



**Hong Kong Democracy Council  
(HKDC)**

**Submission to the  
United Nations  
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**Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)  
CHINA**

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of the Human Rights Council  
(4<sup>th</sup> Cycle)**

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Hong Kong Democracy Council (HKDC) is a U.S.-based nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded in 2019 by Hong Kongers in the pro-democracy movement. HKDC aims to foster a coherent and collaborative diasporic community in order to enrich the global dialogue about Hong Kong (HK)'s democratic development and human rights issues.

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# Introduction

1. HKDC wishes to contribute to the concluding recommendations supported by the People's Republic of China (PRC) during the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. This submission focuses on the substantial changes to the implementation of human rights, particularly issues related to *Art. 19, 20, 22, 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*, in HK since the last review.
  
2. This submission outlines four key areas of concern regarding restrictions on the exercise of freedom, erosion of rights, and failure of the HK government (HKSARG) to comply with international human rights law:
  - 2.1. Freedom of expression drastically restricted
  - 2.2. Freedom of assembly indefinitely suspended
  - 2.3. Freedom of association so grossly restricted as to be effectively suspended
  - 2.4. Right to political participation effectively abolished; all those deemed “unpatriotic” excluded from the political system
  
3. HKDC strongly urges the PRC government and HKSARG to **immediately cease the systematic crackdown on basic civil and political rights.**

## I. Freedom of expression

4. HK has suffered a catastrophic decline in freedom of expression due to the imposition of the national security law (NSL) by the PRC government on June 30, 2020. At least 19 media organizations have been forced to close due to state repression. At least 27 films have been censored. Books have been removed from public library catalogs on grounds that they may “endanger national security.” The government is currently seeking a court injunction to ban a song, “Glory to Hong Kong,” on national security grounds. Hitherto rarely employed “sedition” laws have been used to imprison those accused of expressing views that “incite hatred” of the government.

### Media

5. From May 2021 to June 2023, at least 19 independent media organizations were closed due to state repression. (*Annex 1*)
6. Major pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* was raided by police in June 2020. Board members and editors of online news website *Stand News* were arrested in December 2021. Both publications were forced to close. Six executives and editors of *Apple Daily* have been prosecuted for “conspiracy to collude with foreign forces” under the NSL as well as “sedition,” and two editors of *Stand News* have been prosecuted for “sedition.”
7. The previously highly-respected and independent public broadcaster, *Radio Television HK*, has been turned into a state propaganda organ, moving away from a model similar to the *British Broadcasting Corporation* toward a model similar to *Xinhua*.

## **Film**

8. In June 2021, HKSARG enacted new measures to empower censorship authorities and government officials to censor and outright ban films deemed to “endanger national security.”
9. From November 2020 to June 2023, at least 27 films have been censored for political reasons. Sixteen have been censored by the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration, HKSARG’s censorship authority. Others have been censored by two cinemas, three universities, an arts development council, and Disney+. (*Annex 2*)

## **Books**

10. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the administrator of HK Public Libraries, has reviewed its catalog and removed books deemed to potentially “endanger national security.” The number of books removed so far appears to be several hundred. LCSD refuses to say how many or which books have been removed on grounds that doing so could “endanger national security.” Most books which others have found to have been removed focus on topics such as the Tiananmen Massacre or are written by political figures regarded as oppositional by the government.<sup>1</sup>
11. HKSARG prosecuted five leaders of the pro-democracy General Union of HK Speech Therapists on “sedition” charges for publishing three children’s books about a village of sheep. All five were convicted and sentenced to 19 months in prison each.

## **Use of “sedition” laws to unreasonably restrict freedom of expression**

12. Eighty-one people have been arrested on “sedition” charges since July 29, 2020.<sup>2</sup> Of those cases, 58 have to do solely with speech: 30 involve online speech; 15 are related to journalism; and 13 are for publishing, selling or possessing books. Four news organizations have also been prosecuted for sedition.

13. HKSARG asserts these speech acts constitute “incitement of hatred” of HKSARG or Chinese government or HK police. Its use of sedition laws unreasonably restricts the right to freedom of expression. Criticism of state authorities is protected speech.

