



Summary of 2019-2020 Protest Movement and Hong Kong's Current Situation Under the National Security Law

Issues Brief

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Introduction

It has been almost two and a half years since two million Hong Kongers marched in the streets calling for the withdrawal of the extradition treaty.

The anti-extradition protests have launched a global movement for the future of Hong Kong, in reaction to the authoritarian crackdowns launched by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and Chinese governments who rejected Hong Kongers' initial 'Five Demands'¹. The protest movement faced incredible pressure, silenced through state violence, lawfare, censorship, and the criminalization of dissenting political figures and activities continues today.

After the implementation of the National Security Law (NSL), Beijing has demanded the disqualification of "unpatriotic" opposition lawmakers. Without a political opposition,² the authorities have implemented sweeping institutional changes to ensure complete control over the city's governance, including:

- Stripping Hong Kong of its electoral autonomy³
- Requiring pledges of allegiance in public sectors⁴
- Firing teachers⁵, civil servants for their political views⁶
- Delegitimizing and disbanding university student unions^{7 8}
- Targeting trade unions⁹ and religious groups¹⁰
- Raiding and targeting pro-democratic "yellow businesses"¹¹
- Requiring professional bodies & membered associations to adhere to "patriotic statutory duties"¹²
- Requiring internet service providers to ban specific websites under the NSL¹³
- Banning any choice of words that is mildly sensitive like "Hong Kong Add Oil"¹⁴
- Removal of statues and symbols that supports the democratic movement, including statues that commemorate the Tiananmen Square Massacre^{15 16}
- Barring anyone deemed to be a national security risk from leaving the city¹⁷
- Creating a hostile environment for the free press¹⁸, watchdogs and human rights NGOs to operate¹⁹, leading to dissolution, relocation and disbandment of many of these groups²⁰

¹ "1) Complete withdrawal of the proposed extradition bill, 2) Government to withdraw the use of the word "riot" in relation to protests, 3) Unconditional release of arrested protesters and charges against them dropped, 4) An independent inquiry into police behaviour, 5) Implementation of genuine universal suffrage"; [What do the Hong Kong protesters want?](#) (13 August 2019). The Guardian.

² [Hong Kong opposition lawmakers all quit after four members ousted](#) (12 November 2020). The Guardian.

³ [Hong Kong's civil society under fire: the candidates, the election, then the democracy movement itself](#) (3 September 2021) Hong Kong Free Press.

⁴ [Hong Kong to Fire 129 Civil Servants Who Refused to Pledge Allegiance](#) (19 April 2021) Radio Free Asia.

⁵ [China's 'purification' of classrooms: A new law erases history, silences teachers and rewrites books](#) (11 September 2020) Los Angeles Times.

⁶ [New Hong Kong civil servants told to behave or be fired, by city's leader Carrie Lam](#) (18 August 2020) South China Morning Post.

⁷ ['Profound regret': Chinese University of Hong Kong's student union dissolves after 50 years amid pressure](#) (7 October 2021) Hong Kong Free Press.

⁸ [HKU Student Union leaders quit and apologise after gov't says mourning man who stabbed police officer akin to terrorism](#) (9 July 2021) Hong Kong Free Press.

⁹ [Hong Kong's largest pro-democracy labour union votes to disband](#) (3 October 2021) France24.

¹⁰ [Religious Groups Fear Crackdown After Raid on Hong Kong Protest Church](#) (9 December 2020) Radio Free Asian.

¹¹ [Hong Kong shop founded by pro-democracy activist raided over content labelling](#) (9 April 2021) Reuters.

¹² [Beijing calls Hong Kong bar association chief an 'anti-China politician'](#) (27 April 2021) The Guardian

¹³ [Hong Kong Begins Internet Restrictions on National Security Grounds](#) (15 January 2021) The Diplomat.

¹⁴ ['Runners add oil' would be better than politicized 'HK add oil' slogan, marathon organizer says](#), (19 October 2021) Coconuts.

¹⁵ [Hong Kong University orders removal of Tiananmen Square massacre statue](#) (9 October 2021) The Guardian.

¹⁶ [Pillar of Shame: Hong Kong's Tiananmen Square statue removed](#) (23 December 2021) BBC.

¹⁷ [Hong Kong passes new immigration law that could enable China-style exit bans](#) (24 April 2021) CTV News.

¹⁸ [World Report 2021](#), Human Rights Watch, "police raided the office of pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, arrested its owner Jimmy Lai, his two sons, and four executives for "collusion with foreign forces" and conspiracy to commit fraud...In June, public broadcaster Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) suspended its popular political satirical show, the Headliner, following political pressure. In July and August, New York Times journalist Chris Buckley and incoming Hong Kong Free Press editor Aaron Mc Nicholas were denied visas to work in the city."

¹⁹ [More Hong Kong Civil Society Groups Disband Under Pressure Of National Security Law](#) (23 September 2021) China Digital Times.

²⁰ [Hong Kong Protest Group Disbands Under Government Pressure](#) (14 August 2021) Bloomberg.

We call for the European Union and its member states to join the international community in protecting Hong Kong's autonomy, to facilitate the long-denied promises of universal suffrage and democratic developments, and to hold those responsible for human rights abuses and the decimation of Hong Kong's autonomy to account.

Human Rights Violations Should Not be Normalized

As the anti-extradition protests shifted to a general rejection of the Chinese government's heavy-handed attempt at totalitarian control of the city, Hong Kongers have been relentlessly subjected to a barrage of oppressive tactics — some of them human rights violations — by both state and private actors supported by the HKSAR and the Chinese governments.

Throughout 2019 and 2020, peaceful protestors were indiscriminately tear gassed and shot at with rubber bullets²¹, a violation of international human rights treaties on policing. Calls for an independent inquiry into police brutality were met with more tear gas and senseless violence, with up to an estimated 88% of Hong Kong residents affected.²²

The Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) also began refusing protest permits²³ to justify their violent actions, a move to criminalize political activity and silence freedom of expression. They are also dismantling the freedom of the press as reporters are targeted and attacked. These constitutional rights in Hong Kong, as agreed by the signatories of the Sino-British Joint Declarations, are under attack.

As of January 18, 2022, at least 10,496 protestors have been arrested and 2,909 prosecuted.²⁴ Yet after two years of perpetrating violent state and police suppression, few if any police officers, gang members, or government officials have been held accountable for their actions. A common refrain in the city is “remember to never become numb [to what is happening],” a cry to resist the current attempts to erase the collective memory of the nature of the protests.

At the height of the protests, violent crackdowns were a daily occurrence. Coordinated attacks by police officers and criminal gangs^{25 26} on regular civilians took place after protest events to strike fear into the general populace. There are innumerable well-documented instances of arbitrary arrests: peaceful protestors, medical personnel, reporters²⁷ and even random individuals²⁸ on the streets near protest events. Protestors began avoiding hospital trips for fear of being arrested even when sustaining severe injuries²⁹. There are many accounts of protestors being beaten, raped³⁰, tortured³¹, and denied due process³². Some activists would go missing for months on end.

Nowadays, the city resembles a police-state, with large banners exhorting its citizens to fulfill their patriotic duties and militarized architecture surrounding common protests sites. Under the NSL, you can now be arrested for

²¹ [1,800 rounds of 'Tear Gas': Was the Hong Kong police response appropriate?](#) (19 August 2019). The New York Times.

²² [Millions in Hong Kong Have Been Exposed to Tear Gas Since June](#) (5 November 2019). Bloomberg.

²³ [Hong Kong police refuse permission for four anti-government marches, organisers call it 'shocking' attack on Basic Law rights](#) (9 August 2019). SCMP.

