



CALD Statement No. 3, S. 2021

CALD calls for the immediate release of the 47 pro-democracy activists and leaders in Hong Kong

On Sunday, 28 February, the Hong Kong police arrested and detained 47 pro-democracy activists, including 13 former legislators. They were charged with “conspiracy to commit subversion” and were taken to court the following day, 1 March.

The hearing was adjourned at 2am in the morning of 2 March and several of the arrested activists felt unwell and were taken to the hospital. The prosecution objects to giving them bail and wants to adjourn the hearing until the end of May. This would mean they could be locked up for 3 months if the court approves the prosecution’s request.

This is another blow to the democratic promise embedded in the territory’s Basic Law. Those charged, who were immediately detained and awaiting for court sessions, face life imprisonment if convicted.

The charges were a clear follow up to the sweeping arrests made early this year for planning and participating in a primary election organized by the democratic opposition last July 2020.

The electoral initiative prior to the postponed legislative elections, was reflection of the genuine sentiment of the people of Hong Kong, who should have the right to organize and participate in any political exercise, as well as to freely choose their political leaders. This puts into question the vagueness of the charge against the 47 former legislators and democracy activists. A fundamental right does not and can never equate to subversion.

CALD vigorously opposes the use of the National Security Law to further sow instability and division in Hong Kong. This alarming development is one of Beijing’s continued efforts to dismantle the democracy movement and silence the opposition once and for all.

Beijing continues to constrict the democratic space by applying this draconian law into full force -- a law that was passed without the consultation of the people of Hong Kong. The mass detention appears to be a consequence of the Hong Kong administration’s subservience to Beijing to the detriment of the Hong Kong people.

CALD reiterates its call for China to respect and uphold the guiding principles enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration and Hong Kong’s Basic Law. CALD strongly believes that political stability results from respecting the fundamental rights of everyone, including the right to dissent.



CALD calls for the immediate release of the 47 arrested activists and for all charges against them to be dropped. CALD also calls on the Hong Kong authorities to observe international legal standards in handling the cases and respect the people's right to bail.

The relentless spirit of democracy activists and supporters, particularly the young generation, to continue to courageously fight for the freedoms in Hong Kong is admirable and sends a clear message across the region that political power rightfully belongs to the people.

CALD will continue to stand with the people of Hong Kong and, together, boldly face the threats to democracy and build each other's shared aspiration to defend it at all cost.

For the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats:

Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan (sgd.)
Chairperson

2 March 2021