

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN HONG KONG:

HONG KONG WATCH BRIEFING ON EVENTS: AUGUST 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

POLITICAL PRISONERS: ARRESTS, CHARGES, & TRIALS

Throughout August 2021, Beijing has continued its crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, with:

- Seven pro-democracy activists being sentenced to at least 11 months in prison for participating in an “illegal assembly” in October 2019.
- Pro-democracy activist Max Chung Kin-ping being arrested by the Hong Kong Police and accused of organising an “illegal assembly” on 27 July 2019.
- Four University of Hong Kong students being arrested under the National Security Law and accused of “advocating terrorism”.
- Hong Kong activist Andy Li and paralegal Chan Tsz-wah pleading guilty to taking part in a conspiracy to “collude with foreign forces” along with Jimmy Lai, as a result of possible mistreatment and torture in the mainland.
- Hong Kong’s High Court rejecting the latest bail application from former district councillor Roy Tam, who is one of dozens of pro-democracy figures detained for close to six months pending trial under the National Security Law.
- Two former Apple Daily editors Lo Wai-kwong and Cheung Kim-hung were denied bail under the National Security Law.
- Three more members of a speech therapist union in Hong Kong have been remanded in custody and charged with sedition for publishing a series of children’s books.

CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER ASSAULT

- The Civil Human Rights Front, one of the largest civil society groups in Hong Kong responsible for organising some of the city’s largest pro-democracy protests in 2019, announced that it would disband. The Hong Kong Police Force has been investigating

the civil society group's finances since April and a government source stated to the media that it would pursue the group regardless of its dissolution.

- The Professional Teachers' Union, Hong Kong's biggest teaching union, announced on 10 August 2021 that it would disband as a result of pressure from the Chinese Government.
- The 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, which is a fund that was set up to provide legal fees and financial assistance to protesters arrested during the 2019 pro-democracy demonstrations, has announced that it will cease operations on October 31 2021. The announcement follows reports that the Hong Kong Police has launched a probe into the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund on suspicion of violating the National Security Law.
- The Hong Kong Police have announced that they are investigating the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, the organisers of Hong Kong's annual Tiananmen Square Vigil for breaching the National Security Law.
- The Hong Kong Government announced on 24 August 2021 a censorship law which will be used to ensure that films screened in the city in the past have not violated the National Security Law, with those found guilty facing up to three years in jail or a HK\$1 million fine.
- Three members of the directly elected Hong Kong Government's Art Development Council have resigned citing attacks by pro-Beijing outlets on civil society.
- The Hong Kong singer and pro-democracy activist Denise Ho announced that the Hong Kong Arts Centre had cancelled her upcoming concerts, citing a contract clause that the concerts would not go ahead if "public order or public safety were endangered".

THE STATE OF THE RULE OF LAW

- In a speech to Hong Kong's Law Society the former Chief Justice, Geoffrey Ma, has urged the Hong Kong legal community to speak up for the rule of law, saying it is their public duty and is not political.
- Hong Kong officials intervened in this month's Law Society elections. Hong Kong's Justice Secretary, Teresa Cheng, published a piece in the Chinese regime's propaganda outlet *China Daily* promising lawyers' professional benefits if they backed the right candidates, while Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam warned the Law Society that it would jeopardise its relationship with the Government if "the group became politicized".
- Lord Reed, the President of the UK Supreme Court, released a statement saying that he and his deputy Lord Hodge would continue to serve on Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal for now, concluding that the city's judiciary remained largely independent of government.
- Hong Kong's pro-Beijing dominated Legislative Council has passed a law allowing solicitors for the Department of Justice to become Senior Counsel without first

having to serve as barristers. The Hong Kong Bar Association has criticised the new law which it claims will undermine the independence of the legal community.