²⁴ [Arrests and trials of Hong Kong protesters](#) (originally published 1 December 2019)

²⁵ [Hong Kong Connection: 721 Yuen Long Nightmare <Video>](#) (4 October 2019). RTHK.

²⁶ [Please Stop Beating Us': Where Were Hong Kong's Police?](#) (29 July 2019). The New York Times.

²⁷ [Hong Kong police arrest 51 who 'claimed to be medics or journalists' near besieged PolyU campus](#) (18 November 2019) Hong Kong Free Press.

²⁸ ['Being young is a crime' in Hong Kong: Police arrest students and teenagers.](#) (27 September 2019) LA Times.

²⁹ [Hong Kong police arrested 5 people inside public hospitals over June 12 protests, gov't says](#) (30 October 2019). Hong Kong Free Press.

³⁰ [Woman files complaint against Hong Kong police over alleged rape in station](#) (9 November 2019). Hong Kong Free Press.

³¹ [Hong Kong police tortured detainees, says rights group, as UN experts voice concern over leading activists' arrests](#) (14 May 2020). Hong Kong Free Press.

³² [UN rights boss urges Hong Kong to uphold due process, fair trials](#) (9 December 2019). Reuters.

holding up a blank piece of paper in protest³³, by urging others to cast blank ballots, or boycott an election³⁴. In the eyes of the government, these are somehow egregious threats to national security.

We should not be numb to ongoing suppressive governance of Hong Kong.

A New Form of Authoritarian Crackdown

The NSL was introduced to the National's People Congress in June 2020 without consultation of the Hong Kong government or its people. Itself a violation of the Joint Declaration, the NSL effectively criminalizes all forms of dissent in the city. The Hong Kong Government has used the NSL as a pretext to stamp out street protests, gut the city's legislature, and decimate political opposition. It has conveniently weaponized COVID-19 health measures³⁵ to restrict movement, mobility and gatherings, effectively bringing the movement to its knees.

Since the law's passage, every aspect of life in Hong Kong has been distorted by its outsized legal and political implications — the authorities' goal is to overwhelm citizens into fearful compliance of Chinese authoritarian rule. The tactics have changed: instead of targeting citizens with tear gas, they are targeting their basic freedoms.

Given the ambiguous^{36 37} and the now-confirmed retroactive implementation^{38 39} of the NSL, anyone can be deemed a national security threat if they have protested or shown opposition to governing bodies in the past. There is a lack of legal mechanisms to support those affected by the NSL⁴⁰, especially when those prosecuted are often denied bail⁴¹, denied the right to a jury⁴², and may be denied the right to choose their own legal representation.^{43 44}

In January 2021, Hong Kong authorities arrested over 50 Hong Kong pro-democratic candidates, organizers, and affiliates of the primary elections accused of violating the NSL⁴⁵. Included were some of the most prominent pro-democracy legislators and community activists. Political opposition have been decimated, with many arrested and incarcerated⁴⁶. Some have preemptively chosen a life of exile⁴⁷, choosing instead to advocate for Hong Kong from abroad.

Beijing is now rewriting Hong Kong's electoral system for its own benefit⁴⁸, dismantling the few elements of democratic representation remaining and explicitly calling for "patriots" to rule Hong Kong⁴⁹. As the pro-democracy

³³ "After the Hong Kong government deemed the protest slogan as illegal, Hong Kongers held up blank papers in protest. They were arrested by the police on suspicion of taking part in an unauthorized assembly and obstructing police officers"; [Security law: Hong Kong police arrest 8 at 'blank placard' silent protest](#) (6 July 2020). Hong Kong Free Press.

³⁴ [Urging people to spoil or cast blank ballots in elections to become a crime in Hong Kong](#) (13 April 2021). Hong Kong Free Press.

³⁵ [Hong Kong police are using coronavirus restrictions to clamp down on protesters](#) (1 April 2020). Quartz.

³⁶ [Hong Kong Quietly Widens National Security Law With Subtle Shift](#) (21 September 2021) Bloomberg.

³⁷ [Hong Kong's Expansive National Security Law Swallows Activists, Bail Requests](#) (23 September 2021) China Digital Times.

³⁸ [Court Rulings Free Hong Kong Police To Probe Older Offences Under Security Law](#) (18 October 2021) Reuters.

³⁹ [Hong Kong to Censor, Retroactively Ban Films Due to National Security Law](#) (24 August 2021) Hollywood Reporter.

⁴⁰ [UN Experts Urge Review Of Hong Kong Security Law: Say Arrests 'incompatible' With Human Rights And Int'l Law](#) (14 October 2021) .Hong Kong Free Press

⁴¹ [Hong Kong National Security Law: Teenage Activist Bailed Ahead Of Subversion Trial, But 3 Other Members Of Student Group Told They Must Remain Behind Bars](#) (15 October 2021) South China Morning Post.

⁴² [Hong Kong Court Denies Jury Trial To First Person Charged Under National Security Law](#) (9 June 2021) Reuters

⁴³ [Plans To Assign Lawyers Under Legal Aid Reform](#) (22 October 2021) RTHK

⁴⁴ [Overhaul of Hong Kong's legal aid system could be implemented by year's end](#) (26 October 2021) South China Morning Post.

⁴⁵ [Hong Kong Police Arrest Dozens of Pro-Democracy Leaders](#) (5 January 2021). The New York Times.

⁴⁶ ['I won't give up': four of the politicians and activists sentenced in Hong Kong](#) (16 April 2021). The Guardian.

⁴⁷ [Fugitive former Hong Kong lawmaker Ted Hui reveals move to Australia, thanks authorities for waiving Covid-19 entry curbs](#) (9 March 2021). South China Morning Post.

⁴⁸ [Less Democracy, More 'Patriots': Hong Kong's New Electoral System](#) (31 March 2021). The Diplomat.

⁴⁹ [Hong Kong: China limits parliament to 'patriots'](#) (30 March 2021). BBC.

legislators and politicians are sidelined, the changes were rammed through the legislature despite near-universal disapproval outside of the Legislative Council.

Critical parts of civil society that have expressed concern about the changes to the city are now under threat. In Hong Kong. After the passage of NSL, university administrations are defunding and detaching student unions due to their political stances. Trade unions, religious groups, and civil society organizations are harassed by the authorities. The public sector now requires pledges of absolute allegiance from civil servants. Educators are fired for their political views. Professional bodies such as the Hong Kong Bar Association to adhere to its “patriotic statutory duties”. Almost all organizations/watchdogs that are ever mildly influential are disbanded⁵⁰ and will likely be persecuted under national security charges.⁵¹ The authorities are also actively persecuting individuals and groups that are offering support to those arrested and jailed.⁵²

The suppression expands into the private sector, where “yellow businesses” sympathetic to the protests are facing targeted harassment from Hong Kong authorities. Internet service providers are required to ban specific websites. Younger people and those wearing a black mask (a common signal of support for the protests) continue to be disproportionately stopped and carded by the police in street checks. There is a notable increase of rigid controls and measures over the private sector by the Hong Kong Government and the PRC, with trade and business being weaponized politically.⁵³

Under the NSL, Hong Kong’s education system is now teaching an altered version of history⁵⁴, rewriting and omitting historical events that are critical of the Chinese government. More recently, the Hong Kong Education Bureau hosted a national security education day (see Appendix A), where schools dedicate a full day to disseminate NSL propaganda to influence the next generation.

The NSL is now the guiding principle to the city’s governance. Fearful of triggering the wrath of Beijing, administrators in Hong Kong are tripping over themselves to anticipate and create new forms of oppression and suppression in the city. The changes in Hong Kong mirror the institutionalized and systemic suppression tactics commonly seen in China. A summary of reports on some concerning social and political changes brought on by the NSL can be seen in Appendix A: Hong Kong After the National Security Law⁵⁵.