*(See Annex 3 for a full list of those arrested, prosecuted and convicted of sedition.)*

### **“Glory to Hong Kong”**

14. HKSARG is currently seeking a court injunction to formally ban the pro-democracy protest anthem, “Glory to Hong Kong.” The government may attempt to apply the ban worldwide. International human rights organizations and HK diaspora groups have called on international internet and social media companies including Apple, Google, Meta, Twitter, and Spotify to fight the ban.<sup>3</sup> HKSARG invokes the NSL to claim the song “incites secession” and is therefore illegal.

## II. Freedom of peaceful assembly

### The Public Order Ordinance

15. In 1999, the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) criticized the Public Order Ordinance (POO)<sup>4</sup> in its concluding observations on its first report on HK, recommending, “...***the HKSAR should review this Ordinance and bring its terms into compliance with article 21 of the Covenant.***”<sup>5</sup>

16. Rather than follow the UNHRC’s recommendation, HKSARG has exploited POO’s vague definitions of “unlawful assembly” and “riot,” its punitive sentencing guidelines, and its notification requirements to unreasonably and drastically restrict the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

17. From August 2019 to the present, HK authorities have placed unreasonable restrictions on or outright banned protests. Their attempts to prevent protests can be divided into three distinct phases:

17.1. bans, police attacks, and mass arrests to crush mass protests in 2019-2020;

17.2. pandemic prevention measures to ban all protests from March 28, 2020 to December 28, 2022; and

17.3. unreasonable requirements, threats and intimidation since the end of pandemic restrictions.

### **2019-2020 protests: bans, police attacks and mass arrests**

18. From March 31, 2019 to July 6, 2020, at least 15,246,481 protesters took part in at least 1,096 protests. The vast majority of these protests and protesters were peaceful.<sup>6</sup>

19. However, from June 12, 2019, HKSARG started labeling the protests as “riots.” This was a political decision to deflect criticism, ignore demands and smear protesters. Over the coming months, the police arbitrarily designated a large number of protests as “riots,” attacked protesters indiscriminately, arrested protesters en masse, and eventually charged more than 800 with “riot,” a crime under the POO with a maximum penalty of ten years in prison.
20. As of June 30, 2023, 468 have been convicted of rioting, 444 have been given custodial sentences, with 394 sentenced to prison for an average of 44 months each.<sup>7</sup> Of the 468 convictions, 139 were based on “direct evidence” of discrete acts judged to constitute participation in a riot, such as blocking roads or throwing items at police, while 299 were convicted based on so-called “environmental evidence” such as clothing and gear, from which the judge inferred participation.<sup>8</sup>
21. For the above reasons, the vast majority of arrests, convictions, and sentences for “riot” are arbitrary.
22. Police employed various methods to crush the 2019 mass protests, including outright bans, attacking both pre-authorized and unauthorized protests, and placing unreasonable constraints on protests, rendering it almost impossible from August 2019 onward to hold a protest within the bounds of POO. Every protest, whether authorized or not, risked indiscriminate attacks by police using excessive force. From July 21, 2019, to November 15, 2020, police refused to grant so-called “letters of no objection” (LONOs) to 26 protests (i.e., they were banned), placed unreasonable constraints on 10 protests, stopped four previously authorized protests, and attacked many other protests.<sup>9</sup>(*Annex 4*)
23. Police also conducted mass arrests of protesters. In all, 10,279 people were arrested.<sup>10</sup> Approximately 3,000 have been prosecuted; 1,500 have been convicted of protest-related crimes; and 1,300 have received custodial sentences (imprisonment or juvenile detention).<sup>11</sup>

24. Because of the combination of unreasonable restrictions placed on protests; arbitrary designations of protests as riots, unlawful or unauthorized; and excessive use of force by police, the vast majority if not all of these protest-related detentions are arbitrary.<sup>12</sup>

### **The use of pandemic prevention measures to indefinitely suspend the right to freedom of peaceful assembly**

25. On March 28, 2020, HKSARG enacted pandemic prevention measures, including a ban on public gatherings.<sup>13</sup> The ban was continually renewed for a total of 33 months until December 28, 2022. The ban was a pretext to prevent protests while the authorities undertook a society-wide crackdown, foremost with the imposition of the NSL in June 2020.

