

Joint Statement on the Hong Kong Democracy Movement

We, the leaders of the Churches' Forum for Peace and Security in North East Asia, have been watching with deep concern the escalating protests on the anti-extradition bill in Hong Kong over the past few weeks. During this period, the Hong Kong citizens have protested not only at the center of government operations, but also expanded to different areas of Hong Kong to express their demands on the Hong Kong government.

First of all, we are very concerned with the escalating violence employed by the Hong Kong police to crack down on the protesters, using tear gas, rubber bullets and other unnecessary force. We were shocked too by the White Terror that had happened last week in Yuen-Long train station. A group in white-shirts wielding weapons attacked people at random on the concourse and the train platform. As a result, many citizens and journalists were injured.

We highly respect the people of Hong Kong who are upholding peaceful, rational and non-violent means during the protests, and we reaffirm our solidarity with them. Therefore, we urge the Hong Kong government to:

1. Withdraw completely the controversial extradition bill immediately
2. Ensure the freedom of speech and the right to assembly without any threat of violence
3. Investigate the excessive force used by the police to disperse the protesters
4. Release immediately the 44 citizens who were charged with rioting
5. Ensure a democratic path for electing the government representatives and leaders of Hong Kong

We urge again the Hong Kong government to stop immediately the violent actions against the citizens. History has witnessed the tragic results that when power violently suppresses a people's movement for justice and human rights, it leads more suffering for everyone involved.

As a Christian community, we believe that freedom, democracy and human dignity are inalienable and are all God-given values which must not be violated or degraded under any circumstances. We also affirm that a true democracy, including universal suffrage for the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council in Hong Kong, is the way forward to resolve the ongoing crisis.

We will stay in solidarity with the people of Hong Kong until Hong Kong and China respect people's self-determining way of life for a peaceful coexistence, upholding the value of peace, freedom and dignity.

July 31, 2019

Rev. Lee Hong Jung, General Secretary, National Council of Churches in Korea

Rev. Kim Sung Jae, General Secretary, National Christian Council in Japan

Rev. Lyim Hong-Tiong, General Secretary, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

Churches' Forum for Peace and Security in North East Asia

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In the light of our belief and inspired by our reflection, the National Council of Churches of Taiwan (NCCT) acknowledges the gravity of a wave of protests that the Hong Kong-China extradition bill has triggered off, and agrees with the "*Joint Statement on the Hong Kong Democracy Movement*" of July 31, 2019 (cf. the document here below) made by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCKK), National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) and Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT). Viewing that the extradition bill has now been withdrawn, the National Council of Churches of Taiwan (NCCT) hereby formally appeals to the Government and the people of Hong Kong to work for the good of all Hong Kong people, by tackling problems rationally instead of using violence, and looking for dialogue instead of confrontation.

In the meantime, the National Council of Churches of Taiwan continues to pray for Hong Kong alongside with other Christian communities and organizations of other beliefs, deeply convinced that the Government and the people of Hong Kong will be able to overcome all the difficulties eventually, so as to create a better future for Hong Kong's younger generation. May the Lord bless Hong Kong !

Taipei, September 9, 2019

+ Thomas An-zhu Chung

H. E. Rev. Thomas Chung An-Zhu,
President
The National Council of Churches of Taiwan

September 2, 2019

To the National Council of Churches in Korea:

We were astonished to know that the National Council of Churches in Korea took part in releasing the joint statement at the end of July on the demonstrations in Hong Kong caused by the "Extradition Bill".

Hong Kong is an inalienable part of China. Either its legislation or the rule of law is China's internal affairs. Since 1997, the Hong Kong people are granted high degree of autonomy by the Chinese government so as to ensure the smooth development of Hong Kong within the framework of "one country, two systems". China's internal affairs are not allowed to be intervened by any other country.

The One-China principle is also one of the premises for the exchanges between the church in China and the ecumenical church. The church in China hopes to conduct exchanges on the basis of equality and mutual respect. Over the last decades, a big number of South Korean Churches have been involved in movements separating China's integrity. And the joint statement is even outrageous. The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan has been long engaged in the activities to split the Chinese territory and divide the Chinese society. For many years, NCKC has been advocating the reunification of the Korean Peninsula and the stability of the region, how come this time you would support PCT's separatist movements and interfere in China's internal affairs?

The recent demonstrations in Hong Kong have intensified and escalated into acts of violence, which severely affected the daily life of ordinary citizens and posed a threat to personal safety of tourists in Hong Kong. In response to the gradually escalated turmoil, the Hong Kong government and the police have always maintained a highly restrained attitude. When faced with the mob's provocation and sabotage, they also reacted with minimum force. However, your joint statement disregarded and distorted the facts, and regarded violent demonstrators as the right side. It is not beneficial to ease the situation in Hong Kong.

The joint statement quoting the Five Demands severely intervenes China's sovereignty and Hong Kong's regional rule of law. We urge you to reflect on the serious results brought up by signing the joint statement and at once make an open apology, not to have this incident be escalated to a diplomatic matter.

China Christian Council & the National Committee of the
Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China

September 22, 2019

Dear Rev. Lee, Brother in Christ:

The PCT is most grateful that you are sharing the CCC response to the NEA Statement. We are not surprised by the CCC response at all. Here we offer our considered opinion for your response.

We recommend NOT to enter into a polemical debate with the CCC about its sovereignty over Hong Kong and that any criticism about the situation is interference in the internal affairs of China.

Instead, we would point out the following:

The main point is that it is a response to the dangerous and volatile situation in Hong Kong which was spiralling out of hand. The statement is a request for dialogue and for the respect of the human rights of the demonstrators as well as for a democratic process to resolve the conflict. To quote from the statement:

We urge again the Hong Kong government to stop immediately the violent actions against the citizens. History has witnessed the tragic results that when power violently suppresses a people's movement for justice and human rights, it leads more suffering for everyone involved. As a Christian community, we believe that freedom, democracy and human dignity are inalienable and are all God-given values which must not be violated or degraded under any circumstances. We also affirm that a true democracy, including universal suffrage for the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council in Hong Kong, is the way forward to resolve the ongoing crisis.

Secondly, it should be clearly pointed out that the statement was issued on July 31, prior to the more confrontational stance taken by some demonstrators. The CCC has not said clearly why the statement is an interference in the internal affairs of China but the recommendations of the statement have been vindicated.

Thirdly, the signatories are pleased that their recommendations are being carried out by the Hong Kong government. For example, the extradition bill has been withdrawn and government is entering into a constructive dialogue with civil society thus ensuring that there continues to be freedom of speech without fear of retaliation in Hong Kong.

Fourth, the NEA statement reflects the concern of the churches in East Asia about the situation in Hong Kong. It is not just a concern of the PCT or of Taiwan.

Once more, thank you so much for your solidarity and leadership in this matter.

Yours in Christ,

LYIM Hong-Tiong
General Secretary