

# Hong Kong: Trapped in the Darkness, Struggle Towards the Light

Thursday 15 April 2021, by [GOR \(Tao\) Kuen](#) (Date first published: 15 April 2021).

**Speech by activist Kuen Gor regarding the denial of bail to forty-seven pro-democracy activists charged with conspiracy to commit subversion.**

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## Editorial Note:

This is a translation of a speech given by Kuen Gor, a veteran labour organiser and pro-democracy activist, to reporters at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2021, regarding the denial of bail to 47 pro-democracy activists charged with conspiracy to commit subversion under the National Security Law.

Kuen Gor was approached by reporters from Apple Daily, Epoch Times and two other media. In response to their questions he made a speech on the trial. It was filmed and uploaded to Facebook by Epoch Times eventually. The Borderless adapted and edited his speech with Kuen Gor's approval, and published a Chinese edition. It was then translated into this English edition.

Epoch Times is the mouth piece of the Falungong, a right wing cult. Kuen Gor was not directing his speech to Epoch Times' reporters in particular, as he was not aware that there were reporters from Epoch Times present. What is also worth noticing is that Kuen Gor's speech explicitly condemns Donald Trump, Trumpism, and inter-imperialist rivalry in his speech, in direct opposition to what Epoch Times stand for.

Origin link: <https://www.facebook.com/hkepochevents/videos/109111857799356/>

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## Your Sorrow is the Government's Joy

*Regarding the denial of bail to forty-seven pro-democracy activists charged with conspiracy to commit subversion.*

If the police wanted to investigate a suspect, how the law used to be was that they could only detain you for forty-eight hours. If they had enough evidence to charge you, you'd be taken to court. If not, they'd have to release you. This stopped being the case for the forty-seven arrested pro-democracy leaders. The police do not have sufficient evidence to take any of them to court and have requested

an additional three months' time for investigation. Fine—no one's stopping you from investigating, but why don't you release the forty-seven on bail in the meantime? Of the forty-seven who were already on bail [following their initial arrests in January, as they were only formally charged on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February,] none of them have attempted to skip bail.

The government's explanation is that they have been charged with serious crimes. What a load of baseless rubbish! What characterizes the Chinese Communist Party's definition of a serious crime is that every crime can be a serious crime. This is a government that has already lost all scruples, obeying every directive from Beijing to thoroughly destroy the institution of due process in Hong Kong. One needs only look to the prosecution's case to see what a shambles it is—they can't even figure out who's who among the defendants. They have also gotten the defendants' details wrong, saying that Eddie Chu Hoi-Dick is a District Councilor for Wong Tai Sin. This is sheer incompetence on display. Like in the film *Shaolin Soccer*, where the referees are all in the pocket of Team Evil, the presiding judges in this saga are all stooges of Beijing. Don't focus overmuch on Beijing's rationale behind all this; it's better to take this farce as the joke that it is, and keep on fighting the good fight. It's going to be a long and arduous struggle, so we might as well take what moments of comedy there are and enjoy ourselves with a good laugh. The powers that be will not pity those whom they oppress. Because they are sadists, our sorrow is their joy, so a cheerful resistance is preferable to one that's sad.

Someone told me that the presiding judges take this whole affair not lightly at all. But of course! No doubt every one of the establishment's stooges seem to be very serious about their work, because you have to put up a good performance to peddle lies. There is a world of difference between those who take Hong Kong's predicament seriously, who truly recognize the damage being done to our city, and those who merely pretend to do so.

It would drive you insane if you thought God himself wanted you dead. Let the Chinese Communist Party persist in this insanity! It will only force the people to resist harder. Hong Kong is itself an insane place as well, where the choice between acting on your conscience and eking out a living is no choice at all. Many people don't speak out not because they are indifferent, but because they cannot afford to do so as it would jeopardize their livelihood.

### **If you want Democracy, fight for it!**

If only a few of the tycoons who have made their fortunes off the backs of Hongkongers grow a spine and speak out against the government, they will open the floodgates to a torrent of dissent that will surely transform Hong Kong society. Hong Kong's predicament is a test of character for all those who could make a difference to it. One advantage of Hong Kong's status as an international city is that the whole world has borne witness to the struggle of Hongkongers. It is not enough that we must keep an eye on the government and whatever depths of depravity they have sunken to now; in addition, we must turn our scrutinizing gaze upon Hong Kong's gaggle of trans-national capitalists—Li Ka-Shing, Lee Shau-Kei, and the rest of the tycoons who have grown fat by exploiting the city's working class—and ask: when are you going to act? You have made your fortunes from this city—wealth to last a dozen lifetimes. What have you done for Hong Kong?