26. From April 21, 2020 to March 20, 2022, the police issued fines for “participating in a prohibited group gathering” to at least 900 people suspected of protesting.<sup>14</sup> (*Annex 5*)

27. During this 33-month period, zero LONOs were issued by police to authorize protests under POO.

### **Post-pandemic measures taken by the authorities to continue to prevent protests**

28. Even after pandemic prevention restrictions were lifted on December 28, 2022, the authorities have continued to employ various tactics to prevent protests.<sup>15</sup>

29. The Hong Kong Women’s Workers Association attempted to hold an International Women’s Day march on March 8, 2023. The group said it had been informed by



police the march would be allowed, but no LONO was ever issued. On March 4, the group canceled the march without explanation. Police said, without evidence, that “violent groups” threatened to participate. The police had threatened the organizer that it would be held legally accountable for any potential breaches of “national security” associated with the march, pressuring the organizer to call it off.

30. In April 2023, two former trade union leaders applied to hold a Labour Day rally on May 1, 2023. On April 26, one of the organizers reported the other missing. He reappeared some hours later. While missing, he had withdrawn their application to the police for a LONO. His co-organizer said he was under tremendous pressure but could not reveal more due to the NSL’s confidentiality clause.

31. It has now been three years and six months since the last protest by anyone perceived by HKSARG as political opposition was allowed on January 19, 2020.<sup>16</sup> In effect, HKSARG has indefinitely suspended the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

### **Ban on public commemoration of the Tiananmen Massacre**

32. On June 4, 2023, for the fourth year in a row, no public commemoration of the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989 was allowed, in spite of the fact that the massacre had been commemorated in orderly and peaceful fashion annually from 1990 to 2019 by hundreds of thousands of people.

33. In 2021, HKSARG forcibly shut down the group that organized the annual June 4 candlelight vigil, HK Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China (HK Alliance). HKSARG is currently prosecuting three of its leaders, Chow Hang-tung, Albert Ho and Lee Cheuk-yan, on national security charges of “conspiracy to incite subversion.” All three have also been convicted and served prison terms for crimes related to their attempts to commemorate the massacre in 2020 and 2021.

34. In all, from 2020 to 2022, 69 people were arrested for commemorating the Tiananmen Massacre and 38 people were convicted. (*Annex 6*)

35. In 2023, five people were arrested and 27 were “detained for investigation.”<sup>17</sup>

### III. Freedom of association

36. HKSARG has decimated independent civil society. Since the start of 2021, at least 68 civil society organizations (CSOs) have closed due to state repression.<sup>18</sup>
37. These include 15 trade unions, 15 student organizations, neighborhood groups, professional groups, political parties, religious groups, human rights organizations, protest groups, and groups assisting political arrestees and prisoners. They represented many diverse sectors of society including civil servants, doctors, lawyers, teachers, , psychologists, students and workers from just about every industry. Some were new CSOs that arose in the wake of the Umbrella Movement of 2014 and the 2019-2020 protests; others were decades old, including the largest pro-democracy trade union group, HK Confederation of Trade Unions, and most university student unions, which advocated for democracy. (*Annexes 7 & 8*)
38. Many closed CSOs were among the most influential and active, including Civil Human Rights Front, which organized pro-democracy protests including all four of the 2019-2020 protests of more than one million people; Civic Party, one of the most popular pro-democracy political parties; and HK Alliance, which organized the annual June 4 candlelight vigil.
39. Several CSOs set up in 2019 to provide assistance to arrested, prosecuted and injured protesters were forced to close, including the largest, 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, to which ordinary Hong Kongers had donated more than HK\$200 million. Four trustees were arrested, including Cardinal Joseph Zen, musician Denise Ho, and lawyer Margaret Ng, on suspicion of “collusion with foreign forces” under NSL.
40. The crackdown has been so drastic and widespread that HKSARG has in effect suspended the right to freedom of association.

## IV. Right to political participation

41. Since 2020, HKSARG has in effect abolished the right to political participation.
42. It has 1) changed election laws to eliminate any candidate not deemed “patriotic;”<sup>19</sup> 2) introduced loyalty oaths to disqualify sitting pro-democracy elected officials or force them to resign; 3) eliminated the infrastructure of political opposition, including political parties, student unions, and CSOs; and 4) arrested hundreds of pro-democracy leaders.
43. HKSARG has overhauled the electoral system, halting democratization and renegeing on the promise of universal suffrage.<sup>20</sup> The changes, enacted on 13 April 2021, enshrine the principle of "patriots governing HK," and introduce a stringent nomination threshold, requiring candidates to be vetted by the CCP-controlled Election Committee and gain nominations from members of PRC governing bodies.<sup>21</sup> Popularly elected seats in the Legislative Council have been drastically reduced.<sup>22</sup>
44. Calling on others to cast blank votes or not to vote has been criminalized, though it is not illegal to cast a blank vote or to refrain from voting. Ten people have been arrested and three prosecuted for such incitement; nine exiled activists are wanted for the same.
45. In the 2019 District Council elections,<sup>23</sup> pro-democracy candidates won 388 of 479 seats. Seventeen months later, HKSARG enacted a law mandating oaths of loyalty to the PRC, resulting in the resignations of 265 District Councilors (DCs) and disqualifications of six prior to taking the oath and of 51 for "invalid oaths." This has left fewer than 70 pro-democracy DCs out of the original 388. Vacant seats are so numerous that many of the 18 district councils have been unable to convene meetings since October 2021 due to lack of quorum.