Dismantling Journalism and the Free Press

In the past three years, the Hong Kong and Chinese governments have succeeded in dismantling free press in the city. It started during the height of the protest movement, where HKPF would single out journalists with harassment, verbal abuse, and threatening arrests. Authorities barred journalists from covering crucial stories and “scores of journalists have received beatings, pepper spray, direct hits of tear gas, water-cannon spray, and have been wounded with rubber bullets and bean-bag rounds” at the hands of police themselves⁵⁶.

In July 2020, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam stated she will give guarantees about press freedom to the Foreign Correspondents’ Club if they 100% guarantee that they will not commit any offences under the NSL.⁵⁷ For journalists, this has created an oppressive environment and one that is often treacherous to navigate due to the

⁵⁰ [Hong Kong: Closure Of Prominent Rights Group Signals Worrying Domino Effect](#) (15 August 2021) Amnesty International.

⁵¹ [Amnesty To Close Hong Kong Offices Over National Security Law](#) (25 October 2021) BBC

⁵² [Hong Kong Inmate Rights Group Wall-Fare Disbands](#) (14 September 2021) The Standard UK

⁵³ [Australia asks why Hong Kong considers lobsters national security risk](#) (22 October 2021) Reuters.

⁵⁴ [Hong Kong’s Lesson to Schoolchildren: Love China, No Questions Asked](#) (24 February 2021). The New York Times.

⁵⁵ Appendix A: Hong Kong After the National Security Law

⁵⁶ [Hong Kong’s Worsening Press Climate](#) (11 October 2019). The Atlantic.

⁵⁷ [Hong Kong press freedom assured if media give 100% guarantee they will not commit security offences, says Lam](#) (7 July 2020). Hong Kong Free Press.

arbitrary nature of the NSL. Journalists have simply been arrested for benign actions such as filming⁵⁸ and requesting public information⁵⁹.

Nearly three years since the start of the 2019 movement, the Hong Kong and Chinese government have adapted new tools to continue suppressing journalistic freedoms in Hong Kong. Authorities have retooled colonial laws⁶⁰ to silence independent media, while leveraging the NSL and national security police to target individual journalists and media organizations. Journalists have been navigating an increasingly oppressive and treacherous environment with arbitrary red lines as entire publications were targeted, charged and shuttered.

While the closure of Stand News, Apple Daily, and Citizen News⁶¹ (the last few remaining independent and imperative news media) has been significant blows to the media landscape, press freedom in Hong Kong is being dismantled as the Hong Kong and Chinese government leverage the NSL or retool colonial laws to silence independent media. Foreign correspondents are also in a precarious position⁶² as visas are now often subjected to lengthy bureaucratic processes that can end in outright rejection with little to no explanation. This behaviour has extended beyond borders as there is seemingly a new chilling trend of ministers writing threatening letters to international media.⁶³

Under the hostile conditions perpetrated by the authorities, many journalists have chosen to self-censor or quit the profession entirely out of safety concerns (See Appendix B). A recent article by Vice News⁶⁴ profiled many Hong Kong journalists who have either left the profession or are struggling to find work as many independent media outlets are raided, charged or shut down due to the NSL.

The dire state of journalism in Hong Kong comes at a period where journalism is needed more than ever. Journalism and press freedom is part of a healthy and vibrant democracy. It is about reporting current events and providing a crucial platform for marginalized voices to discuss their lived experiences on critical societal issues. Hong Kong journalists already take on a significant amount of work with little pay and substantial security risks to themselves and their loved ones.

Since the NSL's implementation, Hong Kong has lost its political opposition and visible dissenting voices. With the last few remaining local independent media outlets having closed their doors, there are no formal channels where individuals may discuss the political developments within the city. The Hong Kong government no longer has any external actors holding them accountable. Many journalists and media workers have cited fears of possible retribution under the NSL. With more than a dozen local, independent publications gone, coupled with choking levels of self-censorship and the erosion of press freedom, Hong Kong's media no longer has any checks or balances, transforming the media into a tool of the state.

How Are People Feeling?

Public research & data shows that over 60% of youths in Hong Kong⁶⁵ are hoping to leave the city, while 1 in 5 Hong Kongers are seeking to flee the city and 65% are not confident about Hong Kong's political future⁶⁶. Many Hong

⁵⁸ [Hong Kong police arrest journalist for 'obstruction' after she filmed arrests](#) (6 November 2020). Hong Kong Free Press.

⁵⁹ [Hong Kong journalist improperly accessed public records, court rules](#) (22 April 2021). Reuters.

⁶⁰ [Hong Kong's Sedition Law Is Back](#) (3 September 2021). The Diplomat.

⁶¹ [Hong Kong's Citizen News says closure triggered by Stand News collapse](#) (3 January 2022). Reuters

⁶² [Hong Kong denies visa to Economist journalist in latest media blow](#) (13 November 2021) The Guardian.

⁶³ [Hong Kong: Government accuses Wall Street Journal of incitement](#) (14 December 2021). International Federation of Journalists.

⁶⁴ [They Were Reporters in Hong Kong. Now They Drive Cabs and Sell Fried Chicken](#) (25 January 2022). Vice News.

⁶⁵ [New poll shows 60% of Hong Kong youth aged 15 to 30 want to leave the city if they can](#) (30 April 2021). Business Insider.

⁶⁶ [Hong Kong Public Opinion Project. Theme: "Migration Tide in Hong Kong"](#) (15 March 2021). Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute.

Kongers who hold foreign passports or with financial resources have fled the city in fear of retaliation for their involvement in the protest movement before the NSL was implemented.

Even those ambivalent about the protests are affected by the chilling effects of the NSL. Chief Executive Carrie Lam's popularity ratings fell to 17.5% — she is now on track to finishing her five-year term as the least popular leader in Hong Kong⁶⁷.

Hong Kongers continue to live in fear. While many are looking into options to leave Hong Kong, not everyone has the financial means to resettle elsewhere, and many are unwilling to leave their families and peers behind.

The collective trauma from the protests have created a mental health crisis in Hong Kong. The average mental health score of Hong Kongers has fallen to 45.12 (52 as the satisfactory level)⁶⁸, with many citing the social turmoil as a traumatic experience.

In light of the European Union's international obligations, it is imperative to take a strong and confident stance against challenges to liberal democracy everywhere.

Recommendations

1. Invoke Magnitsky Sanctions to Hold Human Rights Abusers Accountable

We urge the European Union and its member states to invoke targeted sanctions on individuals who are known human rights abusers.

This recommendation is derived from Alliance Canada Hong Kong's community consultation survey from January 2020⁶⁹, which received over 13,400 Hong Kong and Canadian responses. Their top demand was to invoke Magnitsky-style sanctions against the Hong Kong government, HKPF, and Chinese officials.

While organizations have identified specific individuals who are actively destroying Hong Kong's autonomy and violating human rights^{70 71} (Appendix D) there has been no actionable efforts by the international community to hold these egregious human rights abusers to account.

We urge the committee to recommend the European Union to invoke targeted sanctions against individual officials from the Hong Kong Police Force, the Hong Kong government, and the Chinese government. We must also ensure that the appropriate departments have the resources to ensure enforcement of these sanctions and that the perpetrators of human rights abuses are held accountable.

⁶⁷ [Hong Kong Leader's Approval Rating Falls to Lowest Since Sept](#) (17 February 2021). Bloomberg.

⁶⁸ [Hong Kong's mental health hits new low in survey listing Covid-19 pandemic and social turmoil as likely factors](#) (9 September 2020). SCMP.

⁶⁹ [Canada Five Demands: A Community Consultation Survey](#) (January 2020). Alliance Canada Hong Kong.

