



**THE SIX-MONTHLY REPORT ON HONG KONG
1 JULY TO 31 DECEMBER 2023**

Deposited in Parliament by the
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

15 April 2024

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FOREWORD

In the years immediately after the handover, Hong Kong proudly branded itself as 'Asia's World City'. This reputation was founded on the rights and freedoms afforded to its people. The rule of law ensured that those rights and freedoms were protected for individuals and businesses alike. Its vibrancy and openness allowed free enterprise and international tourism to flourish.

When China and the UK signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong, both parties agreed that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) would maintain a high degree of autonomy in all matters except foreign affairs and defence for a period of at least fifty years following the handover. Fewer than twenty-three years later, Beijing imposed the National Security Law on Hong Kong.

They did so in breach of that treaty. Under this law, political opposition has been all but eliminated. Dissent has been criminalised. Civil society has been marginalised. The Hong Kong authorities' efforts to stamp out 'soft resistance' has targeted even the most minor deviations from unwavering support for the governments of Hong Kong and China.

It is in this context that the national security trial of British national Jimmy Lai began in December. In response, I called for the Hong Kong authorities to end their prosecution, release Jimmy Lai, and for China to repeal the National Security Law.

The Hong Kong authorities have also sought to apply their national security laws extraterritorially. In July and December, the Hong Kong police issued arrest warrants and bounties for 13 individuals living overseas simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Many of these individuals now live in the UK.

We will not tolerate any attempt by any foreign power to intimidate, harass, or harm individuals in the United Kingdom. The National Security Law has no authority in the UK. We do not have an active extradition agreement with Hong Kong or China. I want to assure our valued Hong Kong community in the United Kingdom: you are safe here.

On 23 March, the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance came into force in Hong Kong. This law, rushed through the legislative process, is likely incompatible with international human rights law. It falls short of the international standards Hong Kong has promised to uphold and will have a negative impact on Hong Kong people's ability to exercise their rights and freedoms. I have made my views clear – we expect the Hong Kong authorities to respect the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Basic Law, uphold its high degree of autonomy and act in accordance with its international commitments and legal obligations.

Hong Kong's success as an international financial centre relies on the rule of law and the independence of its respected institutions. Although economic, monetary and trade systems remain distinct and dynamic, recent developments are forging a negative trajectory.

Reversing this trajectory requires Hong Kong to reinstate and preserve the high degree of autonomy it previously enjoyed, including the rights and freedoms of all who live and work there. As co-signatory to the Joint Declaration, the UK will not waver from our duty to speak out when we see actions by the Chinese or Hong Kong governments which undermine the rule of law, or diminish rights and freedoms in Hong Kong.

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Affairs

INTRODUCTION

This series of Six-monthly Reports reflects our continuing interest in developments in Hong Kong and our commitment to the faithful implementation of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration. The Declaration guaranteed that, for 50 years from 1997, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) would enjoy a high degree of autonomy, except in foreign and defence affairs, and that it would be “vested with executive, legislative and independent judicial power”. The continuation of Hong Kong’s social and economic systems, lifestyle, and rights and freedoms is guaranteed under the Sino-British Joint Declaration. This arrangement was popularly referred to as ‘One Country, Two Systems’. The structure of this report is based on Annex I of the Joint Declaration, which outlines the commitments made by the Chinese Government. This report covers the period from 1 July to 31 December 2023.

During the reporting period, the Hong Kong National Security Police issued arrest warrants under the National Security Law (NSL) for a total of 13 individuals living outside Hong Kong, including some currently living in the UK. Financial rewards were offered for information leading to their arrests and prosecutions.

In December, Jimmy Lai’s trial for sedition and collusion with foreign forces under the NSL began. He has pleaded not guilty to the three charges he faces. In August, the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) unanimously dismissed Lui Sai-yu’s sentencing appeal – the first appeal under the NSL to reach the CFA – and upheld the original five-year mandatory minimum sentence. This reporting period also saw the closing submissions of the trial of the 47 pro-democracy politicians and activists under the NSL. The judgment is due to be handed down by April 2024. In July, the legislature passed changes to the Criminal Procedure Ordinance, allowing the Government to appeal against High Court acquittals in NSL cases without a jury. To date, all NSL cases have taken place without a jury.

In October, Chief Executive John Lee set out plans to enact local legislation to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law by the end of 2024.

The use of colonial-era sedition laws continued. In November, a Hong Kong student was given a two-month jail term for publishing pro-independence posts online, most of which were posted when she was in Japan.

In December, District Council elections took place across Hong Kong, following electoral changes passed by the Legislative Council in July. The changes reduced the number of seats elected by popular vote from 452 to 88. Voting for these 88 seats saw a record low turnout of 27.5%, despite government efforts to encourage people to vote. No pan-democrat candidates were able to stand.

The cumulative effect of the NSL and increased self-censorship continued to constrain freedom of assembly. Despite the removal of all COVID-19 restrictions in the previous reporting period, no large-scale demonstrations or protests took place during this reporting period. In August, the Court of Appeal (CA) cleared Jimmy Lai and six other defendants of “organising” a protest in 2019, and in December allowed them to appeal against their convictions for “taking part”.

The actions of the Hong Kong Government continued to restrict freedom of the press. The verdict for the trial of two former Stand News journalists charged with sedition was adjourned pending a separate court ruling on the applicability of a relevant judgment by the UK Privy Council. In September, the UK Mission in Geneva organised an event at the United Nations to support media freedom in Hong Kong.

In October, the Chief Executive delivered his Policy address, where he announced a range of measures to improve the city's competitiveness, attract talent, deepen investment and ensure company re-domiciliation to Hong Kong. The Financial Secretary attended the 2023 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum Summit on 16 and 17 November held in San Francisco.

In August, the Hong Kong SAR Government placed a ban on seafood imports from 10 prefectures of Japan following the Fukushima Daiichi wastewater release. In December, Hong Kong's ninth Trade Policy Review took place at the World Trade Organisation.

In November, the Home Office published the latest UK British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) immigration route statistics. Following its launch in January 2021, until September 2023, there were approximately 191,000 applications, with 184,700 visas granted.

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

- **3 July** – National Security Police issue arrest warrants for eight individuals living outside Hong Kong (including some in the UK), offering financial rewards for information leading to each arrest and prosecution.
- **12 July** – Legislative Council passes changes to the Criminal Procedure Ordinance, which allow the Government to appeal against High Court acquittals in NSL cases without jury.
- **18 July** – China's State Council announces the appointment of Dong Jingwei as Director of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong SAR.
- **28 July** – The High Court dismisses the Government's application for an injunction to prohibit four types of unlawful acts related to the song "Glory to Hong Kong".
- **14 August** – The Court of Appeal clears all seven defendants, including Jimmy Lai, of organising the 18 August 2019 protest, but upholds their convictions for taking part in it.
- **22 August** – The CFA unanimously dismisses Lui Sai-yu's sentencing appeal and upholds the original five-year mandatory minimum sentence.
- **24 August** – The Hong Kong SAR Government placed a ban on seafood imports from 10 prefectures of Japan following the Fukushima Daiichi wastewater release.

- **5 September** – The CFA declares that the lack of an alternative framework for legal recognition of same-sex partnerships in Hong Kong is unconstitutional.
- **25 October** – Chief Executive John Lee delivers his annual Policy Address.
- **3 November** – A Hong Kong undergraduate student, previously studying in Japan, is sentenced to two months in prison for sedition following return to Hong Kong.
- **15 November** – The Legislative Council passes an amendment to the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance.
- **16 November** – Financial Secretary Paul Chan attends the 2023 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum Summit in San Francisco.
- **4 December** – The NSL trial of 47 pro-democracy politicians and activists concludes, with the verdict to be issued at a later date.
- **6 December** – Hong Kong’s ninth Trade Policy Review (TPR) begins at the World Trade Organisation. It concludes on 8 December.
- **8 December** – The CA allows Jimmy Lai and six others to appeal their protest conviction for “taking part” in the 18 August 2019 protest.
- **10 December** – The 2023 District Council Election takes place. Only 88 out of 470 seats are elected by popular vote, with a record low turnout of 27.5%.
- **14 December** – National Security Police issue arrest warrants and bounties for five more overseas-based activists, including some in the UK.
- **18 December** – Jimmy Lai’s national security trial begins. He pleads not guilty to all three charges, including two charges of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces to endanger national security and one charge of sedition.
- **28 December** – A teenage member of the pro-independence group “Returning Valiant” is sentenced to six years in prison for conspiracy to commit terrorism under the NSL.

CONSTITUTION

Chief Executive John Lee delivered his second annual Policy Address in October, reinforcing the official narrative of Hong Kong “advancing from stability to prosperity”. His administration pledged to complete local legislation to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law by 2024.

English continued to be used in official government communications and in the courts. In addition to displaying the national flag and national emblem of the People's Republic of China, the Hong Kong SAR continued to use a regional flag and emblem of its own.

In December, the first District Council elections took place following recent electoral changes. No pan-democrat candidates were able to stand. Despite government efforts

in encouraging the public to vote, the turnout for 88 seats elected by popular vote saw a record low of 27.5%.