DEMOCRACY DISMANTLED

- The Hong Kong Government on 26 August 2021 disqualified one of the last pro-democracy lawmakers from his seat within the Hong Kong Legislature, after finding him insufficiently loyal.
- The Hong Kong Government announced its intention to spend HK\$1.17bn renovating the Legislative Council as it cuts the number of directly elected lawmakers and bars pro-democracy parties from running for elections.
- At least 101 candidates put forward for Hong Kong's Election Committee (which will decide the appointment of Hong Kong's Chief Executive and 50 Legislative Councillors) are reported to be top executives of mainland Chinese enterprises and business associations. The South China Morning Post reports that the Election Committee will be packed with at least 1,006 Beijing loyalists out of 1,500 seats.

MOVES TO CONTINUE THE CRACKDOWN ON BASIC RIGHTS

- On 19 August 2021, it was reported that the National People's Congress Standing Committee has put on hold its plan to add China's new anti-sanctions law to the annex of Hong Kong's Basic Law, following a backlash from the business community.
- The People's Liberation Army garrison based in Hong Kong this month practised military drills on land and sea designed to intercept "fugitives" attempting to flee the territory by boat.
- On 1 September 2021, the Hong Kong Government's new law which requires all domestic phone sim cards to be registered with the authorities came into force.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- The UK Government says nearly 65,000 Hong Kongers have taken up its BNO scheme in the first two quarters of 2021.
- On 5 August 2021 US President Joe Biden announced temporary safe haven for Hong Kongers currently in the USA.
- Statistics released by the Hong Kong Government have shown that 89,000 Hong Kongers (1.2% of the population) have left the city since the introduction of the National Security Law last year.
- According to the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) Authority, which deals with Hong Kongers pensions, Hong Kongers in the first quarter of the year permanently applied to withdraw HK\$1.93 billion from their MPF accounts – an almost 50% spike on the previous year.

- In the same month, HSBC and Canadian insurance company Manulife have faced criticism as reports have surfaced of the two MPF providers refusing to allow Hong Kongers who take up the UK's BNO scheme early access to their pension savings, at the behest of the MPF Authority.
- The New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party in Canada have committed to Hong Kong policies within their manifestos for the upcoming Federal Elections in Canada.
- On 5 August 2021 the Australian Foreign Minister announced that the Government intends to introduce legislation reforming its autonomous sanctions regime, which will be akin to the UK, Canada, EU and USA's Magnitsky legislation.
- The Hong Kong Stock Exchange has been hit by the Chinese Government's crackdown on technology companies, as many indexes dominated by Chinese internet, app and gaming leaders are listed in Hong Kong rather than onshore.

POLITICAL PRISONERS: ARRESTS, CHARGES, & TRIALS

Seven pro-democracy activists are sentenced to at least 11 months in prison for participating in an “illegal assembly”

On 1 September 2021, seven pro-democracy activists were sentenced to at least 11 months in prison for taking part in an “unauthorised” protest in October 2019, at the height of the anti-Extradition Bill protest movement in which hundreds of thousands of Hong Kongers took to the streets.

Former League of Social Democrats chairs Raphael Wong and Avery Ng, former League of Social Democrats members Figo Chan and “Long Hair” Leung Kwok-hung, and veteran democrats Yeung Sum, Albert Ho, and Cyd Ho all received at least 11-month prison sentences to be served concurrently with current jail sentences. Out of the seven defendants, all bar Raphael Wong are already in jail.

The Department for Justice has indicated it may appeal the verdict for a harsher sentence.¹

Pro-democracy activist arrested and accused of organising an “illegal assembly”

On 23 August 2021, pro-democracy activist Max Chung Kin-ping was arrested by the Hong Kong Police and accused of organising an “illegal assembly” on July 27, 2019.

The march, in which organisers claimed over 300,000 Hong Kongers took to the streets, was in response to the Yuen Long MTR attack in which commuters and activists were attacked by triads.²

Four students arrested under the National Security Law

Four University of Hong Kong students were arrested on 18 August 2021 under the National Security Law and accused of “advocating terrorism”. The arrests are in connection to a controversial student union statement that was issued following the death of a police officer who was stabbed in Hong Kong.³

If convicted under the National Security Law, all four students could face at least 10 years in prison.

