

To:

*High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell Fontelles.*

Copy:

*European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen.*

*European Council President, Charles Michel.*

*President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola.*

*Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the People's Republic of China, Reinhard Bütikofer.*

*Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights, Maria Arena.*

## OPEN LETTER

A gloomy 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Hong Kong:

CSOs and Trade Unions call for the release of the imprisoned activists  
and the repeal of the national security law

Brussels, 30 June 2022

Dear High Representative Borrell,

**The undersigning organisations condemn the suppression of civil liberties and persecutions of human rights defenders in Hong Kong.**

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's handover to China from Britain, the situation for human rights defenders, civil society organizations and trade unions and their leaders is deteriorating; civil liberties, human and labour rights are not protected nor respected. John Lee, Hong Kong's former secretary of security selected by Beijing will become the city's new chief executive to continue the suppression.

According to the [European External Action Service 2022 Report on Hong Kong](#), in 2021, the EU was the largest foreign business community in Hong Kong, and the third-largest trading partner in

goods. Yet, over the past 2 years, the authorities have clearly demonstrated that they no longer honour the applicable international human rights treaties and labour standards in Hong Kong under the 'one country, two systems' principle.

The PRC National Security Law in Hong Kong, imposed by the National People's Congress, is used to persecute dissent, and criminalise the free exercise of civil liberties and human rights. In less than 2 years of its introduction, the once vibrant civil society and free press in Hong Kong have crumbled.

The police has arrested more than 10,000 protesters in 2019, 162 activists and journalists with national security charges, prosecuted 8 trade unionists. More than 60 civil society organisations, international human rights organisations, trade unions including the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), and 4 press groups have been forced to disband or liquidated. Human rights defenders and trade unionists in the diaspora are issued with arrest warrants, foreign press, multinational banks and advocacy groups based outside Hong Kong are demanded to comply with the NSL.

**We ask you to take immediate actions to urge the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities to respect their international human obligations including human and labour standards, and**

1. **Immediately and unconditionally release all the arrested protesters** who have exercised their rights to civil liberties in the 2019 protests, as well as all the trade unionists, journalists and human rights defenders arrested with national security charges. They include, *inter alia*, Chow Hang-tung, Albert Ho and the general secretary of HKCTU, Lee Cheuk-yan, who are charged with inciting subversion for leading the defunct Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movement in China which had been organising peaceful June-Fourth candle-light vigils in Hong Kong for the past 33 years.
2. **Repeal the NSL** and withdraw any plans to introduce new legislations that are not compatible with international human rights treaties and labour standards including a domestic law on national security.

**We further urge National Governments to report progress on the commitment to suspend** any existing **extradition agreements** with China and Hong Kong, adopt lifeboat scheme for human rights activists in Hong Kong and the diaspora, and the cessation of the exports of sensitive equipment to Hong Kong.

Finally, the Council of the European Union should **update its [2020 Conclusions on the situation in Hong Kong](#)** in order to cope with these rapid deteriorations, reflect in full the resolutions adopted



by the European Parliament in [2021](#) and [2022](#), as well as the due diligence obligations of European companies operating in Hong Kong.

The undersigning organisations stand in firm solidarity with the trade unionists, human rights defenders, and pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong.

We hope you will take our concerns into consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

