

Hong Kong passes law to criminalise insult of Chinese national anthem

Thursday 4 June 2020, by [CREERY Jennifer](#), [WONG Rachel](#) (Date first published: 4 June 2020).

Hong Kong's legislature has passed a controversial bill criminalising insult of the Chinese national anthem by a comfortable majority, despite months of wrangling over fears of curbs to free expression.

The vote on Thursday 4 saw 41 lawmakers - constituting the council's pro-Beijing majority - back the resolution, whilst one objected and no one abstained.

Democrats launched a last-minute protest in a bid to stall proceedings, with most refusing to take part in the ballot.

Offenders who are found guilty of deliberately altering March of the Volunteers risk **fines up to HK\$50,000 or three years in prison**.

Rival camps have repeatedly clashed over the bill - inserted into Annex III of Hong Kong's mini-constitution by Beijing in 2017 - with several meetings descending into physical confrontations as opposition lawmakers sought to delay its passage.

In preparation of potential hold-ups, Legislative Council (LegCo) President Andrew Leung allotted four days or 30 hours for debate.

Security around the LegCo Complex was beefed up beforehand, with riot police stationed around the perimeter and barrier tape set up.

During deliberations, **Elizabeth Quat of the pro-Beijing DAB party** said democrats should not be a public servant if they do not wish to respect the national anthem: *"If lawmakers oppose the national anthem bill, they are violating basic political ethics."*

Democratic Party lawmaker Wu Chi-wai said the public was concerned about arbitrary prosecution over the law: *"Are we going to see more and more draconian laws and harsher penalties?"* he asked. *"We used to have more tolerance and respect to the government."*

At around 12:50 pm, **democrats Eddie Chu and Ray Chan** charged towards Leung holding protest placards reading *"Murderous states stinks for eternity,"* and a container of foul-smelling liquid was dropped on the floor.

The meeting was adjourned for several hours whilst police and fire service department personnel carried out an on-site investigation.

Upon resumption in a separate room, Leung pressed on with the final vote without allowing remaining lawmakers to speak.

Ted Hui from the Democratic Party subsequently marched forward and spilt liquid on the floor before being removed by security.

Speaking to the press afterwards, the **Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Erick Tsang** thanked the LegCo president for *"facilitating the voting process."*

Asked whether he thought the vote was illegitimate due to legislators being denied a chance to finish discussing the bill, he said the public should not be worried because there have been 17 meetings on the issue. He added **the law is expected to come into force on June 12.**

P.S.

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