



## **CALD Statement No. 1, S. 2021**

### **CALD condemns in strongest terms the arrests of over 50 Hong Kong democrats**

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) condemns in strongest terms the arrest of over 50 Hong Kong democrats yesterday, 6 January.

The mass arrest was made on grounds that those arrested organized and participated in the primaries for the postponed 2020 Legislative Council Election, which, according to the authorities, could be considered “subversion” under the Beijing-imposed national security law. Reports also suggest that the charge was made because the arrested democrats supposedly made a pledge during the campaign to veto the government budget once elected. Around 610,000 Hong Kongers participated in the primaries, which the authorities condemned as having “no legal basis.”

CALD considers these arrests as an indication that the national security law can have negative repercussions for democracy and political rights in the territory. The holding of primary elections is a legitimate political exercise and should not in any way be construed as subversion. The recent arrests, therefore, can be considered as an attempt to further intimidate and silence the political opposition and democracy activists in Hong Kong.

These arrests also continue the perilous pattern which has been observed since the national security law came to force last year. Without a doubt, this piece of legislation has shrunk the democratic space for the exercise of fundamental rights, particularly freedom of expression, freedom of organization and assembly, and right to petition the government for redress of grievances.

CALD reiterates that political stability emanates from the respect of fundamental rights of everyone, including the right to participate in political affairs and even the right to dissent. A society that restricts these rights due to the mistaken belief that stability flows from the absence of opposition is sowing the seeds for further political instability and societal fragmentation.

CALD strongly believes that the recent arrests can just further exacerbate the already volatile political situation in the territory. Hence, CALD once again implores the Hong Kong administration to immediately release and drop the charges against those arrested, and to cease from committing further actions that threaten or harass the political opposition and activists. We also appeal for an open and constructive dialogue between both sides as a way to ease the tension and facilitate a peaceful resolution of the political conflict.

For the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats:

**Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan (sgd.)**  
Chairperson

7 January 2021