As is the case with any struggle against totalitarian rule, allies abroad can only play an ancillary role. It is up to the people to take a stand. When we wax poetic about our right to self-determination but fail to act on our political conscience, we might as well be demanding that Hong Kong be annexed by a Western power. What Hongkongers want is not a return to the benevolent authoritarianism of the British colonial regime, although there is a vocal minority who would have you believe that. Has Britain's colonial rule ever brought democracy to Hong Kong? What certainly did result from the colonial era is the exacerbation of socioeconomic inequality to a gross degree

which has benefitted only the city's tycoons, who now serve Beijing as willingly as they did London. These tycoons who had prospered under the British now prosper under the Chinese without giving a single thought for the rest of us Hongkongers. A return to the bad old days of British rule is something nothing of us want.

Nobody knows when the people will experience their political awakening, not even the regime, the demise of which remains far from certain. Perhaps it will collapse tomorrow, in which case we can all celebrate. The key is to not have any fantastical delusions regarding the Chinese Communist Party. As worldly citizens, we cannot fool ourselves that there can ever be a dictatorship with a conscience. There will always be those who wait for a benevolent emperor, but who says we must be led by an emperor at all?

The people must rule themselves! We must develop a high degree of civic and political consciousness to scrutinize those who govern us. We will cast down whoever among them that abuses their power. A film was recommended to me recently, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, which condemns the brutality and wickedness of the American state, says that Americans have a chance to legally overthrow an unjust government once every four years. Democratic elections allow individuals to effect change. But elected rulers can change, oftentimes for the worse; absolute power corrupts, and power corrupts absolutely. Checks and balances on power ultimately comes from every one of us. Don't stake all your hopes on benevolent rulers, for they can turn into despots. Only the power of the people can keep the state on their best behavior. It is the duty of every conscientious citizen to come out and stand up to autocracy.

### **Organization Without a 'Big Stage'**

I was once a money-grubbing prole who knew nothing of politics because there was no cause to do so. For the past few decades, Hongkongers have lucked out and lived lives of relative comfort and ease within a benevolent status quo. This has as much to do with Hong Kong's unique geopolitical and geographical location, which allowed us to profit massively from our special relationship with mainland China, as it does with the labor of Hongkongers. Today, the good times that we once enjoyed have ended. We must weigh up the potential personal consequences of taking a stand against the government; I myself do not know if I might be disappeared tomorrow, and this is not something that can be known anyway. We are faced with a regime that can snuff you out as easily as swatting a fly, but is going underground and hiding the only option? Retreat will only encourage the regime to encroach further on our freedoms, while collectively taking a stand will show them the might of the people. If Xi Jinping didn't fear the people, then entire cities wouldn't have to be locked down while he tours them. The ordinary citizens that Xi meets are all police in disguise. Why is that so? Tyrants fear the people. One need only look at the Tiananmen Massacre to see that there will always be heroes among the people who will be willing to sacrifice their lives to resist the regime.

Our imperative now is to organize—above ground or underground. A central tenet of the 2019 anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill movement has been the rejection of any central coordinating body—a so-called 'big stage'. Sure—we don't have to have a central authority, but we must have organization. When our movement is undergoing fierce repression from the regime and all of us have been scattered to the winds, individual acts of bravery and heroism that happen in isolation will end up being meaningless sacrifices. But if we become organized, then it's a different story. We'll be able to strategize and cooperate with other like-minded organizations. The government can take out a 'big stage' with ease, but it's much harder to crush a mass-based organization with support from the grassroots.

### **Lessons from the New Union Movement**

The regime is now repressing its own civil servants, who have organized themselves into unions. Owing to Hong Kong's historical circumstances, the city's labor movement and trade unions have always been weak—many workers' organizations are under the control of the Chinese Communist Party, most notably the Federation of Trade Unions, which is Hong Kong's largest umbrella organization of unions. If Hong Kong's civil servants recognize that there can be safety and strength in numbers, then this would bolster the labor movement significantly. There are 180,000 civil servants, and even if only a tenth of them unionize and go on strike this would still pose a huge challenge to the regime. The political awakening of the city's proles must happen, and although will not happen overnight, and although it has taken a long time for any class consciousness to develop within Hong Kong's population, it's better late than never. The regime's repression of the new union movement evinces the strength and potency of a politicized working class—why else would they specifically arrest Winnie Yu, chairperson of the Hospital Authority Employees Alliance, alongside the rest of the 47 pro-democracy politicians and activists? I had supported the HAEA when they had first begun to organize, and I had warned them that the government would target them [because of the threat a strong union poses to the regime].

