand right on the front line, because my family are very worried about my safety,” Ng said. “So I’ll find a spot a little further back.”

“The more of us there are, the safer it will be,” she said.

The renewed stand-off came after police cleared a seven-week-old occupation of the bustling shopping district of Mong Kok last week, acting to enforce a civil injunction brought by the transportation industry over the blocking of a major highway.

Police arrested 28 people in clashes on Friday and Saturday in Mong Kok, as hundreds of crowds attempted to retake the cleared site on Kowloon’s Nathan Road, without success.

The Occupy movement began on Sept. 28, when police use of tear-gas and pepper spray against umbrella-

wielding demonstrators brought hundreds of thousands of citizens onto the streets in protest at the movement's height.

But Hong Kong officials have repeatedly told the protesters to leave, saying that Beijing won't withdraw an Aug. 31 decision ruling out public nomination of candidates in the 2017 election for the chief executive.

China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), said that while Hong Kong's five million voters will cast ballots to elect the next chief executive, they may only choose between two or three candidates approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

'Fake universal suffrage'

Protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who currently only have around seven percent of the nominating committee vote compared with 56 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative election, have dismissed the proposed electoral reforms as "fake universal suffrage."

Meanwhile, the high-profile student leaders of the movement appear to be increasingly at odds with its founders, three middle-aged academics, who appear to favor more symbolic forms of resistance.

Law said that while not all Occupy protesters are students and not everyone agrees with the students' actions, the HKFS has a clear vision on which to base its next move.

"At the start of the year...the federation collected the opinions of students from Hong Kong's eight universities, and arrived at the consensus that everyone wants public nomination of election candidates," Law said.

He said students also overwhelmingly support the abolition of industry-based seats in Hong Kong's Legislative Council (LegCo), known as "functional constituencies."

"The federation started out as a student organization that was there for students," Law said. "Now, it is there for the public as a whole."

Several hundred protesters remain in occupation on a major highway not far from government headquarters and at the busy shopping district of Causeway Bay, on Hong Kong Island.

They say they won't leave until the government responds to their demands, some of which include the resignation of embattled chief executive C.Y. Leung and the withdrawal of Beijing's Aug. 31 decision.

Reported by RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-12-01- Students Stage Hunger Strike to Demand Full Democracy in Hong Kong



Debris blocks escalators leading to government headquarters in Hong Kong's Admiralty district, Dec. 1, 2014. – RFA

Hong Kong student leaders said they have begun a hunger strike in a bid to pressure Beijing into allowing full democracy for the city after thousands of pro-democracy activists forced a temporary closure of the government headquarters following clashes with police.

The student leaders announced their “indefinite” hunger strike hours after Hong Kong’s leader Leung Chun-ying warned that police would take “resolute action” against protests now into their third month.

On Monday, police used pepper spray and batons on students trying to storm government headquarters, in some of the worst violence since the rallies began in September after Beijing refused to allow a free vote for electing Hong Kong’s leader.

Joshua Wong, 18, who heads the academic activist group Scholarism said that he and two other student activists would begin fasting to attempt to force the Hong Kong government to respond to their demands for free elections in the semi-autonomous Chinese city in 2017.

“We, Scholarism, announce that now I, Joshua Wong, Wong Tsz-yuet and Lo Yin-wai, the three representatives, will go on an indefinite hunger strike,” Wong told protesters on stage at the main Occupy Central protest site in the former British colony’s Admiralty district.

“Living in these troubled times, there is a duty,” Wong wrote in a statement on Facebook after the announcement, and which was also signed by Lo, 18, and Wong Tsz-yuet, 17.

“Today we are willing to pay the price, we are willing to take the responsibility,” the statement said. “We want to take back our future.”

Previous hunger strikes in Hong Kong have tended to be carried out by large groups of people in shifts.

But the three students said they would fast “indefinitely” unless the Hong Kong government, which has ruled out further talks with students and called on them to end their “illegal” protests, reopens dialogue, and Beijing withdraws an Aug. 31 decision on electoral reform.

The three wrote that they had “tried everything,” including a student strike, surrounding the chief executive’s office, dialogue with the government, and occupation of key areas in Hong Kong—Admiralty, Mong Kok, Causeway Bay and Tsimshatsui.

“Our bodies are tired, but spiritually we feel as if we have endless energy,” the students wrote.

“We feel that we won’t be wasting our young lives if we stake them on the progress of democracy in Hong Kong,” they said.

“We are afraid, but we won’t run away.”

Monday clashes

The announcement followed the forced closure of Hong Kong’s government headquarters in the Admiralty district by thousands of Occupy Central activists on Monday morning, amid conflicting visions for the future of the movement in support of full democracy.

Government headquarters reopened on Monday afternoon after numbers thinned, and police were able to regain access after using water hoses and pepper spray against the crowd, forcing those who remained back to their encampment on nearby Harcourt Road.

Dozens of people were arrested after protesters barricaded roads and blocked entrances to the central government office building in the early hours of Monday.

Leung warned that arrests on public order charges could affect the future of protesters, the majority of whom are university students and young professionals.

“We do not wish to arrest people in site clearance ... as they will have criminal records, which will affect their chances in studying and working overseas,” Leung said.

But he warned that police restraint shouldn’t be mistaken for incompetence.

“Please do not take tolerance as incapability in handling the issue ... do not think the police are weak,” Leung said.

Alex Chow, who heads the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) told reporters on Monday that the bid to escalate the civil disobedience campaign hadn’t worked.

“The aim was to disrupt the government,” Chow said. “We can say we were successful for a short time. But it ultimately failed and there is room for improvement.”

“We will have discussions in the Occupy area in the following days on how the movement should go ahead,” he said.

Violent confrontation

One protester surnamed Lui said he had witnessed violent scenes during the clashes, in which dozens were reported injured by local hospitals.

“They used batons, as if they had gone crazy ... Some people were injured by their beatings, and there was a lot of blood,” he said.

“The police were trying to arrest people, but we managed to pull a few people to safety,” Lui said, adding that he thought the “escalation” plan hadn’t been planned in great detail.

“I don’t think this really counts as an escalation,” he said.

According to the government, “violent radicals” were among the crowds and repeatedly shoved police officers and charged police lines.

“The police took resolute action by using appropriate force to stop these illegal acts and disperse and arrest those involved,” a spokesman said, adding that at least 11 police officers were injured in the clashes.

The clashes came amid growing differences within the Occupy Central movement, whose founders are calling on occupiers to go home after they symbolically turn themselves in to police.

However, activist groups Scholarism and HKFS say they won’t leave unless the decision to do so is unanimous.

Meanwhile, more radical voices within the movement are calling for an escalation of protests to force the government to take action on their demands.

Occupy movement

The Occupy movement began on Sept. 28, when police use of tear-gas and pepper spray against umbrella-wielding demonstrators made international headlines, bringing hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets in protest at the movement’s height.

But Hong Kong officials have repeatedly told the protesters to leave, saying that Beijing won’t withdraw an Aug. 31 decision ruling out public nomination of candidates in the 2017 election for the chief executive.

China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), said that while Hong Kong’s five million voters will cast ballots to elect the next chief executive, they may only choose between two or three candidates approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

Protesters and pan-democratic politicians, who currently only have around seven percent of the nominating committee vote compared with 56 percent of the popular vote in the last legislative election, have dismissed the proposed electoral reforms as “fake universal suffrage.”

Labour party chairman and lawmaker Lee Cheuk-yan called on Monday for more discussions about the future of the movement.

“When protesters escalate their actions, police also escalate their violence,” Lee said in comments reported by the South China Morning Post newspaper.

“Because of such differences ... it’ll be more difficult to remain peaceful and non-violent while escalating action.”

Meanwhile, Hong Kong’s High Court on Monday barred pro-democracy protesters from occupying Harcourt Road—the site of the main encampment—Connaught Road Central, and most of Cotton Tree Drive.

The court claimed the protesters right to demonstrate was “not absolute and subject to limitation,” saying it had

to be balanced against the public's right to use the roads.

A student protester at Admiralty surnamed Shuet said he planned to remain until the police moved him from the site.

"We will definitely remain in occupation, and if they come here, we will think about leaving then," Shuet told RFA. But he added: "I hope there won't be too big a backlash."

Reported by Wen Yuqing and Pan Jiaqing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin and Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-12-02 – Occupy Movement Founders to Surrender to Hong Kong Police



Occupy Central organizers Chan Kin-man (L), Benny Tai (C) and Chu Yiu-ming (R) hold a press conference to announce their surrender to police in Hong Kong, Dec. 2, 2014. – AFP

The three founders of Hong Kong's Occupy Central civil disobedience group aimed at pushing for political reforms said Tuesday that they would surrender to police and called on student activists to end their street protests to prevent violence.

Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP) founders professors Benny Tai Yiu-ting and Chan Kin-man and pastor Chu Yiu-ming said they would turn themselves in Wednesday to take responsibility for the protests that have shut down parts of the Asian financial center for more than two months.

They “will hand themselves in tomorrow at 3 p.m. at Central Police Station,” according to a tweet by the movement.

Another tweet by the non-violent movement, which demands a fully democratic government in Hong Kong, said citizens hadn't abandoned their democratic aspirations, although there may be different ideas about whether continued occupation was a way to achieve them.

The movement's founders also tweeted: “There are different strategies in a democratic movement. We're very clear our role was to help students. What's changed now is violence from the government.”

Although the announcement came shortly after student leaders of the protests, also called the umbrella movement because students used umbrellas to shield themselves from rain and pepper spray, said they would regroup, Tai urged them to retreat in light of authorities' recent attacks on them.

“In the past two weeks, the police have cracked down hard on protestors in the occupied sites,” Tai, a law professor at the University of Hong Kong, told a news conference on Tuesday.

“Our young people have used their bodies to sustain the blows of police batons. Their black and broken bones have brought us the deepest sorrow.

“We respect the students’ and citizens’ determination to fight for democracy, but we are furious at the government’s heartless indifference.

“A government that uses police battalions to maintain its authority is a government that is beyond reason.

“For the sake of the occupiers’ safety and for the sake of our original intention of love and peace, as we prepare to surrender, we three urge the students to retreat, to put down deep roots in the community and transform the movement to extend the spirit of the umbrella movement.”

Hunger strike

On Monday, student leaders said they would begin a hunger strike in a bid to pressure Beijing into allowing full democracy for the city after thousands of pro-democracy activists forced a temporary closure of the government headquarters following clashes with police.

The student leaders announced their “indefinite” hunger strike hours after Hong Kong’s leader Leung Chun-ying warned that police would take “resolute action” against protests.

Police used pepper spray and batons on students trying to storm government headquarters in some of the worst violence since the rallies began in September after Beijing refused to allow a free vote for electing Hong Kong’s leader in 2017.

Despite calls by Occupy Central founders to end the protests, some students said they would continue the mission.

“Now they talk about retreat,” a 24-year-old protestor named Raymond Tsang told Agence France-Presse.

“It is a betrayal of what we have insisted on all along. We should not consider an end to the campaign until there is a solid achievement.”

But Tai said at the press conference: “Surrendering is not an act of cowardice. It is the courage to act on a promise. To surrender is not to fail; it is a silent denunciation of a heartless government.”

Into the background

Tai along with Chan and Baptist minister Chu founded the Occupy Central movement in early 2013 to push for political reforms in the semi-autonomous city, but faded into the background as more radical student leaders stepped to the forefront of the pro-democracy protests.

The main protest camp remains along a stretch of highway in the Admiralty district in central Hong Kong.

Previous attempts to further the movement’s cause through dialogue failed.

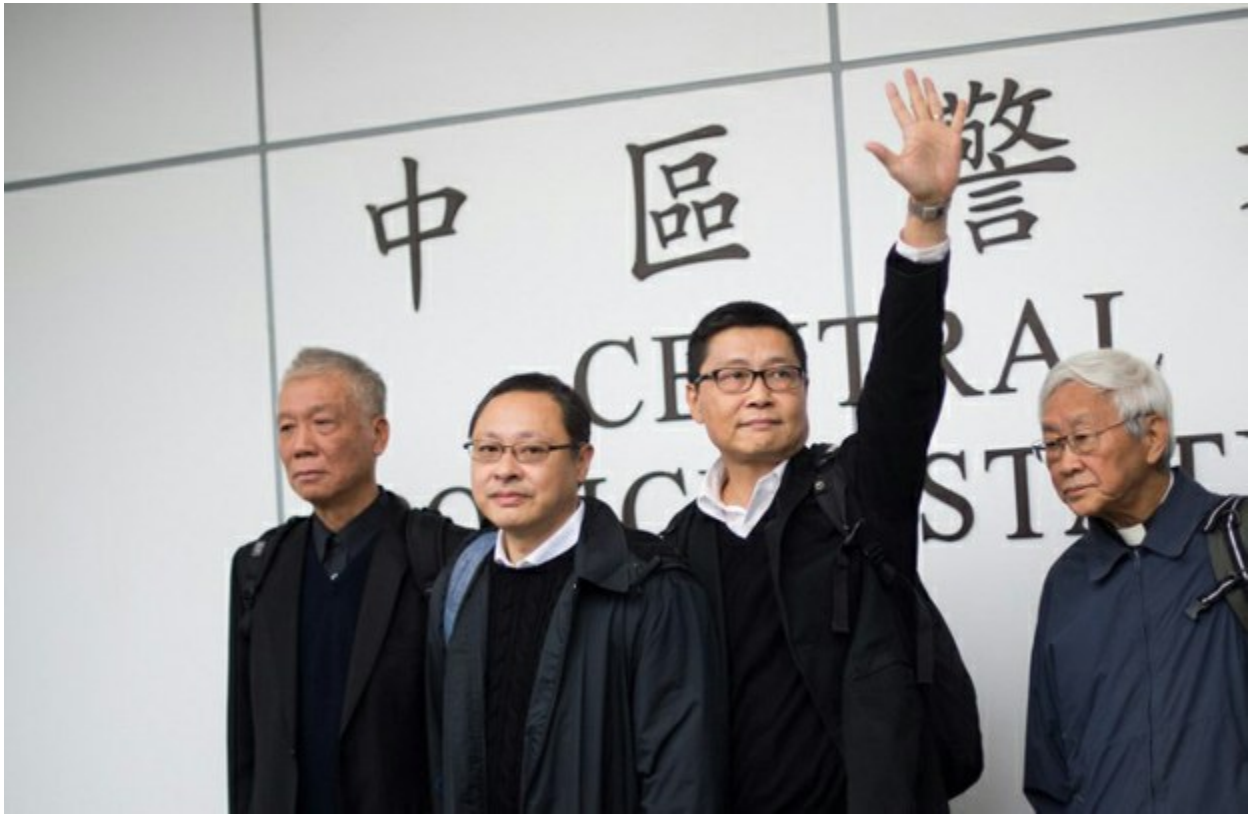
Talks between demonstrators and the Hong Kong government had ended in an impasse in October.

In November, three student representatives from the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students—Alex Chow, Eason Chung and Nathan Law—planned to travel to Beijing to address Chinese Communist Party leaders about their demands for free elections, but they were prevented from boarding the plane after authorities revoked

their travel permits.

Reported by RFA's Cantonese and Mandarin services. Written in English by Roseanne Gerin.

2014-12-03 – Hong Kong Police Turn Away Occupy Movement Founders



(L-R) Occupy Central organizers Chu Yiu-ming, Benny Tai and Chan Kin-man, along with former bishop of Hong Kong Joseph Zen, leave a police station in Hong Kong, Dec. 3, 2014. – AFP

Three organizers of Hong Kong's Occupy Central nonviolent, pro-democracy movement were not arrested when they surrendered themselves to police on Wednesday in a bid to end street protests that have shut down parts of the semi-autonomous city for more than two months.

Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP) founders professors Benny Tai Yiu-ting and Chan Kin-man and pastor Chu Yiu-ming symbolically turned themselves in for "participating in an unauthorized assembly" to protest Beijing's refusal to allow a free vote for electing Hong Kong's next leader in 2017.

"I heard very clearly from the police that we have not been arrested, so we are allowed to leave without restriction," Tai told the media outside the police station. "They handled our cases quite fast."

He also said he did not know if the trio would be prosecuted for other or additional offenses and that police indicated they would notify them if they wanted them to return to the station.

Former Hong Kong bishop Joseph Zen and dozens of supporters also turned themselves in.

"I took part in the campaign to express my disappointment with the government," a protestor surnamed Chen who was waiting to surrender outside the police station told RFA. "But because the occupy action was so unlawful, I'm surrendering today. But the protest was the only way we could express our anger."

The occupy movement was "the most peaceful way to fight for universal suffrage," Chen said.

“Now the surrender will wake up more people to fight for real democracy,” he said.

Another protestor who wanted to surrender to police, but did not give his name, told RFA: “I feel I have a duty to go to the court to make our positions even clearer to all—why Hong Kong people deserve the civil rights and true universal suffrage they want.”

A social worker who only gave his name as Kenneth and was outside the police station to support Tai and the others told RFA: “Civilian disobedience has come to this moment and the last step—to surrender to the police so as to take responsibility.

That’s why I came here. I think we should move our battlefield to other areas, including writing down the [movement’s] work to let many people know and understand [it].”

Wu Yisan, A Hong Kong-based commentator said both the Beijing and Hong Kong governments were the big losers in the protest.

“Students and citizens in Hong Kong held out for more than two months of peaceful protests, which greatly impacted the world. [But] the Beijing and Hong Kong governments clumsily handled the umbrella movement. They lost.”

US diplomat’s call

In the meantime, a top U.S. diplomat for Asia called on China to ensure that multiple candidates would be allowed to run freely in the 2017 elections in Hong Kong.

Daniel Russel, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, urged Beijing, the Hong Kong government, and citizens to “work together to advance Hong Kong’s democratic development, establish universal suffrage by 2017, and preserve Hong Kong’s autonomy and its free and open society.”

“This means allowing for a competitive election in which a range of candidates with differing policy approaches are given an opportunity to seek the support of eligible Hong Kong voters,” he said in a testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Wednesday.

China’s communist leaders decided on Aug. 31 to limit the number of candidates running for chief executive to two or three and required that nominees be endorsed by a majority of the nominating committee.

Despite the surrender of the three founders of the Occupy movement to police, student leaders of the protests—also called the umbrella movement—said earlier this week that they would regroup.

Tai had urged them to retreat in light of authorities’ recent attacks on them.

The student leaders also began a hunger strike in a bid to pressure Beijing into allowing full democracy for the city after thousands of pro-democracy activists forced a temporary closure of the government headquarters following clashes with police.

Police used pepper spray and batons on students trying to storm government headquarters last Sunday in some of the worst violence since the rallies began in September.

Tai, Chan and Chu founded the Occupy Central movement in early 2013 to push for political reforms in Hong Kong, but were overshadowed by radical student leaders who stepped to the forefront of the pro-democracy protests.

Reported by RFA’s Cantonese and Mandarin services. Translated by Shiny Li and Ping Chen. Written in English by Roseanne Gerin.

2014-12-04 - Fasting Hong Kong Democracy Protester Weakens, Vows to Continue



The Occupy Central movement enters its 68th day in Hong Kong, Dec. 4, 2014.- RFA

Student democracy movement leader Joshua Wong vowed on Thursday to continue his hunger strike despite warnings about his health and concern over the future of the two-month-old Occupy Central movement.

Wong, who has been fasting along with two other members of his activist group Scholarism, and who was joined by two other student hunger strikers on Wednesday, says he wants the Hong Kong government to reinstate talks with protesters over their demands for fully democratic elections in 2017.