⁷⁰ [Profiles of Hong Kong Repression: Perpetrators of Human Rights and Democracy Abuse](#). (December 2020). Stand With Hong Kong, Hong Kong Higher Institution International Affairs Delegation.

⁷¹ Human Rights Abusers and State Violence Perpetrators in China and Hong Kong. For the consideration for sanctions under: Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law) S.C. 2017, c. 21 (July 2020). Alliance Canada Hong Kong.

2. Resettlement Options for Hong Kongers Seeking Protection

We urge members of the European Union to consider adopting a swift response to Hong Kong's new immigration law⁷² that enables arbitrary exit bans for anyone inside the HKSAR jurisdiction. After August 1st, 2021, it is no longer clear whether emigration can be an option for Hong Konger pro-democracy activists that are known to the authorities. Most Hong Kongers cannot wait out the long complicated bureaucratic processes required by traditional immigration pathways.

Our recommendations for the European Union and its member states are as follows:

- Create a dedicated asylum pathway for those fleeing persecution, allowing Hong Kongers to apply for travel documents directly from overseas with the ability to waive border restrictions.
- Expand private sponsorship and family reunification measures for extended family members of citizens.
- Create a clear and strategic communication plan to combat misinformation and promote the existing pathways.
- Release a plan to support citizens and their families in Hong Kong, restore residence/citizenship statuses, and expedite applications for extended family members.

3. Monitor shifts and changes in word choice, censorship, attitudes, political posturing, and culture within the PRC

We urge the European Union and its member states to continue monitoring formal and informal from Beijing in their word choices, censorship, and other tell-tale signs are major insights in shifts in positions and policies within the PRC.

For example:

- PRC's continued signalling by calling protesters "terrorists" laid the groundwork for crackdowns in Tibet, East Turkestan and Hong Kong. [As Hong Kong Demonstrations Continue, China Is Controlling What The Mainland Hears](#).
- Tightening censorship of movies, films and what entertainers are saying in recent years foreshadowed [the recent crackdowns](#)
- Less and less resistance to the latest clampdowns, including those targeting the LGBTQ community and those restricting video gaming time, show the [effect of increased nationalism in China](#).

4. Multilateral coordination with international partners institutions

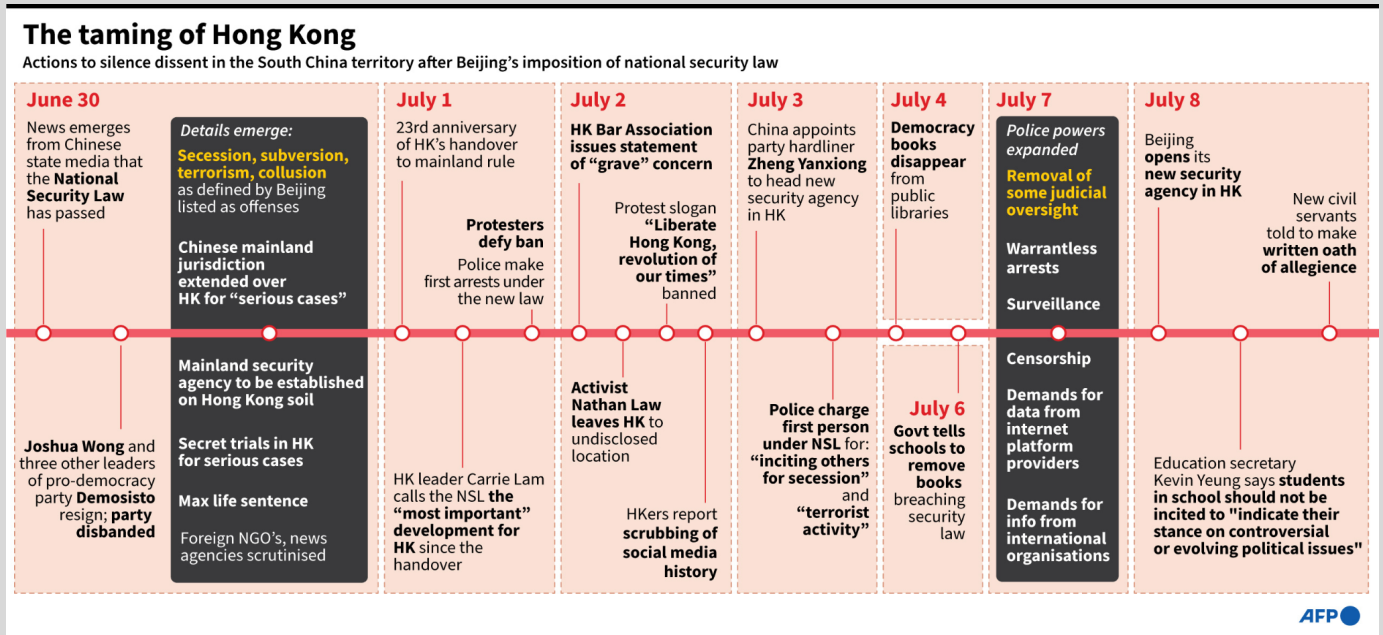
The European Union and its member states have an important role to play on the international stage as multilateral actions are an effective way to confront Beijing collaboratively. It is imperative to expand the foreign and domestic policy toolbox to meet challenges we are facing in the 21st Century.

We urge the European Union and its member states to consider a coordinated approach in engaging with foreign authoritarian powers, like the PRC. It is important to create room for proportionate and appropriate engagement, while critically examining ideas and information presented by Beijing.

⁷² [Hong Kong passes immigration bill, raising alarm over 'exit bans'](#) (28 April 2021). Reuters.

Appendices

Appendix A: Hong Kong Immediately After the National Security Law (July 2020-April 2021)



(Source: [AFP Twitter](#), 10 July, 2020)

Summary: The National Security Law has officially criminalized dissent and will legalize operations of Chinese state agents from the National Security Bureau to be active in Hong Kong jurisdiction. Beijing has quashed dissent and sought to make the semi-autonomous city more like authoritarian China.

- Prosecution of prominent local and overseas individuals under NSL
 - March 2021 - The National Security law broadly outlawed even benign acts of defiance, such as carrying a flag calling for independence or shouting the ubiquitous protest chant (Source: [Hong Kong Makes 100th Arrest Using National Security Law](#))
 - January 2021 - The national security department of the Hong Kong police arrest 47 people that ran in pro-democracy primaries back in July 2020 for "conspiracy to commit subversion" (Source: [Hong Kong charges 47 activists in largest use yet of new security law](#))
 - November 2020 - Even media personalities and radio hosts were charged under NSL for crowdfunding a scholarship for HK students to study in Taiwan. (Source: [Hong Kong radio host 'Giggs' arrested under national security law and for money-laundering in funding drive for protesters to study in Taiwan](#))
 - July 2020 - Police in Hong Kong are seeking the arrest of six pro-democracy activists living in exile in Western countries, suspected of violating the national security law (Source: [Hong Kong police order arrest of Nathan Law and other exiled activists – state media](#))
- Erosion of rights and institutions
 - April 2021 - The government passes legislation that allows immigration authorities to ban people from entering or leaving (Source: [Hong Kong passes law that can stop people leaving](#))
 - April 2021 - More changes proposed to Beijing's overhaul of Hong Kong's electoral system by significantly curbing democratic representation in its institutions to ensure that only "patriots" can rule (Source: [Hong Kong announces more electoral system changes favouring pro-Beijing camp](#))

