

NSL TRIAL OF 47 DEMOCRATS: 5 DEVELOPMENTS THIS WEEK

Week 1: 6-10 February 2023

The [long-anticipated trial](#) of the 47 democrats opened on Monday 6 February 2023. The trial concerns the 47 democrats who organised or participated in “unofficial” primaries in July 2020. As a result of these primaries, 55 people were arrested in January 2021, in the largest crackdown since the National Security Law was passed.

Of these, 47 have been accused of “conspiracy to commit subversion” and are now facing trial. The majority of defendants have been in detention for 2 years, as only 13 have been granted bail. 31 of the defendants have pleaded guilty. This is one of the most significant trials since the National Security Law was passed.

Development 1. Long queues and questionable attendees

Since the first day of the trial, long queues have formed outside the court, with over 200 people in line for the public gallery. Some of these people were [suspected](#) of being paid to be in the queue, including one person who asked a journalist where she could pick up her payment. When asked, many people in the queue did not know what trial they were lining up for. This tactic may be used to prevent the public from listening to the trial, as there is no space left.

Development 2. Defendants turned state prosecution witnesses named

On the first day of the trial, the court [heard](#) that four defendants are set to testify for the prosecution in return for a reduced sentence. This includes, former lawmaker Au Nok-hin, ex-district councillors Andrew Chiu and Ben Chung, and founder of retail chain AbouThai Mike Lam.

On Thursday, a judge [warned](#) against harrasing prosecution witnesses, and that those who did would be liable for criminal contempt of court. The prosecution witnesses’ testimonies begin next week. On Friday, a local court [heard](#) that the prosecutors will summon Registration and Electoral Office officials to testify in this trial.

Development 3. Court proceedings paused after court windows shattered by a “projectile”

On Wednesday, one of the court windows was [shattered](#) by a “projectile” and the police were prompted to search the area with metal detectors. Nobody was injured. Justice Secretary Paul Lam condemned the incident as “violence and intimidation” targeting the judiciary.

Development 4. Election officials to testify for the Government

Hong Kong prosecutors are set to [summon](#) officials from the Registration and Electoral Office to testify for the Government, alongside police officers who will give evidence on the candidates use of Youtube and Facebook, and another witness who is expected to outline a coordination meeting that took place between the primary candidates.

Development 5. Defendant placed under disciplinary action

On Monday, Ng Kin-wai, one of the defendants who pleaded guilty, was [placed](#) under disciplinary actions after he returned from court to the detention centre on Monday, due to reasons unknown. His books, newspapers, and radio were seized too. One reason may be that in his guilty plea, Ng said “I tried to subvert a totalitarian regime”.