Wong appeared very weak on Thursday, but apologized after being given glucose when his blood sugar levels plummeted, on advice from a medical team caring for the hunger strikers.

Hong Kong's secretary for food and health Ko Wing-man warned the fasting students, who pledged to drink only water and eat no food, that hunger striking is bad for their health.

"From a medical point of view, any sort of fast, including that in which nothing is eaten or in which only liquids or water are taken, are all bad for health," Ko told reporters.

In Taiwan, Wang Dan, a former student leader in the 1989 pro-democracy movement in Beijing, called on the five Hong Kong students to end their hunger strike.

"As long as the mountains are green, there will always be fuel for the fire," Wang wrote on Facebook on Thursday. "It doesn't matter if you lose a battle; winning the war is more important."

Worsening condition

A Scholarism volunteer identified only by his nickname Ernest told RFA that the five hunger strikers' conditions had already worsened, and that the three who began refusing food on Monday were the weakest.

"There are medical staff who monitor their health at regular intervals, so as to make sure they're not in danger," he said.

As the hunger strike continued, the ruling Chinese Communist Party ward off growing international criticism of its refusal to allow the public nomination of candidates in the 2017 elections for the territory's chief executive.

According to an Aug. 31 decision from the country's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), all five million of Hong Kong's voters will cast ballots in the poll, but may only choose between two or three candidates vetted by a Beijing-backed election committee.

China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying hit out at calls from U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel on Wednesday for Beijing to exercise restraint and flexibility in dealing with the wishes of Hong Kong people.

"The Chinese side resolutely opposes any interference in any form by any foreign country," Hua told a regular news briefing in Beijing on Thursday.

She repeated Beijing's claim that the Occupy movement in Hong Kong was incited by "some individuals and forces."

Last week, Ni Jian, deputy Chinese ambassador to Britain, told British officials that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration "is now void and only covered the period from the signing in 1984 until the handover in 1997."

Ni's comments were reported during a parliamentary debate on Tuesday by Richard Ottaway, chairman of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee.

Hua responded: "Britain has no sovereignty over Hong Kong that has returned to China, no authority and no right to oversight."

The next move

The influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) said on Thursday that student protest leaders are now considering whether to continue occupying major highways and intersections near government headquarters in the Admiralty district and busy Causeway Bay shopping district.

Students have continued "shopping tour" walking protests around the former Occupy site in Kowloon's Mong Kok district after the site was forcefully cleared by riot police using tear-gas spray and batons last week.

HKFS spokeswoman Yvonne Leung told a local program on Hong Kong's Commercial Radio that students could decide within a week whether to remain in place.

"Some protesters have expressed a wish to stay until police clear the sites, but we also need to think clearly about what purpose a continued occupation would serve," she said.

She said the HKFS would gather opinions and views from protesters before making "a concrete decision."

A student occupier surnamed Lee told RFA on Thursday that there is now a clear split within the ranks of occupiers between those who want to stay and those who want to call an end to occupation.

"I will respect whatever decision the federation makes, but I won't leave if they do," said Lee, who added that he didn't agree with the hunger strike as a strategy for boosting popular support for the pro-democracy movement.

“There’s a limit to how much public sympathy the hunger strike can win,” he added. “It would be better to take good care of oneself so as to better resist police violence.”

*Reported by Wong Lok-to and Ho Shan for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service.
Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.*

2014-12-08 – Hong Kong Gears Up to Clear Pro-Democracy Occupiers From Highway



Hong Kong protesters in tents join a relay to fast for 28 hours in support of student leaders who recently ended their own hunger strike, Dec. 8, 2014. – RFA

Hong Kong authorities on Monday issued an order to clear the main pro-democracy encampment on a major highway near government headquarters in the semiautonomous Chinese city, paving the way for police intervention to end the 10-week-long protests.

The civil injunction was granted to a bus company by the High Court in the former British colony, but police are widely expected to assist court bailiffs in clearing the road, as they did in the Kowloon district of Mong Kok earlier this month.

The injunction covers about one-fifth of the Admiralty protest area. However, connecting sections of road were also cleared by police during the Mong Kok clearance operation.

Some 7,000 police officers will be deployed to clear the main Occupy Central site later this week, government broadcaster RTHK reported.

But police and lawyers for the All China Express bus company said they would ensure those who wished to leave ahead of the clearance had plenty of time to do so.

Student leaders also said on Monday they would make arrangements for more vulnerable protesters to leave

before clearance operations begin.

“I think we will need to make arrangements for high-school students and some older people to leave, leaving volunteers to carry out the civil disobedience protest,” Joshua Wong, leader of the academic activism group Scholarism, told reporters.

He said that while Scholarism and the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) had no plans to offer any resistance to police, leaders were urging students to bring homemade shields to ward off blows from police batons.

He said students also have no plans to leave the site until forced to do so.

A protester at the Admiralty site surnamed Tam said she is camped in an area not covered by the injunction, and had few concerns about the clearance operation.

“It shouldn’t be a problem, because the injunction doesn’t come up as far as the bridge,” she said. “So I will be staying.”

Hong Kong’s embattled chief executive Leung Chun-ying on Sunday repeated his view that the Occupy Central movement is an “illegal gathering.”

“There are fewer and fewer people taking part, but their actions are becoming more and more extreme,” Leung said. “We must make proper preparation, mentally and physically, for the clearance operation.”

“It is likely that police will meet with furious resistance.”

Hunger strike

Hundreds of protesters have remained encamped on Admiralty’s Harcourt Road since clashes with riot police on Sept. 28 brought hundreds of thousands of supporters onto the streets at the height of the “Umbrella Movement.”

The news of the court order came as two out of five students gave up a hunger strike they began last week, including Joshua Wong, who had fasted for 108 hours.

Scholarism member Eddie Ng ended his hunger strike after nearly 120 hours. Both did so on the advice of doctors, they said, prompting supporters to launch a “relay” hunger strike to carry on their protest.

Scholarism activist Gloria Cheng was the only remaining continuous hunger striker by Monday night.

An activist surnamed Tai said he had signed up for the relay hunger strike, in which each protester fasts for 28 hours.

“We all want to show our support for the hunger striking students, and go some of the way with them,” Tai said. “While 28 hours isn’t very long, we at least want them to know they aren’t alone.”

He said the aim of the relay hunger strike remains the re-opening of dialogue with the Hong Kong government over electoral reform.

The ruling Chinese Communist Party has hit out at international support for the Occupy Central protests, saying that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration is “void,” and that it answers to no one in exercising sovereignty over Hong Kong, which was handed back by the U.K. in 1997.

According to an Aug. 31 decision from the country’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), all five million of Hong Kong’s voters will cast ballots in the poll, but may only choose between two or three candidates

vetted by a Beijing-backed election committee.

‘Hold them accountable’

Former U.S. consul general to Hong Kong Stephen M. Young, writing in the *South China Morning Post* newspaper, said world leaders should continue to make it clear that they are watching developments closely, however.

“We must hold them accountable for their actions to undermine Hong Kong’s desire for a representative government whose leaders they can choose themselves,” Young, now retired, wrote in a personal commentary published on Monday.

Hong Kong police are facing growing criticism over the use of excessive force against demonstrators in Mong Kok.

Hundreds of parents, teachers and social workers marched to Hong Kong police headquarters in Central on Monday, shouting “Criminal police! For shame!” and holding up large prints of news photos showing police using batons on the crowd.

Veteran pan-democrat and founding chairman of the Democratic Party Martin Lee called on China’s President Xi Jinping to “clear up confusion” over comments by Chinese officials in London on the status of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

Beijing last week blocked a delegation of British MPs from entering Hong Kong on a fact-finding mission, a move lauded by pro-establishment politicians as a legitimate prevention of foreign interference in Hong Kong’s affairs.

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-12-11 – Hong Kong Occupiers Defiant But Peaceful as Police Clear Main Protest Site



Hong Kong police arrest a pro-democracy demonstrator (2nd L) as authorities clear the main protest site in the Admiralty district in Hong Kong, Dec. 11, 2014. – AFP

Pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong chanted “We’ll be back” as police and court bailiffs cleared their tents and barricades from a major highway in the semiautonomous Chinese city early on Thursday local time, putting an end to a two-month-long occupation.

Police arrested 209 people during the clearance of Harcourt Road near government headquarters in the former British colony’s Admiralty district, while more than 900 people had their details noted and could still be charged, a spokesman said.

Among those arrested were student leaders of the Occupy Central, or “Umbrella,” movement that began on Sept. 28, bringing hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets after clashes with riot police who used tear gas, batons, and pepper spray on umbrella-carrying protesters.

Pan-democratic politicians, protest leaders, and even a pop star were among those in the final sit-in who were arrested, with some walking quietly under police escort with plastic handcuffs and others being carried away by officers.

Police took away Democratic Party founder Martin Lee, Civic Party lawmakers Alan Leong and Audrey Eu, Democratic Party chairwoman Emily Lau, and media mogul Jimmy Lai, whose Apple Daily media group had covered the protests by live webcast and drone camera since they began.

Student leader Nathan Law, Cantopop star Denise Ho, and veteran activist Leung Kwok-hung, known by his nickname “Long Hair,” were also held.

A major impact

Alex Chow said in an interview with RFA before the clearance operation began that the movement has already had a major impact on the territory's political life.

"The Occupy movement has been very effective in awakening our citizens," Chow told RFA. "We had such huge numbers; hundreds of thousands took part in the civil disobedience movement."

"Hong Kong people are willing to pay the price for democracy," he said. "We may not have gotten the result we wanted today, but ... people won't just give up on the movement now."

Chow said he still expects to see smaller but frequent protests greeting Hong Kong government officials as they try to persuade people to accept Beijing's electoral reform plan.

HKFS core member Lester Shum said both the HKFS and the academic activist group Scholarism would stick to principles of nonviolence.

"Everyone knows that the government isn't going to give way on electoral reforms, so we will have to work to put even more pressure on them in future," Shum said.

"A bigger weight of public opinion could force the government to make concessions," he said.

Jimmy Lai told CNN before being arrested that protesters know that the struggle for full democracy in Hong Kong will be a long-term one.

"We are not so naive," he said. "We know there will be many battles before we win the war."

'Unlawful assembly'

Some protesters and lawmakers had gathered in an area just outside the limits of a High Court injunction ordering the clearance of the area, brought by a bus company that complained the protests were hurting its business.

Many were arrested on suspicion of "unlawful assembly," with many demonstrators shouting slogans including "We'll be back!" or making the "mockingjay" rebel salute from Hollywood blockbuster movie *The Hunger Games*.

A protester surnamed Lam at the Admiralty site said that those who had camped there had already removed their tents and personal belongings on Wednesday.

"I don't think it's a good way to solve the problem by remaining here," Lam said. "But I hope to see the movement continue in our communities; that's the most important thing."

A second protester surnamed Lee said that the overwhelming trend seems to be to accept that the clearances are marking the end of the occupation.

"If a lot of people were staying, then I'd stay too," she said. "I'm not afraid of arrest."

"But there has begun to be a backlash among local people, now that so many have been here for such a long time," Lee said. "Why is our government like this?"

Demands still unmet

After the last protesters were taken away, taxis and minibuses began using the road, which was newly cleared of

debris and washed down by water trucks to remove the last evidence of a vibrant protest community that once included impromptu art exhibitions, a “Lennon” message wall, first-aid stalls, makeshift study areas, and a trash disposal service all staffed by volunteers.

Hundreds of police officers posed for a group photograph outside the Admiralty Centre at the heart of the tent city and protest site that became known as “Umbrella Square.”

But while their demands for full universal suffrage in the 2017 election for the next chief executive remained unmet following an edict from Beijing, most activists chose to leave the Admiralty site peacefully.

Police said they would clear a much smaller protest encampment in the bustling shopping district of Causeway Bay at a later date.

The scenes at Admiralty were in sharp contrast to the violent clashes between police and protesters when a similar site across the harbor in Mong Kok was cleared last month, sparking widespread condemnation of excessive force from police, who reportedly attacked a number of journalists as well as protesters.

According to an Aug. 31 decision from the country’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), all five million of Hong Kong’s voters will cast ballots in the 2017 poll, but may only choose between two or three candidates vetted by a Beijing-backed election committee.

Meanwhile, the ruling Chinese Communist Party has hit out at international support for the Occupy Central protests, saying that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration is “void” and that it answers to no one in exercising sovereignty over Hong Kong, which was handed back by the U.K. in 1997.

Reported by Xin Lin and Yang Fan for RFA’s Mandarin Service, and by Wen Yuqing for the Cantonese Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

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7:07 AM - 8 Nov 2014

2014-12-12 - Hong Kong Occupiers Vow to Continue Actions Without Blocking Roads



A worker cleans up the Occupy Central camp outside the Legislative Council in Hong Kong, Dec. 12, 2014. – RFA

Smaller protests continued on Friday outside Hong Kong's legislature and in a busy shopping district after some 7,000 police moved in to clear the last protesters from the main Occupy Central on Thursday, arresting 247 people.

A handful of protesters remained encamped outside the semiautonomous Chinese city's Legislative Council (LegCo) in a bid to keep up the pressure on the government for fully democratic elections in 2017 and beyond.

LegCo chairman and pro-Beijing politician Jasper Tsang said he hadn't ruled out asking for police assistance to remove the protesters.

"The area in question...isn't a public space, and if people begin any sort of movement there, the secretariat will try to use their own efforts...to get them to see sense and move on of their own accord," Tsang told reporters.

"That way, we won't have to ask the police to help us."

Protesters vowed to stay until moved on, however.

"We are gathered here...[because] the Basic Law gives citizens the right of assembly and protest," one protester outside LegCo told RFA, in a reference to the former British colony's mini-constitution.

But he said he had no plans to resist if police tried to remove the group.

'We won't leave'

A second protester surnamed Tsik said protesters planned to stay until LegCo begins its session next week.

“We won’t leave, unless the police come and force us to leave,” he said. “But we will want to know what law we are supposed to have broken.”

“Don’t we have the right to make our views heard, to demonstrate?”

He said the Occupy movement will continue in spite of the loss of its main encampment near government headquarters in Admiralty district after Thursday’s clearance operation.

“All we want are fully democratic elections,” Tsik said.

Student leaders of the civil disobedience movement, which blocked key highways and intersections in Hong Kong for more than two months, said they would likely switch tactics and avoid blocking roads in future protests in the densely populated and congested city.

“Now that the road occupation has ended, students will now go into the community to publicize their ideas,” Joshua Wong, who heads the academic activist group Scholarism, told government broadcaster RTHK.

“If there are occupy movements or other kinds of civil disobedience campaigns in the future, we won’t allow them to drag on, but instead employ flexible strategies,” said Wong, who has been criticized for his absence from the clearance when four other student leaders were arrested.

‘More radical’ protests likely

Meanwhile, Occupy Central co-founder Benny Tai said “more radical” protests now look likely.

“If the government could not respond to the people’s call for genuine universal suffrage, it is possible that more radical actions will appear in the future,” Tai told reporters on Friday.

“This is something that the local government and Beijing should think about,” he said.

He said even if Beijing’s electoral reform package gets through LegCo, unrest could still lie ahead.

Small protests also continued in the busy shopping district of Causeway Bay on Hong Kong Island and in the Kowloon district of Mong Kok, where a protest camp was cleared last month amid widespread clashes with police.

A group of Christians carrying the now-familiar yellow slogans and umbrella logo gathered at the Times Square shopping mall, singing Christmas carols with the lyrics rewritten to call for greater democracy, photos and tweets posted to social media showed.



A few protesters remain at the Occupy Central camp outside the Legislative Council in Hong Kong, Dec. 12, 2014. – RFA

Determination

A Causeway Bay occupier, who gave only a nickname A Man, said he felt out of options at the imminent clearance of the last remaining occupation site in Hong Kong.

“I had hoped that we would still be allowed this place as a gathering place,” A Man said, adding that he would likely take part in any future Occupy Central actions.

“If a lot of people turn out...when the Causeway Bay site is cleared, the government will understand the determination of the people to win universal suffrage,” he said.

Hong Kong financial secretary John Tsang said the clearance of the Occupy sites was “good news” for the territory’s economy, although a recent study failed to show any significant impact on the city’s performance as a financial hub.

“Once the sites have been cleared, local shopkeepers and small and medium-sized businesses will start to feel that things are going better,” Tsang said. “Now the traffic is flowing freely, people’s lives can get back to normal.”

“I’m sure that Hong Kong people are happy about that, and I think this is positive news for the economy,” he told reporters.

According to an Aug. 31 decision from the country’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), all five million of Hong Kong’s voters will cast ballots in the 2017 poll, but may only choose between two or three candidates vetted by a Beijing-backed election committee.

Control by Beijing

Meanwhile, the ruling Chinese Communist Party has hit out at international support for the Occupy Central protests, saying that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration is “void” and that China answers to no one in exercising sovereignty over Hong Kong, which was handed back by the U.K. in 1997.

Beijing on Friday lauded the clearance operation, saying that the ruling Chinese Communist Party “fully agrees and firmly supports” the Hong Kong government and police.

“The Occupy protest has not won the favor of the Hong Kong people,” the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office under China’s cabinet, the State Council, said in a statement.

“We have noticed that the clearance operation was well received and welcomed by the residents of Hong Kong,” it said.

It called on Hong Kong to “learn from” the protests and build consensus around the territory’s future political development.

“We hope that Hong Kong society will engage in rational and pragmatic discussions and accumulate consensus about its political development within the boundaries of the Basic Law and decisions adopted by the Standing Committee of National People’s Congress,” the statement, carried by the official Xinhua news agency, said.

It called on Hong Kong to follow the blueprint laid down in the NPC’s Aug. 31 decision to “realize universal suffrage” in 2017.

The people of Hong Kong should have a better understanding and implementation of the “one country, two systems” principles, it said, referring to the formula agreed by Britain and China before the handover.

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2014-12-15 – Hong Kong Police Clear Last Pro-Democracy Protests as Leaders Vow Movement Will Continue



Causeway occupiers set up Facebook pages, hoping people will continue to support their demand for real universal suffrage in Hong Kong, Dec. 15, 2014. – RFA

Hong Kong police on Monday cleared away the third and last of the pro-democracy encampments on major roads and intersections in the semiautonomous Chinese city, as the city's leader said the 78-day-old civil disobedience movement had come to an end.

Police arrested 20 protesters as they cleared the last remaining Occupy Central site outside a Japanese department store in the busy shopping district of Causeway Bay, dismantling barricades, makeshift shelters and clearing away banners and symbols of the “Umbrella Movement.”

“With the completion of clearance work at the occupation site in Causeway Bay, the illegal occupation that has lasted for more than two months...is over,” Chief Executive Chun-ying Leung told reporters.

He said the protests had caused “serious” economic losses and “damaged the rule of law” in the former British colony.

“If we only talk about democracy, but not about the rule of law, that’s not true democracy. It’s just anarchy,” Leung said.

Monday’s operation also saw the end of a small camp outside Hong Kong’s Legislative Council (LegCo), and

brought to 955 the number of people arrested in connection with the movement, which has campaigned since late September for fully democratic elections in 2017.

The clearance of the sites went off peacefully, with protesters removing their tents and personal belongings well ahead of police deadlines, although some remained behind to be removed by police in a public show of civil disobedience.

Unhappy with response

A Causeway Bay protester in his nineties who was frequently interviewed during the protests and became widely known as Uncle Wong, said he was unhappy with Leung's response to the protesters' demands.