- April 2021 - Authorities refused to disclose where activist Andy Li was detained when handed over to Hong Kong authorities after being detained by Chinese police on a failed escape attempt. He was assigned a lawyer by the government and allegedly refused his family-appointed lawyer. (Source: [Mystery lawyer appears in court for Hong Kong activist Andy Li, but family still don't know where he is](#))
- January 2021 - Internet service providers block the website HKChronicles, which lists the personal information of police officers (Source: [A Hong Kong Website Gets Blocked, Raising Censorship Fears](#))
- September 2020 - Targeting Hong Kong's independent judiciary, party officials called for an overhaul of the courts to rein in judges' autonomy. (Source: [Hong Kong's judiciary under fire over alleged leniency in protest cases: will a sentencing council redress claims of bias and lead to tougher penalties?, Hong Kong's Courts Are Still Independent. Some Want to Rein Them In](#))
- Suppression of Journalists and Free Media
 - April 2021 - Former journalist for Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), was arrested in November and accused of breaching the law for accessing a public database of car registrations (Source: [A Hong Kong journalist exposed police failures. A court found her guilty of a crime.](#))
 - April 2021 - The Hong Kong government proposes changes to the Companies Registry, which would restrict access to the personal information of company directors and officers (Source: [Hong Kong government plan to restrict access to company heads' personal data will shield lawbreakers, critics say](#))
 - August 2020 - Issuing of visas for journalists are politicised. Chinese authorities vets and delay foreign journalists' press credentials in Hong Kong. (Source: [Visas for journalists being vetted and delayed by Immigration's national security unit over "technical reasons"](#))
- Suppression of Political Opinions in Public and Private Sectors
 - April 2021 - Rev. Lo Hing-choi, head of the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong, leaves Hong Kong citing fears of the National Security Law, which he has been outspoken against (Source: [Outspoken Hong Kong pastor and head of Baptist Convention leaves city over national security law fears](#))
 - April 2021 - Raiding and targeted pro-democratic "yellow businesses" (Source: [Hong Kong shop founded by pro-democracy activist raided over content labelling](#))
 - April 2021 - Requiring professional bodies like the Hong Kong Bar Association to be patriotic (Source: [Beijing calls Hong Kong Bar Association Chief an 'anti-China politician'](#))
 - March 2021 - Hong Kong civil servants were given four weeks from Mid-January to pledge loyalty to the government (Source: [About 200 Hong Kong civil servants face dismissal for refusing to pledge allegiance to city and mini-constitution](#))
 - July 2020 - Popular VPN providers announced their exit from Hong Kong over concerns about ability to operate effectively under new Chinese security laws, with more companies set to follow (Source: [VPN providers quit Hong Kong following new China security laws](#))
- Education and Academic Influence
 - April 2021 - Two more teachers were deregistered for life; one was accused of using "one-sided and biased teaching materials", while the other was convicted for involvement in the 2019 protests (Source: [Two more Hong Kong teachers deregistered for life, one for 'defaming the nation' and the other for a protest-related crime](#))
 - April 2021 - Universities takes patriotic stance by severing with student unions (Source: [Hong Kong's top university cuts ties with student union over national security 'legal risk'](#))
 - April 2021 - The Hong Kong government, in conjunction with the Chinese government, holds a "National Security Education Day" event to promote patriotic education. Schools, including kindergartens, distributed pamphlets and held flag-raising ceremonies (Source: [Quizzes, photo mosaic of 'children's smiles' mark Hong Kong's first National Security Education Day since Beijing imposed law on city](#))
 - August 2020 - The Education Bureau instructs all schools to teach students about the national security law with a "positive approach" to help foster a "correct" understanding of the relationship between "our country and Hong Kong." (Source: [How Beijing's National Security Crackdown Transformed Hong Kong in a Single Month](#))



Figure one: Screenshot of article “[Hong Kong marks security 'education day' with military march and toy guns for kids](#)”. (15 April 2021). Reuters.

Appendix B: Hong Kong Journalists Testimonies (January 2022)

Question posed: How have the situation deteriorated over the past years and how are you feeling? What are some personal experiences or facts showing the deterioration of press freedom that we don't hear about in news reports?

Testimonial 1: Previous Freelance Journalist

A: There are still a lot of great journalists in HK, with the passion, ambition and bravery to continue with their job. So in that sense, journalism is not dead in HK yet.

A: However, I would say journalism (as a whole) could be 'dying' via the freedom of expression route. By that I refer to silencing the society with fear, in the name of national security.

A: Journalism is about reporting what is happening, giving a platform for people to voice out what they think, how they feel. And how do we do that? We quote 'real people', actual voices from the public when talking about critical social issues.

A: But like what the previous journalist mentioned. We don't know where the red line is, we never know what exactly is "endangering National security". Journalists don't have the answer, academics and professionals neither, let alone the general public. People are already self-censoring. For instance, academics that were vocal about Tiananmen every year suddenly went silent after NSL. Regular citizens don't really talk much in fear of potential prosecution. Traditionally, journalists don't really offer anonymity unless what sources say could really compromise their wellbeing. But when this has become a norm, even just for regular citizens, things have become trickier.

A: Now with 3 local publications gone, when you have erosion of freedom of speech and erosion of press freedom working together. That is slowly killing journalism in HK.

A: Some might say HK still has a relatively strong foreign media presence. While this is still true, how long can you depend on foreign media? Foreign correspondents are in a way even fragile than local reporters. One simple explanation: Visa rejections

A: But can local reporters be safe working for a foreign media? As of now, we might be able to say it's still fine since nothing has happened yet. Will there be a day where "working for foreign media" becomes "collusion with foreign forces" under NSL? As much as it sounds like an exaggeration, the problem is I don't know.

A: And for the majority in HK, they consume Chinese news, not English. The moment they wiped out the Apple Daily and Stand News, and CitizenNews was forced to shut to protect their staff's safety. The balance in local language news is now broken, it's just a step towards the journalism climate in mainland China. The 'fourth estate' is disappearing.

A: Knowing I was leaving HK back then, there were also times when I've decided to hide my bylines (with agreements and understandings from editors and colleagues). Just so I can safely leave HK, and my name (byline) wouldn't affect my family who are still in HK. (Remember with Apply Daily, one of them got caught at the airport before he could even leave)

A: I wouldn't say the fear of uncertainties (in terms of personal well-being) is the main reason for leaving HK. But that fear is here, slowing eating you up. And if it is only about me, I may be fine since this is the path I chose.

A: But the thought of potentially causing issues or affecting my family, my friends, and colleagues because of my work, this is not easy to deal with.

A: And if I have to continue living a life like that, always walking on eggshells whenever I say or do anything. Even when it's my job. There is no point for me to stay in such a place anymore. Hence, I left. But that doesn't mean I can work without fear. At least not until the day I can get my family out of HK.

Testimonial 2: Foreign Correspondent Journalist with Permanent Residence

A: I think one thing I would emphasise is just the deep sense of hopelessness that is permeating the journalist community here, the nihilism.

A: I have a photo from 2014 of a protest after Ming Pao editor Kevin Lau was attacked, when journalists held up a banner reading "You can't kill us all." And while of course there is no risk of death, there is the sense that people are slowly being picked off, first Apple Daily, then independent outlets, then Ming Pao and SCMP will be truly shuttered (and I don't think their critics realise what that will mean and will miss them when they're gone) and all that will be left will be those outlets toeing the line or openly pro Beijing.

A: In the past, moves like this would have been met with massive resistance by the media and community, but now everyone is so beaten down. You'd never see a protest like that one in 2014 again, even if it could somehow get approved. So self censorship can be even more effective, because not only is there the fear of being prosecuted but also the sense of why bother trying. Many people are still working hard and doing important reporting but there's often a level of fatalism there too, no one expects to make a difference they just feel obliged to keep going.

A: I'm in a very privileged position as both a foreign correspondent and a permanent resident, so I'm not as at risk as local reporters and also don't have a visa renewal hanging over my head.

A: But the direction we're headed in will include, I think inevitably, restrictions on the foreign press. Already seen visa denials starting to tick up, and delays are much more common, and I imagine there will be some new journalist visa eventually similar to China. How that will affect permanent resident media, and there are quite a few of us, remains to be seen.