¹ <https://www.hongkongwatch.org/all-posts/2021/9/1/governments-must-actively-campaign-for-the-release-of-all-political-prisoners-in-hong-kong>

² https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3146139/hong-kong-protests-activist-accused-organising-illegal?utm_source=Yahoo&utm_medium=partner&utm_campaign=contentexchange&utm_content=3146139

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/18/four-hong-kong-students-arrested-for-advocating-terrorism>

Hong Kong activists plead guilty to “colluding with foreign forces” after detention in mainland China

Hong Kong activist Andy Li and paralegal Chan Tsz-wah have pleaded guilty to taking part in a conspiracy to “collude with foreign forces” along with Jimmy Lai. Li and Chan will be sentenced under the National Security Law next year.⁴

Andy Li was one of 12 Hong Kong young people to be held in incommunicado detention in mainland China for six months after attempting to flee the city. It is suspected that their testimonies are a result of mistreatment and possible torture.

Former District Councillor denied bail under the National Security Law

Hong Kong’s High Court has rejected the latest bail application from former district councillor Roy Tam, who is one of dozens of pro-democracy figures detained for close to six months pending trial under the National Security Law.

Roy Tam is among a group of 47 pro-democracy leaders charged on February 28 with conspiracy to commit subversion in connection with an unofficial legislative primary election held in July 2020. So far, only 13 of the 47 have been released on bail.⁵

Two former Apple Daily journalists denied bail under the National Security Law

Two former Apple Daily editors Lo Wai-kwong and Cheung Kim-hung were denied bail this month under the National Security Law.

The pair are accused of conspiring with the newspaper and media company founder Jimmy Lai to request foreign countries or external forces to impose sanctions on Hong Kong and China between July 2020 and April 3 this year.⁶

Three speech therapists are remanded in custody after being charged with “conspiracy to distribute seditious material”

Three more members of a speech therapist union in Hong Kong have been remanded in custody and charged with sedition for publishing a series of children’s books. Union secretary Sidney Ng Hau-yi, treasurer Samuel Chan Yuen-sum, and officer Marco Fong Tsz-ho, appeared before a judge designated to handle national security law cases.

⁴ <https://www.hongkongwatch.org/all-posts/2021/8/19/andy-li-and-chan-tsz-wah-guilty-plea-shows-mainlandisation-of-hong-kong-is-seeping-into-the-courts>

⁵ <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/23/hong-kong-ex-district-councillor-roy-tam-denied-bail-pending-national-security-trial/>

⁶ <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/13/hong-kong-court-denies-ex-apple-daily-chief-editor-bail-in-national-security-case/>

Hong Kong Police first targeted the General Union of Hong Kong Speech Therapists last month, accusing its leaders of inciting anti-government hatred with three picture books about sheep defending their village from invading wolves.⁷

On 17 August 2021, the Hong Kong Labour Department announced that it was revoking the registration of the General Union of Hong Kong Speech Therapists.⁸

CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER ASSAULT

The Civil Human Rights Front disbands following pressure from Beijing

On 16 August 2021, the Civil Human Rights Front, one of the largest civil society groups in Hong Kong responsible for organising some of the city's largest pro-democracy protests in 2019, announced that it would disband.

The Civil Human Rights Front, which has existed for 19 years, cited growing pressure as driving the decision. In recent months, the Front's convenor, Figo Chan Ho-wun, has been jailed and the Hong Kong Police Force has made statements indicating that rallies that the group had previously organised breached the National Security Law.

The Hong Kong Police Force has been investigating the civil society group's finances since April and a government source stated to the media that it would pursue the group regardless of its dissolution. The Civil Human Rights Front's disbandment comes just days after the disbandment of Hong Kong's largest teachers' union.

Commenting on the disbandment of the Civil Human Rights Front, Johnny Patterson, Hong Kong Watch's Policy Director, said:

"The space for civil society and free expression in Hong Kong continues to shrink at a rapid pace, as Beijing marshals its security apparatus to target activists, teachers, speech therapists, and trade unionists.