District Council Elections

In May, Chief Executive John Lee announced electoral changes to Hong Kong's District Councils. This saw the number of seats elected by popular vote reduced from 452 to 88, the return of appointed seats (previously abolished in 2015), and the creation of a vetting mechanism for candidates similar to that used in Legislative Council elections. An amendment bill covering these changes was subsequently introduced into the Legislative Council the same month. Details of the proposed changes are covered in the last Six-monthly Report.

On 6 July, the Legislative Council unanimously passed the amendment bill without major changes. Chief Executive John Lee thanked the Legislative Council for scrutinising the bill "efficiently" and "meticulously", calling its passage "*an important milestone*" in "*improving district governance*". On 10 July, the District Councils (Amendment) Ordinance 2023 was published in the Government Gazette, with immediate effect.

In August, the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC) announced that the number of registered voters for Geographical (directly elected) Constituencies was approximately 4.33 million, falling by 82,705 from 2022. There was also a decrease of 10.3% (64,160) in voters aged 18 to 30.

Nominations and Vetting

The new system requires candidates to secure a minimum of nine nominations from government-appointed district committee members, followed by screening from a government-designated eligibility review committee. The EAC received a total of 399 nominations for Geographical and District Committee constituencies by the end of the nomination period (30 October). No pan-democrat candidates, including six from the Democratic Party, secured enough nominations to stand for election. Smaller parties within the pro-Establishment camp expressed difficulty in contacting members of the district committees or obtaining their nominations. In response, Chief Executive John Lee said those unable to gain nominations should "look into why they have problems", as nominators might "not believe they love the country and Hong Kong".

On 10 November, the District Councils Eligibility Review Committee validated the nominations of all 399 candidates, confirming that they had passed its political and national security vetting. Of the 399 candidates, 171 contested the 88 directly elected seats in Geographical Constituencies, with the remaining 228 competing for 176 indirectly elected seats in the District Committees Constituencies.

Government Campaign and Measures

Between November and December, the Hong Kong SAR Government increased its efforts to encourage electors to support and participate in the elections under new rules. On 7 November, the SAR Government announced plans to use two schools near the border with mainland China as polling stations, which could accommodate up to 38,000 electors (only 12,976 electors living in the mainland were registered to vote).

In late November, Chief Secretary Eric Chan urged all 180,000 civil servants to vote. In early December, local media reported that the SAR Government would offer HKD 20,000 (approximately £2,000) to more than 170 elderly centres to facilitate travel of their residents to polling stations. On 9 December, the Government hosted an “Election Fun Day” across Hong Kong, which included a concert.

In discussing immigration arrangements for the District Council election, the Immigration Department said it would keep “*undesirables*” from entering the SAR. Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Erick Tsang, warned against any forms of “soft resistance”.

Judicial Review

On 1 December, the High Court dismissed a legal challenge brought by Kwok Cheuk-kin against the constitutionality of the new nomination requirements. Kwok argued that the right to vote and the right to stand for election, as set out in the Basic Law, would be infringed as members of the nominating district committees could also stand for election, which they did. Judge Russell Coleman acknowledged that the nomination mechanism has “*made it at least significantly more difficult for a person to stand for election*”. However, he concluded that there was insufficient evidence of such new requirements solely contributing to pan-democrats’ failure in obtaining enough nominations, and the new nomination requirement is “*not manifestly without reasonable foundation*”.

Participation and Results

The District Council elections took place on 10 December. The restructuring of the District Council’s representational composition meant the majority of the 470 seats were not elected by popular vote. In total, 88 seats were directly elected, with the other 176 being elected by District Committee Constituency members. In addition, 179 members were appointed by the Chief Executive on 12 December, and 27 “ex-officio” members were appointed from “Rural Committees”. Chief Executive John Lee described the polls as “*high-quality*”, and the turnout as “*good*”.

Geographical Constituency results (directly elected): Around 1.19 million votes (down from 2.94 million in 2019) were cast to elect 88 seats. Turnout was 27.5% (down from 71.2% in 2019).

District Committees Constituency results (indirectly elected): 2,454 votes were cast for 176 seats. Turnout was 96.9%.

Government appointments: 179 members were appointed by the Chief Executive. 146 of them were chosen from within the nominating District Committees.

Hong Kong’s largest pro-Establishment party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB), secured a majority of the seats available – 109 seats in total (41 from Geographical Constituencies, 68 District Committees Constituencies). A further 38 were appointed by the Chief Executive.

Media reported that there were 22,045 invalid votes. The elections also saw at least seven arrests in relation to calls for boycotting the election or casting invalid votes.

On 11 December, a FCDO spokesperson made the following statement on GOV.UK:

“In local elections yesterday, many voices from Hong Kong’s District Councils were excluded from participating. Meaningful opposition in Hong Kong’s electoral system is being eliminated.”

“We strongly urge the Hong Kong Government to uphold its international commitments and respect the civil rights and freedoms of Hong Kong citizens.”

Chief Executive’s Policy Address

On 25 October, Chief Executive John Lee delivered his second annual Policy Address. The Chief Executive described Hong Kong as “*advancing from stability to prosperity*”, stressing this had been made possible by the introduction of the NSL and changes to the electoral system.

Lee pledged to enact local legislation to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law by 2024, Hong Kong’s domestically introduced national security legislation, and warned against different forms of “*soft resistance*”. He also pledged to introduce legislation for enhancing cyber security.

Lee set out plans to strengthen patriotic education and national security education with the stated aim of aligning Hong Kong more closely with mainland China’s new Patriotic Education Law. Lee highlighted President Xi’s comments in a letter to students of Pui Kiu Middle School in Hong Kong in July, emphasising that “*patriotism lies at the heart of Chinese national spirit*”, which must be incorporated into the curriculum. A specific working group will be established to promote patriotism more widely. Further details are provided in the ‘Education’ section.

In addition, Lee said the SAR Government would focus on recruiting talent, raising the SAR’s competitiveness, fostering cooperation in the Greater Bay Area, as well as increasing land and housing supply.

Appointments in Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China and Central Government Liaison Office in Hong Kong

During the reporting period, there were personnel changes in both the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government (CGLO) in the Hong Kong SAR.

On 23 July, then MFA Commissioner Liu Guangyuan was appointed as Deputy Director of the CGLO in Hong Kong, replacing Chen Dong.

On 25 September, Li Yongsheng, formerly Counsellor and Legal Adviser of the Permanent Mission of the PRC to the United Nations (UN), was appointed as MFA Deputy Commissioner in Hong Kong, replacing Yang Yirui.

New Head of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong SAR

On 18 July, China's State Council announced the appointment of Dong Jingwei as Director of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government (CPG) in the Hong Kong SAR, succeeding Zheng Yanxiong. Dong had been Vice Minister of the Ministry of State Security of the PRC since 2018, reportedly with extensive experience in counterintelligence.

BASIC RIGHTS & FREEDOMS

Freedom of assembly remained constrained. No large-scale demonstrations or protests took place. Freedom of the press remained under pressure, with many journalists exercising self-censorship. The internet generally remained open and accessible from Hong Kong. Virtual Private Networks (VPN) remained legal to use. However, freedom of information in relation to public bodies continued to be curtailed. In July, public libraries established a system for readers to report items that endanger national security. In addition, a prominent public opinion research group ceased releasing survey results on politically sensitive topics. Freedom of association continued to be impacted through the broad application of national security legislation. In August, a Hong Kong-based Cantonese language advocacy group announced its immediate disbandment, citing legal risks and safety concerns.

During the reporting period there was a landmark court ruling concerning Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) rights. In September, the CFA declared that the SAR Government was "*in violation of its positive obligation*" to establish an "*alternative framework*" for legal recognition of same-sex unions, setting a two-year deadline for the SAR Government to comply. In November, Hong Kong became the first Asian City to host the Gay Games along with Guadalajara, Mexico.

Although the NSL continued to erode rights and freedoms in Hong Kong significantly, and the space for civil society has shrunk, individuals remained free to worship and associate according to their beliefs.

Press and Media Freedom

Foreign Correspondents' Club

On 5 July, the Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) released a survey of its members. 65% of journalists and correspondents questioned responded that they had exercised self-censorship "*either in the content of their reporting or by avoiding certain subjects*" in the last 18 months, marking "*a notable increase*" of approximately 10% from 2021 according to the FCC. 83% said the environment for journalists had "*changed for the worse*", and 73% were concerned about the possibility of arrests or prosecution.

In a statement, the FCC said these "*significant*" findings meant that "*many are finding the working conditions in Hong Kong to be increasingly difficult*", representing "*an alarming reflection of the current state of press freedom in the city*".

Media Freedom in Hong Kong discussed at the United Nations

On 27 September, an event entitled “Media Freedom in Hong Kong” was held at the United Nations during the five-week meeting of its Human Rights Council. The event, co-sponsored by 25 nations and organised by the UK Mission in Geneva, marked the 1,000th day of Jimmy Lai’s consecutive detention in prison on NSL charges, with panellists setting out the impact the NSL has had on press freedom in Hong Kong.

In advance of the meeting, China issued calls for countries to boycott the event. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC in the SAR and the Hong Kong Government further issued statements to express their opposition to the event.