A: Loss of foreign media will compound the effect of local critical outlets being closed. Hong Kong has been a major news story around the world in part because there are so many media here, but with a visa regime like China that would drastically change and coverage would inevitably decrease. So foreign media wouldn't fill any gaps left by local coverage and scrutiny of government actions would decrease even further.

Testimonial 3: Local Reporter for a Foreign Outlet

A: I've definitely noticed a change in the way sources talk with me, they are more cautious, less willing to reveal. I've had sources disappear unwilling to be associated with foreign journalists out of fear that it could be seen as 'foreign collusion'.

A: The overall feeling in the industry is helplessness. The general mood is sadness, we're grieving the rapid erosion of press freedom.

A: The lack of diverse media has also made it a lot harder to keep track of many things that go on in the city. As a reporter that regularly reads local media, I miss reading a diverse range of news. There are many issues that the disappeared local media covered that foreign news organizations may not cover as it's "too local" - that's the sad truth. Foreign publications cannot replace the liberal media that have been silenced.

A: Even a few pro-beijing news outlets told me that they had previously relied on Stand News or Apple Daily for their quick and up to date daily news.

A: At press conferences, the familiar faces of colleagues in the industry are no longer there, there are fewer people at news conferences, fewer video cameras, and fewer questions too.

A: What is also heartbreaking is watching people leave the industry. No one in Hong Kong is in journalism for the fame or the money. People here are paid very little, a starting salary for a graduate trainee is roughly HK\$13-15k per month. That's lower than the median monthly wage.

A; Local journalists are the most hard working, tenacious individuals I've ever met, and they do it out of passion, out of love, and the desire to right the wrongs where possible. What drives them isn't their byline or their face on the television, it's the responsibility to inform the public and to be the watchdog, because if they don't, who will?

A: Hong Kong has always been a fake democracy, what politician or opposition figure ACTUALLY held those in government to account? What we previously had was the media and news organizations that acted in the interest of the public. They empowered the public through information and gave the public an outlet to hold the people in power accountable.

A: Many of the people I know in the industry have either left Hong Kong or switched careers. Who wants to stay in an environment where the line is constantly changing, where you are constantly treading on eggshells, unsure whether what you write might land you in jail. It's mentally taxing. Having spoken to those who have left journalism, many of them miss it, but it's just not viable to continue in Hong Kong.

Testimonial 4: Freelance Journalist (Leaving Hong Kong)

A: It's definitely getting worse - nearly all journalists have the inclination to self-censor now, while consumers struggle to find media they want to follow now that many pro-democracy/opposition media were forced to shutter

A: Biggest blow: the closure of the three media

Especially for Stand News in which authorities explicitly sued them for publishing "seditious content", as opposed to colluding with foreign forces in Apple Daily's case. Which means the day where anything you write can be used against you, that day isn't far.

A; Important to note that the red lines in Hong Kong are much more ambiguous than those in mainland China - which are Taiwan issues, Xinjiang, MeToo, among others.

A: But in Hong Kong, I have a feeling that it's really hard to predict/expect now. Even criticising the police in the smallest way makes you cringe.

A: It's also worth mentioning that John Lee said last year that the government plans to "regulate" press to "prevent fake news", which means a more heavy-handed crackdown can be expected. Separately, Theresa Chang just said yesterday that passing Article 23 is urgent, and that article will ensure that regulation is realised to the full.

A: Which means that any hope journalists now have is likely going to be crushed soon

[On why this journalist is leaving Hong Kong]

A: I guess it comes down to a few reasons:

A: 1. I do feel the pressure to stay anonymous when I work on any stories, for my own safety, for my family's safety and potentially for my

sources (tho for most slightly sensitive sources I've offered anonymity). As I feel the erosion of press freedom, I increasingly feel that I have to walk on thin ice in each step I take, and hide behind a byline that does not belong to me. I want to go somewhere I can do my job with a lot more freedom, and don't have to watch over my shoulder every single time.

A: 2. As a Hong Konger, it's utterly depressing to see freedoms in the city deteriorate, and it was beyond heartbreaking to witness the closure of Stand News, Citizen News and Apple Daily. The city does not look or feel the same to me compared to two years ago. I think very soon, Hong Kong will become yet another Chinese city. I know that if we try to ignore politics and get on with our lives, it might still be bearable, but as a journalist, it's not the life I want.

Testimonial 5: Freelance Journalist in Hong Kong (translated from Cantonese)

A: After the executives of Apple Daily and Stand News were charged under the National Security Law (including accusations of colluding with foreign forces/publishing seditious materials, etc), the concern among journalists is: press freedom has slowly shrink where we are unable to feel safe to work on news stories. We are worried that ourselves, colleagues, and boss may be arrested. Because of this environment, it is hard to comprehend the NSL's bound, if this report would be considered a violation, such as publishing opinion articles.

A: After Apple Daily, Stand News, and HK Citizen News have stopped operating, it is a pity that many reports and social issues are lost, including social issues that are not related to the political situation like COVID-19 or judicial courts. As three media organizations had experienced journalists, and the resources to cover stories that are not reported by other news organizations due to capacity. Now, the news may be monolithic, readers and audience has less resources, and there is one less channel to raise concerns.

Testimonial 6: Local Independent News Editor (translated from Cantonese)

Personally, I am not a front line reporter, but I work behind the scenes to coordinate reporters' jobs. The following are information provided based on my personal experience (anonymous)

- 0 Preface
- 1 Early stages of establishing an online news media
- 2 Conflicts easing up post-district council [election]
- 3 Initial changes brought by COVID
- 4 COVID Policies
- 5 The end of online news media

0-1. Originally, my company owns a popular forum and a Facebook page (A), you could say it is kind of a media outlet. We would publish comedic content and repost information from different industries. Strictly speaking, the Facebook and Instagram accounts primarily focuses on reposting content

0-2 Serious conflicts arose from the large scale protest on June 12, 2019. Considering a shift in the political environment, a group of friends who used to be reporters and I started a new Facebook page (B) that focused on live-streaming crisis incidents. As we went to the very front lines and captured many spots that were not covered by large media, we received significant traffic and attention.

0-3 I decided to make our Facebook page (B) into an actual media outlet, but due to the need to file a business registration, register and fulfill numerous requirements, I gave up at the end. Instead, I used the experience I gained from managing it into Facebook page (A) which my company owns, and used personally recruited a few renowned reporters at the time, including one who used to work at the Chinese University Student Association.

1-1 I established 4-5 staff reporters in my company (currently 2 left). They didn't all join from day one, but came gradually, and later left due to various reasons.

1-2 During 2019, many online news media did not last very long as there were no corporate back-up. Many would stop going out [into the field] after getting arrested once or twice. After July 21, 2019 is a turning point for online news media. On that day, the original protest route is to the Hong Kong Liaison office, but a certain pro-establishment group agitated that some people were advancing into Yuen Long. The assault of a reporter from Stand News lead to public outcry, and many felt the need to document what happened in order to bring justice for Hong Kong. It wasn't difficult for one to become online news media, anyone with a phone could livestream, commentate if you are a bit better at speaking, and there were a lot of attention, so end of July to August of 2019 saw many joining the ranks.

1-3-1 For an online news media to become recognized by the government, you have to do two things: One is to register yourself as a newspaper with the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration. It takes someone familiar with the process two to three weeks. It was my first time, which took me a few months; the second was to get a media pass from the Information Services Department.