"C.Y. Leung hasn't responded to our demands, even though hundreds of thousands of us have been sitting here for several months," Wong told RFA as the Causeway Bay camp was cleared. "He has totally ignored us, so we still want answers from him."

"I want to stay in jail if I can, to force him to pay for my keep."

Pan-democratic lawmaker Chan Ka Lok was also at the scene.

"They can take action against us today, and clear us away from Causeway Bay, but that's not the end of the dispute over political reforms," he warned.

Many of the arrests were for "obstructing a police officer in the course of duty," local sources said, adding that those arrested were put into police cars and taken to nearby North Point police station.

But the clearances came amid warnings from one of the original founders of the Occupy Central movement, which brought hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets at its height, after riot police used tear-gas, pepper spray and batons on umbrella-wielding protesters, most of whom were students.

Occupy founder Benny Tai told government broadcaster RTHK that the end of the occupation didn't mean an end to the Umbrella Movement or the campaign for full democracy in Hong Kong.

Tai said the movement could descend into violent riots if the government continues to ignore popular demands for public nomination of candidates in the election for chief executive and more direct representation in LegCo.

According to an Aug. 31 decision by China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), all 5 million of Hong Kong's voters will cast ballots in the 2017 poll, but may only choose between two or three candidates vetted by a Beijing-backed election committee.



The last protesters leave the occupied area in front of the Legislative Council in Hong Kong, Dec. 15, 2014. – RFA

International support

Meanwhile, the ruling Chinese Communist Party has criticized international support for the Occupy Central protests, saying that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration is “void” and that China answers to no one in exercising sovereignty over Hong Kong, which was handed back by the U.K. in 1997.

Beijing has lauded the clearance operation, saying that it “fully agrees and firmly supports” the Hong Kong government and police.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong police commissioner Andy Tsang has vowed to pursue the instigators of the Occupy movement.

“Our aim is to complete this investigation within three months, including all of the processing of suspects,” he said. “In particular, we want to bring to justice those who played a leading role.”

But Tsang also told reporters that the force will investigate more than 1,900 public complaints against the police during the Occupy movement, many of them linked to allegations of abuse of police powers or authority.

He defended the police force’s handling of the protests.

“Any use of force was only enough to achieve legitimate goals, and officers stopped using that force when those goals had been achieved,” Tsang said.

“If people had left when they received the verbal warning from police that they should leave, and if they hadn’t acted illegally or resisted or charged at police officers, the police wouldn’t have needed to use any force at all,” he said.

Continuing the movement

Student leaders have vowed to pursue their movement using means other than blocking roads, with student groups polling their members about potential rent and tax boycotts instead of physical occupation.

Student leader Lester Shum, a core member of the influential Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS), said

many of the arrests during protest clearances were “influenced by political factors,” and that he had been told he would have to wait until Monday to find out if public order charges against him would be dropped or pursued.

“Or perhaps they just wanted to keep us under surveillance,” said Shum, who like many others was released on bail shortly after being arrested.

HKFS leader Alex Chow told local media that the movement would continue in some form for as long as the government continued to advocate “fake universal suffrage.”

“The government will undergo a second round of public consultations [on electoral reform proposals] in January, and other proposals may be on the table,” Chow said, adding that the final reform package wouldn’t be presented to lawmakers until May or June.

He described the end of the Occupy movement as “neither victory nor defeat.”

“I think in the future we will see many more people supporting our movement,” he said.

An Occupy supporter surnamed Choi, who camped for weeks at the main protest site near government headquarters in Admiralty, said the movement isn’t over.

“They may have cleared the occupation sites, but they can’t clear away our minds,” Choi said on Monday. “The seeds have already been planted.”

“We will continue with this; we won’t give up,” she said. “We will just find other ways to continue the struggle.”

Choi said she had joined the movement out of anger at Hong Kong’s chief executive, who was elected in 2012 with just 689 votes from a 1,200-strong Beijing-backed committee.

“To begin with, I didn’t really agree with [Occupy Central],” she said. “But the more I watched things unfold, the more I didn’t like what I saw...If we don’t stand up now, then there won’t be any Hong Kong left at all.”

Labour party chairman and lawmaker Lee Cheuk-yan said the eventual clearance of the Causeway Bay site was inevitable, once the main Admiralty site had been cleared last week.

“This clearance operation doesn’t signal the end of the movement, but a new beginning,” Lee told RFA. “The movement will continue, if the special administrative region government and the central government refuse to give Hong Kong full democracy.”

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin and Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Support from Myanmar, Thailand



Students in Myanmar show solidarity with Hong Kong's demonstrators, Oct. 4, 2014. – RFA



Students in Thailand display signs of support in Thai and Chinese, in an undated photo. – Thammasat University LLTD group

ถึงเพื่อนนักศึกษาและประชาชนชาวฮ่องกง

พวกเราคือศูนย์กลางนิสิตนักศึกษาเพื่อประชาธิปไตยแห่งประเทศไทย พวกเราคอยเฝ้าสังเกตการณ์
และให้กำลังใจพวกท่านอยู่อย่าใกล้ชิด ประชาชนชาวไทยก็ให้ความสนใจต่อการเรียกร้อง
ประชาธิปไตยในฮ่องกงตอนนี้เช่นกัน ขอเป็นกำลังใจให้ท่าน เราเชื่อว่าทุกคนเท่าเทียมกัน ทุกคนมี
สิทธิ์ที่จะเลือกผู้แทนและผู้บริหารของตนเอง สิทธิเหล่านี้เป็นสิ่งสากลที่ไม่มีใครสามารถพรากมันไป
จากพวกเราทุกคนได้ เราหวังว่าพวกท่านจะประสบความสำเร็จในเร็ววัน ลู๊ๆ

To the students and people of Hong Kong

We, Thai Student Centre for Democracy (TSCD), are closely watching and
praying for you. The People of Thailand also are interested in your fight for
Democracy. We would like to put our hearts forth for you and would like to
affirm that we, too, believe that everyone is equal and all are entitled to the
rights to choose their own governments and representatives. Such are the
universal and unalienable rights of all human beings. We hope that you will
succeed in all your endeavours. Fight on!

A message of solidarity from students in Thailand, in an undated photo. – Thammasat University LLTD group

2015-01-08 – Hong Kong Education System Should be More Patriotic: Chinese Officials



Student leaders Tommy Cheung (L), Alex Chow (center L), Joshua Wong (center R) and Oscar Lai (R), attend a press conference at the pro-democracy movement's main protest site in the Admiralty district of Hong Kong, Dec. 10, 2014. – AFP

Chinese officials have hit out at a lack of patriotism in Hong Kong's education system as a major factor behind the city's 79-day Occupy Central pro-democracy movement, in a move that is likely to reignite a heated debate over Beijing's "patriotic education" proposals for schoolchildren in the former British colony.

Former diplomat and government adviser Chen Zuo'er called on Thursday for Hong Kong's education secretary to be subject to scrutiny from the central government at all times, in a bid to prevent "noxious weeds" from coming through the system.

Chen, who led the Chinese negotiating team ahead of the 1997 handover to Beijing, warned that the secretary for education is "under the supervision of the central government and Hong Kong society at all times," and has sworn to uphold the city's mini-constitution, the Basic Law.

Chen lamented a lack of nationalistic feeling among the semiautonomous territory's young people, blaming the city's school curriculum for failing to take into account issues of "national security and sovereignty."

"Why was the education sector in such a mess during Occupy Central?" Chen asked a youth forum in Beijing.

"How did these young men, who were just toddlers at the handover, turn into those people on the front line brandishing the UK national flag and storming into our military camps and government?"

"It is clear that there have been problems all along with education in Hong Kong," Chen said. "Many people have

a distinct lack of national democratic and civic awareness, life goals, and knowledge in geography, history, and culture,” he said.

‘Noxious weeds’

He called on Hong Kong officials to eradicate “noxious weeds” from the education sector, and to allow “green shoots” to flourish.

The Occupy Central movement has campaigned for Beijing to withdraw its electoral reform plan, which will give the city’s five million voters a vote each in the election, but will restrict candidates to just two or three approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

But Beijing has said any reforms must stick to its Aug. 31 decree, and has slammed international support for the Umbrella Movement, saying that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration on the handover arrangements is “void” and that China answers to no one in exercising sovereignty over Hong Kong.

Hong Kong student groups played a leading role in the Umbrella Movement, which camped out on major roads and intersections amid an ongoing civil disobedience campaign for more than two months beginning on Sept. 28.

In 2013, they came out in force to protest plans to include “patriotic education” and Beijing-approved textbooks in Hong Kong classrooms. The plans have since been shelved.

Beijing is watching

Chan Sik Chee, convenor of the National Education Concern group, said Chen’s comments appear to be a warning to education secretary Eddie Ng.

“It’s as if he wants to put pressure on by saying ‘the central government is watching you,’” she said. “This is going to make parents in Hong Kong very worried indeed.”

“Are they saying that because Occupy Central happened, not enough has been done, and that they are going to push this curriculum, or reform it, to change the way people think?”

“That would be unwise, because young people now are even more independent-minded now that they were [before Occupy Central],” she said.

As if to prove her point, Joshua Wong, who heads the academic activist group Scholarism, waylaid Hong Kong’s second-in-command Carrie Lam in the corridors of a radio station, criticizing the government’s recent summing up of public opinion following the Occupy movement.

“I think you might want to take a look at these assessment criteria for high school students with regard to your public opinion summary,” Wong told Lam, proffering a document telling teachers how to mark student assignments in liberal studies disciplines.

“Why would you say in your report that there is a consensus in Hong Kong that people want to proceed with universal suffrage under the framework of the Aug. 31 decision from the National People’s Congress (NPC)?”

Lam defended the government’s statement, but took the document.

End to academic freedom

Chinese University of Hong Kong sociology professor Chan Kin-man, one of the original three founders of the Occupy movement, said that if Chan’s comments are heeded, it could mean the end of academic and other

freedoms in the territory.

“People’s fight for democracy does not mean they do not love the country,” he told Hong Kong’s English-language *South China Morning Post* newspaper.

Chen’s comments came after Beijing University law professor Rao Geping, who advises the ruling Chinese Communist Party on Hong Kong affairs, said the city’s government should try once again to introduce a system of “national education” into Hong Kong schools.

“Hong Kong hasn’t done an ideal job of educating its youth about how to adapt to its status under ‘one country, two systems’,” Rao told a Hong Kong and Macau studies forum in Beijing on Wednesday, in a reference to the formula under which Hong Kong was handed back to China amid promises of “a high degree of autonomy.”

He said the city’s young people should be taught about “decolonisation,” as its schools have inherited some issues from British colonial rule.

Hong Kong lawmaker Ip Kin-yuen, who represents the education sector in the Legislative Council (LegCo) and heads a major teachers’ union, said Chen has no understanding of young people in Hong Kong, however.

“He sees the problem as being that young people aren’t passively obedient, but I think the real conflict lies elsewhere, around a political system that Hong Kong people really want to see implemented,” Ip said, in a reference to Occupy Central’s campaign for public nomination of election candidates in the 2017 poll for chief executive.

“He really doesn’t understand the attitudes of young people in Hong Kong,” he said.

Reported by Dai Weisen for RFA’s Cantonese Service and Qiao Long for Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Support from Houston, Texas



Genie Nguyen of Voice of Vietnamese Americans, in an undated photo. – RFA



A rally in support of Hong Kong protesters in Houston, Oct. 5, 2014. – @globalsolidHK



Vietnamese-Americans express support in Houston, Oct. 5, 2014. – @globalsolidHK

2015-01-12 – Attackers Firebomb Home, Offices of Hong Kong Pro-Democracy Media Mogul



This screen grab of CCTV camera footage shows a security guard (bottom R) looking on as a firebomb (R) explodes after an unidentified person (L) wearing a mask threw it towards Jimmy Lai's home in Hong Kong, Jan. 12, 2015. – AFP / South China Morning Post

Arson attacks against the home and newspaper offices of Hong Kong pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai on Monday sparked renewed fears for press freedom in the semiautonomous Chinese city following a string of attacks on outspoken media figures in recent years.

Unidentified attackers tossed petrol bombs outside two entrances of the Next Media offices in Hong Kong, and at Lai's luxury home on Hong Kong's Kadoorie Avenue in the early hours of Monday, his own newspaper reported.

The website of Lai's flagship *Apple Daily* newspaper showed clips from its own security camera footage, in which masked men throw a flaming bottle at Lai's mansion gates, and outside the main entrance of Next Media's headquarters, before driving away in a car.

In the footage from Lai's home, an explosion is seen as the bottle hits the ground.

A spokesman for Next Media, which owns the *Apple Daily*, said the attacks, which resulted in no casualties, were politically motivated.

"Violence and intimidation seem to be the ongoing currency for those opposed to democracy and free press. There is no other plausible explanation here," Next Media spokesman Mark Simon told Agence France-Presse.

"Anti-democratic forces in Hong Kong keep resorting to violence," he said. Lai reportedly went back to bed after being told what happened, and was unaffected by the attacks.

Apple Daily editor-in-chief Ip Yut-kin said the group will step up security measures following the attacks.

“Actually, we are pretty frightened, but I know that my colleagues will weather this,” Ip told RFA on Monday.

“Naturally I condemn this violence, and call on people to behave in a more civilized manner,” he said, adding: “We will probably be hiring more security guards now.”

Senior Next Media union official Choi Yuen-kwooi said employees would likely take the attacks in stride. “This isn’t the first time; previously, we were besieged in our headquarters [by a crowd of pro-Beijing activists],” he said. “We are used to weathering a storm.”

Lai, 66, who founded Next Media, resigned from his positions as chairman and executive director after being arrested during police clearances of the 79-day occupation of Admiralty district by protesters campaigning for fully democratic elections.

Lai had made no secret of his public support for the “Umbrella Movement,” that began on Sept. 28 and brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets at its peak, and said he was resigning to spend more time with his family and to concentrate on his “personal interests.”

‘Threat to press freedom’

The Hong Kong Journalists’ Association (HKJA) said Monday’s attacks represent a “threat to press freedom.”

“When the attackers threw those firebombs, they weren’t just targeting Jimmy Lai,” HKJA spokeswoman Shum Yee-lan told RFA. “Next Media is one of the most influential news organizations in Hong Kong.”

“This attack ... is a threat to press freedom in Hong Kong, and the HKJA condemns such violence in the strongest terms,” she said.

Pro-democracy lawmaker Frederick Fung agreed. “There have been a series of incidents targeting Next Media, which has a very different viewpoint to the government,” he said. “How is this not connected [to press freedom]?”

He called on Hong Kong people to stand up in support of the territory’s traditional freedoms.

“I hope Hong Kong people will unite against violence, and I call on the police to bring these violent perpetrators to justice as soon as possible,” he said.

Hong Kong justice secretary Rimsky Yuen said the attacks, which come amid global fears for press freedom in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris, wouldn’t be tolerated.

“Regardless of who the victim of the attacks is, their social status, political background, or viewpoint, Hong Kong, as a city with rule of law, will certainly not tolerate this,” Yuen told reporters.

“The police will carry out a full investigation, treating it like any other incident,” he said.

But Hong Kong’s Democratic Party called on the city’s government to take more conspicuous action to protect press freedom in the city, which was promised a high degree of autonomy and the protection of its traditional freedoms under the terms of its 1997 handover from Britain to China.

“Following the terrorist attack at *Charlie Hebdo*, world leaders stood up and walked the streets of Paris to participate in a protest against violence,” the party said in a statement.

“The Democratic Party also urges officials to act to protect freedom of the press,” it said.

Democratic Party chairwoman Emily Lau said there had been a number of attacks aimed at damaging Hong

Kong's media organizations, and called on police to get to the bottom of the case.

"Are we going to send the message that there are no consequences for those who harm or attack [the media]?" she said. "Wouldn't that just be plain lawlessness?"

February rally

Meanwhile, a pro-democracy group on Monday announced plans for a major protest march on Feb. 1, the first mass rally since two months of Occupy Central protests ended last month.

The Civil Human Rights Front, which coordinates traditional mass protest marches on July 1, the anniversary of the 1997 handover, said the march would continue to call for fully democratic elections for the city's chief executive in 2017.

"We haven't come to the end of the road for the civil disobedience campaign for universal suffrage in Hong Kong, although police may have cleared the occupied areas," the group's convener Daisy Chan told reporters.

Chan said she didn't rule out the possibility of a spontaneous re-occupation of major streets and intersections in Hong Kong following the march, which ends at midnight.

The Occupy Central movement has campaigned for Beijing to withdraw its electoral reform plan, which will give the city's five million voters a vote each in the 2017 election, but will restrict candidates to just two or three approved by a pro-Beijing committee.

Beijing has said any reforms must stick to its Aug. 31 decree, and has slammed international support for the Umbrella Movement, saying that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration on the handover arrangements is "void" and that China answers to no one in exercising sovereignty over Hong Kong.

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-01-14 – Pan-Democrats Stage Protest As Hong Kong's Leader Warns of Anarchy



Pro-democracy lawmakers walk out in protest before Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying addresses the legislative council in Hong Kong, Jan. 14, 2015. – AFP

Pan-democratic lawmakers, who hold 24 seats out of 60 in Hong Kong's legislature, walked out of the chamber ahead of an annual address by embattled chief executive Leung Chun-ying, in which he warned that the former British colony could descend into "anarchy" amid an ongoing civil disobedience campaign for fully democratic elections.

As Leung entered the Legislative Council chamber for the first time since the 79-day Occupy Central pro-democracy movement began, more than 20 pan-democratic lawmakers came in holding yellow umbrellas, the symbol of the movement, and carrying banners which read: "C.Y. Leung resign," and "I want genuine universal suffrage," before walking out as Leung waited to begin.

Two of them, Albert Chan and Raymond Chan, remained seated, while shouting for Leung's resignation and poking fun at Leung's fixed smile during the protest. Albert Chan was carried from the chamber by security guards.

Calls for Leung's resignation intensified after riot police fired tear gas and pepper spray at protesters in clashes on Sept. 28, at the start of more than two months of mass demonstrations and occupation of major highways in the semiautonomous Chinese city.

The Occupy Central movement, also known as the "Umbrella Movement" after protesters used umbrellas to ward off tear gas and pepper spray, tried to put pressure on Beijing to allow public nomination of candidates in 2017

elections for Leung's successor.

China's rubber-stamp parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), announced on Aug. 31 that while all of Hong Kong's five million voters will cast a ballot for the first time in the poll, they may only choose between candidates vetted by a pro-Beijing nomination committee.

Pan-democratic politicians and Occupy protesters have dismissed the Aug. 31 ruling as "fake universal suffrage," and called on the Hong Kong government to renegotiate the election arrangements with Beijing.

They have also demanded Leung's resignation over the use of tear gas and over a legal but undeclared U.S. \$6.5 million payout from an Australian company shortly before he was voted into office by a 1,200-strong pro-Beijing election committee in March 2012 with just 689 votes.

Correcting 'mistakes'

After a third year in office that was dominated by the Occupy movement and surrounding political debate, Leung said there was a need to correct the "mistakes" of the largely student-led campaign, repeating the government's position that it can't and won't challenge Beijing on election arrangements.

"University students are the future pillars of society and deserve our care," he said. "Hence, there is all the more reason for us to commend them for their merits and correct their mistakes."

"They should be guided towards a full understanding of the constitutional relationship between our country and Hong Kong so that the discussion on constitutional development would not be fruitless," he said.

