

# Social Movements storm Hong Kong streets in protest over negotiations

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Korean Farmers clash with riot police outside HK Convention Centre

In the most intense confrontation yet between demonstrators and the police since the start of the ministerial, around 5,000 protesters from across the world came within just 200 meters off the Hong Kong Convention Center where the World Trade Organization negotiations are being held.

Demonstrators managed to breach several levels of barricades by outrunning the police and catching them unawares, confused, and in disarray. Several small groups first broke off from the main protesters' block, managed to break into rows of police, paving the way for the rest of the demonstrators to proceed, forcing the police to regroup.

The main block separated into various smaller blocks, moved towards the streets leading to the Convention Center, and completely surrounded the last police barricade before the Center from all sides. At least thirty protesters managed to cross the last barricade and reached the entrance of the Convention Center.

When the demonstrators succeeded in kicking down the wooden walls surrounding a nearby office tower, the police started firing tear gas on the demonstrators, forcing them to disperse. Hundreds of protesters were then seen coughing, vomiting, and grimacing in pain.

Up to 2,000 mostly Korean and other international delegates managed to regroup just another 100 meters from the frontline of the protests. "We will not go away until the WTO is derailed. It is not us who should be dispersed, it's the WTO," one speaker said.

Despite the press' consistently demonizing and caricaturing the protesters, Hong Kong locals had become more and more supportive of the protests. At various points during the march, locals clapped and cheered on the protesters. Many even chose to get off the sidewalks to join the march.

After the demonstration was dispersed, locals handed biscuits and water to the protesters and assisted those who were reeling from the tear gas attacks. As the police regrouped to encircle the demonstrators, dozens of locals sat down in rows directly in front of the barricades, decried the police's excessive use of force, chanting, "Go away! Go away!" in Cantonese. By the end of the night, many were chanting the demonstrators' main slogan, "Kong Yee Sai Maw!" or "Protest the WTO!"

Despite the Hong Kong mainstream press' consistently hyping up threats of chaos from the demonstrations, no single private establishment has been damaged and no locals or officials have been injured throughout all the many actions held throughout the week. But by the end of the night, up to 900 rounded up, 41 people injured, with one critically injured.

As of press time, around 2,000 people are still by the doors of the WTO, braving the cold winds but determined to stay on through the night. Massed in an area about 200 meters by 25 meters, they had been surrounded on all sides by about 3,000 police who were slowly closing in on them.

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\* Published on Focus on the Global South.