

Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU): Anti-Mask Law adds fuel to flame

Depriving workers from defending their rights

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The HKCTU strongly opposes the promulgation of the Anti-Mask Law by invoking the Emergency Regulations Ordinance, which the government announced would be effective from 5 October, with such forceful means. Once enacted, the Law will severely repress workers from defending their rights.

The government indicates that the Law seeks to ban citizens from wearing face masks when participating in rallies or protests. Offenders will be subjected to a maximum of one year imprisonment.

HKCTU is of the view that the political crisis faced by Hong Kong now comes from the violent and imperious rules imposed on society by those who hold power, resulting in the complete loss of trust towards the government.

Not only will the promulgation of such Law not solve the problems, it adds fuel to the already violently burning flame and will worsen social conflicts.

The promulgation of the Law is sure to severely repress workers from defending their rights. In an unequal playing field between workers and employers, it is not easy for the former to stand up against the exploitation by the latter.

Workers are under intense pressure and it requires them tremendous courage to stand up for themselves, as they are at risk to be identified by their employers in future retaliations. Even after having left a company, workers are concerned that they may be blacklisted by other employers when switching jobs.

This is especially so when there is a strong sense of white terror that exists in our society after a group of civil aviation workers were dismissed for expressing their personal political opinions. Banning the wearing of face masks will certainly lead to a purge due to one's political opinion in the future.

As such, once the Anti-Mask Law comes into force, it will be even harder for workers who are already in a weak position to fight against the exploitation of evil-spirited employers.

Moreover, those vulnerable communities in workplaces, such as women who are subjected to sexual harassment and ethnic minorities and people with mental conditions who often face discriminations will have to take up even more pressure when choosing to speak up for themselves.

In order to protect themselves from being a target and subject of discrimination, these people often have to wear masks when speaking up to protect their identities. The Anti-mask Law will deprive them of the chance to stand up for themselves.

Mrs. Carrie Lam proclaimed repeatedly that she would prefer "conversations" than "confrontations". Yet, she is only squashing confrontations by the arbitrary promulgation of a new Law that circumvents all the established legislative processes.

This shows that the “conversations” advanced by the chief executive are merely insincere deception which will not lead Hong Kong out of the current predicament.

We reiterate that only when the Five Key Demands are addressed would be the only way to lead Hong Kong away from the crisis.

Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions

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P.S.

<http://en.hkctu.org.hk/content/anti-mask-law-adds-fuel-flame-depriving-workers-defending-their-rights>