46. To align with the principle of “patriots governing HK,” HKSARG passed a revamping District Council elections in July 2023.<sup>24</sup> Democratically elected seats were cut from 452 to 88.<sup>25</sup>

47. HKSARG has also systematically arrested, prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned pro-democracy leaders. In all, 213 pro-democracy leaders have been arrested 341 times. Of those, 140 have been prosecuted; 114 convicted 167 times; and 51 imprisoned 80 times. Most every pro-democracy leader is either in prison or has gone into exile. Among the arrested are 119 DCs, 48 Legislative Council candidates, 35 pro-democracy CSO leaders, 29 political party leaders, 19 Legislative Councilors, 9 student union leaders, 5 protest organizers, 3 District Council candidates, 1 political party founder, and 1 media owner. Many pro-democracy leaders have been targeted for multiple arrests and trials each. Twenty-four pro-democracy leaders have been prosecuted three or more times each.

*(Annexes 9, 10 & 11)*

48. Ever since the 1997 handover, Hong Kongers have consistently demanded genuine universal suffrage. Rather than implementing it, as required by both the Basic Law and international law, the CCP and HKSARG have in effect abolished the right to political participation.

## Recommendations

49. Given the drastic deterioration of the human rights situation in HK, HKDC respectfully urges the Working Group to include in its recommendations the following:

- Repeal the National Security Law
  - Immediately cease the application of the National Security Law
  - Cease all censorship of publications and arts
  - Ensure citizens can express their views freely without fear of reprisal and censorship
  - Repeal the obsolete colonial-era sedition laws
  - Repeal provisions in Part III and IV of the Public Order Ordinance relating to notification of public meetings, unlawful assemblies and riots, ensuring it is consistent with the ICCPR
  - Immediately release all protesters whose freedom of peaceful assembly was violated
  - Immediately release all political prisoners
  - Abolish the “patriotic” electoral reforms which exclude all who are opposed to the CCP.
  - Protect citizens’ right to political participation regardless of their political ideology in line with international standards
  - Implement genuine universal suffrage in accordance with the Basic Law
  - Respect Chapter III of the Basic Law, Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and international human rights standards, including but not limited to standards for freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, as well as right to political participation
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<sup>1</sup> Since 2021, many news outlets have reported on individual titles disappearing from the HK Public Libraries catalog. URLs of those reports can be found below.

In May 2023, *Ming Pao* found that 195 books and recordings with political themes had been removed since 2020. ([https://news.mingpao.com/pns/%E8%A6%81%E8%81%9E/article/20230515/s00001/1684089306936/%E5%AF%A9%E8%A8%88%E4%BF%83%E8%AD%B7%E5%9C%8B%E5%AE%89%E5%BE%8C-%E5%9C%96%E6%9B%B8%E9%A4%A8%E5%A4%9A%E9%A0%85%E4%BD%9C%E5%93%81%E4%B8%8B%E6%9E%B6-%E7%B5%B1%E8%A8%88-%E6%B6%89%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E8%B3%87%E6%96%99%E5%85%A9%E5%B9%B4%E5%B0%91%E5%9B%9B%E6%88%90-%E6%B9%AF%E5%AE%B6%E9%A9%8A-%E5%AE%9C%E8%A7%A3%E9%87%8B%E6%BA%96%E5%89%87%E4%B8%8D%E6%87%89%E9%A8%E4%BE%BF%E5%AF%A9%E6%9F%A5\)](https://news.mingpao.com/pns/%E8%A6%81%E8%81%9E/article/20230515/s00001/1684089306936/%E5%AF%A9%E8%A8%88%E4%BF%83%E8%AD%B7%E5%9C%8B%E5%AE%89%E5%BE%8C-%E5%9C%96%E6%9B%B8%E9%A4%A8%E5%A4%9A%E9%A0%85%E4%BD%9C%E5%93%81%E4%B8%8B%E6%9E%B6-%E7%B5%B1%E8%A8%88-%E6%B6%89%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E8%B3%87%E6%96%99%E5%85%A9%E5%B9%B4%E5%B0%91%E5%9B%9B%E6%88%90-%E6%B9%AF%E5%AE%B6%E9%A9%8A-%E5%AE%9C%E8%A7%A3%E9%87%8B%E6%BA%96%E5%89%87%E4%B8%8D%E6%87%89%E9%A8%E4%BE%BF%E5%AF%A9%E6%9F%A5))