Let's compare the HAEA with the Professional Teachers' Union, another prominent trade union. The PTU boasts a membership of ninety thousand, but they have been co-opted by the Chinese Communist Party, and thus fails to make use of its power to resist the regime. In contrast, the HAEA under Winnie Yu had around twenty thousand members who dared to go on strike. The power of such a union has had the CCP running scared, which is why Winnie Yu was arrested. When pro-democracy unions have become such high-profile targets for state repression, does this mean we should avoid this mode of organizing? Of course not. The intensifying repression means that we will just have to develop a flexible strategy for resistance.

The 'One Country, Two Systems' model is definitely dead, which is a good thing! This will open the eyes of Hongkongers to the reality that the promise made by 'One Country, Two Systems' of freedom and autonomy for Hongkongers has always been an illusion. The system imploded under the Chinese Communist Party's repression of the protests, and they can no longer dream of using the example of '1C2S' in Hong Kong to entice Taiwan into reunification. This is our silver lining—that the world can now see the Chinese Communist Party as the totalitarian dictatorship that it is.

The idea of 'One Country, Two Systems' or the notion that Hong Kong's 'capitalist way of life' will remain unchanged for fifty years after the handover has proved to have always been fantasy. The rule of law has been replaced by rule by law, as evidenced by the complete failure of the Department of Justice to explain why, out of the 55 pro-democracy candidates who had run in the primary elections, eight of them were not charged with any crimes. The law has become an arbitrary tool to be used by the regime, to be selectively deployed against dissidents who refuse to back down.

### **The Democracy Movement and Parliamentarism**

Should the pro-democracy movement participate in Hong Kong's elections? I think so. Whether the elections are fair is immaterial. The establishment will be delighted if we abstain totally, whereas if we run a pro-democratic candidate to contest an unfair election, we will at least expose it as a sham.

What's important is that without an opposition to contest elections, the establishment will effectively have a monopoly on political discourse. The unfairness of it will be apparent to Hongkongers, but the establishment might still be able to deceive foreigners about the legitimacy of these elections, thus proving that Hong Kong is still 'democratic'. Beijing has assumed de-facto direct control over Hong Kong, so why do they still bother with elections? The elections have become a means of deception, a smoke screen to obscure the dictatorial reality of Hong Kong. As long as we continue to field pro-democratic candidates to contest elections, their deception will be incomplete. Of course, we will

have to wait and see how Beijing will further 'reform' Hong Kong's political system in the future.

They may crack down on the leaders of the pro-democracy movement, but others can always take their place even if they are not experienced politicians. History shows us that fielding unassuming, uncontentious candidates in sham elections under dictatorial regimes can be a way of exposing the unfairness of the system. Those in the know will understand that these candidates represent our voice in opposite to the regime. Candidates don't have to be explicitly anti-CCP, nor do they have to present a coherent political platform. They can merely be citizens who want to stand for election. We'll know what's up. Our conscience must be our guide, because there is no longer any point in abiding by the rule of law when we can be arrested for something we did yesterday that just got criminalized today. The new rules make this game unplayable. No matter—it has become completely clear that, in Hong Kong, legality and illegality are totally divorced from right and wrong. I'm not advocating for extremist or suicidal acts. But all of us must play our part in the struggle to the best of our abilities, no matter how insignificant of a contribution we might make.

What is the definition of a 'patriot' or someone who supports Hong Kong independence? The regime wields semantics as a weapon, as they have a monopoly over the definition of words. Those who want to stand for election should apply nonetheless, and if the regime forbids them from doing so, so be it. If we continue to try our best, there will be hope.

The Chinese Communist Party states that only patriots must run Hong Kong, but are the party leaders patriots themselves? If they were, they should openly disclose the amount of wealth and assets they own, their front companies and go-betweens who launder their dirty money, and the family members they have stowed overseas. Why do the children of the party elite eschew their parents' surnames and hide behind aliases? The party leaders dictate that we must all be patriotic, yet the country they concern themselves with is not China, but those that grant them their second passports and serve as their tax havens.

