

Hong Kong Watch supplementary submission: The National Security Law

The scope of Beijing's plans for the National Security Law are now clear. This is a constitutional coup. The safeguards which have historically defended human rights in Hong Kong have been shattered. Rule of law has been replaced with rule by law – and the Communist Party's word is law.

The new status quo has seen many young people arrested, including prominent activists like Joshua Wong.

We are seeing the screening out of opposition lawmakers. The Foreign Secretary was right to declare that the disqualification of Hong Kong lawmakers was a breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. Hong Kongers are becoming permanently disenfranchised.

The purge is not limited to politics. Benny Tai, a notable legal academic, has been fired from Hong Kong University for his involvement in protests. [Libraries have been screened](#), and books placed under review. Banks have started scrutinising their clients for pro-democracy ties. Businesses are being told that pro-protest posters violate the National Security Law. Technology firms face being forced to hand data over to the Hong Kong police.

Welcome to authoritarian Hong Kong. An Orwellian city where the Hong Kong government issues a [press release](#) which says that 'expressing an objection (to the enactment of the National Security Law)' is unconstitutional, while insisting that 'the HKSAR Government respects and safeguards the lawful rights of Hong Kong people, including the right to vote and the right to stand for elections.'

For Hong Kongers, this confirms their worst fears. Many will now be looking at their options: some will stay and continue to stand for freedom in the city they love, others will be looking for a way out. The path is costly for both groups. Britain must be ready to welcome Hong Kongers who decide to seek a way out. While the UK government has offered three million Hong Kong residents a path to citizenship, visa fees proposed by the Home Office are exorbitant and should be removed.

The British government has rightly taken a strong stance on passports but they must continue to press China in other areas. These latest incidents are another serious violation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. Sanctions should now be implemented, as should further action with allies to reduce Britain's strategic dependency on China. People are waking up to the systematic assault on freedom in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. We must respond proportionately.