Media Freedom Coalition Statement

On 29 December, a Media Freedom Coalition statement was published on the second anniversary of the closure of Stand News and arrest of its staff. This statement was signed by 24 member states and called out attacks on media and press freedoms in Hong Kong, specifically raising the prosecution of journalists such as the Stand News team and publishers such as Apple Daily founder Jimmy Lai. It called for the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities to abide by their international human rights commitments and legal obligations to preserve Hong Kong’s high degree of autonomy and respect for universal rights and freedoms.

Ombudsman rejects complaints against media ban

Prior to Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (HKMAO) Director Xia Baolong officiating at the opening ceremony of the National Education Day on 15 April, several government-registered media outlets, including local outlet Hong Kong Free Press, were refused entry by the SAR Government’s Information Services Department. In July, following an investigation of the complaints, the Office of the Ombudsman concluded that it was unable to investigate the media ban as it was imposed by the Chief Executive-led National Security Committee.

Freedom of Information

Hong Kong Public Libraries

As recorded in the last Six-monthly Report, Hong Kong’s public libraries continued to remove books systematically, where such books were “*contrary to the interests of national security*”. Public libraries were also advised to “*step up efforts*” in examining materials to safeguard national security.

On 6 July, the responsible Leisure and Cultural Services Department established a system for readers to report items in public libraries that “*violate the laws of Hong Kong*” or “*endanger national security*”. Collections suspected of being “*contrary to the law*” or contain “*objectionable content*” can be reported anonymously online via a designated form, which collects information including author and publisher. According to guidelines, relevant materials will be removed temporarily for review by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department of Hong Kong upon complaints.

In October, local media reported that the SAR Government had received more than 50 reports about suspected “*objectionable content*” in public libraries, and the materials in question would be reviewed as soon as possible.

Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute

On 27 July, the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute (HKPORI), responsible for collecting polling data for unofficial Legislative Council election primaries in July 2020, announced that it would stop publishing its survey results on politically sensitive topics, including on the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre, the performance of the Hong Kong Police Force, and support for Taiwan independence. It had previously cancelled the release of surveys on the massacre, citing “suggestions” by “relevant SAR Government department(s)”. HKPORI President, Robert Chung, said the institute had considered previous SAR Government risk assessments on its work and public demand for its data.

Department of Justice

On 28 July, local media reported that the SAR Government’s Department of Justice (DoJ) removed 11 annual prosecution reports, all published before NSL implementation, from its website. The reports included statistics on conviction rates and appeal applications, as well as photos of prosecutors at all court levels. The DoJ said it updated the website’s information based on operational needs.

Internet Freedom

On 6 July, local media, citing official statistics presented at a Legislative Council meeting, reported that the Hong Kong Police made more than 65,000 requests for local and overseas Internet Service Providers to remove “crime-related” content online in 2022. The number of relevant requests made in 2020 was 5,567. Google noted in its January – June 2023 transparency report that 4% of the removal requests were made on national security grounds, with the majority of requests (33%) made on privacy and security grounds. Google notes it does not always adhere to these requests.

Civil Society

Closure of Cantonese Language Group

On 28 August, the Hong Kong Language Learning Association, a group founded in 2013 to promote Cantonese in Hong Kong and “*safeguard the linguistic rights of Hong Kong people*”, announced its immediate disbandment citing legal risks and safety concerns. Its closure came after National Security Police, citing NSL violations, visited the founder’s former residence and questioned his family members over a fictional short story submitted to a literary competition in 2020. The story depicted Hong Kong in 2050, 25 years after a crackdown on linguistic, religious, and cultural minorities. The founder complied with the police’s request to take down his story from the group’s website the same day.

In response to media enquiries, the founder said he was “*shocked*” that he was “*targeted by the National Security Police*” for running a group “*only related to arts and*

literature". Media quoted the founder as saying he had been staying overseas since the incident, expressing concerns about any potential risks of returning to Hong Kong.

Remembrance of the Tiananmen Square Massacre

Chow Hang-tung

As recorded in the previous Six-monthly Reports, former Hong Kong Alliance vice chair Chow Hang-tung was found guilty of inciting people to attend the vigil on 4 June 2021 and sentenced to 15 months in prison. Chow subsequently appealed. In December 2022, High Court Judge Judianna Wai Ling Barnes overturned Chow's conviction and sentence, ruling that her action was not illegal as the lawfulness of the police ban under the Public Order Ordinance was not established. In the same month, the SAR Government's DoJ filed an appeal to the CFA.

On 22 November 2023, the CFA conducted an appeal hearing of the case, in which prosecutors argued that Chow did not have the right to challenge the legality of the police ban in her defendant capacity and during a criminal trial. The CFA was expected to deliver its final verdict in early 2024.

Police Warnings against creator of "Pillar of Shame"

As noted in the last Six-monthly Report, in May National Security Police seized the "Pillar of Shame", a sculpture created by Danish artist Jens Galschiøt to commemorate the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre, as part of its investigation of an "incitement to subversion" case. In a letter to the SAR authorities, Galschiøt asked for clarification of whether an arrest warrant had been issued for him under the NSL, as per a report in pro-government Chinese newspaper *Sing Tao Daily*. Secretary for Security Chris Tang, in his written reply, said the police would not respond to any "enquiry" in relation to individual cases, but warned acts that endanger national security under "the pretexts of peaceful advocacy and artistic creations" would be investigated. In response, Galschiøt said Tang's reply amounted to "criminalising Hong Kong arts".

During a press briefing on 27 August, Tang again declined to confirm whether the police had plans to arrest Galschiøt. In October, Galschiøt stated in news reports he believed it would be impossible for him to visit Hong Kong.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

On 30 September, Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong, His Eminence Cardinal Stephen Chow Sau-yan, was appointed Cardinal at a ceremony in the Vatican City, making him the fourth cardinal from the Hong Kong diocese. Cardinal Chow called for closer ties between the Roman Catholic Church in China and the universal Roman Catholic Church, suggesting that Hong Kong has an important role in serving as a "bridge" between them.

On 1 October, the Chinese national flag was present on the altar in St. John's Cathedral during a service conducted in Mandarin to mark China's National Day. The presence of the flag had been suggested by canon and legislator Peter Douglas Koon Ho-ming. The flag was removed prior to the subsequent service conducted in English.

Koon said placement of the Chinese national flag on the altar did not violate any Christian principles or beliefs, and it could be placed as such during worship services on all future National Days. Local media reported that, prior to the service, more than 140 people had signed an online petition against Koon's proposal to display the flag.

Following Cardinal Chow's visit to Beijing in April, the Most Reverend Archbishop Joseph Li Shan visited Hong Kong between 13 and 15 November. This marked the first official visit by a Catholic bishop from Beijing. Archbishop Li met with Cardinal Chow and different diocesan offices to "*promote exchanges and interactions between the two dioceses*".

Concerns about Hong Kong Expressed at the United Nations

On 9 October, four UN Special Rapporteurs (SR), including the SR on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, expressed "serious" concerns over the NSL, specifically regarding the ongoing national security trial of 47 pro-democracy activists and politicians, as well as the issuing of arrests warrants and financial rewards for activists outside Hong Kong.

In a statement, the four SRs said they were "*very troubled about the use of mass trials in NSL cases and how they may negatively affect safeguards that ensure due process and the right to fair trial*". They called on the Chinese authorities to review the NSL to "*ensure that the law is in compliance with China's international human rights obligations with respect to the Hong Kong SAR*".

In addition, the SRs recommended that the Hong Kong authorities improve access to legal aid and consider reviewing amendments to the Legal Practitioners Ordinance.

Academic Freedom

In October, media reported that China-born history professor Rowena Xiaoqing He, a Canadian national, was dismissed by the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) after the Hong Kong SAR Government's Immigration Department refused to renew her work visa. Previously, she had lectured and conducted research on the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre, having taught at several universities in the United States. She revealed that immigration officials asked questions about her sources of funding and possible foreign government ties. In a statement, the Hong Kong authorities refused to comment on individual cases, noting that the Immigration Department "*acts in accordance with the law and relevant policies*". A CUHK spokesperson said: "*visa decisions are a matter for the Immigration Department and the university is unable to influence visa outcomes, and nor is it aware of the circumstances of individual cases*".

On 29 November, the Hong Kong SAR Government's Audit Commission noted in a report that CUHK "*has not incorporated in the tender documents, contracts and guidelines safeguard measures over matters concerning national security*", citing the operation of its bookstore. The auditors recommended that CUHK strengthen guidance and regulations for its campus facilities to safeguard national security.

Equality

On 5 September, a landmark ruling by the CFA declared that the lack of an alternative framework for the recognition of same-sex partnerships was unconstitutional under Article 14 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights. This ruling mandated that the Hong Kong SAR Government establish an “alternative framework” for legal recognition of same-sex partnerships within a limited time frame. The ruling followed the Judicial Review launched by activist Jimmy Sham Tsz-kit, as recorded in previous Six-monthly Reports. On 27 October, the CFA set a two-year deadline for the SAR Government to comply with its ruling. The CFA added that the SAR Government could apply for an extension with “compelling reasons”.

This CFA ruling was followed by several unsuccessful government appeals in other LGBT cases, in the contexts of housing and inheritance rights.

