

Urgent Calls for Support from the International Legal Community for Hong Kong Lawyers Wanted under the Hong Kong National Security Law

On 3rd July 2023, arrest warrants were issued for eight Hong Kong individuals who allegedly contravened the Hong Kong National Security Law (HKNSL) by the Hong Kong Police's National Security Department. The bounty offered by the Hong Kong Police for the eight individuals in question is at HKD 1 million each. Among them is Kevin Yam, a Hong Kong solicitor and the co-founder of the Progressive Lawyers Group in Hong Kong, a civil society group set up to champion for the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. Another individual is Dennis Kwok, a barrister and former Hong Kong lawmaker who was elected as the sole representative of the Hong Kong legal profession in the Hong Kong Legislative Council from 2012 to 2020. Both Mr. Yam and Mr. Kwok have engaged in international human rights and rule of law advocacy work since leaving Hong Kong.

These arrest warrants (and bounties) are the latest egregious actions taken by the Hong Kong SAR authorities since the establishment of the HK NSL by Beijing's National People's Congress in 2020. It has been condemned by governments across the world and the United Nations. On 11th October 2022, the UN Human Rights Committee recommended the HKSAR government to repeal the HKNSL and stop applying the law, as the Committee concluded that it seriously undermines the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong.

We call on the HKSAR Government, the Hong Kong Bar Association, and the Hong Kong Law Society to implement the following actions:

- 1. Repeal the Hong Kong National Security Law:** In order to fulfill its obligations under the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as enshrined in Hong Kong's Basic Law, the HKSAR Government must repeal and/or cease applying the HKNSL as recommended by the UN Human Rights Committee.
- 2. Uphold obligations under the ICCPR:** The HKSAR Government should fulfill its obligations under the ICCPR, which safeguards fundamental rights and freedoms. This includes protecting the right to freedom of expression, assembly, and association.
- 3. Protect the independence of the legal profession:** The legal professional bodies in Hong Kong should safeguard and defend their members who are being politically targeted by the authorities under the HKNSL. No disciplinary proceedings should be commenced against anyone on the grounds of HKNSL.

Reference:

https://gia.info.gov.hk/general/202307/03/P2023070300526_424125_1_1688375520491.pdf

Signatories (in alphabetical order):

American Association of the International Commission of Jurists

Bar Human Rights Committee of England & Wales

Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)

Committee to Support Chinese Lawyers

Human Rights Now

International Association of People's Lawyers, Australian Branch

International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL) Monitoring Committee on Attacks on Lawyers

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

Justice Abroad

Lawyers for Lawyers

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Lawyers Without Borders Canada

Leitner Center for International Law and Justice