Elsewhere in his speech, Leung said Hong Kong's election arrangements are specific to its situation, and shouldn't be compared with "international standards."

"As we pursue democracy, we should act in accordance with the law, or Hong Kong will degenerate into anarchy," he warned, criticizing a student publication in particular for its "errors" after it discussed notions of Hong Kong autonomy and identity.

Yuen Yuen-lung, current editor of the targeted Hong Kong University magazine *Undergrad*, said Leung's comments were an "attempt to suppress press freedom and to damage the editorial independence of our student paper ... in a thinly veiled white terror campaign."

Former *Undergrad* editor Leung Kai Ping said that the recent magazine issue had discussed the ideas of independence and self-determination for the city, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997 after being promised a "high degree of autonomy" and the maintenance of traditional freedoms.

"Now they want to stick that Hong Kong independence label on us, but in fact the article was justified by an in-depth analysis of the way history and culture have shaped the identity of Hong Kong citizens and their political awareness," he told RFA.

"This sort of analysis of Hong Kong identity has been pretty rare in recent years," he added.

Tightening policy

Lawmaker and solicitor Paul Tse said he has detected a tightening up of Beijing's policy towards Hong Kong since the Occupy movement began.

"The central government can reserve the right to veto any law of Hong Kong's that it doesn't like," Tse told RFA. "Beijing has been keeping a tighter grip on everything in the past couple of years, especially since the Occupy movement."

Civic Party chairman Alan Leong, who was among those who walked out of the LegCo building, said Leong was undeserving of public respect, and had failed to engage with demands for true democracy.

“As for concrete policies, we detect neither any commitment nor conviction,” he told government broadcaster RTHK.

China’s ruling Communist Party has resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong since the 1997 handover using the “one country, two systems” formula, which allows the city freedoms not enjoyed by cities on the mainland.

While the territory’s mini-constitution, the Basic Law, specifies universal suffrage as an eventual goal, Beijing’s interpretation is at odds with that of pan-democratic politicians and democracy activists.

Reported by Dai Weisen for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Support from Prague



The 'Lennon Wall' in Prague displays graffiti in support of the Hong Kong pro-democracy Umbrella Movement, in an undated photo. – PFF



Sticky-notes are posted on the Lennon Wall in Prague in support of the Hong Kong pro-democracy Umbrella Movement, in an undated photo. – PFF



Hong Kong protest supporters post stick-notes on the Lennon Wall in Prague, in an undated photo. – PFF



A supporter posts sticky-notes in support of Hong Kong democracy protests on the Lennon Wall in Prague, in an undated photo. – PFF



Shao Jiang 邵江
@shaojiang



+ Follow

Prague commemorated the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, showing solidarity with #HK #UmbrellaRevolution



RETWEETS

62

FAVORITES

24



Residents of Prague mark the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution while voicing support for the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement, Nov. 16, 2014. – @shaojiang

2015-01-16 - Hong Kong Police Question Student Leaders Over Pro-Democracy Protests



Student activist Joshua Wong (R) and other students display pro-democracy placards outside the Wanchai police station in Hong Kong, Jan. 16, 2015. – AFP

Police in Hong Kong on Friday hauled four student leaders of the 79-day Occupy Central pro-democracy movement in for questioning following their earlier arrest on public order charges, as a writers' group issued a report charting a worsening climate for freedom of the press in the territory.

Agnes Chow, Derek Lam and Oscar Lai from the academic activist group Scholarism arrived at police headquarters in the semi-autonomous Chinese city to the sound of pro-democracy slogans chanted by supporters holding aloft yellow umbrellas, the symbol of the Umbrella Movement for fully democratic elections in the former British colony.

The three were arrested last month on suspicion of inciting, organizing and participating in illegal assemblies, but were later released unconditionally after refusing police bail.

Later on Friday, protest leader and Scholarism convenor Joshua Wong also arrived for questioning, also refused to answer police questions and was released unconditionally along with the others.

No charges were brought against the four.

Wong, who flashed a defiant victory sign as he went into the building, said the Umbrella Movement isn't over.

"[Further arrests] would just motivate more of the secondary school or university students to come out on the streets and join the action," he told reporters at the scene.

Wong said he had refused to answer police questions, and that police lacked enough evidence to charge him, despite showing him video clips of his involvement in the protest movement that blocked key highways and intersections in Hong Kong from late September.

“I am still confident and optimistic for further action and more of the Umbrella Movement, and continue to fight for universal suffrage,” said Wong, who was arrested on the last day of the protest.

‘A little nervous’

Chow said she was “a little nervous” after receiving her summons. “But I believe that what I am doing is worthwhile,” she said before entering the police station. “There is nothing wrong with fighting for democracy.”

One of the Occupy supporters at the scene said he was there because he had been arrested at the same time as Wong, when police cleared the remaining protest encampment near government headquarters last month.

“I’m a student too, and I have a duty to support him and to root for him,” said the student, also surnamed Wong.

A police spokesman later confirmed that Joshua Wong and the three other Scholarism members were arrested on suspicion of unlawful assembly, adding that police would “reserve the right to prosecute” in future, the English-language *South China Morning Post* newspaper reported.

Veteran democracy activist and independent lawmaker Leung Kwok-hung, known by his nickname “Long Hair,” said the police were trying to create an atmosphere of fear around the movement by summoning people weeks after the Occupy movement had ended.

“They want to send a message to society that they will pursue this to the bitter end,” Leung told RFA. “But they will be hard-pressed if they want to charge large numbers of people in a short space of time.”

“That’s why they are arresting people before they have gathered enough evidence against them. They may bring charges on the basis of evidence they find later,” he said.

He said the police were anxious to prevent further mass protests while a two-month government consultation process on electoral reforms that kicked off earlier this month is under way.

“They are creating an atmosphere of white terror and arresting people nonstop so that no one will come out in protest lightly,” Leung said.

‘Umbrella Movement’

The Occupy Central movement, also known as the “Umbrella Movement” after protesters used umbrellas to ward off tear gas and pepper spray, tried to put pressure on Beijing to allow the public nomination of candidates in the 2017 elections for the city’s leader.

China’s rubber-stamp parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), announced on Aug. 31 that while all of Hong Kong’s five million voters will cast a ballot for the first time in the poll, they may only choose between candidates vetted by a pro-Beijing nomination committee.

Pan-democratic politicians and Occupy protesters have dismissed the Aug. 31 ruling as “fake universal suffrage,” and called on the Hong Kong government to renegotiate the election arrangements with Beijing.

As the student leaders were questioned, a new report warned that press freedom in Hong Kong, which was promised a high degree of autonomy under the terms of its 1997 handover to China, had deteriorated over the past year.

The report, released in Hong Kong on Friday by the PEN American Center, describes a “shrinking environment for free expression,” 17 years after the handover.

It comes as chief executive Leung Chun-ying is under fire from journalists and academics for criticizing a student publication in his annual policy speech on Wednesday for “errors” after it discussed notions of Hong Kong autonomy and identity.

Asked by lawmakers on Thursday whether he supported the right of students to discuss issues such as Hong Kong independence, Leung told the city’s Legislative Council: “My comments in my policy address had nothing to do with press freedom or academic freedom.”

Haven of free press

But according to PEN American Center, Hong Kong’s former status as a haven of free press is fast disappearing.

“Hong Kong’s position as a media hub and harbor for press freedom is increasingly insecure,” the Center said in a statement on Friday.

It cited economic pressures on pro-democracy newspapers and broadcasters, personnel changes that are widely seen as attempts to silence critics of Beijing, cyber attacks against online media, and unsolved cases of physical violence against journalists.

“The confluence of attacks—economic, physical, and cyber—on press and media outlets in Hong Kong, coinciding with a period of political turmoil, drives suspicion about the future of press freedom in this crucial media hub,” PEN American Center executive director Suzanne Nossel said.

“While the forces behind these incidents are shadowy, the pattern of interference and intimidation is hard to mistake,” she said.

The group called on the Hong Kong authorities to fully investigate reports of physical attacks on journalists.

More than 25 journalists were injured in clashes with police during the Occupy Central movement, according to the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA).

One reporter told RFA he was held down and kicked by police officers while shooting footage of the clearance of protest sites in Kowloon’s Mong Kok district.

Last year, former Chinese-language *Ming Pao* chief editor Kevin Lau was hospitalized following a brutal knife attack, while the sacking of Commercial Radio talk-show host Li Wei-ling and the removal of other prominent journalists from senior editorial positions have also raised concerns.

Last week, unidentified attackers threw petrol bombs at the offices and home of pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai, whose flagship *Apple Daily* newspaper was the target of a major cyber attack in June.

Reported by Yang Fan for RFA’s Mandarin Service, and by Dai Weisen for the Cantonese Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

Support from London



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Photos from yesterday of HK students in UK that handed in petitions gathered from 20+ Uni to @Number10gov. #OccupyHK



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22

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5



Hong Kong students in the UK hand petitions in support of the Umbrella Movement to the office of the Prime Minister in London, Nov. 5, 2014. – @GlobalSolidHK



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The group marched from @Number10gov to London's HKETO afterwards. Full album: facebook.com/media/set/?set ... #UMHK #OccupyHK



RETWEETS

8

FAVORITES

2



Hong Kong students march from the Office of the Prime Minister to the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London, Nov. 5, 2014. – @GlobalSolidHK



Alexondra Soraya

@DoubleYourDosag

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Hong Kong protest in London last night
#OccupyCentral #UmbrellaRevolution
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Occupy Central supporters demonstrate in London, Oct. 10, 2014. – @DoubleYourDosag



Siu-see Hung
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Mini umbrellas at HK economic&trade office in London #UmbrellaRevolution #OccupyCentral #solidarity

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Umbrellas are hung outside the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London in an undated photo. – @SiuseeHung



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Door of HK economic&trade office in
London #OccupyCentral
#UmbrellaRevolution #solidarity

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Umbrellas are displayed on the entrance to the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London, in an undated photo. – @SiuseeHung



Derek Fontaine Siu

@dereksiu

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2 hours after work well spent. support from London. @tomgrundy @OCLPHK @HKFS1958 #democracyHK #OccupyHK



RETWEETS

9

FAVORITES

2



3:43 PM - 23 Oct 2014

A London-based supporter congratulates Hong Kong protesters who hung a banner atop nearby Lion Rock, Oct. 23, 2014. – @dereksiu

2015-01-19 - Hong Kong's Chalk Girl Released From Protection Order



Hong Kong authorities clean up the Lennon Wall pro-democracy site in Hong Kong, Dec. 11, 2014. – AFP

A court in Hong Kong has canceled a care and protection order handed to a teenage girl who chalked flowers on a wall at a pro-democracy site in the city, removing the threat of being sent to a children's home.

The Tuen Mun magistrate's court revoked the order initiated by police who accused the 14-year-old of drawing chalk flowers on "Lennon Wall," near the former site of the Occupy Central movement in downtown Hong Kong.

The girl, who can't be named for legal reasons, but who has been dubbed Chalk Girl, sparked fears that the police were trying to send a political message over the 79-day Umbrella Movement that occupied key roads in Hong Kong in a campaign for fully democratic elections in the former British colony.

The would-be protester had chalked two flowers around a sticky-taped umbrella on Occupy Central's "Lennon Wall."

Her drawing sparked a rash of copycat chalk-drawing protests across Hong Kong, where police actions to clear protesters and an inflexible approach from local officials and the ruling Chinese Communist Party in Beijing have left public anger simmering since protest sites were cleared earlier this month.

She was originally held in a children's home under supervision, but later released on bail following an application to the High Court by her lawyer, founding chairman of Hong Kong's Democratic Party, Martin Lee.

"It's such lovely weather today. She must be pretty happy," Lee, who acted pro bono in the case, told reporters after the decision.

Tuen Mun magistrate Winnie Lau said there was “no need” for the care and protection order to remain in place, based on reports from social workers.

Concerns over uniformed youth corps

Meanwhile, plans to set up a uniformed youth corps in Hong Kong have further sparked concerns in the city, following criticism by embattled chief executive C.Y. Leung of a student newspaper and calls from officials in Beijing for more Communist Party influence on the territory’s education system.

Educators in Hong Kong have questioned the motives behind the newly established Hong Kong Youth Corps, which is run by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) garrison in the city.

Critics say the youth military training program oversteps legislation aimed at keeping the army out of Hong Kong affairs, while others say it is a form of political brainwashing by the Communist Party, whose officials were shocked at the audacity and anger shown by the city’s young people during the Occupy movement.

The Hong Kong Youth Army was formally inaugurated at PLA naval headquarters on Stonecutters’ Island on Sunday, with the stated aim of “encouraging young people to recognize the responsibilities and obligations of Chinese citizens.”

Members of the voluntary corps aimed at university students will don PLA-style military uniforms, and receive “military and moral education,” local media reported.

Politically sensitive time

Lawmaker Ip Kin-yuen said the corps was being set up at a politically sensitive time, and questioned whether it was motivated by a need to indoctrinate young people in Hong Kong into mainland Chinese ideology.

“The fact that they have set this up will make people think of brainwashing,” Ip told RFA on Monday.

“I think that everyone will be very worried that they want to employ a disciplinarian model to change the thinking of young people in Hong Kong.”

He said few details have emerged about the exact activities engaged in by the corps.

“But it seems that the aim is to solve the problems that have arisen over the political system between Hong Kong and the mainland,” Ip said, adding: “There are many different views about what the concepts of political power, nationhood and the motherland actually mean, and people have different ideas about what belonging means.”

Civic Party chairman Audrey Eu said it was hard to see how growing ties between local people and the PLA garrison could fail to work both ways.

“In the past, Hong Kong people would go there very seldom, and only make a brief visit, but now events are being held inside the garrison,” Eu told RFA.

“If Hong Kong people are to start attending events there, then it’s also likely that the PLA will become more involved in Hong Kong affairs,” she said.

PLA training

But secretary for home affairs Tsang Tak-sing said uniformed youth groups have existed in Hong Kong for years.

“This group was set up by a group of young people who participated in a military camp,” Tsang told a local radio

show on Monday. “The PLA will be helping them with their training, using its own facilities and equipment.”

“These young people want to learn about the troops garrisoned here, which is a very different matter from [the PLA] interfering in Hong Kong’s affairs,” he said.

Civic Party lawmaker Kenneth Chan told government broadcaster RTHK that the corps violates Hong Kong’s Garrison Law governing the behavior of the PLA in the city, warning that the government could face “legal consequences.”

Under the terms of the 1997 handover, Hong Kong was promised the continuation of its traditional freedoms and independent judiciary for 50 years.

‘Patriotic education’

Earlier this month, Chinese officials hit out at a lack of “patriotism” in Hong Kong’s education system as a major factor behind the Occupy Central movement, reigniting a heated debate over Beijing’s shelved “patriotic education” proposals for schoolchildren in the former British colony.

Former diplomat and government adviser Chen Zuo’er said the authorities should take steps to prevent “noxious weeds” from coming through the system, lamenting a lack of nationalistic feeling among the semiautonomous territory’s young people.

Hong Kong student groups played a leading role in the Umbrella Movement, which camped out on major roads and intersections amid an ongoing civil disobedience campaign for more than two months beginning on Sept. 28.

In 2013, they came out in force to protest plans to include “patriotic education” and Beijing-approved textbooks in Hong Kong classrooms. The plans have since been shelved.

Reported by Dai Weisen for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-01-29 – Chinese Activist Held Over Support For Occupy Movement in Hong Kong



The Occupy Central movement enters its 68th day in Hong Kong, Dec. 4, 2014. -RFA

Authorities in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong have formally arrested an online activist for subversion after he publicly supported Hong Kong's Occupy Central pro-democracy movement, his wife and lawyer said.

Huizhou-based Ye Xiaozheng, known online by his nickname Humian Yizhou ("A boat on the lake"), is being held on suspicion of "incitement to subvert state power," his wife Zhong Shuimei told RFA on Thursday.

"I went to visit him [in the detention center on Wednesday]," Zhong said. "It lasted 20 minutes."

"He said the food was terrible and that the rice was often not cooked properly, so he always had to buy food separately," she said.

"His mood was pretty normal; we didn't talk for very long, because we weren't allowed to discuss anything to do with his case," Zhong said.

Zhong said she is very worried that Ye will receive a prison sentence.

"I am afraid they will charge him and send him to prison, and there are also the lawyer's fees to pay," she said. "I won't be able to afford them."

Ye's lawyer, Sui Muqing, said he had also visited his client on Monday.

"He has been moved to a different cell, and he told me that the detention center guards won't let him talk to

anyone else in the cell,” Sui said.

“The other people are saying he’s a traitor to China.”

“Incitement to subvert state power,” a charge listed in Article 105 of China’s Criminal Law, carries a maximum jail term of five years, but this can be extended for those regarded as “ringleaders” or in serious cases.

‘Psychologically prepared’

Sui said Ye, a vocal activist who has posted online in support of democratic reforms, constitutional government and official corruption, was “psychologically prepared” to do time in jail.

“He just never thought he would do it on account of Occupy Central,” he said.

Ye was initially detained on Dec. 18 by Huizhou police, and is being held at the police-run Huizhou Detention Center, where he told Sui he was shackled for long periods and subjected to “harsh interrogation,” the Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) group said in a recent report.

Last year, Ye posted a photo of himself online during Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement holding a banner saying “Protesting for Freedom,” and a T-shirt with the slogan: “When the people fear the government, then there is tyranny.”

According to CHRD, which compiles and translates reports from rights groups inside China, 113 mainland activists had been detained for supporting the Occupy Central campaign by Jan. 27, while 74 have since been released.

“Many mainlanders have expressed their support by traveling to Hong Kong to join the protests, or meeting in small gatherings and posting messages on social media, including photos of themselves’ holding signs in support of the protests,” CHRD said in an online report on the detentions.

“Police have harassed and intimidated countless others by visiting their homes and issuing warnings, or putting them under house arrest,” it said, adding that still others have gone into hiding.

While the majority of Occupy-related detentions were in Beijing, activists have also been detained in Chongqing, Shanghai, Anhui, Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan, Jiangxi, Liaoning, and Shandong, it said.

An illegal movement

Chinese officials said the Occupy Central movement, which was encamped on major highways in the former British colony for more than two months beginning on Sept. 28, is illegal, while official media said it was instigated by “hostile foreign forces” in Hong Kong.

Beijing has also said that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration is “void” and that China answers to no one in exercising sovereignty over Hong Kong.

According to political commentator Liang Jing, however, Chinese President Xi Jinping is likely to back away from such rhetoric about the Umbrella Movement in the future for fear of damaging ties with the United States.

“Morally, the United States couldn’t fail to support the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, but to accuse it of manipulating them [the protestors] behind the scenes is nonsense,” Liang said in a commentary broadcast on RFA’s Cantonese Service.

“This won’t do the bilateral relationship, nor Xi Jinping himself, any good at all.”

The Occupy movement has campaigned for Beijing to withdraw its electoral reform plan, which it says is “fake universal suffrage,” and allow publicly nominated candidates to run for chief executive in 2017.

An Aug. 31 decision by China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), decreed that all 5 million of Hong Kong’s voters will cast ballots in the 2017 poll, but may only choose between two or three candidates vetted by a Beijing-backed election committee.

Reported by Qiao Long for RFA’s Mandarin Service, and by RFA’s Cantonese Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-02-01 – Umbrella Protestors Return to Streets of Hong Kong



Demonstrators march for democracy in Hong Kong, Feb. 1, 2015. – AFP

Thousands of pro-democracy protesters rallied in Hong Kong on Sunday, returning to the streets for the first time since police broke up mass demonstrations last year after a 79-day occupation of the center of the former British colony.

