

Government response to procession

In response to the Human Rights Day rally held by an organisation this afternoon (December 8), a spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government said the following:

The procession today was issued a Letter of No Objection by the Police and participated by a large number of members of the public. It was in general peaceful and orderly. Hong Kong people's freedom of speech, of the press, of publication, of association, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration are fully protected by the Basic Law, the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other legislation. Provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as applied to Hong Kong remain in force. Today's procession as well as the 50 000 public assemblies and processions held in Hong Kong over the past five years are testimony to the freedom of peaceful assembly, of procession, of demonstration and of speech enjoyed by the people.

While today's procession was ongoing, there were still violent and illegal acts, in particular, the vandalism and arson targeting the Court of Final Appeal and the High Court. In a society governed by the rule of law, everyone must respect the courts, judges and their rulings. Any attack and smear against the Judiciary would cause enormous damage to the rule of law in Hong Kong, which is unacceptable to the whole community. The HKSAR Government severely condemns the acts. In addition, some people blocked roads and trashed shops and banks while the procession was ongoing, posing a danger to the peaceful protesters.

Allegations against the Police were raised by some protesters today. We emphasise that it is incumbent upon the Police to maintain public safety and public order. If protest activities are conducted peacefully and orderly in general, as with the procession today, the Police would not need to use any force. However, when unlawful acts take place, the Police must take appropriate actions, including deploying appropriate force to handle and stop the violent acts. While using force and making arrests, the Police must act according to the law, taking account of the situation at the scene, and in an appropriate manner. They must also comply with relevant internal guidelines of the Police. The HKSAR Government does not tolerate any breach of law or offence against discipline by police officers. Anyone who is unsatisfied with the operations of the Police may file complaints according to established procedures.

The HKSAR Government hopes to work together with the whole community to stop the violence, uphold the rule of law, restore social order and find a way out for Hong Kong's deep-seated problems through dialogues.

We appeal to participants who are still gathering after the procession to disperse peacefully as soon as possible.