

April silent protest attempts to call attention to plight of Hong Kong 47

Monday 29 May 2023, by [HIOE Brian](#) (Date first published: 28 May 2023).

A SILENT PROTEST took place outside of [the Ximen MRT last month](#) on April 16th to call attention to the plight of the 47 defendants in what is Hong Kong's largest national security trial to date. The protest began at 2 PM and lasted until 4 PM.

The 47 include activists from a number of backgrounds and age ranges. This includes everyone from Joshua Wong, to former journalist Gwyneth Ho, and former LegCo member "Long Hair" Leung Kwok-hung. It is generally thought that the composition of the 47 arrested activists was aimed at intimidating the Hong Kong public more broadly, including a wide range of activists. Apart from well-known activists, this also includes lesser-known ones, likely with the aim of intimidation.



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The silent protest took place as part of a global day of action for the Hong Kong 47. As part of this, coordinated silent protests took place in 19 cities in 15 countries, though ten of the cities were located in the United Kingdom. Protesters wore black and some wore white masks. Participants held signs urging members of the public to be concerned with events in Hong Kong, as well as stressing Taiwanese society not to have faith in promises of One Country, Two Systems offered by the CCP.

Among the participants in the demonstration was Lee Ming-che, the Taiwanese NGO worker who was arrested by China for over five years on charges of seeking to subvert state power. That many Hong Kong establishments have sprouted up in Ximending since 2019 also makes the location of the demonstration significant.

The Hong Kong 47 were mainly arrested over charges related to primaries for the pro-democracy camp, so as to decide who the candidates of pro-democracy forces in Hong Kong would be in Legislative Council (LegCo) elections. Though this previously took place regularly in Hong Kong without incident, that primaries are now used as a pretext to jail activists reflects how much political freedoms have deteriorated in past years.

For its part, the Hong Kong government accuses the activists of engaging in a "conspiracy to commit subversion", as part of a "massive and well-organized scheme to subvert the Hong Kong government." It is claimed that if elected, the candidates would have acted to disrupt the regular operations of the Hong Kong LegCo to block budgets, prevent voting, to dissolve the LegCo, or to oust the Chief Executive as part of a "mutual destruction" strategy.

Many of the arrested have been jailed for over two years, seeing as they were originally arrested in January 2021, while bail has been refused to a number of the candidates when this was previously unheard of in the Hong Kong judicial system. The Hong Kong government has sought to tout the efficiency and conviction rate of the new system.

A statement released by the organizers of the Taiwan protest highlighted the waning of public interest in events in Hong Kong. However, more generally, views of Hongkongers in Taiwan may be hardening, with increasingly prevalent views that Hong Kong has simply become part of China. Hongkongers themselves have increasingly come under suspicion for potentially being Chinese spies, never mind that it is already possible for Chinese to travel to Taiwan for work, study, as spouses, or other means.



PHOTO CREDIT: HONG KONG OUTLANDERS/FACEBOOK

In May 2022, a plan to streamline the process for Hongkongers to obtain permanent residency in Taiwan was delayed [after opposition from DPP legislator Lin Ching-yi, who raised such concerns](#). At the time, Lin was criticized by members of civil society supportive of Hongkongers for apparently being unaware that there were already means for Hongkongers to obtain permanent residency in Taiwan. Now, [proposals have shifted in the direction of extending the amount of time that Hongkongers need to spend in Taiwan to secure residency](#).

Likewise, earlier this month, [the Ming Pao reported that pro-democracy district councilors hoping to travel to Taiwan had their visas rejected or delayed](#), even when they previously had been able to travel to Taiwan. One view as to why this took place was because of loyalty oaths taken by such district councilors, though district councilors who had resigned rather than take such oaths were also prevented from traveling to Taiwan. Such district councilors were not aiming to seek asylum or flee to Taiwan, but rather simply wished to travel to Taiwan to vacation, sightsee, or meet with friends. It remains unclear whether this is due to increased backlash against Hongkongers in Taiwan or due to bureaucratic inertia from the Taiwanese government.

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P.S.

- New Bloom. 05/28/2023:
<https://newbloommag.net/2023/05/28/hk-47-protest/>

- New Bloom is an online magazine covering activism and youth politics in Taiwan and the Asia Pacific, founded in Taiwan in 2014 in the wake of the Sunflower Movement. We seek to put local voices in touch with international discourse, beginning with Taiwan. Among our other endeavors, we currently run a community space in Wanhua, Taipei.