The freedoms that were once guaranteed under Hong Kong's Basic Law and China's obligations under the Sino-British Joint Declaration have been replaced with a culture of intolerance and fear as Hong Kong turns into a police state."⁹

⁷ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3146852/hong-kong-childrens-books-trio-charged-conspiracy>

⁸ <https://twitter.com/HelvetinPastori/status/1427546642761326592?s=20>

⁹ <https://www.hongkongwatch.org/all-posts/2021/8/16/the-disbanding-of-the-civil-human-rights-front-shows-the-space-for-free-expression-in-hong-kong-continues-to-shrink-at-a-rapid-pace>

The Professional Teachers' Union disbands following the Hong Kong Government cutting ties

The Professional Teachers' Union, Hong Kong's biggest teaching union announced on 10 August 2021 that it would disband as a result of pressure from the Chinese Government.

The teaching union, which has existed for 47 years and has 95,000 members, has increasingly come under pressure from the Hong Kong Government, which announced it would no longer recognise it following pro-Beijing outlets describing the union as "a malignant tumour" that needs to be eradicated.

On 6 August 2021, the Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union stated that it would stop selling teachers materials on its website.

Kevin Yeung Yu-Hung, Hong Kong's Education Secretary, called for teachers to rethink their association with the union and the Hong Kong Police Commissioner has said that the police will investigate the union for any potential national security violations.

Under Article 27 of Hong Kong's Basic Law, Hong Kongers are guaranteed the right and freedom to join trade unions and to strike.

Commenting on the disbanding of the Professional Teachers' Union, Benedict Rogers, Hong Kong Watch's Chief Executive, said:

"The forced disbanding of the Professional Teachers' Union is a new low for human rights in Hong Kong. Not content with jailing pro-democracy activists, journalists, and students, Beijing and its acolytes in the Hong Kong Government have turned their attention to attacking trade unions and teachers under the pretence of state security.

China has once again flagrantly breached its international obligations to the people of Hong Kong and their previous commitments to respect their right and freedom to join and participate in trade unions."¹⁰

612 Humanitarian Relief Fund announces it will disband

The 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, which is a fund that was set up to provide legal fees and financial assistance to protesters arrested during the 2019 pro-democracy demonstrations has announced that it will cease operations on October 31 2021.¹¹

The announcement follows reports that the Hong Kong Police has launched a probe into the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund on suspicion of violating the National Security Law. On 1

¹⁰ <https://www.hongkongwatch.org/all-posts/2021/8/10/the-forced-disbanding-of-the-professional-teachers-union-is-another-flagrant-breach-by-china-of-its-international-obligations-to-hong-kong>

¹¹ <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/18/humanitarian-fund-helping-arrested-hong-kong-protesters-will-halt-operations-by-october-31/>

September 2021, the Hong Kong Police announced that it had obtained a High Court order demanding that the fund hand over information regarding its donors.¹²

Hong Kong Police investigate the organisers of the annual Tiananmen Square Vigil

On 26 August 2021, the Hong Kong Police announced that they are investigating the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, the organisers of Hong Kong's annual Tiananmen Square Vigil for breaching the National Security Law.

Core members of the group have confirmed that they have received letters from the authorities accusing them of being “foreign agents” and giving them 14 days to declare the organisations membership, finances, and foreign links.¹³

Hong Kong Government announces a new film censorship law to bring Hong Kong into line with the mainland

The Hong Kong Government announced on 24 August 2021 a censorship law which will be used to ensure that films screened in the city in the past have not violated the national security, with those found guilty facing up to three years in jail or a HK\$1 million fine.

Under the new law, set to be voted on in Hong Kong's pro-Beijing dominated Legislative Council, the authorities will have the power to revoke the licence of venues that show films that are deemed “contrary to the interests of national security”.

