



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

The State of Civil and Political Rights in Hong Kong

Thursday, October 14, 2021

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

**2172 Rayburn House Office Building
and Virtual via Cisco WebEx**

As delivered

Good afternoon. I join Co-Chair Smith in welcoming everyone to this Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing on the state of civil and political rights in Hong Kong.

I want to thank my colleague for his leadership on this issue. He has been committed to human rights in Hong Kong for a long time.

We approach this hearing in a mood of sadness. We have watched the Chinese central government tighten its grip on the free and open spirit of Hong Kong. We have witnessed authorities shutter institutions of democracy and free expression. We have seen our friends jailed to silence their voices, while others have fled into exile to allow their voices to be heard.

And it is these voices that preserve hope and remind us that the distinctiveness of Hong Kong cannot be wiped away by fiat.

Today we welcome not just a status report, but recommendations for what policy-makers in the United States, and in other countries, can do to address the erosion of human rights.

In the last two years, Congress has passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, and the PROTECT Hong Kong Act, which I introduced.

Pursuant to these authorities, the Executive Branch determined that Hong Kong is no longer “sufficiently autonomous” to warrant “differential treatment,” and imposed sanctions on government officials complicit in undermining autonomy, democracy and rights.

What more can we do to try to change behavior? Can we move to revoke Hong Kong's distinct W.T.O. status as its own customs territory?

Can we leverage the spotlight of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics? The Congressional-Executive Commission on China, which I also co-chair and Congressman Smith is also a member of, asked the International Olympic Committee to postpone and relocate the Games if the host Chinese government did not let up on the Uyghurs and Hong Kong. They refused.

We asked the Olympic corporate sponsors to use their leverage to demand improvements in respect for human rights. They refused.

We owe it to Hong Kongers and Uyghurs not to dignify the corrupt stain that is the Beijing Olympics. I urge the Biden Administration not to send U.S. officials, and American sponsors not to send their CEOs.

In December, the White House will convene the Summit for Democracy. I urge the Biden Administration to use this event to shine a light on Hong Kong. The democratic freedoms that the people of Hong Kong aspire to, and that the Chinese government is taking away, are universal values.

One practical thing we can do is provide humanitarian pathways for those fleeing the Chinese government's repression. The CECC will hold a hearing next Tuesday on proposed legislation, including the Hong Kong Safe Passage Act and the Hong Kong People's Freedom and Choice Act. I welcome any thoughts our witnesses have on these bills.

Thank you.