### **The struggle in Myanmar, and the Crisis of Trumpism**

Those who would sacrifice their livelihood or future for Hong Kong have already done so by standing at the forefront, and subsequently being arrested. Those who would not have fled the city and gone into exile. Those of us who cannot bear to live under the suffocating tyranny of the regime which stifles free speech, and who believe that it is better to die on your feet than live on your knees, must be mentally prepared to receive the brutal violence of the state. The medics on the front line of the protests in Myanmar are being targeted by the regime's soldiers and police. People are afraid of death, it's true, but when you have accepted the possibility of dying then perhaps it becomes less scary. Everyone dies someday. It is up to each of us to choose whether we want to die happy and free, or at the end of a lifetime of passively suffering under injustice.

You mention that Trump is the only one capable of standing up to Beijing, but his bark is worse than his bite. Who is Trump? A white supremacist, misogynist, racist, and nationalist right-winger. Such aberrations should not exist in the world, and Trump's electoral defeat is a small glimmer of hope in the past decade of right-wing resurgence throughout the world. If this international pivot to the right continues, war will be inevitable. We must understand that a third world war will be a nuclear war that will pose a threat to humanity's existence magnitudes greater than the first two world wars. The prospects are terrifying if we fail to stop the rising forces of nationalism, imperialism, and chauvinism.

Of course, Joe Biden is not a good person. China may be a one-party dictatorship, but the United States may well be a two-party dictatorship. Both systems of governance are unsustainable and undesirable, but even here there are different degrees of badness, and in America there are

democratic checks and balances, rebuilt with some popular consensus after a civil war, that limits the damage someone like Trump can do. There is nothing to hold Xi Jinping back.

What do I have to say for the 47 jailed pro-democracy activists? Most of them are facing the prospect of a few years' incarceration. I would tell them to cheer up if they can, because they might as well. I once visited a friend at the Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre [a prison], and she had a tough time adapting. However, those in jail have the time to hone their mind and body, and the friends they might make on the inside may even outnumber the friends they have on the outside. Life in jail won't get too boring as the inmates are our friends and comrades. At Lai Chi Kok I saw a lot of familiar faces from the pro-democracy movement, including Wu Chi-wai (a prominent pro-democracy politician). Be it on the streets or from a jail cell, the struggle continues.

Hong Kong has become a crazy place. We all love our friends and family, and cherish each moment we see our jailed comrades, because you never know if today's the last time you'll see them again. Even if you entirely withdraw from politics today, that's no guarantee against being arrested or harassed by the state tomorrow. Such things have become out of our control, but the one thing that we will always control is our thoughts and attitude. How we respond to the current atmosphere of persecution and repression is a test all of us will have to face.

All the leaders in the pro-democratic camp, from the moderates to the radicals, have been arrested. What do we do now? My answer would be that there is a multiplicity of approaches that can work, because a democratic struggle is bound to be pluralistic. Only dictatorships like the CCP adopt a binary view of us-against-them, where you're either with me or against me. Even the CCP itself isn't a monolithic bloc because there are internal cliques within it. There is no need to force people to adhere to a single party line. We are climbing the same hill in our own ways, and there are many paths that lead to the same summit.

But what if we are not climbing the same hill at all? There are some KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) in Hong Kong who support Donald Trump, and their fight is not my fight. These people are appealing to one autocrat to deal with another autocrat, but all autocrats are indefensible. Nevertheless, we can co-exist separately without fighting each other. The pro-democracy struggle must not devolve into internecine fighting. I loathe when people talk about the 'law of the jungle', because if you espouse that sort of mentality then you're not a human, but a wild beast. The greatest ability of humanity is to reject and overcome the dog-eat-dog mentality that the weak must fear the strong.

We must all accept the current reality, which is that the movement has reached a nadir. At such times, internal divisions will inevitably arise as we are scattered to the winds. But we shouldn't expect a messiah to come and save us, because there are no more messiahs! Progress happens when there is progress in everybody's thoughts and attitudes. My point is, we must all keep struggling onwards and do what we can. Hong Kong is now entering into a long and dark night, but we can all keep on fighting in preparation for the coming of the dawn.

**Kuen Gor**

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