From 3 to 11 November, the Gay Games were held in Hong Kong, with over 600 competitions hosted with competitors from 41 countries and territories. The event was co-hosted with Guadalajara, Mexico. Prior to the Games taking place, in August the Hong Kong SAR Government directed the organisers to comply with local laws and regulations. On 1 November, several Hong Kong lawmakers including Junius Ho Kwan-yiu expressed opposition to the event, claiming that it would threaten national security. In response, Executive Council convenor Regina Ip Lau Suk-ye expressed her support for the event, emphasising its legality. The Gay Games Hong Kong Organising Committee stressed that the event would not be used as a political platform, dismissing claims from lawmakers that it received funding from foreign governments or groups.

LEGAL SYSTEM

Hong Kong continued to maintain a common law system. Adjudication of civil cases continued as practised in Hong Kong prior to the establishment of the SAR. In July the Legislative Council passed changes to the Criminal Procedure Ordinance, allowing the Government to appeal against High Court acquittals in NSL cases without jury. In November, the Legislative Council passed an amendment to the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance.

Changes to the Criminal Procedure Ordinance

In February 2023, the DoJ introduced a proposal to the Legislative Council to allow the SAR Government to appeal against High Court “no case to answer” rulings in non-NSL criminal trials, as well as acquittal verdicts in NSL cases tried without jury. This came after several no case to answer rulings by the High Court were overturned by the CA in October 2022. The CA noted that these cases had resulted in “*a serious miscarriage of justice*” and there was “*no statutory procedure*” for the prosecution to appeal against judges’ verdicts of no case to answer and acquittal.

The Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill 2023 was introduced into the Legislative Council on 31 May. The Bill contained provisions to grant the High Court powers to re-arrest or remand defendants acquitted under the NSL in instances of a DoJ appeal.

Secretary for Justice, Paul Lam stressed that the amendments would not apply to acquittal by jury in non-NSL criminal trials. The DoJ added that the new appeal mechanisms would be “*necessary*” to deal with “*erroneous*” rulings and acquittals by “*professional*” judges.

The Bill was passed by the Legislative Council on 12 July, with the appeal mechanism governing not guilty verdicts in NSL cases coming into effect on 14 July.

Amendments to the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance

On 15 November, the Legislative Council passed an amendment to the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance, which was originally enacted on 1 July 1997. This law, in alignment with the National Flag and National Emblem Ordinance amended on 8 October 2021, criminalises the “*inappropriate use*”, as well as “*intentional*” and “*public*” desecration of the SAR’s regional flag and emblem, including them being discarded, burnt, trampled or displayed upside down, and covering online activities. The Law carries a maximum penalty of a fine of HKD 50,000 (approximately £5,500) and a custodial sentence of up to three years.

The Regional Flag and Regional Emblem (Amendment) Bill was published in the Government Gazette on 24 November. Relevant prosecutions are recorded in the ‘Judicial System’ section of this report.

Legislative Council Quorum

On 14 August, local newspaper *Ming Pao* reported that for two-thirds of the Bills (16 out of 24) passed by the Legislative Council in the 2023 legislative session to date, less than half of its members were present. The Stamp Duty Amendment Bill was passed by just 11 out of 90 members. According to Article 75 of the Basic Law and the Legislative Council Rules of Procedure, the quorum for a Council meeting shall not be less than one half of all Legislative Council members, including its President.

In response, pro-Beijing lawmaker Junius Ho Kwun-yiu said there is “*no requirement*” for legislators to attend Council meetings and urged the authorities to tighten media regulations after the implementation of the NSL.

JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The reporting period saw the National Security Police issue arrest warrants against 13 individuals living outside Hong Kong and offer financial rewards for information leading to their arrests and prosecutions. Some of the individuals currently reside in the UK. The period also saw the commencement of Jimmy Lai’s NSL and sedition trial on 18 December. He pleaded not guilty to the three charges he faces. His previous legal challenges to the National People’s Congress Standing Committee’s (NPCSC) interpretation of the NSL and the subsequent National Security Committee (NSC) decision concluded with the High Court ordering Lai to pay all costs.

In August, the CA cleared all seven defendants, including Jimmy Lai, of “organising” a protest in 2019. The CFA also allowed the defendants to appeal against their convictions for “taking part” in it.

The CFA dismissed Lui Sai-yu's sentencing appeal, the first ever appeal under the NSL, and upheld the original five-year mandatory minimum. This reporting period also saw the closing arguments in the NSL trial of the 47 pro-democracy politicians and activists.

National Security Police's Arrest Warrants for Activists Living Outside Hong Kong

On 3 July, Hong Kong's National Security Police issued arrest warrants for eight pro-democracy activists living outside Hong Kong (including some who live in the UK), offering \$1,000,000 Hong Kong dollars (approximately £101,000) for information leading to their arrest and prosecution. The eight individuals were accused of various NSL offences including foreign collusion, secession and subversion. They include: Kevin Yam Kin-fung, Elmer Yuan Gong-yi, Anna Kwok Fung-yee, Dennis Kwok Wing-hang, Ted Hui Chi-fung, Christopher Mung Siu-tat, Finn Lau Cho-dik and Nathan Law Kwun-chung.

Police froze their Hong Kong assets, and warned the public not to fund persons or activities that endanger national security. Chief Superintendent Steve Li Kwai-wah said sharing social media posts by the wanted persons could attract "certain risks".

The same day, the then Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon James Cleverly MP, released a statement:

"We will not tolerate any attempts by China to intimidate and silence individuals in the UK and overseas. The UK will always defend the universal right to freedom of expression and stand up for those who are targeted.

We strongly object to the National Security Law that China imposed on Hong Kong, including its extraterritorial reach, in breach of the legally binding Sino-British Joint Declaration.

We call on Beijing to remove the National Security Law and for the Hong Kong authorities to end their targeting of those who stand up for freedom and democracy."

The wanted activists are reportedly living in the UK, United States, Canada and Australia. The United States State Department issued a spokesperson statement to condemn the "*extra-territorial application of the Beijing-imposed National Security Law*" as a "*dangerous precedent*", calling on the Hong Kong authorities to withdraw the arrest warrants. Australia Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong also released a statement expressing concern.

On 4 July, Chief Executive John Lee said the eight would be "*pursued for life*", urging them to surrender. Local media reported that following the arrest warrants, family members of at least six of the wanted activists were taken away by National Security

Police for questioning, with the homes of some raided. The Chief Executive reiterated that authorities would “*exhaust all methods*” to arrest the eight individuals.

On 11 July, Minister of State for Indo-Pacific, the Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, said:

“Trying to spread fear and pressure people into silence by targeting family in Hong Kong is unacceptable. We won’t tolerate attempts by China to intimidate and silence individuals in UK. We will always defend rights to freedom of expression.”

On 13 July, the Minister of State for the Indo-Pacific made a statement in Parliament. The same day, a senior UK official, at the instruction of the Foreign Secretary, conducted a formal diplomatic *démarche* of the Chinese Ambassador to the UK. An FCDO spokesperson said on 15 July:

“The *démarche* set out our objections to actions in Hong Kong in recent weeks, including the issuing of arrest warrants and bounties for eight individuals living overseas, three of whom live in the UK, and the detention and questioning of the family members of some of those individuals in Hong Kong.

“The *démarche* also set out our ongoing opposition to the imposition of the National Security Law by Beijing on Hong Kong, which is a breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.”

On 14 December, National Security Police issued a further five arrest warrants against Hong Kong activists living overseas (some of whom are in the UK), again with a \$1,000,000 Hong Kong dollar reward for information. The five, Simon Cheng Man-kit, Frances Hui Wing-ting, Joey Siu, Johnny Fok Ka-chi and Tony Choi Ming-da, are accused of various NSL crimes such as foreign collusion, secession and subversion. During a press conference the same day, Chief Superintendent Steve Li said the five had “betrayed” China and Hong Kong.

In response, the Foreign Secretary the Rt Hon Lord Cameron made a statement the same day:

“The Hong Kong police have again targeted individuals for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

I have instructed officials in Hong Kong, Beijing and London to raise this issue as a matter of urgency with the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities.

We will not tolerate any attempt by any foreign power to intimidate, harass or harm individuals or communities in the UK. This is a threat to our democracy and fundamental human rights.

We call on Beijing to repeal the National Security Law and end its persecution of political activists.”

US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, issued a statement on 15 December condemning the “*transnational repression*” by the authorities in Hong Kong.

Agnes Chow Ting

Activist Agnes Chow Ting, formerly a core member of the disbanded political party “Demosisto” and student group “Scholarism”, was arrested on 10 August 2020, along with Jimmy Lai and others, on suspicion of colluding with foreign forces. Subsequently, Chow was released on bail on the condition that she surrender her passport and report to police regularly.

In 2023, the police required Chow travel to the mainland to attend a “*patriotic exhibition*” on China’s “achievements” to obtain her passport for travel to study in Canada. Chow agreed, and visited mainland China in August accompanied by National Security Police officers. Upon her return to Hong Kong, Chow was required to sign letters expressing gratitude to the police for organising the trip. In September, she was allowed to leave Hong Kong to continue her studies in Canada and required to report to national security police on her planned return to Hong Kong in late December.

