

HKCTU (Hong Kong) : Respect Rights to Freedom of Assembly! Drop All Charges Against LEE Cheuk Yan Now!

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The General Secretary of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), LEE Cheuk Yan, was arrested this morning (28/2/2020) on charges of “unlawful assembly”. He was later released on bail and pending court hearing on May 5.

The HKCTU vehemently condemns the arrest, which we regard as a plot to further suppress Hong Kong citizens and workers’ rights to freedom of association, and we demand the Hong Kong Government to drop all charges against LEE and others who are criminally prosecuted due to political reasons.

On around 7:30 am of February 28, 2020, LEE was taken away by six police officers from his residence.

Disregarding LEE’s civil rights and privacy, the police confiscated the clothes, cellphone and backpack that were worn and carried by LEE at the alleged assembly during the arrest.

The arrest is part of a well-coordinated operation carried out by the Hong Kong Police which saw another pro-democracy politician, YEUNG sum and media publisher, Jimmy LAI also arrested at the same time.

All three men were charged with “unlawful assembly” alleged to their participation in the August 31, 2019 march that marked the 5th Anniversary of the National People’s Congress’ 831 decision to deny Hong Kong people’s right to universal suffrage, which eventually led to the Umbrella Movement in 2014. After the march on August 31, Police Tactical Team stormed one of the subway stations and assaulted protestors and ordinary citizens alike without discrimination, causing many seriously injured.

However, before an independent investigation on the police brutality is conducted, the police have now taken the initiative to arrest political leaders who allegedly participated in the peaceful march earlier that day.

The HKCTU would like to reiterate that the rights to peaceful assembly is enshrined in Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 27 of the Basic Law, the mini-constitution of Hong Kong.

Despite the ICCPR is applied to Hong Kong without reservation, the HKSAR Government has already banned 47 public assemblies since the start of the “Anti-Extradition Bill Social Movement” in June 2019.

The arrest of LEE further illustrates that the HKSAR Government is now stepping up its efforts to suppress Hong Kong people’s given rights to freedom of assembly and threaten those who exercise such rights.

The HKSAR Government’s failure to observe her obligations in the ICCPR and Basic Law is alarming.

We fear that if we are not to contest such unjust and unlawful arrests, many more will fall victims to political persecutions in the future.

Thus, the HKCTU solemnly demand the HKSAR Government to:

- Drop all criminal charges against LEE Cheuk Yan, YEUNG Sum, and Jimmy LAI now;
 - To observe Article 21 of ICCPR and Article 27 of Basic Law without reservation and respect Hong Kong people's rights to freedom of assembly;
 - Lift all restrictions on peaceful assemblies and ensure peaceful assemblies to be conducted without police interferences;
 - Stop arresting and prosecuting people who participate in peaceful assemblies;
- To initiate independent investigation on alleged police brutality and arbitrary detentions.

P.S.

<https://en.hkctu.org.hk/content/respect-rights-freedom-assembly-drop-all-charges-against-lee-cheuk-yan-now>