A crowd-sourced list administered by a HK teacher has found that as of June 27, 2023, at least 311 titles addressing social and political issues or written by authors perceived by HKSARG as oppositional had been removed:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bqq5sjKQYDplg4112yExb8wT\\_Bsz04URVqZ-ZYV9dFg/edit?resourcekey#gid=1121124105](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bqq5sjKQYDplg4112yExb8wT_Bsz04URVqZ-ZYV9dFg/edit?resourcekey#gid=1121124105).

For reports on the removal of individual titles, see: <https://hongkongfp.com/2023/05/26/not-recommended-reading-the-books-hong-kong-is-purging-from-public-libraries/>,

<https://thecollectivehk.com/%e4%b8%8b%e6%9e%b6%e6%9b%b8%e5%96%ae%ef%bd%9c%e5%9c%96%e6%9b%b8%e9%a4%a8%e4%b8%89%e5%b9%b4%e4%b8%8b%e6%9e%b6-255-%e6%9c%ac%e4%b8%ad%e6%96%87%e9%9b%bb%e5%ad%90%e6%9b%b8%e3%80%80%e8%bf%91%e5%9b%9b/>,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/05/17/hong-kong-tiananmen-books-removed/>,

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-05-16/hong-kong-public-libraries-purge-books-on-tiananmen-crackdown#xi4y7vzkg>,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/16/tiananmen-square-books-removed-from-hong-kong-libraries-in-run-up-to-anniversary>,

<https://www.inmediahk.net/node/%E6%94%BF%E7%B6%93/%E5%9C%96%E6%9B%B8%E9%A4%A8%E4%B8%8B%E6%9E%B6%E5%A4%9A%E5%90%8D%E5%82%B3%E5%AA%92%E4%BA%BA%E5%8F%8A%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E5%AD%B8%E8%80%85%E8%BF%91%E5%85%A8%E9%83%A8%E6%9B%B8-%E6%B6%89%E5%8F%A3%E8%BF%B0%E6%AD%B7%E5%8F%B2%E3%80%81%E6%97%85%E9%81%8A%E6%96%87%E9%9B%86%E3%80%81%E8%A6%AA%E5%AD%90%E6%BC%AB%E7%95%AB%E7%AD%89>,

<https://thechasernews.co.uk/%E7%BE%8E%E9%BA%97%E6%96%B0%E9%A6%99%E6%B8%AF%EF%BD%9C%E5%AF%A9%E8%A8%88%E7%BD%B2%E8%A6%81%E6%B1%82%E5%85%AC%E5%85%B1%E5%9C%96%E6%9B%B8%E9%A4%A8%E5%8A%A0%E5%BC%B7%E5%AF%A9%E6%9F%A5/>,

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/books-11242021093901.html>,

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/05/10/hong-kong-pulls-more-democracy-books-from-library-shelves-citing-security-law-concerns/>

<sup>2</sup> The sedition laws were enacted when HK was a colony of the United Kingdom. From the handover to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1997 until 2020, they had never been used. Of the 81 people so far arrested for sedition, 50 have been prosecuted; 28 convicted; none acquitted; 27 sentenced to prison for between three and 40 months each, and five to juvenile detention.

<sup>3</sup> “Hong Kong: Tech Firms Should Oppose Protests Song Ban,” Human Rights Watch, June 20, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/20/hong-kong-tech-firms-should-oppose-protest-song-ban>

<sup>4</sup> The Public Order Ordinance is the set of HK laws that cover public gatherings.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC), ‘Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee on the First Report of the HKSAR of PRC in the light of the ICCPR’, 15 November 1999, Geneva

<sup>6</sup> “HK pro-democracy protests, 2019-2020,” Kong Tsung-gan, <https://kongtsunggan.medium.com/hong-kong-protests-2019-82cf32383605>

<sup>7</sup> As of June 30, 2023, 304 riot trials related to the 2019-2020 protests are still ongoing or have not yet begun.