On 3 December, Chow announced that she would not return to Hong Kong to report to the police, citing “*personal safety*” and the “*situation in Hong Kong*”. On 4 December, the Hong Kong authorities issued statements condemning Chow’s “*irresponsible action*”, urging her to “*turn back*” and cooperate with the police. On 14 December, Chief Superintendent Steve Li warned that an arrest warrant for Chow would be issued if she failed to report to police by the deadline. At the end of the reporting period, no public announcement had been made that an arrest warrant had issued.

Tony Chung Hon-lam

In November 2021, student activist Tony Chung Hon-lam was sentenced to three years and seven months in prison for secession under the NSL and money laundering. Upon his release in June 2023, he was given a one-year supervision order under the Rehabilitation Centres Ordinance, mandated by the Correctional Services Department. In December, he was permitted to travel to Japan. On 28 December, Chung announced on social media that he had arrived in the UK to seek political asylum, citing fear of the National Security Police and extradition to mainland China. On 29 December, the Hong Kong authorities issued a recall order for Chung. The same day, Beijing called on the UK to repatriate Chung to Hong Kong.

Jimmy Lai’s legal actions relating to the NPCSC interpretation of the NSL

Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, founder of Apple Daily, stands accused of three national security offences – two counts of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces under the NSL, and one charge of sedition under the Crimes Ordinance. In addition, Lai had been charged with a further count of collusion with foreign forces under the NSL, but this charge was dropped by the prosecution. His trial, scheduled to start on 1 December 2022, began on 18 December 2023 after being adjourned three times. Lai has pleaded not guilty to all three charges he faces at trial.

As detailed in the last Six-monthly Report, Lai brought a legal challenge against the interpretation of the NSL by China’s NPCSC, made on 30 December 2022. He also launched a separate judicial review challenging the NSC decision to refuse a work visa for British barrister Timothy Owen KC, due to represent Lai in court. The High

Court dismissed both appeals in May 2023, noting that the NPCSC interpretation was “*applicable*”, and all NSC decisions are “*not amendable to judicial review*”.

Following the dismissals, the DoJ sought costs against Lai. On 3 August, the High Court ordered Lai to pay an undisclosed amount of costs for both proceedings. Despite noting in his judgment that unsuccessful applicants for judicial review would generally not be ordered to pay, Judge Jeremy Poon Shiu-chor said Lai’s application was “*wholly unmeritorious*” as the NSL clearly states that any NSC decision is legally unchallengeable. Poon also highlighted that the DoJ had advised Lai to discontinue the proceedings due to “*the lack of merits*” but he “*unreasonably persisted*”. For his challenge against the NPCSC interpretation, the court ruled that Lai “*would have had the opportunity*” to discontinue the proceedings but his “*persistence thereafter*” was “*unreasonable litigation conduct*”.

On 17 December, before the start of Lai’s trial, the Foreign Secretary issued the following statement:

“Hong Kong’s National Security Law is a clear breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. Its continued existence and use is a demonstration of China breaking its international commitments.

It has damaged Hong Kong, with rights and freedoms significantly eroded. Arrests under the law have silenced opposition voices.

I am gravely concerned that anyone is facing prosecution under the National Security Law, and particularly concerned at the politically motivated prosecution of British national Jimmy Lai.

As a prominent and outspoken journalist and publisher, Jimmy Lai has been targeted in a clear attempt to stop the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.

I urge the Chinese authorities to repeal the National Security Law and end the prosecution of all individuals charged under it.

I call on the Hong Kong authorities to end their prosecution and release Jimmy Lai.”

Lai’s national security trial began on 18 December and is scheduled to last 80 days. The judiciary moved the trial from the High Court to West Kowloon Magistrates’ Courts to accommodate a larger number of observers. The British Consulate-General in Hong Kong, along with other diplomatic missions, observed his trial throughout December. The court was heavily policed, both inside and outside. The first two days of trial saw legal debates around the time limit of Lai’s sedition charge. His defence lawyer, Robert Pang SC argued that the alleged offence fell outside the six-month statute of limitations as the prosecution had not charged Lai within six months of the alleged offence taking place. He argued the Court therefore had no jurisdiction to try the defendant. On 22 December, the High Court ruled against Lai, noting that the prosecution had already begun as the DoJ had indicated its intention to charge him with sedition within the proscribed time limit.

Separately, Lai appealed to the CA against the High Court ruling on the NSC's decision to reject Timothy Owen's work visa, with a hearing set for 16 April 2024. Timothy Owen was originally due to represent Lai in court as defence counsel.

Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (National Security Law)

According to Hong Kong Police statistics, since the imposition of the NSL on 30 June 2020 until 8 December 2023, a total of 285 people have been arrested for NSL offences and 172 charged. Security Secretary Chris Tang has previously praised the 100% conviction rate in national security cases.

NSL arrests continued to take place during the reporting period. On 5 July, four former members of the disbanded political party "Demosisto" were arrested for allegedly colluding with foreign forces, reportedly in connection with some of the activists living outside Hong Kong who are wanted by National Security Police (details provided in 'Legal System' section). In the same month, another three former members were also arrested for foreign collusion under the NSL. All seven individuals arrested were released on police bail as of the end of the reporting period. They have not yet been charged.

On 13 December, four people were arrested on suspicion of providing financial assistance via an online subscription platform for activists Nathan Law and Ted Hui. The four had not been charged by the end of the reporting period.

Hong Kong University Students' Union Council

On 30 October, four former members of the Hong Kong University (HKU) Students' Union Council, originally charged with "advocating terrorism" under the NSL, were instead sentenced to two years in jail after pleading guilty to an alternative, non-NSL charge of "*incitement to wound with intent*". The four former HKU council members passed a motion in July 2021 to commemorate a man who stabbed a police officer on HKSAR Establishment Day and committed suicide afterwards, for his "*honourable sacrifice*" for Hong Kong as a "*martyr*". They pleaded not guilty to the terrorism charge. The four defendants appealed against their sentences. No date has been set for an application hearing.

"Returning Valiant"

On 28 December, a teenage member of the pro-independence group "Returning Valiant", 19-year-old Ho Yu-wang, was sentenced to six years in prison for conspiracy to commit terrorism for planning to bomb Hong Kong courts and public infrastructure.

Trial of 47 Pro-democracy politicians and activists under the NSL

The NSL trial of 47 pro-democracy politicians and activists charged with "*conspiracy to commit subversion*" continued throughout this reporting period, exceeding the 90 days originally scheduled by the High Court. 31 defendants had pleaded guilty to the charge and 16 not guilty. On 4 December, the closing submissions of the defence ended, concluding the trial after a total of 118 days. The court, without a jury, is expected to hand down its verdict in April 2024. 34 of the individuals remained remanded in custody, having been in detention for almost three years.

Procedural Fairness: NSL sentencing appeal

In April 2022, university student Lui Sai-yu was sentenced to five years for incitement to secession for posting messages on social media supporting Hong Kong independence. The defendant appealed against his sentence, arguing that the court should have given a customary one-third discount for his pre-trial guilty plea. As previously reported, the CA dismissed Lui's appeal and upheld the five-year mandatory minimum.

Lui appealed again, insisting on his entitlement to a one-third reduction. The CA granted him a certificate to apply for leave to appeal to the CFA, the first appeal of an NSL sentencing to clarify the meanings of related articles. On 16 May, the CFA granted Lui permission to appeal his sentence. The final appeal hearing took place on 9 August.

On 22 August, the CFA unanimously dismissed Lui's appeal, upholding the five-year mandatory minimum for serious NSL offences. The CFA ruled that priority shall be given to NSL sentencing provisions over local sentencing laws, and that a guilty plea is not a mitigating factor for sentences under the NSL.

Use of sedition laws

This reporting period saw a continued expansion of the use of sedition laws in Hong Kong, with more people arrested and prosecuted for making seditious comments online, and one, for the first time, for importing seditious publications from the UK. At least seven people were convicted for sedition between 1 July and 31 December.

Convictions included:

Kong Tat-kuen

On 27 July, martial arts coach Kong Tat-kuen was sentenced to three months in prison for publishing online content inciting hatred against the Hong Kong authorities as well as advocating for Hong Kong and Taiwan independence. Prosecutors said the defendant had posted statements describing Communism as "*a devil*", Hong Kong as "*an authoritarian region*" and Taiwan as "*an independent country*". Principal Magistrate Peter Law Tak-chuen noted that despite their limited reach and impact, Kong's "*radical*" comments could lead to a "*resurgence*" of anti-government sentiment, hence a custodial sentence. In mitigation, the defence said Kong was willing to contact national security agencies to share with young people the "*lessons*" he had learnt.

Tommy Yuen Man-on

On 31 August, the District Court sentenced singer Tommy Yuen Man-on to 21 months in jail for sedition. He was convicted of publishing online posts inciting hatred towards the SAR Government, the police and the judiciary. Prosecutors said Yuen had made seditious comments about a police officer who died during an operation and a magistrate who suffered from a heart condition. In addition, he had advocated for Hong Kong independence, mobilised support for Apple Daily and Stand News, and commemorated the 2019 anti-extradition protests. Judge Ernest Lin Kam-hung ruled that the posts had attracted great public attention with the intention to reignite anti-government sentiment, causing "*harm to society*". During sentencing, Lin categorised

the case as “*close to serious*”, noting explicitly that the court had considered the NSL and its precedents.