1-3-2 Media, in the eyes of the Hong Kong public, is that if you have a Facebook page, your content looks like news, then you're a news media. Prior to 2019, the Hong Kong government has also not attempted to change this perspective. There is a civil association in Hong Kong called the Hong Kong Journalists Association which gives out HKJA media passes. The public misunderstood that the government would recognize this pass, but it never has. The government in the past gave out mixed ideas that the HKJA passes meant something, but in reality, it is just a membership card. As for the media pass from the government, it is also not any type of qualification. It simply is a "work badge" for "employees performing reporting duties for a corporation" that is recognized as "a media corporation" by the government. And this work badge has gradually become a permit by law enforcement agencies starting 2020.

1-3-3 From the beginning of 2020, our colleagues told us that it was harder to seek approval from both the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration and the Information Services Department.

2-1 The district council elections in November 2019 happened at a key point in time, as both the surrounding of Chinese University and the Polytechnic University happened prior to the election (There were a lot involved in these two incidents, you should seek out front line reporters that reported at the time). As these two incidents caused much international attention, it changed the police's strategy: Reduce conflicts in front of camera, if you can't reduce the number of conflicts, you reduce the number of cameras. At the time, our front line reporters stated that even reporters from pro-China newspapers like Tai Kung Po were angered by what the police has done. The landslide victory by the pan-democratic camp at the district council reduced a lot of conflicts in the streets. I won't speculate at this time why that is, but at the same time, many online media started to fade out as there weren't as much reporting in the front lines. The ones that remain needed to find some ways to survive, and one of them is to depend on the "yellow economy."

2-2 Personally speaking, a businessperson can have political stances, but anyone that depended on politics to operate will inadvertently fail, so the media platform that I manage at the time did not join the so called "yellow camp," and as a manager, I didn't interfere in the political views of our reporters. I would allow anything that they say in their live programs, as long as it isn't provoking or provoking anyone to perform certain actions, and as long as they provide objective description as a reporter.

2-3 Later, the police started to set up cordons. The NSL was not established at the time, so its actions were based on "avoiding the press." As I have already registered for all my media passes, I could go into most places where restrictions were placed, but it is clear that places we could go were simply theatre stages, as at the time, Apple Daily and Stand News also have all the passes, and the things we could all capture were largely the same. The online media that don't have passes would not dare to barge in now, and could only capture the peripherals. Strictly speaking, the siege of Polytechnic University was the last conflict that had any "scenes" that were also attended by online media, most of the things that could be captured were controlled [by the police].

3 Not long after COVID, around 1 to 2 months after the cruise ship incident, most of the news' attention shifted from protests to fighting the pandemic. Some of the media that sprung up for the protests gradually disappeared, and the ones that remain hope to do as much as they can to keep their audience's attention.

4-1 Gathering restrictions placed after the onset of the pandemic restricted gatherings of more than 4 people, with threats of issuing the 599G fines. The information I gathered was that even if not more than 4 reporters were responsible for the job, some police would still issue 599G's. They may not be convicted, and they can ask the judge for leniency, but it still dispersed a number of online media outlets.

4-2 A few prominent journalists hosted a meeting in mid-2020 with the goal to unite online news media to fight for some rights for themselves. Before the start of the meeting, the host told me that they actually didn't have much hope. I was there in person as well along with a lawyer. He's doing many actual things to support people working in online news media, but he too doesn't have much hope. We determined that the government would soon deal with media that "don't listen". To survive as an online news media, there weren't much else we could do apart from keeping a low profile and cooperating with the police.

5-1 At the time, another journalist and I determined that we couldn't survive unless we become the "Oriental Daily" of the internet. As the company is not my own possession but that of a group of my bosses, for their safety, I requested some of the reporters to cooperate with the police when working. There are some that took issue with this and left the company, but this is for another time.

5-2 The National Security Law has arrived. At the beginning, they charged people related to the slogans, then they targeted Apple Daily. Before Jimmy Lai was arrested, only less than 10% of the online media that rose in 2019 were left. One, there are no longer any conflicts; two, some license-less journalists were charged; three, it has been tough economically; four, leaving because of the NSL. I was responsible for the operation of the company, aside from one, two to four are issues that I must deal with in my work.

5-3 Mid-2020 onwards up until now, my company's journalists kept good relations with the police. We would send staff to "breaking traffic accidents," "injury accidents," "large scale incidents," "fire incidents," "police press conference on targeting criminals, etc. And remained in contact and understanding with reporters from Cable TV, NOW, Oriental Daily. Apart from HK01, which is somewhat different, front line journalists, no matter the political background of the company, have consensus on what to do to continue to survive.

6-1 "The end of online media" is somewhat of a false title, wherever there are people, whenever one can still go on the internet, there would be online media. However, they would definitely be suppressed, as among them there would always be what the government deems as "fake news," even pro-government media would create fake news to keep its readers. Online media is gone for now, and the media that the government targets as "having political tendencies" are gradually disappearing. But to me, they're simply lying to themselves. What the government fears is not fake news, is real, naked truth truth being observed and documented. And the person documenting it doesn't have to

be from a major outlet, it doesn't need sensationalist language. Often what the government cannot face, what they need to silence, are scenes that are not written into words at all, that even the experts in the government cannot explain

6-2 This is not only happening in Hong Kong or China, but in other countries too. The fall of large media companies might not be a bad thing, what those of us who work in the media need to care about is not political views, but "some time, some where, for someone, something happened, and we must record it in some way."

Appendix C: Hong Kongers' Testimonies (April 2021)

Testimonial 1: Activist Known as "Bobo"

"It's been such a difficult situation for us lately, while battling with the pandemic situation and economic downturn and struggling to make a living. Many of our friends have left the city because there is a great possibility of prosecution. Some others are planning to immigrate to other countries like UK, Canada, or Australia, because the government is stepping up to restrict Hong Kongers' freedom day by day. Most of the time, in the name of COVID. It is even more heartbreaking and helpless to know while the majority of pro-democracy icons are arrested and now facing trial every day; many more people who are involved on the frontline anonymously are now convicted on court publicly and often without public's attention. It feels like reality is forcing us to get our lives to get back to what people say normal or on track.

We all clearly understand that nothing can get back to normal. We are still doing what we can, fighting for what we deserve. And we hope that all of you still notice there are a lot of us in desperate situations every day.

Please stand with us."

Testimonial 2: Teammate A

"From hope to despair to fear

In Apr 2019, the very first match against the extradition bill took place. Some people started to talk about but they were the minority. I thought, the bill would pass anyway. There was nothing more for me to do.

Jun 2019 brought me hope, I saw a HK which I had never experienced before in my life. Every protest was filled with kind and warm people. It stunned me. I had the wishful thinking that we may be Goliath this time.

When peaceful protests were in vain, people resorted to other means for the fight of freedom. Blatant police brutality, collusion with gangsters, the government's inaction, HK had then become very foreign to me. Similar to the umbrella movement in 2014, I had become a part time protestor. But this time, I went digital as well. Working with unknown souls sharing the yearning for freedom was invigorating. I felt the passion and energy of friends whom I had never met. And, this truly moved me. We knew we wouldn't win but we never imagined the price would be this huge. Over 10k people were arrested and I believe still more to come.

We forced the government to cancel all celebrations, ' National Day', ' Xmas', ' New Year's Eve'. There was no mood to celebrate anyway. We warned the world about the intrusion of CCP, today HK, tomorrow the world. We knew but the rest of world didn't or probably still don't.

The siege in the two universities broke my heart. My hope was smashed when seeing students trying to leave the university rounded by police by climbing down fr pipes and flyovers. Paramedics were arrested and treated like criminals. What had HK become?

Those who managed to escape are now charged with rioting.

In the beginning of 2020, we heard of a new SARS like virus in Wuhan. Our Lunar New Year was spent searching for masks, sanitizers and spray. We didn't want SARS to repeat. It eventually did.

