

# Demosisto - Hong Kong's umbrella movement spawns new political party

Wednesday 17 August 2016, by [PHILLIPS Tom](#) (Date first published: 11 April 2016).

**Demosisto party, founded by some of the leaders of 2014 protests, aims to fight against perceived attempts by China to erode region's autonomy.**

Some of the most prominent leaders of Hong Kong's umbrella movement protests have launched a new political party, vowing to press on with their fight to wrest democratic concessions from China's authoritarian leaders.

The foundation of the Demosisto party was announced on Sunday evening amid growing unease over Beijing's erosion of the former colony's fiercely treasured freedoms.

The party's creators include Joshua Wong, the teenage campaigner who shot to fame during the 79-day street occupation in 2014 [[1](#)], Nathan Law, the former head of the Hong Kong Federation of Students, and fellow activists Oscar Lai and Agnes Chow.

Chow, who is 19, said Demosisto was being created to kickstart a longterm political struggle for democracy in the former British colony, which returned to Chinese hands in 1997.

"The Chinese government keeps lying to Hong Kong's people and making fake promises to us," she told the *Guardian* on Sunday.

"But lots of Hong Kong people are very clear that the Chinese government is actually taking away democracy from us. So it is the time for Hong Kong people to fight back."

Chow said the party's name - a fusion of the Greek word *demos*, meaning "people", and the Latin word *sisto*, meaning "I stand firm" - reflected its focus on the defence of democratic rights.

"We believe ... the people's opinion should be respected and the government should be chosen and formed by people," she said. "We will stand firm in the future although it is very difficult to fight for the self-determination and democracy of Hong Kong. We will stand firm and we will not give up in our movement."

Since Hong Kong reverted to Chinese control as a special administrative region, it has been ruled under the so-called "one country, two systems" formula, with far greater social and political freedoms than the mainland.

However, that 50-year framework expires in 2047, at which point activists fear the territory could be completely stripped of its autonomy.

China's lurch back towards a more repressive brand of authoritarianism since Xi Jinping became leader in 2012 [[2](#)] has alarmed members of Hong Kong's pro-democracy community.

Activists' fears were aggravated further by the suspected abduction of a local bookseller called Lee Bo by Chinese security officials, in apparent violation of the former colony's supposed judicial autonomy.

China has rejected claims that Lee, a British citizen who was seized in late December and subsequently turned up in the hands of mainland police, was kidnapped and has stonewalled British requests for information about his status.

But, speaking in Hong Kong on Friday, the British foreign secretary, Philip Hammond, said the UK believed the publisher, who specialised in books critical of the Communist party elite, had been involuntarily removed from the streets of the former colony.

"On the basis of all the evidence available to us ... we believe that he was removed under duress to the mainland," Hammond told reporters, adding that members of Hong Kong's business community had been "unnerved" by the incident.

Pro-democracy activists have said Lee's snatching leaves the "one country, two systems" model - which supposedly guarantees Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy from Beijing - in tatters. "It's just a lie of the Chinese government," said Chow.

Jason Y Ng, the author of a book about Hong Kong's youth protesters called *Umbrellas In Bloom*, said Demosisto's founders were launching a political party in order to appeal to a broader section of society. "Voters don't tend to take schoolkids seriously," he said. "They need a clean slate."

Ng said the party would try to occupy a political middle-ground between Hong Kong's traditional democracy movement - the pan-democrats - and the more radical "localist" movement [3] whose members often favour direct action and call for full independence from China.

"[Joshua Wong] won't advocate violence or fighting law enforcement in street protests, which is what the localists are prepared to do and have done. He will continue to preach non-violence. But he and Demosisto will be more aggressive than the traditional pan-democrats," Ng said.

Chow said her party was considering putting forwards two candidates in September elections for Hong Kong's legislative council parliament. It would also push for a referendum on the territory's political future after 2047. "In other countries and other cities, when they are facing important policies or controversial policies, they use referendums to decide."

Ng, the author, said the umbrella movement activists' decision to throw themselves into September's election battle was a high-stakes gamble given how divided the democratic vote could be.

"What if no-one takes them seriously? What if they have a pitiful showing at the polls, winning only a few thousand votes out of hundreds of thousands of votes? That could be catastrophic," he said.

Chow said Demosisto's founders expected to be attacked and branded as independence-seeking radicals by Beijing. "Of course the Communist party will say we are fighting for independence. But I think it is very basic for people living in one place to have the power to decide what we want to have in our future."

**Tom Phillips** in Beijing

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**P.S.**

\* The Guardian. Sunday 10 April 2016 10.54 BST Last modified on Monday 11 April 2016 15.51 BST:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/10/hong-kongs-umbrella-movement-spawns-new-political-party-demosisto>

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**Footnotes**

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/01/joshua-wong-teenager-public-face-hong-kong-protests>

[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/25/zhao-wei-mothers-search-for-daughter-caught-china-human-rights>

[3] <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-35547186>