

## Hong Kong: The International community must show strong support for Hong Kong through diplomatic pressure and international action

(Bangkok, 15 March 2021) – ‘We urge the UN Human Rights Council to call on Hong Kong and Chinese authorities to ensure the protection of fundamental human rights in Hong Kong in line with international human rights law,’ panellists said at a civil society side event<sup>1</sup> at the 46th regular session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Organised by the Asia Democracy Network (ADN), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Hong Kong Watch, Front Line Defenders, CIVICUS and the International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), the side event was aimed at raising awareness on the current situation in Hong Kong.

The panellists were: Aileen Calverley from Hong Kong Watch; Joey Siu, Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China; Sunny Cheung, Hong Kong activists in exile; and Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Director of The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI).

Despite international condemnation, China and Hong Kong continues to dismantle the democratic institutions that have once characterised the autonomous city. It passed an over-reaching National Security Law with vague and broad provisions that would expand China’s control and effectively criminalise dissent and work of human rights defenders.

‘Under the National Security Law, trials can be held without a jury and cases can be managed by mainland authorities. The law has already been used to charge over 100 Hong Kongers, including students, lawyers, doctors, and media professionals while 55 pro-democracy activists have been arrested on suspicion of "subversion" under this controversial Beijing-imposed National Security Law,’ said Aileen Calverley.

The side event underscored the flawed and compromised Hong Kong judicial system. ‘China's top law-making body has unveiled plans to ensure only ‘patriots’ can govern Hong Kong. We can foresee that no pro-democracy figures will ever be allowed to participate in elections in the future,’ said Joey Siu.<sup>2</sup>

‘The rule of law means independent judges and independent lawyers in conducting cases. A nation cannot protect its rule of law without protecting human rights,’ Baroness Helena Kennedy QC added.

Another key area that was discussed was the safety of human rights defenders and pro-democracy activists in light of the current situation. The movement continues to persevere, but increased crackdowns of pro-democracy activist has forced many to lay low for the time being or seek asylum abroad. Hong Kongers are now fleeing to countries such as the UK, Canada and Australia. ‘However

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<sup>1</sup> [http://l.forum-asia.org/Webinar\\_UNHRC\\_HK](http://l.forum-asia.org/Webinar_UNHRC_HK)

<sup>2</sup> On 11 March, 3 days after the side event, China’s Parliament approved a resolution allowing a pro-China panel to vet nominees and candidates in Hong Kong, to bring in a more ‘patriotic’ government. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-56356046>

these countries have not been doing enough to assist the courageous people of Hong Kong as many activists are still facing intimidation and harassment from pro-Beijing groups overseas,' added Joey Siu.

It will be a long journey for Hong Kong democracy, but the struggle continues with Hong Kongers willing to give everything to defend their freedom.

'Right now, there is no room for opposition voices, and this is an outrage for Hong Kong's political space. We urge the international society to take concrete action and do more to stand with the people of Hong Kong,' said Sunny Cheung.

'We condemn the enactment of the National Security Law and demand that it be repealed. China and Hong Kong should adhere to their obligations to protect the fundamental rights of their people, and we stand in solidarity with people of Hong Kong, who continue to fight for their rights and freedoms peacefully as they face unprecedented repression and violence,' added the panellists.

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#### **About FORUM-ASIA:**

*The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is a Bangkok-based regional network of 81 member organisations across 21 Asian countries, with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity-development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has sub-regional offices in Geneva, Jakarta, and Kathmandu. [www.forum-asia.org](http://www.forum-asia.org)*

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