



CALD Statement No. 7, S. 2020

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) strongly condemns the postponement of the Hong Kong legislative elections scheduled on 6 September 2020. This is another huge blow to Hong Kong's autonomy especially after the recent enforcement of the National Security Law, which already handed down the arrest of four young activists and the barring of 12 opposition candidates from running in the elections.

Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's Chief Executive, made the announcement on 31 July 2020, and said the decision to delay the elections is due to the recent spike in COVID-19 cases with 100 plus cases everyday in the last ten days. "It is a really tough decision to delay, but we want to ensure fairness, public safety and public health," she said.

The opposition claimed a landslide victory in the last 2019 elections, winning 17 out of 18 district councils. On 12 July 2020, the pro-democracy camp organized an unofficial primary election where 600,000 Hong Kong resident turned up to cast their votes. The pro-democracy group used the results as reference to field the best candidates in the deferred September legislative elections.

CALD notes that under Hong Kong law, an election can only be delayed for 14 days. However, Carrie Lam postponed the elections for a year until 5 September 2021. This arbitrary decision-making reflects misguided leadership and only mirrors the tight control of China over the internal affairs of Hong Kong.

Even amidst the pandemic, there are countries that have successfully conducted peaceful elections - South Korea on 15 April 2020 and Singapore on 10 July 2020, among others. With the proper health measures in place, CALD believes that the power of the 4.4 million registered voters to choose their leaders must not take a step back.

CALD appeals to the Hong Kong government to heed the people's call and proceed with the September legislative elections. It is a venue to determine the true sentiments of the people as enshrined in the Basic Law of Hong Kong. Any delays and postponement of the elections would only diminish the people's trust in the government and aggravate the political situation in Hong Kong.

CALD condemns China's continued disregard of the Sino-British Joint Declaration that clearly guarantees Hong Kong with a high degree of autonomy. China must stop any further attempt to subvert the political processes in Hong Kong and uphold its promise of "one country, two systems."

CALD expresses solidarity with the people of Hong Kong in their continued fight for their civil and political rights and strongly urges the international community to stand firm against threats that continue to erode fundamental rights and freedoms of the people.

The election is one of the most important lifelines toward hope and progress. Without it, the Hong Kong people will continue to suffer in fear, abuse of power and uncertainty.

For the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Francis Pangilinan', written over a horizontal line.

Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan
Chairperson

4 August 2020