



Appeal - Joint Statement to Denounce Violence against Students and Youth in Hong Kong by Police Personnel

WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION (WSCF)-15 AUGUST 2019

Since June 2019, Hong Kong has been in the limelight through the international media. This is the 11th consecutive week of an extraordinary movement started in Hong Kong in protest against the proposed controversial extradition bill by the government of Hong Kong. More than one million people of Hong Kong demonstrated on the streets on June 9 against the proposed bill. Despite the outcry of millions of people against the bill, the Hong Kong government insisted to read the bill in the Hong Kong Legislative Council (Legco) on June 12, the unicameral legislative body of Hong Kong. As a result, thousands of people protested by surrounding the Legco building and the government headquarters, prompting Legco to postpone the reading of the bill. The police, however, fired tear gas, rubber bullets, bean bag rounds and pepper spray at the protesters and dispersed them violently. Surprisingly, the Hong Kong government instead condemned the protest, saying it was an organized "riot."

In response to the violent actions towards the protesters by the Hong Kong police, two million people of Hong Kong took to the streets a week later on June 16 demanding the withdrawal of the proposed bill and revoking the characterization of the anti-extradition law protests as a riot. Since then, there have been ongoing protests and rallies in different districts of Hong Kong to which the authorities have responded with an excessive use of force. On July 21, the protesters and the general public witnessed mob violence by about 100 men late at night at the Yuen Long train station, injuring at least 45 people—those passing by as well as protesters returning home from a demonstration in the urban area and even journalists, a legislator and a pregnant woman. The police were heavily criticized for taking more than 30 minutes to respond to this violence and not making any arrests, provoking claims of collusion between the police and the mob, many of whom were suspected to be triad members of organized criminal gangs.

We are concerned about the escalating violence by the Hong Kong police to crack down on the protesters during indoor and outdoor assemblies. The unnecessary and abusive power used to arrest protesters and with no positive response to the protesters' demands by the government have forced the peaceful protesters to adopt different strategies to continue the protests, which led them to occupy the Hong Kong International Airport for five days beginning on August 9.

On August 11, the Hong Kong police once again used excessive force and used tear gas inside the Kwai Fong train station. They also fired a pepper ball at close range at protesters inside the Tai Koo

train station and beat them as they tried to flee down an escalator. A young woman protesting in Tsim Sha Tsui may lose her right eye after apparently being hit by a bean bag round fired by the police. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights urged Hong Kong on August 13 to exercise restraint and to investigate the police's use of tear gas in crowded and enclosed areas and directly aiming tear gas at individuals—practices that are banned under international law.

The protest is mainly led by the students and youth of Hong Kong. The aspirational young people, who are organized, creative and full of confidence, are envisioning a democratic and equitable Hong Kong. Their love and passion for the city have encouraged them to continue and to lead the pro-democratic movement since 2014. The young people are the future of any community or nation. Hence, it's important to hear their voices. Many youth in Hong Kong are losing hope, however, and they find their future in the city is bleak, which is shown by their emotions during the protests. It's reported that four young people who were part of the protest group have lost their lives concerning the proposed Extradition Bill [1]. Indeed, a sad and shocking news for the people in and outside of Hong Kong!

An efficient and capable leadership of any government should be able to facilitate the process to understand the problem in society.

We, as an international ecumenical student Christian organization, join hands and stand in solidarity with SCM Hong Kong, the young people and the community who are seeking a peaceful resolution of this crisis with a just outcome for the people of Hong Kong.

We condemn all forms of violence by all parties. Specifically, we strongly condemn the violent crackdown by the Hong Kong police against the frontline protesters—unarmed youth and students who use their umbrellas, helmets, eye and face masks as their protection.

We urge the leaders of the Hong Kong government to listen to the voices of millions of people and to initiate political dialogue on the five demands by the protesters:

1. Formally withdraw the Fugitive Offenders (Amendment) Bill in order to officially terminate the legislative procedure of the bill;
2. Revoke the characterization of any protests during the anti-extradition law movement as a riot;
3. Dismiss all charges already made and guarantee that the people protesting against the Fugitive Offenders (Amendment) Bill will be free from any charges;
4. Establish an independent commission of inquiry to conduct an impartial investigation into the abuse of power by the police; and
5. Implement genuine universal suffrage for the election of the chief executive.

We also urge SCMs across the globe to dedicate a prayer day for the people of Hong Kong to uphold them, especially the students and young people, in your prayers to overcome violence and restore peace and justice in the city.

Lord make us an instrument of your peace; Where there is hatred let us sow love

Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is doubt, faith

Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light

And where there is sadness, joy - Amen.

August 15, 2019

World Student Christian Federation Global (WSCF)

Student Christian Movement of Hong Kong (SCM HK)

World Student Christian Federation Asia -Pacific (WSCF A-P)

Photo credit: <https://images.app.goo.gl/PdASJ2KXGGBpV1Up7>

[1]<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/06/15/man-protesting-hong-kongs-extradition-law-unconscious-jumping-mall-admiralty/>

<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/06/29/21-year-old-hong-kong-student-falls-death-sheung-shui-leaving-message-opposing-extradition-law/>