The law will bring Hong Kong into line with mainland China where films are rigorously censored to ensure that there is no content which could undermine the Chinese Communist Party's rule.¹⁴

One of Hong Kong's last independent bookstores is to close

One of Hong Kong's last independent English-language bookstores is to close. Founded in 2017 by Albert Wan and Jenny Smith, Bleak House Books in San Po Kong will close to the public on 15 October 2021.¹⁵

¹² <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/09/01/hong-kong-police-serve-court-order-to-protester-support-fund-for-info-in-national-security-probe-reports/>

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/26/hong-kong-police-investigate-organisers-of-tiananmen-square-vigil>

¹⁴ <https://www.hongkongwatch.org/all-posts/2021/8/24/hong-kongs-status-as-a-world-class-film-hub-and-rich-cultural-scene-is-being-stripped-away-in-the-name-of-state-security>

¹⁵ <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/29/hong-kong-independent-bookstore-bleak-house-books-to-close/>

Pro-democracy artists resign from Hong Kong Arts Development Council

Three members of the directly elected Hong Kong Government's Art Development Council have resigned citing attacks by pro-Beijing outlets on civil society and the ongoing crackdown on the pro-democracy movement within the city.¹⁶

Hong Kong singer and pro-democracy activist Denise Ho says her concerts have been cancelled

On 1 September 2021, the Hong Kong singer and pro-democracy activist Denise Ho announced that the Hong Kong Arts Centre had cancelled her upcoming concerts, citing a contract clause that the concerts would not go ahead if "public order or public safety were endangered".

The cancellation came days after pro-Beijing media publications accused Denise Ho of "colluding with foreign forces" and breaching the National Security Law.¹⁷

THE STATE OF THE RULE OF LAW

Former Hong Kong Chief Justice says upholding the rule of law is not political

In a speech to Hong Kong's Law Society the former Chief Justice, Geoffrey Ma, has urged the Hong Kong legal community to speak up for the rule of law, saying it is their public duty and is not political.¹⁸

Hong Kong officials intervene in the Law Society elections

Hong Kong officials intervened in this month's Law Society elections. The election for five open positions on the Law Society's Council took place on 24 August 2021. Hong Kong's Justice Secretary, Teresa Cheng, published a piece in the Chinese regime's propaganda outlet *China Daily* promising lawyers' professional benefits if they backed the right candidates.¹⁹

Ahead of the elections, Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam warned the Law Society that it would jeopardise its relationship with the Government if "the group became politicized".²⁰

¹⁶ <https://observer.com/2021/08/hong-kong-arts-development-council-resignations-ai-weiwei-china/>

¹⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-singer-activist-denise-ho-says-concerts-cancelled-2021-09-01/>

¹⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/exclusive-hong-kongs-former-chief-judge-says-upholding-rule-law-not-political-2021-08-25/>

¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/jeromeacohen/status/1429451367417057289?s=20>

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/XinqiSu/status/1427451824567590912?s=20>

On 25 August 2021, the Law Society announced that all five positions had been won by “establishment” lawyers²¹. Following the election results, Eric Cheung a top legal scholar announced his resignation from the Law Society.²²

President of the UK Supreme Court says British judges will stay on the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal for now

On 27 August 2021, Lord Reed, the President of the UK Supreme Court released a statement saying that he and his deputy Lord Hodge would continue to serve on Hong Kong’s Court of Final Appeal for now, concluding that the city’s judiciary remained largely independent of government.²³

Hong Kong law allows senior government lawyers easier route to Senior Counsel status

Hong Kong’s pro-Beijing dominated Legislature has passed a law allowing solicitors for the Department of Justice to become Senior Counsel without first having to serve as barristers.

The Hong Kong Bar Association has criticised the new law which it claims will undermine the independence of the legal community.²⁴

DEMOCRACY DISMANTLED

Hong Kong pro-democracy lawmaker disqualified

The Hong Kong Government on 26 August 2021 disqualified the last pro-democracy lawmaker from his seat within the Hong Kong Legislature, after finding him insufficiently loyal.