The turnout was a fraction of last autumn's "Occupy Central" movement, but organizers said the smaller scale of the rally did not indicate that Hong Kong citizens had accepted a plan imposed by China's parliament that would limit voting choices in elections for the city's top official.

Organizers had projected a turnout of 50,000 people, but said only 13,000 joined the peaceful rally, which proceeded without police interference or clashes. Police said the crowds reached 8,800 at its peak on Sunday, and witnesses said it had dwindled to 100 by evening.

"We should not regard the number of protesters this time as an indication that Hong Kong people will accept the limited election package," Daisy Chan, spokeswoman for the Civil Human Rights Front, which organized the rally, told the crowd.

She said the turnout should not be used as a basis by Hong Kong chief executive Leung Chun-ying for pushing through with Beijing's "fake democracy plan" for the territory.

An Aug. 31 decision by China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), decreed that all 5 million of Hong Kong's voters will cast ballots in the 2017 poll, but may only choose between two or three candidates vetted by a Beijing-backed election committee.

That decree sparked the Occupy Central movement, which drew hundreds of thousands of people to the heart of Hong Kong, where many thousands camped on major roadways for more than two months beginning on Sept. 28.

Occupy Central also became known as the “Umbrella Movement” after protesters used umbrellas to ward off tear gas and pepper spray, and tried to put pressure on Beijing to allow the public nomination of candidates in the 2017 elections for the city’s leader.

Umbrellas

Many protesters Sunday again brought yellow umbrellas, and carried banners saying “We want genuine democracy” and “We want to choose our own government.”

They were joined by student leaders Joshua Wong, Alex Chou and others who spearheaded the major demonstrations last year. Wong and three other student leaders were questioned by police in mid-January but released without charges.

“We don’t want the three hand-picked candidates by the Central Government. We, as Hongkongers, want to make our own choices,” said a woman who gave only her last name, Ho, as she marched with her husband.

Chan Yanxia, a teacher with the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said she did not participate in the protest Sunday but her “support for true democracy for Hong Kong will never change.”

“I did not go, but I think the number is not the most critical element,” she said. “Fewer demonstrators don’t mean the people’s determination to fight for universal suffrage has diminished. Not getting on the street does not mean not supporting or not fighting [for] democracy.”

Universal suffrage

Benny Tai, one of the founders of last year’s Occupy Central movement, said support for universal suffrage remained far stronger than Sunday’s showing on the streets.

“The Occupy movement lasted so long and all of civil society needs time to rest,” he told the rally.

“There were over a million people involved in the Occupy Movement and they are still here,” said Tai. “The question is: Is this the right moment to use this method to fight for universal suffrage?”

Reported by RFA’s Cantonese and Mandarin Services. Translated by Shiny Li and Ping Chen. Written in English by Paul Eckert.

Support from Singapore, South Korea



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A supporter raises an umbrella in Singapore, Nov. 4, 2014. – @TravelFoto



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Umbrellas displayed in support of the Hong Kong Occupy Central movement in Seoul, Korea, Nov. 4, 2014. – @TravelFoto

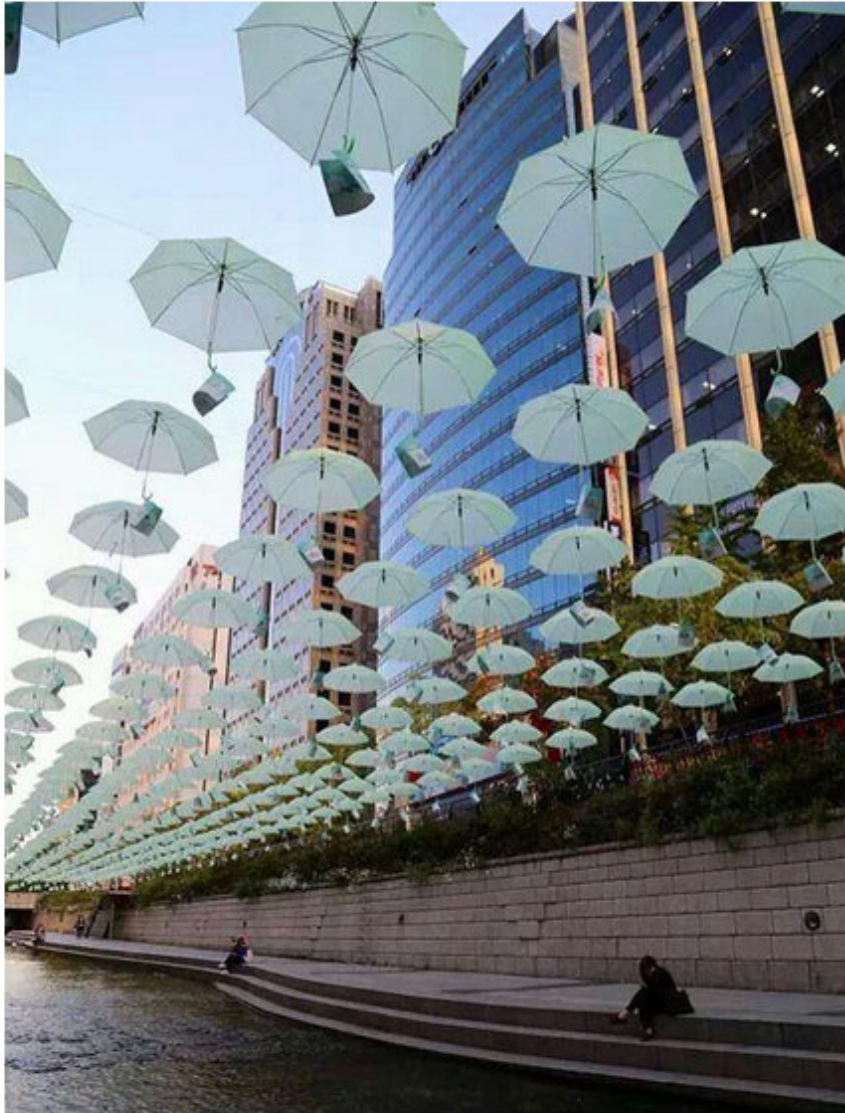


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Rows of umbrellas on display in Seoul, Korea, Nov. 4, 2014. – @TravelFoto

2015-02-02 – Hong Kong's Leader 'Can't Promise' Full Democracy Even by 2020



Hong Kong's chief executive Leung Chun-ying delivers his annual policy address to the legislative council in Hong Kong, Jan. 14, 2015. – AFP

In a fresh blow to the Occupy Central pro-democracy movement on Monday, Hong Kong's leader warned that there are no guarantees that the city's legislature will move towards full democracy by 2020.

Responding to demands from pan-democratic lawmakers, who hold 24 out of 60 seats in the Legislative Council (LegCo), chief executive Leung Chun-ying said his administration couldn't promise that all lawmakers would be directly elected by 2020, one election away from next year's scheduled poll.

"This isn't something that the current administration can promise," Leung told reporters, adding that Beijing's wishes would have to be obeyed amid huge popular pressure for universal suffrage.

Currently, 30 of LegCo's 60 seats are directly elected from geographical constituencies, while the remainder is chosen by businesses, professions, labor unions, civic and religious groups.

The abolition of these "functional constituencies" and the direct election of all 60 seats were a key demand of the largely student-led Occupy Central movement last year.

Leung's comments came after thousands of pro-democracy protesters took to Hong Kong's streets on Sunday for the first time after the end of last year's 79-day mass protest and occupation calling for universal suffrage in the former British colony.

While the turnout was much smaller than the crowds that surged onto the streets at the height of the "Umbrella

Movement,” organizers said public feeling is still at loggerheads with Beijing’s plans for future elections in the city.

Maintaining the status quo

Leung said the only alternative to following Beijing’s election reform plan is to maintain the status quo, under which the chief executive is chosen by a 1,200-strong election committee handpicked by Beijing, and under which only half of Hong Kong’s lawmakers are directly elected.

“That is one of only two options open to us—to make no headway at all,” Leung said.

He said elections in 2017 to choose the next chief executive would be implemented according to the Aug. 31 framework laid out by the National People’s Congress (NPC), which would permit only candidates vetted by a committee beholden to Beijing to run for the territory’s top executive post.

Occupy Central campaigners, many of whom are students, have dismissed the plan as “fake universal suffrage,” because pan-democratic candidates are unlikely to be selected.

Pan-democratic lawmakers have threatened to veto the government’s electoral reform bill in LegCo in a bid to win further concessions on universal suffrage.

Leung’s second-in-command Carrie Lam said there would be no horse-trading with lawmakers over the reform package.

“If we miss this opportunity, then it will actually be a lose-lose situation, because we will have lost the chance to elect a chief executive through universal suffrage,” Lam said.

“We will also lose the opportunity to directly elect the whole of LegCo,” she told a group of business leaders on Monday.

“To put it simply, you can rest assured that we be making no deals with the pan-democrats over the 2017 elections for chief executive,” she said.

Reform plan

Democratic chairwoman and lawmaker Emily Lau called on civil society to reject the NPC’s plan outright, and to get together to formulate their own reform plan.

Pan-democratic lawmaker Albert Ho said no talks had been held between government officials and pan-democrats, and that making public comments about possible concessions was a bad idea.

“If you tell people what concessions you might be prepared to make before anyone has even sought you out to discuss it, then people are going to think you’ll be prepared to make a whole lot more,” Ho said.

“This can’t lead to a good outcome.”

Meanwhile, political commentator Alex Lo, writing in the *South China Morning Post* newspaper, said the functional constituencies are “rotten boroughs” impeding the political development of Hong Kong.

“Beijing has drawn an explicit linkage between the functional constituencies in LegCo and the future nomination committee for the chief executive,” Lo wrote.

He said the ruling Chinese Communist Party is very unlikely to abolish the functional constituencies, because the concept has inspired the principles on which the election committee is formed.

“If Beijing kills the functional constituencies, it would not only undermine the balance of power in LegCo [between pro-establishment and pan-democratic camps], but the raison d’être of the nomination committee,” Lo wrote.

“Those rotten boroughs have become the main stumbling block to political reform.”

China has resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong since the 1997 handover using the “one country, two systems” formula, which allows people in the city freedoms not enjoyed by mainland citizens.

While the territory’s mini-constitution, the Basic Law, specifies universal suffrage as an eventual goal, Beijing’s interpretation is at odds with that of pan-democratic politicians and democracy activists.

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-02-17 – Divisions Grow Among Hong Kong Students After Pro-Democracy Movement



The Occupy Central movement enters its 68th day in Hong Kong, Dec. 4, 2014. – RFA

The withdrawal of the student union of the University of Hong Kong from the city's Federation of Students has sparked a wave of campaigns on social media for similar moves in the territory's remaining universities, student leaders said on Tuesday.

Voters in a referendum at the university voted last week to leave the Hong Kong Federation of Students, which played a leading role in the 79-day Occupy Central pro-democracy movement last year, by 2,522 votes to 2,278, with 1,293 abstentions. Turnout was 39 percent, the South China Morning Post newspaper reported.

Since then, a number of Facebook pages have sprung up to campaign for students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Science and Technology, Lingnan University, City University and the Baptist University to make similar moves.

The apparent splintering of the student movement comes amid growing concern over Beijing-inspired interference by the government in the politics of the city's universities.

Many of the comments cite dissatisfaction with the federation's role in the Occupy Central, or Umbrella Movement.

"Of course this is a blow for the federation, and it reflects a lack of trust among students in the federation," Joshua Wong, who heads the academic activist group Scholarism, and who played a key role in the occupation of major highways in the city last year, told RFA on Tuesday.

"We should spend more time in future explaining the actions of the federation to every student at Hong Kong's

universities and technical institutions,” he said.

“We have to face up squarely to this problem...to avoid such things from happening in future.”

Wong said many students are angry that the federation’s bid to win concessions on universal suffrage in 2017 elections for the next chief executive by surrounding central government headquarters had come to nothing.

Other universities plan votes

Students at Lingnan University announced last week that they will also hold a similar referendum of their union members next month, although sources told RFA that turnover is likely to be low.

Meanwhile, students at the Chinese University have called on the Hong Kong Federation of Students to reform the way it elects its leaders.

If the voting system isn’t changed to a one-person, one-vote poll involving all Hong Kong students, the Chinese University will also stage a referendum on withdrawal, the students warned.

Last week, pan-democratic lawmakers called for an official inquiry amid reports that Hong Kong’s embattled chief executive C.Y. Leung interfered to prevent the appointment of a pro-democracy candidate for the job of pro-vice-chancellor at the University of Hong Kong.

The reported interference appeared to be aimed at ensuring that law professor and democracy activist Johannes Chan, who is among the candidates for the post, didn’t get the job.

Local media reports have accused Leung, or his officials, of telling members of the university’s council not to elect Chan, who is a member of the Hong Kong 2020 group campaigning for greater democracy. Leung has denied any direct intervention.

Aug 31 decree reverberates

According to an Aug. 31 framework laid out by Beijing’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), only candidates vetted by a pro-Beijing committee will be allowed to run for the territory’s top executive post in 2017, although all five million eligible voters will get a vote.

Occupy Central campaigners, many of whom are students, and pan-democratic politicians have dismissed the plan as “fake universal suffrage,” because pan-democratic candidates are unlikely to be selected for the race to lead the former British colony.

Pan-democratic lawmakers have threatened to veto the government’s electoral reform bill in LegCo in a bid to win further concessions on universal suffrage, although the government has ruled out any such deals.

As the government carries out a second round of public consultations on Beijing’s electoral reform plan, an opinion survey carried out by the pollster-led Civil Society Joint Action group said the Occupy protests had worsened trust and communication between Leung’s administration and the Hong Kong people.

The group published their findings, which ran to dozens of closely typed pages, on Tuesday, saying it would give a better idea of public reaction to Beijing’s reform plan than the government’s own report sent last August.

It called on the government to strengthen cooperation with civil groups and improve communication with citizens, and to seek consensus during its current consultation.

“The views of citizens on the pace of reform are very divided, and the government’s consultation methods have served not to bring them closer together, but to make the divisions more acute,” the group said in a statement

posted on its Facebook page.

“The degree of social participation and openness and transparency should be...increased dramatically,” the statement said.

Referendum demand

The survey follows another public opinion survey carried out by pan-democratic lawmakers, which called on the government to allow a city-wide referendum on the reform package.

“The Chinese Communist Party is afraid even of a referendum, so scared is it to face up to the true opinions of the people,” Civic Party leader Alan Leong told RFA on Monday.

“Why would they fear it, if they believe that their ideas have the support of the majority of Hong Kong people?”

Amid growing concern over attacks on Hong Kong’s press freedom, journalists hit out at recent criticisms of government broadcaster RTHK by pro-China politicians, who said it should toe the official line more often.

Hong Kong Journalists’ Association spokeswoman Shum Yee-lan said the station was simply holding to its principle of editorial independence.

“These pro-establishment politicians have been strongly critical of RTHK’s programming, but it is crucial that they maintain their independent stance,” Shum told RFA.

“They’re not the mouthpiece of the Hong Kong government, nor are they are government news service,” she said. “Maybe they were unhappy about some of the recent headlines talking about satirical humor directed at the chief executive.”

Reported by Lin Jing and Wen Yuqing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-02-20 - 'We Will Definitely See More Large-Scale Protests': Interview



Student activist Joshua Wong speaks outside the Wanchai police station in Hong Kong, Jan. 16, 2015.
AFP

At the age of 15, Hong Kong democracy campaigner Joshua Wong was already active in a movement opposing the use of teaching materials approved by the ruling Chinese Communist Party in the former British colony's schools. When he helped launch Hong Kong's Occupy Central protest—later called the Umbrella Movement after student-led protesters used umbrellas to ward off police tear gas and pepper spray—he was still only 17. Speaking to RFA in an interview, Wong, now 18, says that the 79-day protest that brought hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets at its height isn't over yet.

Q: How would you describe the past 17 years in Hong Kong, since the 1997 handover to China?

A: We were promised a high degree of autonomy—one country, two systems—with Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong. But in the past 17 years we have seen that the promises that our way of life would remain unchanged for 50 years were all empty. It was a dream, but it hasn't been the reality. We have seen the space for freedom of expression shrink, and continual interference with the freedom of the press.

The central government has said that we will have universal suffrage in the 2017 elections. Originally we were supposed to have universal suffrage in 2007 and 2008, but that has been delayed now until 2017. Now, they have said they will give us one person, one vote, but we still don't have the right to nominate candidates. This isn't genuine universal suffrage.

Q: Many citizens in mainland China and Hong Kong weren't supportive of the Umbrella Movement. Why not?

A: There is a small proportion of people in Hong Kong who are genuinely supportive of the central government's electoral reform package. They can't see why it's a problem that we can't nominate candidates. They say that the general public doesn't take part in the primaries in the U.S. presidential elections, either.

But the movement still enjoys broad support in Hong Kong. Otherwise, why would the government have let it go on for more than 70 days? Why didn't they move in to clear the occupied areas in the first month?

There are also people who were critical of the Umbrella Movement itself, because this was the first time Hong Kong has fully experienced an Occupy movement, and it was even bigger than the Occupy Wall Street movement. A lot of people couldn't fully understand the point of view of citizens who were protesting.

Q: What do you think of the central government's attitude to the Umbrella Movement?

A: The central government has taken a hard-line stance towards the Umbrella Movement, and it has persecuted anyone who supports it. In mainland China, more than 100 people were detained or kept under surveillance for supporting us.

There wasn't much they could do within Hong Kong's borders, but we have found that the majority of the students who took part in the Umbrella Movement are now unable to travel to mainland China.

We don't want to see people from Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement come to the same end as the mainland's own pro-democracy activists, 20 or 30 years from now.

Last year, I went traveling in Taiwan with some of my fellow students after we finished the college entrance exam. At the time, we were followed while we were in Taiwan by some people who told us they were sent by the central government. They checked out the hotel we were staying in, and the times of our return flights.

Q: Will there be a resurgence of the Umbrella Movement in 2015?

A: Given that the Aug. 31 decision of the National People's Congress tells us that we can't have public nominations, only the right to vote, I think we will definitely see more large-scale citizen protests in 2015, or more Occupy movements.

Reported by Dai Weisen for RFA's Cantonese Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-04-22 – Pan-Democrats Protest in Hong Kong Legislature Over Beijing's Election Plan



Pan-democrat protesters prepare to go on a hunger strike to call for 'true' universal suffrage in Hong Kong, March 28, 2014. – AFP

Pan-democratic lawmakers in Hong Kong walked out of the city's legislature on Wednesday in protest after the government tabled a set of electoral reforms within strict limits laid down by Beijing.

Around 17 lawmakers walked out, shouting slogans against "fake universal suffrage," after the territory's second-in-command Carrie Lam told the Legislative Council (LegCo) that no amendments would be permitted to the reforms.

Pan-democratic lawmakers, who hold 27 out of 60 LegCo seats, have repeatedly vowed to block the proposed legislation when it comes to a vote. The government needs a two-thirds majority to pass legislation in LegCo.

Outside the chamber, around 100 protesters gathered, wearing yellow T-shirts and carrying the trademark yellow umbrellas of the Occupy Central pro-democracy movement, chanting "I want real universal suffrage! Oppose fake universal suffrage!"

Pan-democratic LegCo member Kenneth Leung said he had boycotted the entire session.

"It's just another way to express my dissatisfaction with the whole proposal, because this proposal, I've heard it before, a year ago, and none of it has been changed," Leung told reporters.