Zeng Yuxuan

On 12 September, Zeng Yuxuan, a mainland Chinese postgraduate law student studying at CUHK, was sentenced to six months in jail for attempting to act with seditious intent. Prosecutors alleged that Zeng planned to display a giant banner featuring “the Pillar of Shame”, a sculpture commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre, publicly on 4 June to protest against its seizure by National Security Police. Principal Magistrate Peter Law noted that the defendant had a “*meticulous*” plan to display the banner on a sensitive date, which would have amplified its seditious impact. In October, the Security Bureau announced the removal of Zeng from the Hong Kong SAR upon her release from imprisonment.

Leung Kui-ming

On 6 October, clerk Leung Kui-ming was sentenced to four months in jail for importing “seditious publications”. He had collected a parcel shipped from the UK, which contained 18 copies of children’s books that allegedly depicted Hong Kong political events using sheep and wolves. The books, created by a group of speech therapists in Hong Kong, were previously ruled by the court as having a seditious intent. Prosecutors accused Leung of intending to instigate hatred against the authorities, promote “*feelings of ill-will and enmity*” and incite violence. Chief Magistrate Victor So Wai-tak noted that the defendant’s actions could encourage people overseas to continue publishing the books, threatening national security.

Yuen Ching-ting

On 3 November, Yuen Ching-ting, a Hong Kong undergraduate student studying in Japan, was given a two-month custodial sentence for sedition. She was originally arrested for secession under the NSL upon her return to Hong Kong. The prosecution accused Yuen of publishing 13 posts online inciting Hong Kong independence, backdating her offence as early as September 2018 (predating the NSL). 11 of them were published whilst Yuen was in Japan, and the remaining two in Hong Kong. Chief Magistrate Victor So noted that the defendant’s posts had a “*continuous and permanent*” effect that could exert a subtle influence over the public. This case marked the second known conviction for seditious acts committed outside of Hong Kong.

UK Privy Council Judgment

During the reporting period, activist Tam Tak-chi applied for leave to appeal against his conviction and sentence. He was found guilty of seven counts of “*uttering seditious words*” in March 2022, and given a 21-month custodial sentence in April the same year. The CA conducted an application hearing on 4 July.

On 12 October, the Judicial Committee of the UK Privy Council delivered a judgment concerning the constitutionality of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago’s Sedition Act, noting that “*there is implied into it a requirement there must be an intention to incite violence and disorder*”. This is contrary to rulings of the Hong Kong courts that there is no requirement to demonstrate intention to incite violence as a part of Hong Kong’s

sedition offences. Local media reported that Tam's defence submitted the Privy Council's judgment to the CA for consideration. A verdict is expected to be delivered in March 2024.

Stand News

The trial of two former Stand News journalists charged with conspiracy to publish seditious material carried on throughout the reporting period. Both pleaded not guilty to the charge. The verdict, originally set for 4 October was adjourned until 15 November, and further adjourned pending the CA ruling on activist Tam Tak-chi's leave application. A verdict is expected to be delivered in April 2024.

Government applies for injunction to ban 'Glory to Hong Kong' song

'Glory to Hong Kong' is a song written during the 2019 anti-Extradition Bill protests. As recorded in the last Six-monthly Report, on 5 June the DoJ applied to the High Court for an injunction to prohibit, on national security grounds, four types of unlawful acts related to the song - intention of inciting secession or acting seditiously, insulting China's national anthem, assisting others to commit these acts, or authorising others to commit these acts.

On 18 July, the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) stated that the DoJ agreed to include in its injunction application, if granted, an "*express exemption*" for journalistic activity. This would exempt from prohibition and civil proceedings any journalistic activity in relation to the song in news reporting in and outside Hong Kong.

On 28 July, the High Court rejected the Government's application. It ruled that the proposed injunction would conflict with existing criminal laws such as the NSL, lacking "*real utility*". In addition, the court highlighted the potential "*chilling effects*" of the injunction. Chan dismissed the DoJ's submission that "*the Court should defer to the executives on matters of national security*", as a "*sweeping*" statement.

On 7 August, the DoJ appealed against the High Court's decision in the interests of national security.

On 23 August, High Court Judge Anthony Chan granted DoJ leave to appeal to the CA, due to "*the importance of national security*". On 19 December, the CA conducted a hearing and adjourned the case until 24 February 2024.

Prosecutions under the National Anthem, Flag and Emblem Ordinances

The reporting period saw the continued use of the National Anthem Law, along with numerous prosecutions under the National Flag and National Emblem Ordinance introduced since 1997. The Ordinance criminalises the "*intentional insulting*" of the Chinese national flag and emblem, including them being discarded, burnt, defaced, trampled or displayed upside down. The Ordinance was amended in August 2021 to outlaw acts that "insult" both national symbols online. Any relevant offence is liable for penalties of fines up to HKD 50,000 (approximately £5,500) and custodial sentences of up to three years. Amendments to a similar Regional Flag and Emblem law were passed by the Legislative Council in November (details provided in 'Legal System' section).

On 14 July, 31-year-old Yung Ching-man was sentenced to 18 days in prison for desecrating the national and regional flags. He was found to have taken down the flags displayed by a pro-Establishment party and thrown them to the ground during National Day celebrations in 2022.

On 20 July, 27-year-old Cheung Wing-chun was sentenced to three months in jail after pleading not guilty to insulting the national anthem. He was found to have replaced the anthem with '*Glory to Hong Kong*' in a video of a Hong Kong fencer at the Olympics.

On 24 August, a 36-year-old Moroccan man was convicted of "*wilfully*" insulting the regional flag but was acquitted of "*intentionally*" insulting the national flag. He took down 12 national and regional flags and threw them on the street during National Day celebrations in 2022. The magistrate ruled that the defendant, did not have a specific intent to insult the national flag, but he had committed "*wilful*" acts related to insulting the regional flag. On 14 September, the defendant was given a suspended jail sentence of 14 days.

In October, a 21-year-old was charged for booing the Chinese national anthem during an international volleyball match held in Hong Kong. Reportedly, the defendant also refused to stand up when the anthem was played. The defendant pleaded not guilty to the charge on 14 December. His case was adjourned until April 2024.

18 August 2019 Protest Conviction Appeals

In April 2021, nine pro-democracy politicians, activists and pan-democrat legislators, including veteran Martin Lee Chu-ming and Apple Daily publisher Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, were sentenced to up to 18 months for organising and participating in the 18 August 2019 protest, with four given suspended sentences. Subsequently, seven of them appealed against their convictions.

A leave to appeal hearing took place at the CA between 28 and 30 November 2022. On 14 August 2023, the CA cleared all seven defendants of "*organizing*" an unauthorised assembly but upheld their convictions for "*knowingly taking part*" in it.

For its unanimous dismissal of the first charge, the CA rejected government prosecutors' arguments that the defendants were organisers because they were "*at the front of the procession*", as "*not a realistic or suitable substitute for evidence*". The court quashed the related sentences for all appellants, including Jimmy Lai.

For the second charge, the CA ruled that the evidence of the defendants' participation was "*overwhelming*", refusing their appeals. All appellants have served their sentences for this charge.

Subsequently, the DoJ applied for leave to appeal to the CFA against the CA ruling, and all seven defendants sought leave to appeal to the CFA against their convictions.

On 8 December, the CA rejected the DoJ's application, but allowed the defendants to appeal against their convictions at the CFA. The CA made clear that the legal issues raised by the DoJ regarding the specific meaning of "*organizing*" the protest had been "*resolved*", whereas the court acknowledged that their defendants' conviction appeals

may involve a question of “*great and general importance*”. By the end of the reporting period no date had been set for the CFA hearing.

Protest Convictions

According to Hong Kong Police statistics, as of October 31 2022, at least 10,000 people were arrested in relation to the 2019 anti-Extradition Bill protests. Around 3,000 of them have been charged and 1,400 convicted. About 7,000 arrestees were still on police bail pending investigation.

During a Legislative Council meeting on 13 November, non-aligned legislator Tik Chi-yuen again requested updates on the pending cases. In response, Secretary for Security Chris Tang said the Government had been dealing with the remaining cases “*individually*”, without providing figures. In December 2022, Tang had unveiled plans to conclude investigations and determine prosecutorial decisions “*within weeks*”. In February 2023, Police Commissioner Raymond Siu said the Hong Kong Police Force aimed to announce relevant arrangements for the remaining arrestees within the month. By the end of the reporting period no announcement had been made.

Judicial Visits

Chief Judge of the High Court Jeremy Poon Shiu-chor, along with Permanent Judge of the CFA Johnson Lam Man-hon, led a delegation of judges and judicial officers from the Hong Kong Judiciary to visit Beijing from 29 October to 5 November. The trip was part of the “*ongoing professional exchanges between the Hong Kong and Mainland judges and judicial officers*” on the Constitution of the PRC and the Basic Law.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Police recruitment

During the reporting period, the Hong Kong Police Force recruited from mainland Chinese universities for the first time, recruiting at least 130 students. This came after the Police relaxed eligibility requirements for recruiting police constables in May, including height, weight and language.