Cheng Chung-tai of the Civic Party was disqualified from the legislature after he “failed to fulfil the legal requirements and conditions on upholding the Basic Law and bearing allegiance” to Hong Kong, the Government said in a statement.²⁵

Hong Kong Government spends HK\$1.17bn renovating the Legislative Council as it cuts the number of directly elected lawmakers

²¹ <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/25/hong-kong-law-society-members-with-establishment-ties-now-dominate-its-council-after-liberals-suffer-election-defeat/>

²² <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/31/hong-kong-law-society-respects-top-legal-scholar-eric-cheungs-resignation-from-its-council/>

²³ <https://twitter.com/alvinllum/status/1431207620455530501?s=20>

²⁴ <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/26/hong-kong-law-change-gives-govt-lawyers-easier-route-to-senior-counsel-status/>

²⁵ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/hong-kong-beijing-china-b1909149.html>

The Hong Kong Government announced plans to spend HK\$1.17bn renovating Hong Kong's Legislative Council to accommodate twenty new directly appointed lawmakers.

As part of Beijing's electoral changes, the legislature's membership will increase from 70 to 90, while the number of directly elected lawmakers will fall from 25 to 20. The Election Committee, chaired by the Hong Kong Chief Secretary John Lee Ka-chiu, will also ensure all candidates for office are "sufficiently patriotic".²⁶

Chinese companies dominate Hong Kong's newly reconstituted Election Committee

At least 101 candidates put forward for Hong Kong's Election Committee (which will decide the appointment of Hong Kong's Chief Executive and 50 Legislative Councillors) are reported to be top executives of mainland Chinese enterprises and business associations.

The South China Morning Post analysis of the seat distribution of the Election Committee found that, considering the seats set aside for appointed officials and several newly created subsectors tailor made for pro-Beijing camp, the Election Committee will be packed with at least 1,006 Beijing loyalists out of 1,500 seats.²⁷

MOVES TO CONTINUE THE CRACKDOWN ON BASIC RIGHTS

Hong Kong's introduction of Beijing's Anti-Sanctions Law is put on hold

On 19 August 2021, it was reported that the National People's Congress Standing Committee has put on hold its plan to add China's new anti-sanctions law to the annex of Hong Kong's Basic Law, following a backlash from the business community.²⁸

Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, has stated that the anti-sanctions law will be implemented in Hong Kong in some form.²⁹

The law authorises retaliation against individuals and groups involved in issuing and carrying out sanctions against China. The measures include denial of visas, deportation and seizure of assets located in China.

²⁶ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3145218/building-extensions-hong-kongs-legislative-council-will>

²⁷ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3145078/hong-kong-election-committees-mainland-china-linked>

²⁸ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-19/china-poised-to-add-anti-sanctions-law-to-hong-kong-charter>

²⁹ <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/10/hong-kong-leader-says-city-set-to-adopt-chinas-anti-sanctions-law/>

Risk advisory firms have raised concerns that applying the legislation to Hong Kong could impact financial institutions in the city that comply with U.S. sanctions, particularly the likes of HSBC, as China's law orders organisations and individuals not to cooperate with foreign sanctions, and it gives those harmed by the sanctions the right to sue for damages.³⁰

PLA garrison in Hong Kong practices military drills to prevent Hong Kongers fleeing by boat

The People's Liberation Army garrison based in Hong Kong this month practised military drills on land and sea designed to intercept "fugitives" attempting to flee the territory by boat.³¹

Government's sim card registration law comes into force

On 1 September 2021, the Hong Kong Government's new law which requires all domestic phone sim cards to be registered with the authorities came into force.

The Deputy Director of Beijing's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office Deng Zhonghua cited the registration scheme as one of a series of policies to protect China's national security, in a speech to mark one year since the national security law came into force in the city.³²

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

UK Government says nearly 65,000 Hong Kongers take up its BNO scheme in the first two quarters of 2021

The UK Government's data on BNO applications has found that there were 30,600 applications for the BN(O) route in Q2 of 2021, with 25,600 out of country applications, and 5,000 in country applications. Of the total, 17,500 applications relate to main applicants and 13,100 relate to dependants.

