

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 14

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The largest union and biggest pro-democracy coalition disband, a journalist, artist, and media outlet leave the city, film censorship is widened, lawyers warned and another lawmaker ousted. HKFP rounds-up month 14 under the security law.

After 14 months under Hong Kong's national security law, critics say that civil society is crumbling – a charge Chief Executive Carrie Lam denied on Tuesday. Nevertheless, in the space of a month, the city's largest teachers' union and its largest pro-democracy coalition have disbanded, university student leaders have been charged with "advocating terrorism," and the legislature now has only one lawmaker who is not aligned with the government.

Prominent faces in the media and art world have fled the city, while one independent media outlet has moved its head office to Singapore.

Since the law was enacted last June, 143 people between the ages of 15 to 79 have been arrested for acts allegedly endangering national security, 84 of whom have been charged. Three companies connected with the now defunct pro-democracy Apple Daily newspaper have also been charged with violations.

HKFP continues its monthly roundup of major developments shaping the city's national security era.

Civil society groups disband

Two pillars of Hong Kong's civil society disbanded in August — the city's largest teachers' union, the **Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (HKPTU)**, and the coalition responsible for its mass July 1 pro-democracy rallies, the **Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF)**.

Both cited an inability to see a way forward in the changing political landscape.

The two groups had been subject to pressure from both government officials and state-backed media in the weeks leading up to their dissolution. Attacks on the groups continued despite their disbandment, with Chinese state media saying they may still face legal risks.

It comes as pressure mounts on other pro-democracy groups in the city. National security police

have requested information from the **Hong Kong Alliance**, the group which organises the city's annual candlelight vigil to remember victims of Beijing's bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in 1989.

The force have also accused the alliance of acting for foreign agents, a potential violation of the security law.

Separately, a **humanitarian fund** set up during the 2019 pro-democracy protests to provide financial aid to protesters announced it will cease operations. The city's security chief later accused the group of "profiteering."

Journalist, artist, and media outlet leave

On August 3, a veteran journalist, a dissident artist and an independent media outlet each announced that they had moved their operations out of the city for good.

HKFP columnist Steve Vines cited the "**white terror**" sweeping the city and threats to his personal safety for his decision to return to the UK, while artist Kacey Wong said his decision to relocate to Taiwan was to meet his need for "*100 per cent artistic freedom.*"

Independent news organisation **Initium Media**, meanwhile, announced it had relocated to Singapore but said it will maintain a presence in Hong Kong.

Retroactive film bans

The city's censorship laws are being amended to allow films to be retroactively banned by officials. The proposal, set to be heard by a legislature with no opposition, will allow films to be prohibited on the basis of national security.

Those who show an unauthorised film may face **up to three years in prison and a HK\$1 million fine**. Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Edward Yau said the new censorship laws will protect the city's freedom of expression.

The legislature is also set to pass plans to outlaw the desecration of the Chinese flag on the internet.

Lawyers told how to behave

The Law Society of Hong Kong, the regulatory and representative body for solicitors, was cautioned by Chinese state-media to steer clear of politics ahead of its annual leadership election. The warnings were echoed by the city's leader and its secretary for justice.

An incumbent council member withdrew his candidature shortly before the elections citing fears for his safety. The election saw all candidates with pro-establishment ties gain seats on the council. The week following the election, prominent legal academic Eric Cheung announced his decision to resign from his council position.

Lawmaker ousted

Civic Passion's Cheng Chung-tai, one of only two remaining lawmakers not aligned with the government, was ousted from his seat after he was deemed not patriotic enough to serve in public office.

His disqualification leaves only one lawmaker in the city's legislature who is not pro-establishment, after the majority of the democratic camp quit last November in protest at another decision to disqualify four of their colleagues.

Cheng's ousting was the result of a decision by the new candidate vetting committee for election candidates to disqualify him from serving as an election candidate.

The new committee, which is part of the Beijing-led overhaul of the city's electoral process, is led by Chief Secretary John Lee and includes six other officials and pro-Beijing heavyweights.

The lawmaker is also barred from running in the upcoming Legislative Council elections.

University leaders charged

Four former student union leaders at the University of Hong Kong were arrested and charged with "*advocating terrorism*" over a student union statement that expressed condolences for a man who killed himself after attacking a policeman. Only one of the four has been granted bail.

The arrests came after the city's leader Lam called for "*further action*" against students responsible for the statement, even after the union leaders had retracted it, apologised and stepped down in response to anger from university management and the Security Bureau.

Other HKU students present at the union meeting which passed the retracted statement were also requested by the university to provide information on their roles, votes and participation.

Earlier in the month, dozens of students who participated in the meeting were banned from its campus pending a disciplinary hearing.

Bookstore shutters

Bleak House Books, **one of the city's last remaining English-language bookstores**, announced **it will close down**, citing the city's political environment.

"The backdrop to these developments is, of course, politics. To be sure, what my wife Jenny, my kids, and I do in our daily lives is not overtly political..."

But as George Orwell once remarked, '[i]n our age there is no such thing as 'keeping out of politics.' All issues are political issues,' one of its owners wrote in the announcement.

See also :

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 13

4 AUGUST 2021

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/04/explainer-hong-kongs-national-security-crackdown-month-13/>

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article59083>

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 12

30 JUNE 2021

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/06/30/explainer-hong-kongs-national-security-crackdown-month-12/>

Hong Kong national security crackdown - month 11

1 JUNE 2021

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/06/01/explainer-hong-kong-national-security-crackdown-month-11/>

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 10

1 MAY 2021

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/05/01/explainer-hong-kong-national-security-crackdown-month-10/>

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 9

2 APRIL 2021

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/04/02/explainer-hong-kongs-national-security-crackdown-month-9/>

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article57465>

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 8

3 MARCH 2021

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/03/03/explainer-hong-kongs-national-security-crackdown-month-7/>

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article57057>

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 7

2 FEBRUARY 2021

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/02/02/explainer-how-the-national-security-law-changed-hong-kong-month-7/>

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 6

4 JANUARY 2021

<https://hongkongfp.com/2020/12/01/explainer-how-the-national-security-law-changed-hong-kong-month-5/>

national security explainer 5

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 5

1 DECEMBER 2020

<https://hongkongfp.com/2020/12/01/explainer-how-the-national-security-law-changed-hong-kong-month-5/>

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 4

30 OCTOBER 2020

<https://hongkongfp.com/2020/10/30/explainer-how-the-national-security-law-changed-hong-kong-month-4/>

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 3

30 SEPTEMBER 2020

<https://hongkongfp.com/2020/09/30/explainer-how-beijings-security-law-transformed-hong-kong-month-3/>

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article55006>

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 2

1 SEPTEMBER 2020

<https://hongkongfp.com/2020/09/01/explainer-how-beijings-security-law-transformed-hong-kong-two-months-in/>

Hong Kong's national security crackdown - month 1

1 AUGUST 2020

<https://hongkongfp.com/2020/08/01/a-city-shackled-how-beijings-security-law-transformed-hong-kong-in-one-short-month/>

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