<sup>8</sup> The 50 others were sentenced to juvenile detention. For full statistics, see “6.12四周年 | 暴動案數據分析 58%審結 382人罪成判囚 近半料2025年或之後出獄,” 法庭線, June 11, 2023,

<https://thewitnesshk.com/612%E5%9B%9B%E5%91%A8%E5%B9%B4-%E6%9A%B4%E5%8B%95%E6%A1%88%E6%95%B8%E6%93%9A%E5%88%86%E6%9E%90-5%E6%88%908%E5%AF%A9%E7%B5%90-382%E4%BA%BA%E7%BD%AA%E6%88%90%E5%88%A4%E5%9B%9A-%E8%BF%91%E5%8D%8A/>

<sup>9</sup> In addition, the High Court granted HKSARG an injunction against protests at the airport.

<sup>10</sup> According to HKSARG statistics.

<sup>11</sup> In addition, several hundred have been remanded in long-term custody pending completion of trial.

<sup>12</sup> For a full account, especially of those imprisoned in relation to the protests, see *Hong Kong Reaches a Grim Milestone: 1,000 Political Prisoners*, Hong Kong Democracy Council, June 2022 <https://www.hkdc.us/political-prisoner-report>

<sup>13</sup> The number of people allowed at public gatherings was capped. For most of the 33-month period, the maximum number of people allowed to gather in public varied between 2 and 4, with short periods of maximums of 8, 12 and 50. A complete list of the maximum number of people allowed to gather in public places while the pandemic prevention regulations were in effect from March 28, 2020 to December 28, 2022: From March 28 to May 7, 2022: 4 people maximum; May 8 to June 18: 8 people maximum; June 18 to July 14: 50 people maximum; July 15 to July 28: 4 people maximum; July 29 to September 10: 2

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people maximum; September 11 to December 1: 4 people maximum; December 2, 2020 to February 23, 2021: 2 people maximum; February 24, 2021 to February 9, 2022: 4 people maximum; February 10 to April 20: 2 people maximum; April 21 to October 18: 4 people maximum; October 19 to December 28: 12 people maximum.

<sup>14</sup> “Participating in a prohibited group gathering” was a specific violation under the pandemic prevention regulations that had previously never existed in Hong Kong. The actual number of citations issued to suspected protesters is likely much higher than 633. That number was compiled based on media reports.

<sup>15</sup> This includes some new restrictions never before seen in the history of protests in Hong Kong. The first—and so far, only—post-pandemic protest with police authorization was held on March 26, 2023. The protest was non-political, against land reclamation. Still, police made protesters wear numbered tags, carry their own cordon lines, and not wear masks, and prohibited the shouting of political slogans.

<sup>16</sup> Though authorized, it was nevertheless attacked and terminated by the police.

<sup>17</sup> “Detained for investigation” is a category newly devised by police. It is a form of preventive detention believed to have no legal basis.

<sup>18</sup> Nineteen media organizations were also forced to close, but are not included in the count of 69 in this section. Please see the “freedom of expression” section of this submission for information on those.

<sup>19</sup> In the People’s Republic of China as well as in Hong Kong, “patriotic” is a euphemism employed by authorities to mean “loyal to the Chinese Communist Party.” The effect of this change to election laws is that no person deemed to be in political opposition to the CCP is allowed to take part in elections.

<sup>20</sup> See Basic Law Articles 45 and 68.

<sup>21</sup> Namely, the National People’s Congress and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.

<sup>22</sup> From 35 (50 percent) directly elected seats to only 20 (22 percent).

<sup>23</sup> District Council elections were the only elections in Hong Kong in which, prior to recent changes, almost all of the seats were elected in accordance with principles of universal suffrage.

<sup>24</sup> “CE welcomes passage of District Councils (Amendment) Bill 2023,” Hong Kong government press release, July 6, 2023, <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202307/06/P2023070600331.htm?fontSize=1>.

<sup>25</sup> “District Councils (Amendment) Bill, 2023,” <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2023/english/bills/b202305301.pdf>.