There has been a total of 64,900 applications for the BN(O) route since its introduction on 31st January up to 30th June 2021.³³

³⁰ <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/US-China-tensions/China-poised-to-impose-anti-sanctions-law-on-Hong-Kong>

³¹ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/chinese-army-sends-warning-to-fleeing-hong-kong-troublemakers-lmfvr892>

³² <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/31/hong-kong-real-name-sim-card-registration-to-roll-out-but-govt-says-it-wont-regulate-intl-roaming-sims/>

³³ <https://www.hongkongwatch.org/all-posts/2021/8/26/uk-government-say-nearly-65000-hong-kongers-take-up-bno-scheme-in-first-2-quarters-of-2021>

President Biden announces a deportation freeze for Hong Kongers in the USA

On 5 August 2021, US President Joe Biden announced temporary safe haven for Hong Kongers currently in the USA. President Biden issued a directive to the Department of Homeland Security to ‘Defer the Enforced Departure of Hong Kongers’.

Under the directive, the US Government will suspend deportations of Hong Kongers for 18 months and ensure those whose visas expire in this period are given the opportunity to continue with their employment or studies. It has been reported that the directive will help thousands of Hong Kongers currently living in the USA.³⁴

Nearly 90,000 Hong Kongers have left the city in the last year since the National Security Law came into force

Statistics released by the Hong Kong Government have shown that 89,000 Hong Kongers have left the city since the introduction of the National Security Law last year.³⁵

According to statistics Hong Kong’s population has declined by 1.2% in the past year. The scale of the exodus is the greatest since records were first calculated 60 years ago – greater even than during the Handover in 1997.

Pension withdrawal applications soar as HSBC and Manulife block early withdrawals

According to the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) Authority, which deals with Hong Kongers pensions, Hong Kongers in the first quarter of the year permanently applied to withdraw HK\$1.93 billion from their MPF accounts – an almost 50% spike on the previous year.³⁶

In the same month, HSBC and Canadian insurance company Manulife have faced criticism as reports have surfaced of the two MPF providers refusing to allow Hong Kongers who take up the UK’s BNO scheme early access to their pension savings.³⁷ This follows an instruction along these lines by the MPF Authority

Canada opposition parties commit to Hong Kong policies in their manifestos

The New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party in Canada have committed to Hong Kong policies within their manifestos for the upcoming Federal Elections in Canada.

³⁴ <https://www.hongkongwatch.org/all-posts/2021/8/5/hkw-responds-to-president-bidens-announcement-of-temporary-safe-haven-for-hong-kongers>

³⁵ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-12/hong-kong-sees-89-000-leave-in-past-year-after-new-security-law>

³⁶ <https://www.asianinvestor.net/article/mpf-withdrawals-set-to-soar-as-hk-exodus-continues/472074>

³⁷ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-19/china-s-hong-kong-crackdown-billions-in-retirement-money-blocked-for-uk-emigres>

The Conservatives have committed to introducing a human rights defender asylum stream, which will allow frontline Hong Kong protestors the opportunity to apply for asylum in Canada.³⁸

The New Democratic Party have committed to stand with Hong Kong pro-democracy asylum seekers in Canada.³⁹

Australia announces Magnitsky legislation

On 5 August 2021, the Australian Foreign Minister announced that the Government intends to introduce legislation reforming its autonomous sanctions regime, which will be akin to the UK, Canada, EU and USA's Magnitsky legislation.⁴⁰

Hong Kong Stock Exchange hit by China's crackdown on technology companies

The Hong Kong Stock Exchange has been hit by the Chinese Government's crackdown on technology companies, as many indexes dominated by Chinese internet, app and gaming leaders are listed in Hong Kong rather than onshore. Overseas investors exacerbated a \$1 trillion global selloff in August of Chinese shares after the government's ban on profits at tutoring companies.⁴¹

³⁸ <https://cpcassets.conservative.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/25132033/5ea53c19b2e3597.pdf>

³⁹ https://xfer.ndp.ca/2021/Commitments/Ready%20for%20Better%20-%20NDP%202021%20commitments.pdf?_gl=1*cp2ju3*_ga*MTEyNjQyOTI2NC4xNjMwMDY5ODk2*_ga_97QLYMLC56*MTYzMDA2OTg5NS4xLjEuMTYzMDA3MDA4NS4w

⁴⁰ <https://twitter.com/SenPaterson/status/1423177730892263429>

⁴¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-03/china-stocks-are-better-shelter-than-hong-kong-in-xi-s-clampdown>