



CALD Statement 4, S. 2019

CALD urges the Hong Kong government to take responsibility for worsening political crisis

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) is alarmed of the worsening political crisis in Hong Kong which has led to the cancellation of many flights to and from Hong Kong International Airport, as the protesters swarmed the airport's main terminal building. The protesters, which have gathered at the airport for a sit-in protest, have been demonstrating against how the Hong Kong government handled the controversial extradition bill and the massive and numerous protests it generated, as well as how mainland China has been increasingly threatening a military response to the crisis.

In a statement dated 17 June, CALD urged “the Hong Kong government to listen to the demands of its people and to work closely and inclusively with them in order to address the growing concern about protecting Hong Kong’s autonomy.” CALD believes that the escalating political conflict, which has turned more violent in recent weeks, is largely due to the Hong Kong government’s failure to earnestly listen and adequately respond to the demands of its people.

For one, while the extradition bill has been shelved, it has not been completely withdrawn. For this reason, the Hong Kong people rightly feel that their sense of personal safety and security remains imperil. Second, no credible, independent and impartial investigation of how the police handled previous demonstrations has been undertaken. As a matter of fact, in recent weeks, rights groups and democracy activists alleged that the police has been using more “disproportionate” and “excessive” force in dealing with the demonstrators. Commenting on the events in the past few days, Amnesty International Hong Kong observed that clashes between protesters and police had “escalated to another level, especially on the police side.”

During the weekend of 10-11 August, at least 40 people were injured and rushed to the hospital as police crackdowns took place in various parts of Hong Kong. The increasingly violent confrontations emerged as protesters used flash mobs across the city, surrounding police stations, disrupting traffic, and hurling projectiles at the police. However, videos of police using teargas into a subway station, firing non-lethal projectiles at close range, and infiltrating the demonstrators by dressing up as protesters have shown that the police appears to be violating their own guidelines and

the principle of maximum tolerance. CALD surmises that this response on the part of the police will only lead to further escalation of the political crisis.

As the political situation in Hong Kong deteriorates, CALD is increasingly concerned about possible military involvement of mainland China, especially since state-backed Chinese media reported that armed police has held exercises in the neighboring city of Shenzhen, even as the Hong Kong police is demonstrating the use of water canons to legislators and journalists. CALD also strongly condemns the statement of Yang Guang, a spokesman for the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, which called on Hong Kong authorities to “show no mercy” in dealing with the protesters. Pronouncements like this, CALD believes, are not conducive to the peaceful resolution of the conflict. CALD urges Beijing to be an instrument of peace, and not to turn Hong Kong into another Tiananmen Square.

CALD calls on the Hong Kong government to take responsibility for the worsening political crisis by taking steps that accede to the demonstrators’ reasonable demands, particularly the withdrawal of the extradition bill and a full, credible investigation of alleged police violence and brutality in dealing with peaceful protesters. The Hong Kong government should also take proactive steps to demonstrate to its people that it is committed to protect and preserve the city’s cherished autonomy. This should include the introduction of democratic elections in choosing the Chief Executive and all members of the Legislative Council -- a long-standing promise to the Hong Kong people which remains unfulfilled to this day.

CALD stands with the people of Hong Kong in their continuing fight for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

For the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bi-khim Hsiao". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bi-khim Hsiao, MP

Chairperson

Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats

14 August 2019