"That's the sole reason. It's a total waste of my time."

Lam told the Council not to miss a “golden opportunity” to broaden the voting franchise in 2017 elections for the next chief executive, who is currently chosen by a 1,200 Beijing-backed committee.

“We have reached a crucial time in our political development, and whether or not we march forward or take a step backwards is in the hands of legislative councilors,” Lam said.

“I call on all LegCo members, especially our friends in the pan-democratic camp, to stop and think,” she said. “If LegCo rejects this package, then all our hopes of electing the chief executive with ‘one person, one vote’ will come to nothing, and the general public will be very disappointed.”

No room for change

The reforms as tabled by Lam were in line with guidelines issued by China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), on Aug. 31, under which Hong Kong’s five million voters will each cast a ballot for the chief executive, but may only choose between two or three candidates pre-approved by Beijing.

Asked if there would be any opportunity to amend the package in LegCo, Lam replied: “The government sees the package as reasonable and there is no room for change.”

Pan-democratic Civic Party leader Alan Leong warned that accepting the government’s Beijing-backed proposals would mean no further reforms would be forthcoming.

“Once we have passed any electoral model announced today which is restrained by the National People’s Congress standing committee’s decision, that would be the ultimate electoral model envisaged by Article 45 of the Basic Law,” Leong told reporters.

“This is really meant to be the end-game.”

He rejected the slogan “pocket it for now,” meaning Hong Kong should take what it can get and continue to campaign for fully democratic elections in future.

“If we pocket it, that would mean we will give the executive and the central people’s government an excuse. There is no incentive for them to hand in their homework any more,” Leong said.

Hong Kong’s mini-constitution, the Basic Law, provides for the territory to progress to “universal suffrage,” but sets out neither a precise time-frame nor a definition of the term.

Nomination process ‘a mockery’

Under the government’s proposals published on Wednesday, the 2017 elections will require aspiring candidates to garner support from at least 120 members of the election committee, which will then narrow down the list of candidates in a secretly balloted primary election to just two or three.

The general public will then take part in a one person, one vote ballot to decide between the pre-approved candidates, using a first-past-the-post system.

Pan-democratic lawmaker and Labour Party chairman Lee Cheuk-yan said the selection process would render the eventual ballot meaningless.

“It’s meaningless to talk about who can seek candidacy when what matters most is who the electorate actually gets to vote for,” Lee said.

“The fact that they have to be nominated by a committee makes a mockery of any idea of genuine universal suffrage,” he said.

“If we are only allowed to vote for people chosen for us by the central government [in Beijing], then what is the point of those five million votes?”

Hong Kong chief executive C.Y. Leung warned that there was great uncertainty about what would happen if the package doesn’t pass in LegCo, calling on lawmakers and the public to support the proposed reforms.

“I can say that today is an important milestone in Hong Kong’s democracy, because our package fits the Basic Law, the national legislature’s decisions, democratic spirit, and Hong Kong residents’ aspiration and demands,” Leung told a news conference on Wednesday.

“I’m confident [that it will pass in LegCo],” he said.

Broken promises

But Democratic Party chairwoman Emily Lau said the issue was whether or not Beijing had lived up to the promises it made ahead of the 1997 handover from British rule.

“They have promised us universal suffrage, and now they are saying that giving us one person, one vote means this promise has been kept,” Lau told RFA.

“That is totally incorrect.”

The NPC’s Aug. 31 edict sparked the mass Occupy Central democracy movement that blocked key highways in downtown Hong Kong for 79 days last year, and took the yellow umbrella as its symbol after protesters used umbrellas to shield themselves from pepper spray and tear-gas in clashes with police.

The movement, which campaigned for “genuine universal suffrage” and the preservation of Hong Kong’s traditional rights and freedoms, drew hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets at its height.

Pan-democratic lawmaker and political activist Leung Kwok-hung told reporters that the pro-democracy movement had expressed the true will of the people of Hong Kong.

“That is the voters’ talk, not official talk, nor [that of] those academics who stay in their ivory towers and talk about what is the real consensus of the Hong Kong people,” Leung said.

Asked to comment on Lam’s assertion that the Occupy Central movement had lost public support, Leung said: “We will have to see how things develop over the next couple of months, and whether or not opposition to the plan will bring the general public out onto the streets once more.”

Reported by Dai Weisen and Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-05-07 Hong Kong's Chinese University Postpones PLA Trip Amid Student Protest



A poster protests a planned visit by PLA officers to the Chinese University of Hong Kong campus, saying it would pose a direct threat to academic freedom, May 7, 2015. – RFA

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, scene of the first major pro-democracy rally that kicked off a 79-day Occupy Central campaign in the former British colony, has postponed a planned visit from the Chinese military after vocal opposition from students, it said.

Calls have been growing among students at the university to cancel the event, which critics said was “inappropriate” in run-up to the sensitive anniversary of the 1989 bloodshed, when the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) ended several weeks of student-led pro-democracy protests with machine guns and tanks.

“Please be informed that the mutual visit and recreational event with the PLA Hong Kong garrison scheduled for May 8, 2015 has been postponed,” the Chinese University of Hong Kong said in a statement on its website.

It said such visits between university students, who are invited on a tour of the PLA barracks, and Chinese soldiers, who have visited all of Hong Kong’s universities, had been going on since 2007.

“This year, members of the PLA Hong Kong garrison were to have visited ... for communication and networking with students, as well as ball-games of various sorts and a tour of the campus,” the statement said.

“But in view of the fact that some people appear to have misunderstood the original intent of the activity, after

mutual consultations between the PLA Hong Kong garrison and the university, we have decided to postpone it,” it said.

Starting point of suffrage protests

Thousands of Hong Kong students converged on the Chinese University of Hong Kong, known colloquially as the Chinese U, on Sept. 22 at the start of a week-long boycott of classes in protest at Beijing’s decision to limit electoral reforms.

Some 13,000 students crowded into the main concourse of the university on the first day of the strike, not far from a permanent replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue raised by protesting students in Tiananmen Square before the movement was crushed by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in June 1989.

For many, the statue gives a focus to the role played by the Chinese University in Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement, sparked last year by the ruling Chinese Communist Party’s rejection of public nominations of candidates in the 2017 elections for the city’s next leader.

A student surnamed Hui said the PLA’s presence on campus was “inappropriate” ahead of the anniversary of the military crackdown on 1989 protesters that left, hundreds, possibly thousands, dead or maimed.

“The Chinese U campus is a democratic place, and June 4 is approaching,” the student said. “The PLA carries a lot of the responsibility for the June 4, 1989 incident.”

“The PLA should have no connection with universities, not under the banner of so-called unity or friendship,” Hui said.

“Chinese U students don’t welcome them.”

Hui rejected the university’s argument that the PLA has carried out similar activities in Hong Kong since 2007.

“This is the Chinese U, and the other universities are different. Here at the Chinese U, we students have our own principles,” Hui said.

A second student surnamed Cheng said the PLA’s image in the eyes of students is a poor one, and that the trip was liable to be manipulated by pro-Beijing media.

“I don’t want to see any reports about Chinese U students happily meeting with PLA soldiers,” Cheng said. “The university has postponed the trip rather than canceling it, which is OK.”

“At least the university is listening to the student voice, and has acted accordingly.”

Meanwhile, Hui said students planned to continue their protest against any rescheduling of the visit.

“We don’t want such activities to happen here, not in a few days, not in a few weeks,” Hui said.

Since the Occupy movement, the Hong Kong government has tabled a set of electoral reforms that would prevent any publicly nominated candidates from running for chief executive, while pan-democratic politicians have vowed to veto the package when it is put to the vote in the city’s legislature next month.

“This is the most crucial moment we have faced since the Umbrella Movement ended,” Daisy Chan, convenor of the pro-democratic Hong Kong Civil Human Rights Front, told a local radio show on Thursday. “We mustn’t slack off now.”

Keep up pressure on legislation

She called on supporters to keep up the pressure on the government around the time of the debate and vote in the Legislative Council (LegCo).

“We should be having rallies and live broadcasts of the speeches given by delegates, because no other form of action will induce LegCo to cooperate with us,” Chan said. “This is a simple and direct method.”

But she said her group and others campaigning for universal suffrage hadn’t yet formulated their strategy.

“We are open to suggestions from other organizations ... who may feel that a large gathering is too boring, and who may prefer to add other ingredients to the mix,” she said.

Beijing officials styled the student-led Occupy Central movement an “illegal protest,” and have publicly hit out at any suggestion of a “Hong Kong identity,” saying it is tantamount to discussing independence for the city.

But opinion surveys have shown that a relatively small proportion of Hong Kong residents—just 17 percent in 2012—identify themselves as “Chinese,” with a larger proportion describing themselves as “Hong Kong people,” or “Hong Kong Chinese.”

Officials have called for the re-introduction of Communist Party-backed “patriotic education” in the territory’s schools, a plan that sparked mass protests before being shelved in 2012, citing concern over a lack of patriotic feeling among Hong Kong’s young people.

A Beijing-backed company has also moved to take control of more than 80 percent of the publishing industry in Hong Kong, which was promised a high degree of autonomy and the continuation of its existing freedoms under the terms of the city’s 1997 handover to China.

Clause 14 of Hong Kong’s mini-constitution, the Basic Law, states that the PLA garrison must not interfere in the affairs of Hong Kong, although the city’s government may request military assistance to maintain public order or to deal with disasters.

Many Occupy protesters have said they weren’t just fighting for public nominations, but against the steady erosion of the city’s core values and freedoms, citing a slew of violent attacks on outspoken Hong Kong journalists in recent years.

Reported by Qiao Long for RFA’s Mandarin Service, and by Dai Weisen for the Cantonese Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-06-01 For Now, Hong Kong Remains a Focus For Tiananmen Massacre Anniversary



Pro-democracy demonstrators march to Beijing's Liaison Office in Hong Kong, May 31, 2015. – RFA

Many of the hundreds of thousands of people who thronged the streets at the height of Hong Kong's 79-day Umbrella Movement for universal suffrage last year said they did so partly out of fear that the city's traditional freedoms may be fast eroding.

For now, however, Hong Kong remains a focus for activists and political commentators wishing to mark the sensitive anniversary of China's June 4, 1989 military crackdown on weeks of student-led pro-democracy protests in Beijing.

While the sensitive topic is banned from public debate across the internal border in mainland China, where those who mark the massacre or call for justice for its victims often end up in jail, thousands took to the streets of Hong Kong Island on Sunday in a march to Beijing's representative office in the territory to call for a reappraisal of the crackdown.

Chanting slogans and carrying banners calling on the ruling Chinese Communist Party to "Overturn the verdict on June 4," demonstrators marched to the Central Government Liaison Office, which is increasingly becoming a focus for protest in the city since the 1997 handover to Chinese rule.

More events will follow, not least the now-traditional candlelight vigil in Victoria Park, which this year will also remember the Occupy Central pro-democracy movement.

"Apart from [Sunday's] demonstration, we also call on people to gather on [Thursday] at 8.00 p.m. in Victoria

Park to continue to light the candles of conscience, and to continue our fight for a reappraisal of June 4, 1989,” Richard Choi, deputy chairman of event organizers the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China, told RFA.

‘Our demands are the same’

Sunday’s demonstrators have already given hints of an irrevocable association between the Occupy Central movement and the 1989 pro-democracy protests in the minds of Hong Kong activists.

At the start of the march, demonstrators opened dozens of yellow umbrellas, the icon of the Umbrella Movement since protesters used them to ward off pepper spray attacks from riot police on Sept. 28, 2014.

“The Communist Party’s massacre of students who called for democracy and freedom is proof that the party aren’t herbivores,” one protester told RFA on Sunday.

“I am taking part in the demonstration so as to perpetuate the spirit of June 4,” the protester said.

Meanwhile, Labour Party lawmaker and trade unionist Lee Cheuk-yan brushed aside reports of deep divisions in Hong Kong’s activist body in the wake of the Occupy movement, which have resulted in a boycott of the Victoria Park vigil by the city’s student federation.

“Our demands are the same: the reappraisal of the verdict on June 4, and an end to a single-party dictatorship,” Lee said.

He said a controversial package of electoral reforms that was endorsed by Beijing on Aug. 31, and which sparked the Umbrella Movement, will soon be presented with no amendments to Hong Kong’s Legislative Council (LegCo).

“This year, it is also the year of the reform package, and ... the Chinese Communist Party has slapped down our demand for universal suffrage as well,” Lee said.

“This puts the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement right on the front line of the struggle,” he said.

Limited choices

Under the electoral reform plan, all of Hong Kong’s five million voters will be eligible to cast a ballot in the 2017 race for the next chief executive, but they may only choose between candidates approved by Beijing.

The arrangement has been rejected as “fake universal suffrage” by pan-democratic lawmakers, who have vowed to block the package in LegCo later this month in spite of a meeting on Sunday with Chinese officials.

Lee said the Hong Kong democracy movement won’t accept defeat: “We will fight, not just for universal suffrage within Hong Kong itself, but also for China to move towards democracy,” he said.

Lee said Hong Kong activists are acutely aware that dozens of mainland Chinese activists have been jailed or held in long periods of detention for their open support of the Umbrella Movement.

Across the border, authorities in the southwestern province of Sichuan on Monday detained veteran rights activist Huang Qi, whose Tianwang website was originally set up to track down the victims of the 1989 crackdown.

Huang, who was detained for questioning amid a nationwide clampdown on dissent ahead of the anniversary, said police came to his home at around 9.00 a.m. local time and took him to the police station.

In a brief interview on Monday, Huang said he was questioned by state security police from Sichuan’s Guang’an

city about his possible involvement in a demonstration there.

Huang said he had denied taking part, and returned home after being released at around 8.00 p.m. the same day.

Demand for accountability

Victims' group the Tiananmen Mothers said it has continued its bid to hold Beijing to account for the crackdown, according to a statement issued Monday via the overseas group Human Rights in China.

"We ask for a public and just resolution to the June Fourth issue," the statement said.

It called on the Chinese government to reinvestigate the events of June 1989, to make public full details of all those who died, and to provide an explanation and compensation to the family of each of the victims

"[We also demand the government] prosecute those criminally responsible for the June Fourth tragedy. In summary, we seek truth, compensation, and accountability," the group said.

Back in Hong Kong, Nathan Law, secretary general of the city's student federation, also brushed aside the disappointment of many activists that his group wouldn't be attending the vigil, as it has in previous years.

"All we want is for the historical truth to be admitted and recognized, and to remind people of the spirit of June 4 and of the 1989 pro-democracy movement," Law told reporters.

Law, who has said the vigil has become a ritual that lacks fighting spirit, said plans for separate memorial events won't lessen the impact of the anniversary for Hong Kong.

"Personally, I don't see why it's a problem to have separate memorial events," Law said.

Sensitive questions examined

Meanwhile, a political analysis by a U.S.-based Chinese academic has hit bookstores in Hong Kong, amid fears that the recent takeover of a major Hong Kong publishing chain by a Beijing-backed company will bring books in the once freewheeling city within reach of Chinese censors.

Titled *Changing China: Chinese Political Thought in The Wake of June 4, 1989*, the book's publication is timed to resonate with the public mood at a somber time for Hong Kong's activists and pan-democratic politicians, its author said.

"The book is being published now because it is the 26th anniversary of June 4," Columbia University political science professor Zhang Boshu, who was in Beijing at the time of the massacre, said.

"In the past 26 years, there have been huge changes in China," Zhang said. "From the perspective of Chinese intellectuals, these changes have been severe."

"We have not only seen an end to the reforms of the 1980s, including political reforms, but also the emergence of today's elite, who exist because of the combination of market economics and a political monopoly on power," Zhang said.

He said his book engages in particular with the sensitive question of how China's political elite came by its wealth, where the most important social tensions lie, and in what direction China could evolve in the future.

"Since Xi Jinping came to power, we have seen one aspect of his rule: the fierce anti-corruption campaign, which we can say has won him public support," Zhang said.

“His anti-corruption stance is much tougher than that of any of his predecessors. But at the same time, Xi Jinping has strengthened government control of ideology, of the media, and of higher education ... over liberal intellectuals, and [his crackdown] is anti-constitutional,” he said.

Beijing has never published full details of deaths and injuries from the June 3-4 crackdown, when the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) deployed troops with tanks and machine guns to clear democracy protesters who had paralysed central Beijing for several weeks.

Chinese officials have ignored growing calls for a reappraisal of the official position that the crackdown was a necessary response to a counter-revolutionary rebellion, and last year arrested dozens of high-profile activists after they organized a seminar to discuss the event ahead of the 25th anniversary.

Among them, veteran political journalist Gao Yu was jailed for seven years in April for “leaking state secrets overseas,” while prominent rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang faces up to 10 years’ imprisonment for each of the two public order and ethnic hatred charges against him.

Reported by Lin Jing and Yin Kejing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan and Qiao Long for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-06-04 – Hong Kong Marks June 4 Massacre Anniversary Amid Discord Over Its Own Future



Hong Kong Federation of Social Work Students commemorates the massacre at Tiananmen Square, June 4, 2015. – HKFSWS Facebook page

Tens of thousands of people gathered in parks and public spaces in Hong Kong on Thursday to commemorate the 26th anniversary of the military crackdown on the 1989 democracy movement in China, but also the city's own pro-democracy movement last year.

The crowds poured into Victoria Park amid the neon-clad skyscrapers of Causeway Bay for a mass candlelight vigil, filling up the space of six football fields, singing anthems of the 1989 movement, and bowing three times to remember those who died.

A youth group lit a lamp with an Olympic-style torch under the slogan “Build a Democratic China” and presented memorial wreaths at a temporary replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue and a monument to “martyrs of the democratic movement,” echoing a similar monument to revolutionary heroes on Beijing’s Tiananmen Square.

Symbols of the Umbrella Movement, which took its name from the umbrellas used by protesters on Sept. 28 to ward off pepper spray attacks by police, were woven into the event, which used a yellow umbrella and candle for its logo.

“Occupy was in a way a mini-June 4 for Hong Kong,” pan-democratic lawmaker and vigil organizer Lee Cheuk-yan told reporters, in a reference to the 79-day Occupy Central civil disobedience campaign for fully democratic elections in 2017.

“We should not separate our fight for democracy from that of China’s,” said Lee, adding, “We should link up the two and fight in unity.”

Growing divisions

But the memorial took place amid growing social divisions in the city, the only place in China where public memorials are allowed to mark the massacre of civilians by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), with breakaway events held for the first time, and following scuffles with pro-Beijing activists.

Police intervened to hold apart pro-Beijing protesters who showed up during preparations for the candlelight event in Victoria Park on Thursday, following shouting and scuffles that lasted around 10 minutes.

Elsewhere in the city, separate memorial events were held, reflecting growing division among Hong Kong activists in the wake of the city’s own Occupy Central pro-democracy movement last year.

A tourist from across the internal immigration border in mainland China said he had deliberately timed his trip to attend the vigil.

“If you want to find out about these events [in China], you have to ... get information from outside the Great Firewall [of Chinese government censorship],” the man, who gave only his surname Yan, told RFA.

“Now I have the opportunity to experience the atmosphere myself, when I take part in the memorial event alongside everybody else,” Yan said.

The event’s organizers hammered home the link between last year’s 79-day Umbrella Movement and the events of June 3–4, 1989, with this year’s slogan “Build a Democratic China.”

Only one target

Deputy chairman of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, Richard Choi, said he was respectful of other groups’ desire to hold a different kind of event this year.