Protests were halted, the government banned any sorts of gathering of people. I fell into the stage of despair. There was nothing much for me to do , but, HKers demonstrated agility. Be Water.

The first half of the year was spent establishing the yellow economy (ie a community of conscious businesses), sharing SARS fighting tips with the world, sending supplies to our friends around the globe. We continued our fight for freedom by supporting the yellow economy. We no longer go to Starbucks and IKEA.

Summer 2020, HKers were astounded by the abrupt legislation of the Almighty National Security Law. It's so arbitrary that all HKers could be subject to prosecution. The slogan we used 'Liberate HK, revolution of our time' is now forbidden. What's left for HKers?

Yet, over 600k HKers cast their votes in the pan-democrats primaries. In the name of pandemic prevention, the Legislative Council Election was called off later.

Sooner after the enforcement of the National Security Law, we witnessed familiar faces being detained without trial, Joshua, Agnes and Jimmy, and many more. We saw activists fleeing HK.

In Aug, we were shocked by how the police searched the Apple Daily office. On that day, the share price of Next Media (which owns Apple Daily) rose over 1000%, 500000 copies were sold on the day after. Yes, we were silenced but we found a way to speak up.

Unfair trials and sentences became a daily routine. Our fight for freedom changed. Instead of taking to the street, we went to court hearings, we flashed our mobile torch to send our love to the arrested, we wrote letters to our imprisoned friends. Whenever a conscious business was picked on by the government, we went to support and emptied their shelves. These practices still continue today.

I can't really recall what happened in the rest of 2020. The despair has now changed fear as the 47 candidates of the primaries were charged and the majority of them are still detained without trial, friends and colleagues are leaving HK, thanks to the schemes imposed by the UK, Australia and Canada.

I am afraid of being charged by penning this even. After the enforcement of the National Security Law and the 'improvement' of our Legislative Council Elections, the voices of HKers are forever muted in HK. The media are self-censored. Our kids are brainwashed and loving the regime is a MUST. We are being retaliated for defending the core values which made HK HK. We rely on our friends outside to speak up for us. We are the fine example of CCP could do once it's seized control.

May I conclude my thoughts with a few lines from a song written by a renowned lyricist fr HK, whose name is now made 'anonymous' in China due to his political views. And, I am confident that they resonate with HKers incarcerated, exiled, emigrated and stayed due to this political movement, and most importantly, freedom fighters across the globe.

- There is a space which can't be shattered
- There is wisdom n thoughts which can't be stolen.
- Powerlessness n feebleness is the evidence of perseverance."

Testimonial 2: Teammate B

"Arrests related to the protest are continuing, though very underreported in international media, the numbers are increasing. The mass charges of the 47 Pro-democracy politicians and activists are a clear breach of the common law's concept of 'innocent until proven guilty'. Also Andy Li's incident, being assigned a lawyer without family's consent or knowledge. Bail has been refused for most of the people on the grounds that they pose a security risk or threat.

I have noticed that police officers are frequenting and patrolling MTRs and public areas more often - usually in fours. There are random ID checks, usually targeting young people still occurring

There's an increase of harassment of people who are holding street stands, particularly for trade unions. Universities are cutting off ties with student unions due to 'legal risks'. Banning June 4 vigil under the guise of 'coronavirus concerns'.

Recent passing of immigration law amendments, without clear provisions that have given the government broad sweeping of powers including exit bans."

Testimonial 3: Comments from Teammate C

"Very strong police presence on the streets.

Certain premises are not accessible without 安心出行 (government COVID-19 app).

Availability of employment opportunities have become associated with your political views."

Testimonial 4: Comments from a Reporter

"As international media reporters we've had more rejections from experts or fewer on the record comments"

Testimonial 5: Friend A

“Although the National Security Law does not have a huge impact on the general public, it is obvious that the government has used this to pick on people or use it as political intimidation.

For me, the previous demonstrations are the result of a government that has caused popular grievances. No doubt the National Security Law restricts the speaking platform, which citizens can no longer express their opinions and it is an ordinance that is not beneficial to the citizens. If a government can really do a good job of people’s livelihood, listen to their people, will anyone like to come out to go against them?”

Testimonial 6: Friend B

“The election reforms are already... but I don’t care (because it’s a sham previously anyways). It’s crazy that they’re not letting people check records. They’re just asking for corruption. And the police can just blatantly rape people then since the Department of Justice would go and clear their name anyways.

They’re picking on and targeting pro-democratic yellow businesses, like raiding About Thai. Though it hasn’t happened to me yet, I’ve witnessed random police checks on people with black masks.

There’s no longer any human rights. With the 40-hour marathon of court hearings for the 47 activists, Hongkongers rushed to buy M&M’s for jailed activists to bypass a strict list of approved items for inmate visitation, and the case of the 12 missing Hong Kongers all shows that the Hong Kong we know is dead.

Testimonial 7: Friend C

“As of right now, National Security Law will not affect you as much if you obey the government. What I mean is that I joke and laugh at Xi Jinping all the time, but it will not be harmful to me nor my family immediately. It also doesn’t mean that National Security Law will not affect me. The most obvious reason is that more and more people around me want to immigrate. Several friends who own a second nationality have already left. Other parents, riders, and protestors have left before the national security law takes effect, the leftover ones are the people who do not have a second nationality and do not have financial support. I also noticed some other families who never mentioned immigrating, but now they will bring up the topic once in a while.

In addition, one of my friends who used to be an admin of a Channel had told me, since National Security Law had taken place, there are fewer subscribers. He continued that this is not just his Channel, others also experience this phenomenon. I also discovered that many discussion forums had slowly turned silent. The most exaggerated I have seen is people started to use code to replace some words, just like in the mainland (China). I am not sure about all the behinds meaning, but the thought of it is already very scary on its own.

What impacted me the most is, every weekend I will help my friend (who left Hong Kong already) to visit the graves (of their relatives to pay respect - this is tradition), after that I will purposely go out and cruise for a while (in case someone is following) before I return home. Sometimes I wonder will visiting the grave end up becoming one of the violations of the National Security Law in the future? I can’t help it, but I found this is pretty funny if we all end up in jail from this.

I bet the National Security Law does not seem to impact daily life significantly due to the distraction of Sinovac (a kind of China COVID Vaccine) and “Leave Home Safe” app. The Hong Kong Government is infamous and not reliable. First, they started with the National Security law, the real-name system for SIM cards, then the immigration bill, what is up next? It is foreseeable that the government can form Hong Kong as in another Xinjiang easily. After the encirclement net was completed, the emperor can now order a concentration camp in Hong Kong and there is nothing much we can do about it. As we can see, the internet network has been tightened. LIHKG (one of the most popular discussion forum) servers is down occasionally and some websites cannot be loaded suddenly as well, especially the websites that are related to Hong Kong Chronicles. They are straightforward and block buried, which is the first step in network monitoring. Even though some still hope to fight for this long-term struggle, this fight can be easy, just as we can’t rehabilitate the bloody Tiananmen Square crackdown by singing a song or chanting slogans.

To be honest, if you ask me the future of Hong Kong, I am so pessimistic. The government can send over a tank anytime. After National Security Law has been enrolled, we are no longer facing a 10-year sentence, instead it will be a lifetime sentence. I used to think that riots, arson and keeping weapons are serious enough, but at least it is listed out black and white. Although there is no difference right now, you have no idea when they will arrest you, perhaps you are just holding a Winnie the Pooh on the street.

In the end, I would like to talk about how grateful I am for the Lifeboat programs within different countries. However, there are a lot of people who are taking it for granted and the program couldn't help the one that is needed. It will be great if the Lifeboat program can set the threshold higher.”

Appendix D: [Human Rights Abusers and State Violence Perpetrators in China and Hong Kong](#)

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