Civil Servant Oath-taking: Judicial review

On 4 October, the High Court rejected an application for judicial review of the SAR Government’s requirement for a former civil servant to “*retire in the public interest*”, who returned his signed declaration of allegiance to the Hong Kong SAR six months after the deadline. Applicant Wong Chau-ming was an assistant taxation officer. He had sent a letter requesting the authorities to clarify the “*violations*” stipulated in the declaration. The judgment on 19 October noted that the applicant did fail to provide a duly signed declaration within the stipulated deadline “*without reasonable excuse*”, refusing his application.

Separately, on 20 November, the Secretary for Civil Service Ingrid Yeung Ho Poi-yau said a total of 535 non-Civil Service contract staff who refused to sign a declaration of allegiance to the Hong Kong SAR in 2021 had left their posts.

EDUCATION

At the start of the 2023-24 academic year, the requirement for newly appointed teachers to pass a Basic Law and National Security test was expanded to include those working at direct subsidy scheme schools and kindergartens participating in the kindergarten education scheme.

The reporting period saw further reductions in the number of Primary One classes in the 2023-24 academic year, with 80 failing to enrol the minimum number of pupils.

On 24 August, the Hong Kong Education Bureau and the Guangdong Provincial Department for Education signed the *Framework Agreement on Strengthening Education Exchange and Co-operation between Guangdong and Hong Kong*. The stated aim of the agreement is to support Hong Kong's alignment with national Chinese development strategies through various collaboration and exchange initiatives across all levels of the education and qualification system. The Vocational Training Council also signed a similar Memorandum of Understanding with the Guangdong Provincial Education Department. In November, the Legislative Council passed a bill to reform the governing council of CUHK, most notably reducing its membership from 55 to 34 and increasing the number of externally appointed positions compared with internal academic staff. Potential recurrence of incidents at the university relating to the 2019 protests, and concerns about its top management's upholding the principle of “*One Country, Two Systems*” were cited by the Legislative Council Bill Committee as necessitating reform.

Patriotic Education

On 24 October, China's NPCSC adopted a new Patriotic Education Law, taking effect on 1 January 2024. This Chinese law was not added to Annex III of the Basic Law but it includes provisions on patriotic education for Hong Kong.

In his Policy Address on 25 October, Chief Executive John Lee pledged to “*integrate*” patriotic education and national security education into the curriculum. In particular, a “*Working Group on Patriotic Education*” and a “*Chinese Culture Promotion Office*” will also be established to “*further promote patriotism*”.

In November, Secretary for Education Christine Choi Yuk-lin made clear that the SAR Government would not set any key performance indicators to measure the success of patriotic education, affirming both schools and teachers would not face punishment for poor delivery.

FINANCE

Over the reporting period, the Hong Kong SAR Government continued to manage its own financial matters, including disposing of its financial resources and drawing up its budgets and its final accounts.

During his 25 October Policy Address, Chief Executive John Lee announced a range of measures including policies seeking to improve competitiveness, attract talent,

deepen investment and ensure company re-domiciliation to Hong Kong. Between 6 to 8 November, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) hosted the Global Financial Leaders Investment Summit. The HKMA and the Bank of International Settlements co-hosted the HKMA-BIS High-Level Conference between 27 and 28 November. The Financial Secretary Paul Chan attended the 2023 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum Summit on 16 and 17 November held in San Francisco.

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The HKSARG maintained its capitalist economic and trade systems during the reporting period, retaining policy autonomy in economic and trade decisions. Hong Kong continues to be a separate customs territory, and to engage independently through its membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

On 24 August, the HKSARG placed a ban on seafood imports from 10 prefectures of Japan following the Fukushima Daiichi wastewater release. On 29 August, the HKSARG announced the formation of a taskforce focused on 'Enhancing Stock Market Liquidity' reporting directly to the Chief Executive. Hong Kong's ninth Trade Policy Review took place between 6 to 8 December at the WTO.

On 6 December, the UK's Permanent Representative to the WTO in Geneva delivered a statement during Hong Kong's Trade Policy Review:

Chair, let me join others in welcoming the delegation from Hong Kong, China, led by Director-General of Trade and Industry, Ms. Wong. Let me also express my gratitude to the wider delegation, ably led in Geneva by Permanent Representative Miss So, and to colleagues from the WTO Secretariat for their respective reports; to the Chair, as ever; and to our Discussant for his comments.

Chair, the UK and Hong Kong, China enjoy people-to-people, cultural, and trade ties. UK companies continue to operate in Hong Kong, China, valuing its historic reputation for strong institutions and respect for the rule of law, its open and predictable business environment, and its status as a global financial centre.

Hong Kong, China is the UK's 13th largest trading partner. Our total trade in goods and services has reached almost £30 billion in 2023. It is our second largest market for goods in Asia-Pacific, after mainland China. And it was the destination for almost £80 billion of UK Foreign Direct Investment in 2021.

However, despite Hong Kong, China's commitment to free trade, there remain untapped opportunities, such as the 100% ad valorem excise tax that it places on beverage alcohol products, which are over 30% alcohol by volume. Not only has this tax led to significant price disparities between wine and spirits, but its ad valorem nature effectively penalises higher-value and higher-quality spirits.

Besides making British businesses very happy, a reduction in spirit taxation would help to support the recovery of Hong Kong, China's hospitality and tourism industry. It would also enhance the restaurant scene that makes Hong Kong, China one of the world's gastronomic gems, allowing diners to responsibly enjoy

the best of UK gin, Scotch whisky, or any other of the countless high-quality UK spirits.

And yet, Chair, despite the myriad of global trade challenges we face, the current trading relationship between Hong Kong, China and the UK remains strong. One of the most significant reasons for this is our shared commitment to free and open trade, which is underpinned by our historical ties. As promised in 1997, Hong Kong, China remains a separate customs territory, retains its free port status, and does not levy tariffs on the import of goods.

Chair, Hong Kong, China is a valued member of the WTO. Its strength rests on the reputation and integrity of its institutions, its independent regulators, and the independence of its Common Law Legal system, which offers effective dispute resolution systems in commercial cases to high standards. They are a fundamental part of why UK businesses continue to choose to operate in Hong Kong, China.

The UK's strong interest in seeing Hong Kong, China prosper is evidenced in the promises we made, together with China, in the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984. The Joint Declaration guarantees the continuation of Hong Kong, China's high degree of autonomy, social and economic systems, lifestyle, and rights and freedoms for 50 years from 1997. The UK remains committed to ensuring that these promises, made by both countries, are upheld.

However, China is now in an ongoing state of non-compliance with the Joint Declaration. Hong Kong, China's capitalist economic, monetary and financial systems remain distinct and robust, but actions taken by China, such as the imposition of the National Security Law, as well as the actions taken by the authorities of Hong Kong, China, continue to erode many of the civil and political rights guaranteed in the Joint Declaration and Hong Kong, China's Basic Law.

This, in turn, puts at risk confidence in the effective governance, fair judiciary, and independent regulation, which makes Hong Kong, China such a great place to do business. Given Hong Kong, China's significant role as a regional trade and economic hub, these actions also risk harming China's own economic development in the long term.

The UK therefore maintains that unwavering commitment to upholding the promises made in the Sino-British Joint Declaration is not only the best way to support our own trading relationship, but also the best way to safeguard its long-term prosperity and ensure that Hong Kong, China continues to be a crucial part of the world economy.

Chair, I would like to conclude by welcoming the role that Hong Kong, China plays in supporting the world economy through its full and active engagement within the WTO. The UK welcomes Hong Kong, China's participation in a range of Joint Initiatives, and most notably its recent efforts to help conclude substantive negotiations on Investment Facilitation for Development, as well as its ratification of the fisheries subsidies agreement. But like others, we were disappointed in the role that Hong Kong, China played in blocking consensus on selecting the Chair of

the Government Procurement Committee. I hope that Hong Kong, China will continue to use its influence in the WTO to advance free trade; promote important reforms; and work together with other Members to conclude an ambitious fisheries agreement heading into Ministerial Conference 13.

Finally, as one of the three co-chairs of the Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender, let me also welcome Hong Kong, China's initiatives to promote women's empowerment, such as the Women Empowerment Fund, and thank them for providing further information on the role of the Women's Commission in their answers to our Advanced Written Questions.

Thank you, Chair, and Discussant for facilitating this Trade Policy Review, and to the delegation of Hong Kong, China for its full cooperation with this important exercise in transparency.

Hong Kong applied to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in January 2022. By the end of the reporting period, the city had yet to accede. On 13 and 14 September, the Hong Kong SAR Government hosted the eighth Belt and Road Summit, followed by a Chief Executive-led Hong Kong delegation attending the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing on 17-18 October.

MONETARY SYSTEM

The Hong Kong SAR maintained its status as an international financial centre and was ranked fourth of 121 financial centres in the 34th Global Financial Leaders Index. Hong Kong's monetary and financial systems continued to be overseen by its four major independent regulators.