“Our only adversary, the only target of our protest, our challenge, is the Communist Party regime,” Choi said.

But he defended the idea that the June 4 vigil is irrevocably linked to Hong Kong’s own democracy movement.

“This has been happening in Hong Kong for more than 20 years without a break, and it is a very important form of local protest,” Choi said.

For the first time since a million people turned out on Hong Kong’s streets in the immediate aftermath of the massacre, the city’s student federation has boycotted the main event, while students and local activists held smaller events elsewhere, including on the waterfront at Tsimshatsui.

Pan-democratic Civic Party deputy chairman Tanya Chan appeared to take the view that all movements go through periods of fragmentation, however.

“There is a time for breaking apart, and a time for coming together,” Chan said. “This is normal.”

Chan said the symbolic meaning of the Victoria Park vigil is to keep the memory of the crackdown alive and to call on the ruling Chinese Communist Party to revise its official verdict that the bloodshed was necessary to put an end to the threat of a violent “counterrevolutionary rebellion.”

“We will continue to do this until they overturn this verdict,” Chan told RFA, adding: “But different people have different ways of mourning. That’s understandable.”

‘Remain aware’

Social work student Lo Man-kit said the event is also important as a way of reminding Hong Kong people not to forgo their political awareness under Beijing’s rule.

“We light up Causeway Bay in a circle of flame to express our demands regarding June 4, but also to awaken the people of Hong Kong to a greater awareness,” Lo said.

“[They] shouldn’t bury their conscience ... we want to wake up people’s feelings through singing.”

Among the anthems sung by the crowd on Thursday was “Bloodstained Glory,” a revolutionary war anthem originally written as a paean to those who died during the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese war but adopted by the student-led protesters on Tiananmen Square in 1989.

The scenes, slickly shot and streamed live online by the pro-democracy Next Media group, recalled the drone footage of hundreds of thousands of smartphone lights during the Umbrella Movement that occupied major highways in downtown Hong Kong last year in a bid to win universal suffrage.

That movement was sparked by an Aug. 31 decree from China’s parliament that while Hong Kong’s five million voters will cast a ballot for the city’s chief executive in 2017, they may only choose among candidates pre-selected by Beijing.

Pan-democratic lawmakers, who have vowed to block the reform package later this month in Hong Kong’s Legislative Council, and political activists have dismissed the plan as “fake universal suffrage,” and have called for public nominations.

Many who joined the crowds of hundreds of thousands at the movement’s height in October said they were also worried at the erosion of Hong Kong’s existing freedoms in the wake of the 1997 handover to Chinese rule following a series of violent attacks on outspoken media figures.

Reported by Wen Yuqing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Qiao Long for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-06-16 - Hong Kong Gears Up For Tense Political Vote Amid 'Bomb Plot' Arrests



Police escort a suspect during a crime reconstruction a day after suspected explosives were seized at an abandoned television studio in Hong Kong, June 16, 2015. – AFP

Authorities in Hong Kong have arrested 10 people in connection with a suspected bomb plot as police officers took up residence in the city's legislature ahead of a Beijing-backed political reform package for the former British colony.

Police arrested six men and four women late on Monday on suspicion of “conspiracy to manufacture explosives,” the territory's police department said in a statement on its website on Tuesday.

It said chemical ingredients for manufacturing triacetone triperoxide (TATP) were seized at the home of one of the group, while the chemical formula for manufacturing smoke grenades was found in the mobile phone of another arrestee.

“Bomb and kill you all ... Long live democracy!” one of the suspects was quoted by the *South China Morning Post* newspaper as telling police.

The arrests come amid high political tensions, as members of Hong Kong's Legislative Council (LegCo) gear up for a three-day debate on an electoral reform plan approved by Beijing, which pan-democrats and participants in last year's 79-day Occupy Central pro-democracy movement have repeatedly dismissed as “fake universal suffrage.”

Under the terms of an Aug. 31 decree from China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), the city's five million voters will each cast a ballot in the 2017 race for chief executive, but they may only choose among

candidate vetted by a pro-Beijing committee.

Critics say the arrangement will mean that no pan-democratic politicians, who currently hold 27 out of 60 LegCo seats, will be able to run in the election.

Pan-democratic lawmakers have vowed to block the plan when it is put to the vote, in spite of growing calls from “pro-establishment” Beijing-backed groups and officials to take what’s on offer now, in the hope of greater democracy to come.

Police said evidence found at the scene of the alleged bomb plot suggests that the suspects are members of a Hong Kong-based “localist radical” group.

“Police officers will be deployed into the LegCo Complex for stand-by duties [on Tuesday evening],” a police statement said. “This is to ensure that ... police can make a quick and effective response to protect the safety of the LegCo members and staff.”

It said reinforcements would be sent “according to the prevailing situation,” but said the police presence was there to “facilitate all peaceful and lawful public events in a fair and impartial manner,” not to impede freedom of expression.

Meanwhile chief executive Leung Chun-ying appeared to blame the Occupy Central mass civil disobedience movement in part for the alleged plot.

“Even if these activities are non-violent, if we rationalize them, we will only let people with a violent tendency use the same reason to rationalize their violent behavior,” Leung told reporters on Tuesday.

“Hong Kong’s community should not tolerate any illegal activities, no matter whether these activities are nonviolent or violent,” he said. “Illegal is illegal.”

‘Dubious attempt’

But Hong Kong activists hit out at what they said was a dubious attempt to connect the bomb-making suspects to the “localist” campaign that seeks to emphasize the city’s unique identity and political freedoms, and which includes a minority of independence advocates.

“The police described [the suspects] as localist radicals, but are they radical?” Leung Kam-shing, who heads the Sheung Shui Parallel Traders’ Concern Group campaigning against cross-border bulk-buying groups, told RFA.

“What exactly constitutes a localist radical group? There are so many localist groups in Hong Kong; it seems as if the police are saying that ... anyone who speaks up in favor of localism is a radical,” Leung said.

“I don’t think that’s fair.”

Pro-independence activist Roy Wong said propaganda materials found during the raid on the bombing suspects were different from that of Hong Kong’s localist groups, and used wording that is more often used by the Chinese government and the tightly controlled state media.

“I’ll say it clearly: we don’t know this bunch of people, nor what they were planning to do with the explosives they were caught with,” Wong told local media.

“Actually, there’s not even any evidence linking them to LegCo, and there should be some proof shown to local people that they were even part of the localist faction,” he said.

Pan-democratic politicians and activists on Sunday launched a five-day rally “against fake universal suffrage,” but

the rally only drew some 3,500 activists, a far cry from the hundreds of thousands who turned out at the height of the “Umbrella Movement” last year.

“LegCo members may have their own political views [regarding the reform package], but they should listen to the views of the electorate and find out what citizens think,” a participant surnamed Ho told RFA.

A protester surnamed Ng said he wanted to let the government know how important fully democratic elections are to the people of Hong Kong.

“Now it’s going to be the central government who chooses people,” Ng said. “I didn’t care how hot it was, or how tired I am; I had to come out.”

“This is about the fate of Hong Kong.”

Pro-establishment protesters also came out in protest.

“What reason do we have not to take what’s on offer for now?” Patrick Ko, spokesman for the pro-Beijing group Voice of Loving Hong Kong, told reporters.

“It’s as if everyone in Hong Kong decided that they only want to eat rice, with no dishes,” he said. “We’d like three dishes and a soup, please.”

Rally organizer Johnson Yeung said the pro-democracy camp will meet to discuss its next move following the LegCo vote.

But he said there would likely be no call for a repeat of Occupy Central, also dubbed the Umbrella Movement after protesters used umbrellas to defend themselves from tear-gas and pepper spray.

“We won’t be calling on citizens to occupy anything,” Yeung said. “If there is no big crisis during the vote ... I don’t think that many people would turn out.”

“That wouldn’t serve our aims.”

Reported by Lin Jing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-06-17 – Political Tensions High as Hong Kong Lawmakers Debate Electoral Reforms



Opposing groups face off as a crucial vote approaches in Hong Kong, June 17, 2015. – RFA

Crowds of protesters on either side of a tense debate on Hong Kong's political future faced off outside the city's legislature amid tight security on Wednesday as lawmakers called a halt to the first day of debate ahead of a crucial vote.

Protesters waving banners in support of Beijing's plan for the 2017 elections for the former British colony's next chief executive chanted "Vote out the pan-democrats in 2016, say yes to 2017!"

Meanwhile, pro-democracy protesters held up the yellow and black banners of last year's Umbrella Movement, which has—together with the 27 pan-democratic lawmakers in the Legislative Council (LegCo)—dismissed Beijing's electoral reform plan as "fake universal suffrage."

"Our destiny, our freedom! Say no to fake universal suffrage!" they shouted from the other side of crowd barriers placed by police.

Wong Tze Yuet, spokesman for the student activist group Scholarism, which played a key role in last year's 79-day Occupy Central civil disobedience movement, said the pro-democracy camp outnumbered the pro-reform camp several times over, in spite of earlier reports from government broadcaster RTHK that the pro-Beijing camp was larger.

"When we saw how many people there were from the other side, Scholarism called on everyone to gather here, to tell the government our opinion," he said.

"We think that this reform package should be voted down, unless something unexpected happens," Wong told RFA on Wednesday, after lawmakers adjourned for further debate on Thursday.

The students were joined outside LegCo by key figures in the Occupy Central campaign, which drew hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets at its height after riot police fired tear gas and pepper spray at protesters shielding themselves with umbrellas.

‘We want a real choice’

Under the terms of an Aug. 31 decree from China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), Hong Kong’s five million voters will each cast a ballot in the 2017 race for chief executive, but they may only choose among candidates vetted by a pro-Beijing committee.

Critics say the arrangement will mean that no pan-democratic politicians, who currently hold enough of the 60 LegCo seats to block the plan, will be able to run in the election.

A demonstrator surnamed Wong said she had also taken part in the Occupy Central protests that took over key highways and intersections in downtown Hong Kong last year.

“We want genuine universal suffrage, not fake universal suffrage,” Wong told RFA. “We want a real choice of who we elect.”

“We don’t want bunch of rotten apples and oranges that have been picked out for us. That’s no use to us,” she said.

“I felt I had to do something to show my support.”

Wong said she doesn’t expect the reform bill to pass in LegCo, in a vote that is scheduled for Thursday at the earliest.

“I don’t think it’s got much chance of getting through,” she said. “But we are afraid that the Communist Party will be using all sorts of tactic behind the scenes that we haven’t thought of.”

“They have a very long history of political machinations.”

Vow to block the plan

Pan-democratic lawmakers have vowed to block the plan when it is put to the vote, in spite of growing calls from “pro-establishment” Beijing-backed groups and officials to take what’s on offer now, in the hope of greater democracy to come.

But a pro-reform supporter surnamed Chong said the pan-democrats are out of touch with public opinion in Hong Kong, after a string of opinion polls suggested support for the reform plan is growing.

“This is a very important day for Hong Kong, which will take us away from the appointed governors of the British colonial era, to an era in which five million voters elect the chief executive, one person, one vote,” Chong said.

“I think we should support it.”

Chief executive C.Y. Leung has warned that no further reforms will be tabled, should the pan-democrats carry out their veto threat, and that the current system will remain in place.

An opinion poll carried out by three Hong Kong universities showed that supporters of the electoral reform bill now outnumber its detractors, local media reported.

The survey by the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and Hong Kong

Polytechnic University found that 45 percent of respondents were backing the government's proposal, while 39 percent opposed it.

An earlier result had put support for the reform package at 41.7 percent and opposition at 43 percent, the *Apple Daily* newspaper reported.

Pressure to vote

Government officials are apparently engaged in a last-ditch bid to persuade pan-democratic politicians to vote for the bill, lawmaker Kenneth Leung told reporters.

Leung told RTHK that a friend had called him and asked him to abstain from voting rather than voting no, although he didn't know who had asked the friend to do so.

Chief secretary Carrie Lam, C.Y. Leung's second-in-command, told lawmakers they should take what was being offered, and pay attention to growing public support for the reform package.

"A vote in your hand is better than having none," Lam told LegCo on the first day of the debate.

"The vote represents the right to vote for five million people," she said.

Meanwhile, Starry Lee, who heads the pro-establishment Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong, criticized Occupy Central activists for threatening to launch the campaign in the early stages of the political debate.

The threat of a mass protest movement had likely sparked Beijing's Aug. 31 decree on the electoral process, Lee told lawmakers.

Tight security

Pan-democratic legislators hit out at tight security throughout the LegCo complex on Wednesday, following reports of a bomb threat earlier in the week.

"We are here with the trust of all of the people of Hong Kong, who think we are worthy of that trust," pan-democratic lawmaker and political activist Leung Kwok-hung told reporters after undergoing security checks.

"If the police have received some intelligence that any LegCo member is likely to carry out a violent attack, then they should apply to the LegCo speaker to arrest them," Leung said.

"They shouldn't force all LegCo and Executive Council members to undergo these humiliating security checks," he said.

LegCo speaker Tsang Yok-sing defended his decision to raise the threat level at LegCo to amber on Tuesday.

"If we had ignored warnings from police following their risk assessment, and did nothing, and then a serious incident occurred here ... this would set a bad precedent," Tsang told reporters.

'Ungovernable'

But lawmaker and Labour Party chairman Lee Cheuk-yan said the government was deliberately creating an atmosphere of terror ahead of the vote.

"They are trying to make it seem as if Hong Kong is becoming ungovernable because of the political reform debate," Lee said. "But I believe this is a self-constructed, self-directed and staged drama."

“There are clearly more security personnel than there are protesters,” he said.

“How did Hong Kong get this way? Don’t they trust the people of Hong Kong?”

Beijing sent out a warning to lawmakers on Wednesday as the debate opened, in an opinion article published by the state news agency Xinhua.

“Lawmakers are to be reminded that they have pledged allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China when taking office,” the article said.

“If they choose to oppose social advancement—allowing personal gains and political scheming to kidnap public opinions—they will be held accountable for obstructing democratic development in Hong Kong for generations and beyond,” it said, without detailing to whom they would be accountable.

If the bill is rejected in LegCo, “[Hong Kong] society risks being torn further apart; and the city may dwindle into trivial political bickering,” it warned.

Reported by Chiu Tze-ho, Wen Yuqing and Lin Jing for the Cantonese Service, and by Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-06-22 – Last Occupy Central Die-Hards Face Eviction From Hong Kong Street



Dozens of tents remain on Tim Mei Avenue next to the Legislative Council in Hong Kong, June 21, 2015. – RFA

Authorities in Hong Kong handed an eviction notice to a group of die-hard Umbrella Movement protesters on Monday, following the defeat of a Beijing-backed political reform plan at the hands of pan-democratic lawmakers, who dismissed it as “fake universal suffrage.”

Some of the protesters have been camped outside the city’s Legislative Council (LegCo) on Tim Mei Avenue since the start of the 79-day Occupy Central mass civil disobedience movement last year.

The deadline was announced formally in notices nailed up at the site by Hong Kong’s Lands Department, but some residents say they won’t leave until the city has a system of “genuine universal suffrage” agreed.

A protester surnamed Mok said he is preparing to stay in the spirit of Sept. 28, when thousands of student-led protesters armed with goggles and umbrellas faced off with ranks of riot police firing tear gas and pepper spray at the crowd.

“I have been here more than 200 days in total,” Mok told RFA on Monday. “Today is the 267th day, beginning on Sept. 28.”

“[I am here] to overturn fake universal suffrage, but we still have a long way to go in the fight for a fair public nomination system and the right to stand as a candidate,” he said.

“Injustices are still taking place, and the liars are still telling their lies on TV,” he said. “I think we still need some form of symbolic action here.”

He said more than 20 people had remained outside LegCo since the broader Occupy movement shut up shop.

“We won’t put up any resistance when they clear us out,” Mok said. “But some of us will come back again after they’re done with the clearance of this street.”

Pan-democratic LegCo member Fernando Cheung said he felt the clearance of the tent village was a shame.

“I think it’s a shame, because it is an expression of public opinion, and it doesn’t cause a lot of inconvenience to the general public here on Tim Mei Avenue,” Cheung said.

“If they’re not causing an obstruction to anyone, they should be allowed to continue expressing their views here.”

“I don’t think it’s reasonable for the police to clear them away,” he added.

Cheung called on Hong Kong people to come out in support of genuine universal suffrage again during the traditional July 1 protest marking the 18th anniversary of the handover from British rule.

“I hope to see even more citizens demonstrating on July 1 ... and I think that civil society groups will continue to call on people to come out and express their views,” he said.

More localized campaigns

Public anger at the police response to the initial Occupy protests brought hundreds of thousands of people out onto major highways in downtown Hong Kong at the Umbrella Movement’s height.

But as Beijing and Hong Kong officials declined to offer concessions, and cracks became apparent in the Occupy leadership, the number of protesters dwindled to a few hundred.

The last main Occupy site was cleared from a three-lane highway in Admiralty in early December.

Unofficial spokesman Dang Four said many protesters were getting ready to leave for good, however, after seeing the defeat of the electoral reform bill by 28 votes to eight last Thursday.

“We have already done what we wanted to do, and the [reform package] has been vetoed,” Dang said. “Now we will leave, because it’s meaningless to stay here.”

He said more localized campaigns would be a better way to continue the pro-democracy movement in future.

“We won’t get this done by sleeping on the pavement,” he said. “There’s no concrete result.”

“But there’s plenty of publicity work we can do by setting up a stand in the districts, and by running activities,” Dang said. “That will be more effective.”

A protester surnamed Chan told RFA: “Now that the government’s reform plan has been voted down, our job here is done.”

“I will continue to support the Umbrella Movement for universal suffrage, by making donations to political parties and civic groups,”
Chan said.

Under the terms of an Aug. 31 ruling by China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), Hong Kong’s five million eligible voters could have cast a ballot in the 2017 election for the next chief executive, but only candidates pre-approved by Beijing could run.

Pan-democratic LegCo members, who hold 27 seats out of 70, had vowed all along to vote against the plan, and effectively vetoed the measure that the NPC said needed two-thirds of the vote to pass.

China has repeatedly slammed the Occupy Central movement as illegal, the folly of “radical democrats” and instigated by “hostile foreign forces.”

Reported by Dai Weisen for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-06-29 – Hong Kong Student Leader, Girlfriend Attacked on Mong Kok Street



Student activist Joshua Wong speaks outside the Wanchai police station in Hong Kong, Jan. 16, 2015. – AFP

Umbrella Movement student leader Joshua Wong and his girlfriend were assaulted on the city's streets by an unknown assailant on Monday, ahead of a planned mass demonstration to mark the return of Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule.

Wong, who rose to prominence during last year's Occupy Central campaign for fully democratic elections, was punched by an unidentified man as he left a movie theater in the gritty downtown district of Mong Kok, just streets away from where he was arrested at the end of the mass civil disobedience movement.

The attack left Wong, 18, with visible injuries to his face, and also embroiled his girlfriend and fellow activist Tiffany Chin in the melee, after which Wong tried to catch and photograph their attacker.

"This man was about 20 years old ... and crossed the road towards us, taking off his jacket and rolling up his sleeves as if getting ready for a fight," Wong said. "He kept saying to me, 'you wanna fight? you wanna fight?'"

"Then he pushed me and my girlfriend to the ground and kicked and punched us," Wong said.

"I kept asking him why he was attacking me, and when I chased and caught up with him, he said he didn't need a reason."

Wong said he believed the attack would send a warning to any political figure in Hong Kong, where political divisions have deepened in the wake of the Occupy movement and the rejection of Beijing's electoral reform package by the city's legislature earlier this month.

