

The Hong Kong Government Should Immediately Stop Suppression of Democracy and Human Rights, and Guarantee Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

8 August 2019

The umbrellas of Hong Kong opened again.

The protests that began on 31 March 2019 demanding the withdrawal of 'Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation Amendment Bill (Extradition Bill)' in Hong Kong are continuing until today. The protests started with 12,000 people but has expanded to more than 1 million as of June, 2019. Though Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, announced the tentative suspension of the amendment on 15 June, more people are joining the protest demanding complete withdrawal of the extradition bill and the resignation of the Chief Executive. While the Hong Kong government began a violent crackdown on the protesters, the central government of China has 'warned' its armed intervention. Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly of Hong Kong citizens is being seriously violated. We, 92 South Korean NGOs, are expressing our grave concerns on indiscriminate and violent crackdown on peaceful protesters in Hong Kong and express our solidarity to Hong Kong people's persistent resistance for democracy and human rights.

The extradition amendment bill, of which the Hong Kong citizens are calling for the complete withdrawal, enables the extradition of criminals to China, Taiwan and Macau, which have not signed extradition agreement with Hong Kong. While the current extradition bill makes it mandatory to go through the deliberation of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong to extradite criminals, the amendment bill allows the court to make decisions just through a review of documents without interrogation process if the Chief Executive decides to do so. Under the situation that the involvement and pressure of China are increasing, Hong Kong people are concerned that the bill, if passed, will threaten the safety of human rights activists, journalists and NGO activists in Hong Kong and jeopardize Hong Kong's autonomy. Given that there are not enough safeguards to protect the human rights of Hong Kong citizens, and that the Chief Executive of Hong Kong is elected by a pro-government electoral college and receive a final appointment from the Chinese government, the Hong Kong citizens' call that the extradition amendment bill should be completely withdrawn is fair. Also, Hong Kong citizens' protests are an expression of their strong desire for democracy and human rights. It reflects social and economic deprivation of Hong Kong people and the reality that Hong Kong's autonomy is not guaranteed.

However, the Hong Kong government is pushing ahead with a harsh crackdown and indiscriminate arrests, labeling the protests as illegal. Police fired rubber bullets and "straight tear gas" at the protesters, leaving dozens of injured and arresting about 500 people so far since last June. The government even indicted 44 participants of the protest which was held on 28 July, on a charge of rioting. The excessive response of the police is a clear violation of <the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials>, freedom of peaceful assembly and association as specified in 'the Basic Law', which is the constitution of Hong Kong, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In addition, on 29 July, the central government of China also labeled Hong Kong protests as 'violent' and 'illegal', strongly criticizing the protesters for "any act that harms the sovereignty and security of the country is unacceptable," and even forewarned the possibility of deploying the People's Liberation Army. The actual armed intervention of China would result in unpredictable incidents, and it could be recorded as another history of oppression on democracy. It should never happen.

Despite the harsh crackdown of the Hong Kong government and the 'warning' of China, the resistance of Hong Kong citizens is spreading to all levels of society. On 5 August, half a million people participated in a general strike, and simultaneous protests continued late into the night. We fully support the desire of Hong Kong citizens to protect democracy and human rights, and stress that freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association should be guaranteed under any circumstances. In addition, we urge the Hong Kong government to stop the indiscriminate arrests of protesters and withdraw the indictment. We stand in solidarity with Hong Kong citizens' peaceful and persistent resistance for democracy and human rights.

The statement is endorsed by 92 South Korean NGOs:

416JakartaCandlelights
80 million's movement for one korea
Activists group for Human Rights 'BARAM'
Asan YMCA
Asian Dignity Initiative
Bucheon YMCA
Buddhist Human Rights Committee
Catholic Human Rights Committee
Catholic Justice Implementation National Union
CHANG: Korea Human Rights Research Center
Citizens Opening the World for Welfare
Civil Society Organizations Network in Korea
Committee to Support Imprisoned Workers
Daegu Women's Association
Dasan Human Rights Center
Disability and Human Rights in Action
Fiends of Asia
Goyang YMCA
Gwang-Ju Human Rights Center Hwal JJak
Human Rights Education Center 'Deul'
Human Rights Education Onda
Human Rights Movement Space 'Hwal'
Imagination for International Solidarity
Incheon Human Rights Film Festival
International Conference for Peace in East Asia
Jeju Dark Tours
Jeju Peace Human rights Center
Jeju peace human rights institute WHAT
Jeonju YMCA
Jeonnam Maeul Network
Jesuit Research Center for Advocacy and Solidarity
Jungnang hope solidarity
KFEM Dangjin
Korea Federation for Environmental Movements
Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center
Korea Women's Hot Line
Korea YMCA

Korean Coalition for Abolishment of Insecurity Employment
Korean Confederation of Trade Unions
Korean Federation for Environmental Movement of Yesan Hongseong (KFEM Yesan Hongseong)
Korean Gay Men's Human Rights Group 'Chingusai'
Korean House for International Solidarity
Korean New Zealanders for a Better future
Korean People's Solidarity Against Poverty
Korean Progressive Network 'Jinbonet'
Korean Women Workers Association
Korean Women's Association United
Kyunggi Women's Associations United
Life & Safety Network
Migrants center FRIENDS
MINBYUN-Lawyers for a Democratic Society International Solidarity Committee
Namum Munhwa
National Solidarity against Sexual Exploitation of Women
National YWCA of KOREA
OFM
Paju YMCA
Palestine Peace & Solidarity in South Korea
PEACEMOMO
People & Commune
People's Initiative for Development Alternatives
People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy
PINKS: SOLIDARITY FOR SEXUAL MINORITY CULTURES & HUMAN RIGHTS
Pohang Women's association
QUV; Solidarity of University and Youth Queer Societies in Korea
Rainbow Action Against Sexual-Minority Discrimination
RAVE
Restorative Justice Korea
Sarangbang Group for Human Rights
Seosan-Taeon Federation for Environmental Movements
Seoul Human Rights Film Festival
Society of international solidarity in Justice party
Solidarity against Disability Discrimination
Solidarity for Another World
Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights of Korea
Solidarity for Worker's Health
Study Group for East Asia Social Movement
Supporters for the Health And Rights of People in the Semiconductor industry
Suwon Women's Association
The April 9 Unification & Peace Foundation
The Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice
The Korean Catholic Women's Community for a New World
The National Council of Churches in Korea Human Rights Center
The National Council of Churches in Korea International Committee
Women Making Peace
Women with Disabilities Empathy

Womenlink

Won Buddhism Human Rights Committee

Yeosu YMCA

Youth -Rights Center