The Exchange Fund continued to be managed and controlled by the Hong Kong SAR Government, via the HKMA, and continued to regulate the exchange value of the Hong Kong dollar, within a band of HKD \$7.75 to \$7.85 to one US dollar. As of the end of the reporting period, the official foreign currency reserve assets of Hong Kong amounted to USD 425.5 billion, representing over five times the currency in circulation.

SHIPPING

Hong Kong's port maintained its status as an international maritime centre and ranked fourth of 43 top-ranked port cities in the 2023 Xinhua-Baltic International Shipping Centre Development Index Report.

On 20 December, the Transportation and Logistics Bureau released an "*Action Plan on Maritime and Port Development Strategy*", with a focus on increasing Hong Kong's maritime competitiveness through climate-sensitive and digital development, promotional activities, and greater collaboration with Guangdong ports in the Greater Bay Area.

CIVIL AVIATION

During the reporting period, Hong Kong maintained its role as a significant regional aviation hub and a leading global centre for air cargo.

On 26 October, the Airport Authority Hong Kong signed an agreement with Dongguan Port Group to establish a joint venture for the development of Hong Kong International Airport Dongguan Logistics Park. This project will enable cargo export procedures to be completed upstream in Dongguan, in compliance with Hong Kong regulations, before secured vessels convey goods to Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) for onwards transshipment, as well as vice versa for imports.

Over the reporting period, a new air services agreement and amendment to an existing agreement entered in to force between Hong Kong and Myanmar, and Hong Kong and Germany respectively.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS & UK-HK BILATERAL RELATIONS

British National (Overseas)

On 23 November, the Home Office published the latest UK immigration statistics. Since the British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) immigration route was launched on 31 January 2021, until 30 September 2023, there were approximately 191,000 applications, with 184,700 visas granted.

The Hong Kong SAR Government continued not to recognise the BN(O) passport as a valid travel document.

Visits

From 20 to 23 September, Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po visited the UK. On 20 September, he attended the *Hong Kong Trade Development Council Dinner* in London. The event was also attended by Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Home Office, Lord Sharpe; several UK Government officials, including the Consul General to Hong Kong and Macao; and British financial and business leaders. On 21 September, Paul Chan attended a Hong Kong Association lunch, which Department for Business and Trade Investment Minister Lord Johnson attended.

Chief Executive John Lee undertook his second annual visit to Beijing between 17 and 20 December, meeting President Xi, Premier Li Qiang, and other Central Government institutions. Between 23 July to 29 July the Chief Executive visited Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia, signing a total of 34 Memorandums of Understanding.

The then Lord Mayor of the City of London, Lord Mayor Lyons, visited Hong Kong on the 19 September to promote London as a financial centre.

Trade and Investment

Hong Kong is the UK's 14th largest global trading partner, accounting for 1.6% of total UK trade in the four quarters to the end of September 2023 (a change from the previous reporting period). Total trade in goods and services (exports plus imports)

between the UK and Hong Kong SAR was £28.6 billion in the four quarters to the end of September 2023, an increase of 6.9% or £1.9 billion from the four quarters to the end of September 2022. Of this £28.6 billion, UK exports accounted for £18.6 billion.

Culture

Between 1 July and 31 December, the British Council delivered 24,685 International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exams. 1,898 candidates took UK professional and university qualifications and another 1,918 candidates sat school-age exams. During the same period more than 4,800 Young Learners and 1,500 Adult students attended regular English Language courses.

On 9 July, 20 July and 12 August the British Council conducted three pre-departure briefings for over 1,500 students going to study in the UK, providing practical information on visas, flights, banking and other aspects of living in the UK. 5,971 (Q1-Q3) Study UK visas were issued to Hong Kong students in September 2023. The British Council held a Study UK Universities Roadshow for prospective university students from 18-22 September. More than 50 UK universities participated, attracting over 5,000 prospective students from international schools and local Direct Subsidy Schools.

On 21 November, a major exhibition of 52 masterpieces from the National Gallery UK opened at the Hong Kong Palace Museum. Entitled *Masterpieces: Botticelli to Van Gogh*, this was first major art exhibition from the UK in Hong Kong for a number of years. The exhibition will remain open until mid-April 2024. On 22 November, the British Council hosted a discussion between the Director of the National gallery, Dr Gabriele Finaldi and Dr Daisy Wang, Deputy Director of the Hong Kong Palace Museum, attended by 50 senior Hong Kong stakeholders.

DEFENCE

The maintenance of public order in the HKSAR continued to be the responsibility of the Hong Kong SAR Government. There has been no evidence that military forces sent by the CPG to be stationed in the SAR for the purpose of defence have interfered in the internal affairs of the city. Expenditure for these military forces have been borne by the CPG. In line with the provisions of the Joint Declaration, the Chinese People's Liberation Army Hong Kong Garrison held a one-day joint patrol exercise in the territory involving land, navy and air forces on September 21 and again on December 27.

RIGHT OF ABODE, TRAVEL & IMMIGRATION

In August, a photography professor based in the United States, Matthew Connors, was denied entry to Hong Kong for the second time by immigration officials at Hong Kong International Airport. Professor Connors had previously been arrested for failing to show his press pass as an independent journalist covering the 2019 protests, but was later released without charge. The immigration authorities said Connors did not satisfy the entry requirements.

In October, Hong Kong immigration authorities denied a visa to Rowena Xiaoqing He, a scholar of China's 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, preventing her from returning to her teaching post in the city. Further detail can be found in the Basic Rights & Freedoms section of this report, under Academic Freedoms.

OTHER REPORTS

On 18 August, the European Union published its 2022 annual report on Hong Kong's economic and political developments, which noted the "*continuing erosion*" of the SAR's high degree of autonomy, democratic principles and fundamental freedoms in 2022. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, said, "*the National Security Law and other legislation have continued to be used to stifle dissent and pluralism and the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong. The dismantling of the 'One country, Two systems' principle and erosion of Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy continues unabated*".

On 19 September, the Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom of the World 2023 Annual Report ranked Hong Kong as the world's second freest economy out of 165 jurisdictions, losing its top position to Singapore for the first time since 1996. The report was based on data for 2021. It noted that the decline was partly due to "*increased military interference in the rule of law and eroding confidence in judicial independence and the impartiality of Hong Kong courts*". The report warned that "*the decline in Hong Kong's rating in recent years has been much larger than the world's average decline*", noting that "*much of this decline is related to China's new harsh policies in Hong Kong and is not entirely the fault of pandemic policies*".

On 26 October, the World Justice Project (WJP) published its Rule of Law Index 2023. Hong Kong was ranked 23rd out of 142 countries and territories globally, falling one place from 2022, and four places from 2021. The SAR's score for constraints on government powers dropped from 31st to 59th, marking the most significant decline since 2020. Scores for fundamental rights and criminal justice rose slightly from 61st to 58th, and from 22nd to 20th.

On 15 November, the US Congress issued its US-China Economic and Security Review Commission Report. It noted that Beijing "*continues to adapt Hong Kong's institutions to mainland preferences and has eliminated the territory's once vibrant civil society*". The report described Beijing's efforts to rehabilitate Hong Kong's international image as "*cosmetic, designed purely to attract foreign business*".

CONCLUSION

The Sino-British Joint Declaration is an international treaty, registered with the United Nations, which China freely negotiated and agreed to. Under the Joint Declaration, China guaranteed to uphold Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy. China also guaranteed to uphold basic rights and freedoms, including those enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Hong Kong's capitalist economic, monetary and financial systems continue to operate in line with the Joint Declaration. However, Hong Kong's civil and political systems no longer reflect China's commitments. Despite the NSL stating that human rights should be respected and protected in safeguarding national security in Hong Kong, its implementation has led to the curtailing of fundamental freedoms such as freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and of association. In addition, changes to the electoral system in Hong Kong since 2021 mean that the people of Hong Kong have no meaningful choice in their elected representatives, limiting the ability of the Legislative and District Councils to hold the Executive to account. Whilst the judicial system practised in Hong Kong prior to handover continues to be maintained for civil and most criminal cases, cases concerning national security operate differently following the imposition of the NSL. In such cases, common law norms such as presumption of bail and trial by jury no longer hold.

As a co-signatory of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the UK will continue to speak out when China breaches its legally binding agreements and when it breaks its promises to the people of Hong Kong. We urge China to honour their commitments.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation	APEC
British National (Overseas)	BN(O)
Central Government Liaison Office	CGLO
Court of Appeal	CA
Court of Final Appeal	CFA
Central People's Government	CPG
Chinese University of Hong Kong	CUHK
Department of Justice	DoJ
Electoral Affairs Commission	EAC
European Union	EU
Foreign Correspondents' Club	FCC
Hong Kong Bar Association	HKBA
Hong Kong International Airport	HKIA
Hong Kong Journalists Association	HKJA
Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office	HKMAO
Hong Kong Monetary Authority	HKMA
Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute	PORI
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region	HKSAR
Hong Kong University	HKU
International English Language Testing System	IELTS
Legislative Council	LegCo
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender	LGBT
National People's Congress Standing Committee	NPCSC
National Security Committee	NSC
National Security Law	NSL
Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	MFA
People's Republic of China	PRC
Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership	RCEP
Special Rapporteurs	SR
Trade Policy Review	TPR
United Nations	UN
World Justice Project	WJP
World Trade Organisation	WTO