“This incident should tell academic activists that if they are active in politics, they should pay close attention to their personal safety when they go out and about,” said Wong, whose group Scholarism was formed in opposition to a Beijing-approved “patriotic education” program in Hong Kong’s schools.

“It’s very serious that somebody, without direction, could suddenly attack another person because they don’t like what a public figure says, or because they don’t agree with their political views,” Wong said.

‘Not going to stop’

But Chin told RFA she had no plans to scale down her activism in the wake of the attack.

“I may stick to places where there are a lot of people and it’s brightly lit,” Chin said. “But I’m not going to stop social activism just because I got beaten up by somebody.”

“Otherwise, they would just be able to stop people opposing government policy and reduce the amount of activism in Hong Kong just by sending people to beat us up,” she said.

Both Wong and Chin have been prevented from entering mainland China since they took part in the Umbrella Movement, which rejected Beijing’s electoral reforms as “fake universal suffrage.”

The attack on the couple immediately drew comparisons with a series of attacks on prominent media personalities in Hong Kong, including a knife attack on former Chinese-language Ming Pao chief editor Kevin Lau, and a firebomb attack on the home of Next Media mogul Jimmy Lai.

‘Darkest days’

Under the terms of its 1997 handover to China, the former British colony was promised the continuation of its existing freedoms and a “high degree of autonomy.”

But journalists and political commentators say Hong Kong’s formerly free press is seeing its “darkest days” yet in what is likely a harbinger of further erosion of the city’s traditional freedoms.

In a recent annual report, the Hong Kong Journalists’ Association (HKJA) pointed to a series of “grave attacks, both physical and otherwise in the past 12 months” that threatened freedom of expression in the territory.

Alan Leong, convenor of a pan-democratic lawmakers’ group in the Legislative Council (LegCo), said pan-democrats deplore any form of violence.

“Hong Kong values its freedom of expression deeply, and violence cannot be allowed into space where expression is free,” Leong told RFA.

“Violence is not the way. We need to use reason to convince our opponents,” he said.

No entry

Meanwhile, political activists across the internal immigration border with mainland China are being prevented from entering Hong Kong ahead of Wednesday’s planned protest, which is the first since the 79-day Umbrella Movement brought hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets at its height last year.

“A lot of people want to come to Hong Kong to take part in the July 1 demonstration and other activities in support of the pro-democracy movement, but they can’t even manage to get a passport or an entry permit for Hong Kong,” online activist Jia Pin told RFA.

“At the same time, they would want to speak out about persecution in mainland China, and express their

demands,” he said.

He said state security police and border authorities have stepped up controls on such activists both in the southern province of Guangdong, which borders Hong Kong, and further afield.

“There are even some entry and exit points in Beijing that are under tighter control over this period,” Jia said.

“It’ll get much easier once [the demonstration has passed],” he added. “Then the immigration controls will be a bit more relaxed.”

*Reported by Lin Jing and Wen Yuqing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service.
Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.*

2015-07-01 – Tens of Thousands March For Democracy in Hong Kong



A protest banner lists political freedoms enjoyed in Hong Kong, June 30, 2015. – RFA

More than 40,000 people took to the streets of Hong Kong on Wednesday in a now-traditional mass rally on the anniversary of the city's 1997 handover to Chinese rule, calling for political reform and for amendments to the city's constitution, organizers said.

Thousands of people braved sweltering heat to march through the streets of the former British colony, sometimes chanting "No to fake universal suffrage!"

Former student leaders of last year's 79-day pro-democracy Umbrella Movement meanwhile said they would stage an overnight sit-in in the Central business district, promising to leave by morning rush-hour.

Some banners called on Beijing-backed chief executive Leung Chun-ying to step down, while others called for an end to "interference" in academic freedoms, and still others for amendments to the city's post-1997 mini-constitution, the Basic Law.

Joshua Wong, a prominent figure in the Occupy Central movement, called from a podium: "C.Y. Leung step down!" shouting: "Remake the future of our city. Build a democratic Hong Kong!"

'Dissatisfied'

Yellow umbrellas and banners apparently recycled from last year's Occupy Central civil disobedience movement

were also dotted throughout the crowd.

A protester surnamed **Wo** said the march largely represents widespread dissatisfaction with the post-1997 Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) government.

“It has been 18 years since 1997, and we are dissatisfied with the government’s performance,” **Wo** said. “The Occupy Central movement last year showed us that our government is impotent.”

“They only care about suppressing our voices,” said **Wo**, a veteran protester during the Occupy Central movement. “We have never achieved democracy or universal suffrage.”

“But we want to keep speaking out on behalf of the next generation,” she said.

Political impasse

Ernest Ho, one of the leaders of **Wong’s** academic activist group **Scholarism**, said the group is behind proposals to amend the Basic Law following the defeat in the Legislative Council (LegCo) of a Beijing-backed electoral reform package on June 18.

“Since the political reform package was voted down, it is clear that we have reached a political impasse,” Ho told RFA ahead of the march.

“We need to find a breakthrough point, so we can get the political system that we should get,” he said.

“The Basic Law no longer reflects our Hong Kong values, so we think it should be rewritten.”

An Aug. 31 decision from China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), dictated the terms of Hong Kong’s move to “universal suffrage,” in which each voter would cast a ballot to choose among candidates approved by Beijing.

But democracy campaigners dismissed the idea as “fake universal suffrage,” and pan-democratic politicians voted it down in the city’s legislature earlier this month.

Backtracking on agreement

Former British colonial-era civil service chief **Anson Chan** accused Beijing and Hong Kong officials of trying to “rewrite” the Basic Law and of backtracking on the handover agreement.

“I think the problem ... is the fact that the [Beijing] Liaison Office and the Hong Kong government are not sticking to the provisions in the Basic Law but are trying to rewrite and to reinterpret the Basic Law,” Chan told government broadcaster RTHK from the sidelines of the march.

She called on the Hong Kong government to adhere to pre-handover promises of “a high degree of autonomy,” “one country, two systems,” and of “Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong.”

But Chan warned against any amendment to the Basic Law.

“I think there are inherent risks in amending the Basic Law, because it can very quickly turn into a Christmas tree on which everyone will hang their pet amendments,” Chan said.

“The pro-Beijing and conservative [forces] will also be pressing for amendments that will even further erode our rights and freedoms,” she warned.

Other groups join protest

Elsewhere, “localist” protesters angry over growing mainland Chinese influence in the city, called for independence and a “Hong Kong nation,” while one woman was detained by police after running across a street holding a colonial-era Hong Kong flag, according to Twitter users posting from the scene.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) groups, workers’ unions, the People Power civic group, pan-democratic political parties, and a marching band staffed by uniformed members of the Falun Gong spiritual group, banned as an “evil cult” by the ruling Chinese Communist Party, also took to the streets.

For its part, Beijing declined to issue an invitation to prominent social activist and pan-democratic lawmaker Leung Kwok-hung to its official flag-raising ceremony at Hong Kong’s iconic harbor to mark the 18th anniversary of the handover.

Leung accused the government of disrespect toward lawmakers, who have previously all received invitations regardless of political background.

“For them not to invite a single LegCo member is actually a form of disrespect to the Legislative Council,” Leung told RFA on Sunday.

“What [Leung Chun-ying] is doing, is encouraging his supporters to bully the pan-democratic camp supporters,” he said.

‘A bad job’

Meanwhile, Hong Kong political commentator Camoes Tam agreed with Anson Chan’s criticism of Beijing.

“We have had three chief executives chosen by Beijing in the past 18 years, and none of them has done a good job,” Tam told RFA.

“Hong Kong was first run by a businessman [Tung Chee-hwa], which was a proven failure, then by a civil servant [Donald Tsang], which also failed, though not catastrophically,” he said.

“Now we have a homegrown member of the Chinese Communist Party [Leung Chun-ying] running things, which is much worse.”

“[Beijing] is clearly not very good at running one of the ... major financial centers in the world, but they still keep trying, like kids playing with artillery,” he said.

“One country, two systems is a joke,” Tam said.

Internal controls

Across the internal immigration border in neighboring Guangdong province, the authorities have imposed tight controls on activists and dissidents who had planned to join Wednesday’s demonstration in Hong Kong.

Guangdong-based activist Ye Du said a growing number of political activists in China are seeking to establish ties with those in Hong Kong, but that they are now routinely denied permits to enter the city for such events.

“It used to be that only the most prominent individuals in the pro-democracy movement wouldn’t be allowed to leave the country, while the majority of rights activists had a certain degree of autonomy,” Ye told RFA.

“But they started to get worried when large numbers of people went to take part in last year’s July 1 demonstration, or were posting about it,” he said.

“Now, they have cast their restrictions far wider.”

*Reported by Wen Yuqing for RFA's Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin and Yang Fan for the Mandarin Service.
Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.*

CORRECTION: 400,000 protesters is corrected to 40,000.

2015-08-27 – Hong Kong Charges Occupy Central Leaders With Public Order Offenses



Occupy Central leader Joshua Wong speaks to the media after a vote at the city's legislature in Hong Kong, June 18, 2015. – AFP

The face of last year's pro-democracy Occupy Central movement in Hong Kong, Joshua Wong, hit out on Thursday after being charged by police for his role in the mass protests for universal suffrage in the former British colony.

Wong, 18, who could face a jail term of up to five years, slammed the charges of “illegal assembly” and “inciting others to take part in an illegal assembly” as politically motivated.

The charges relate to a protest on Sept. 26 during which some Umbrella Movement protesters climbed into Civic Square, part of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) government complex.

Writing on his Facebook page, Wong said that the freedom of association, among a number of traditional freedoms that Beijing promised to uphold after the 1997 handover to Chinese rule, has been severely limited in the city in recent years.

“I would like to reiterate that if we went back in time to 2012 or 2013, we would be in a space where freedom to gather in public was allowed,” Wong said.

“But Civic Square isn't a road, and in going there, we didn't cause any obstruction to daily traffic, nor to the normal functioning of society,” he said.

He told reporters before entering the Wanchai police station on Thursday: “Today... is a political prosecution.”

He added: “My involvement in the Civic Square action is the best thing I have accomplished in the four years I’ve been involved in social student movements.”

“I won’t come to regret it... even if I have to pay the price,” Wong said.

Charges ‘totally flawed’

Wong’s lawyer Michael Vidler said the charges against his client were “totally flawed.”

“In my view it’s a clear abuse of process,” Vidler told reporters, as dozens of supporters waved the yellow umbrellas that became an icon of the pro-democracy after protesters used umbrellas to ward off tear gas and pepper spray fired by riot police.

Police also charged fellow student leader Alex Chow with taking part in an unlawful assembly, while Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) leader Nathan Law was charged with inciting others to take part in an unlawful assembly.

The charges against Wong, Law, and Chow will be heard at a magistrates court on Sept. 2.

Deputy HKFS leader Lester Shum said the occupation of Civic Square had likely sent shock waves through the Hong Kong government.

“The occupation of Civic Square was a shock to this unjust system, and can be seen as a form of civil disobedience,” Shum said. “Contrary to what is claimed by [justice] secretary Rimsky Yuen, these charges are not apolitical.”

He compared the charges against Wong, Law and Chow with a lack of charges so far against seven police officers filmed by journalists beating up Civic Party member Ken Tsang in a dark area while they were clearing a main road of protesters during the Occupy movement.

“If they were genuinely apolitical, then those seven rogue cops ... would have been charged by now,” Shum said.

Seven Hong Kong policemen were arrested in connection with Tsang’s beating last November on suspicion of “assault resulting in grievous body harm,” but have yet to be charged, prompting Tsang’s lawyers to apply for a judicial review.

‘The new normal’

The public order charges come after Wong and Law pleaded not guilty last month to separate charges of obstructing police at an earlier protest in June 2014, during which they burned a copy of a policy document issued by Beijing.

Wong, who heads the student activist group Scholarism, pan-democratic lawmaker Albert Chan, League of Social Democrats deputy chairman Raphael Wong, and Law, secretary general of the Hong Kong Federation of Students, burned Beijing’s “white paper” on the “one country, two systems” arrangement under which it rules Hong Kong.

Hong Kong blogger and activist Oiwan Lam said the authorities have continued to pursue key figures in the Occupy Central movement, nearly a year after the events occurred.

“The whole environment is one of prosecution; it’s as if it’s the new normal,” Lam said in a recent interview with RFA.

“There has been some online reaction to it, but I think a lot of people are just holding their anger inside,” she

said. “The judicial system in Hong Kong is getting worse and worse. It feels a bit hopeless right now.”

“The anger’s still there,” she said. “But it will get expressed in different ways than it did before the Umbrella Movement.”

Broken promise

Hong Kong was promised a “high degree of autonomy” under the terms of its 1997 return to Chinese rule, within the “one country, two systems” framework agreed between British and Chinese officials and enshrined in its mini-constitution, the Basic Law.

But the white paper, published days ahead of an unofficial referendum that saw 400,000 people vote in favor of universal suffrage and public nominations, spelled out that such autonomy was still subject to the will of Beijing, and didn’t constitute full autonomy, nor decentralized power.

Hong Kong lawmakers dealt a death blow to Beijing’s electoral reform package on June 18, in a humiliating defeat for Hong Kong’s chief executive Leung Chun-ying and for Chinese officials.

Members of the city’s Legislative Council (LegCo) voted against the bill by 28 votes to eight, with 34 pro-government lawmakers walking out in an unsuccessful bid to stall the vote.

The bill would have enacted an Aug. 31 plan outlined by China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), to allow all of Hong Kong’s five million eligible voters to cast a ballot in the 2017 race for the next chief executive, but would have limited the slate to candidates approved by Beijing.

The NPC’s plan sparked the 79-day Occupy Central campaign last year, and was rejected by pan-democratic lawmakers as “fake universal suffrage.”

Reported by Wen Yuqing for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Xin Lin for the Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

2015-09-25 – One Year After Occupy Central, Democracy Activists Call on US For Support



A protester holds a yellow umbrella, the symbol of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement in front of police in Hong Kong, Aug. 2, 2015 – NurPhoto

A year after a mass student strike launched the 79-day Occupy Central pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, activists are calling on the United States for more support for their cause, as President Barack Obama receives his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Washington.

Founding chairman of Hong Kong's Democratic Party Martin Lee said Obama's administration has a "responsibility" towards the semiautonomous city, which saw hundreds of thousands of people take to its streets last year in support of fully democratic elections.

"This is his responsibility, because this is enshrined in the Hong Kong Policy Act, in his own foreign policy," Lee told RFA in an interview on a trip to the U.S.

"The U.S. government has always supported democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Hong Kong," said Lee, who is in town for the 75th anniversary celebrations for the independent watchdog Freedom House.

"There is no reason for him not to bring up [Hong Kong]."

Lee said that China's growing military and economic power should put the former British colony high up on the agenda during the presidential summit.

"China's power is growing daily, and the world should be warned," Lee said. "Hong Kong should be a hot topic of discussion, that counterweights Xi Jinping's claim to be a reformer."

Broken promises

Lee hit out at Beijing for failing to keep promises made before the 1997 handover to Chinese rule, under which Hong Kong was to enjoy a “high degree of autonomy” and the continuation of its rights and freedoms.

“China should keep its promises. Beijing signed agreements, including the Basic Law, but it hasn’t respected them in the 18 years [since the 1997 handover],” Lee said.

Meanwhile, Occupy Central student leader Joshua Wong, who also attended the Freedom House event, said the existing “one country, two systems” formula under which Hong Kong is supposed to be governed is no longer enough.

“From the point of view of the next generation [of Hong Kong activists], we have to break out of current molds of thinking,” said Wong, who was arrested on public order charges on the first day of the Umbrella Movement, when protesters used umbrellas to ward off tear gas and pepper spray fired at them by riot police.

“Now we are thinking about 15 years down the line,” he added. “We need to start a debate about Hong Kong’s future, to boost our bargaining power.”

In a recent commentary published by *Time* magazine, Wong called on the international community to arrive at a consensus “that Hong Kongers shall have the right to determine their city’s future.”

He said there are growing calls for self-determination among the city’s younger activists, who see no hope of true autonomy or full democracy under the “one country, two systems” formula as it is understood by Beijing.

“If we can do this, we might have a slight chance for our ultimate goal: democracy and autonomy,” Wong wrote.

Call to drop charges

While Wong and Lee have no involvement in Xi’s official visit, U.S.-based rights groups this week called on the Hong Kong government to drop all charges against Wong and other student leaders for their part in peaceful protests.

“A year after Hong Kong people staged an unprecedented protest for democracy, the government continues to deny this fundamental right, while pressing charges against student leaders for organizing the peaceful movement,” Sophie Richardson, China director at the New York-based group Human Rights Watch (HRW).

“This raises real concerns about adherence to international human rights standards,” she said.

Some 1,000 people were arrested in connection with the Umbrella Movement during its existence, mostly for public order offenses like “unlawful assembly,” “obstructing police,” “assaulting officers,” and “contempt of court,” HRW said in a statement on its website on Thursday.

While most were quickly released and only 160 have been charged so far, the authorities last month announced charges against Wong and fellow student leaders Alex Chow and Nathan Law for “unlawful assembly” and “inciting others to take part in an unlawful assembly,” which could result in sentences of up to five years.

“Hong Kong people went onto the streets not only for their rights to democracy but also to express alarm over erosion of their treasured autonomy,” Richardson said.

“The Hong Kong government has the power to push back against Beijing’s overreach, and to ensure that the institutions that protect human rights continue to uphold the law, not succumb to political pressure,” she added.

The charges against the student activists stem from Hong Kong’s Public Order Ordinance, which requires seven

days' advance notice of large demonstrations, and which has been criticized as excessive by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, HRW said.

The group called for an independent investigation into Hong Kong's handling of the Umbrella Movement protests, saying it had documented "police use of excessive force on a number of occasions," some of which led to injuries.

It said the reports come amid growing concerns over Beijing's encroachment on Hong Kong's traditional rights and freedoms, which have until now been protected by an independent judiciary and a professional police force.

Public actions planned

Pro-democracy groups in Hong Kong are planning a number of activities from next Monday to mark the anniversary of the first mass sit-in of the Occupy civil disobedience movement.

Public anger soared in the wake of the clashes, which brought hundreds of thousands of people onto the city's streets at its height, many of them calling for fully democratic elections.

Protesters carrying yellow umbrellas will observe a 15-minute silence from 5:58 pm on Sept. 28, the time when police fired the first canister of tear gas against protesters a year earlier, local media reported.

Meanwhile, student groups are planning public seminars outside Hong Kong's Legislative Council and outside government offices in Tamar Park from Sept. 26-30 to discuss Hong Kong's political future.

China's enactment in July of a new State Security Law making Hong Kong responsible for protecting national security has raised further concerns that such laws could be used as a basis to target dissent in future, as already happens across the internal border in mainland China.

Recent comments by high-ranking Chinese officials suggest that Beijing, which has warned that Hong Kong's autonomy is subordinate to its own diktats, will continue to encroach on areas traditionally regarded as the preserve of Hong Kong people.

Hong Kong activists have also slammed a lack of progress over video footage filmed live at protests last November by local journalists that showed Civic Party member Ken Tsang being beaten and kicked by a group of police officers in a dark area while they were clearing a main road of protesters in a violent crackdown.

Tsang later showed journalists his injuries and vowed to sue the seven officers—two inspectors and five constables—who were later arrested on suspicion of "assault resulting in grievous body harm," but have yet to be charged, prompting Tsang's lawyers to apply for a judicial review.

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