

Please go to this link <http://bit.ly/stopviolenceandhostilityV2> to sign up for the joint appeal.

Say No to Violence - Pursue the Criminals;

Follow Public Opinion - Launch Independent Inquiry

Our worst nightmare has come true! In the late evening of July 21, a rampaging mob launched a series of brutal attack on innocent civilians in Yuen Long. The bloodshed is a challenge to human dignity and is totally deplorable. Meanwhile, a group of protesters stormed the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in Western District, raising the tension between Mainland and Hong Kong.

The level of violence is escalating, to an extent that it now threatens the personal safety of our people. The thin trust between communities of different political views has crumbled. Incidents of open provocation and incitement prevail, in a complete disregard for people's right to peaceful expression of their aspirations to the government. These come with an erosion in the public's confidence in the ability of Hong Kong Police to keep the city safe. Police-public relations are caught in the peril of piled eggs. In the absence of concrete action to rebuild confidence, fears and distress will continue to cast a shadow over our city.

In addition to immediate criminal investigations into the recent incidents, the latest development has also highlighted the urgent need for the establishment of an independent Commission of Inquiry (COI). Since the joint appeal by our group of 35 on July 19, over 2,900 people have signed up in support of the statement in two days. It is time to respond to the appeal and bring the society back to the normal course without delay.

Here we are to renew our joint appeal for the Chief Executive to reconsider the popular call for the setting up of COI. This is a concrete response to the appeal by the people. The COI should be chaired by a senior judge and adopt a fair and macro perspective in examining the causes of the series of conflicts and policy failures. We call for immediate action to avoid further bloodshed, splitting of our society, or damage to Hong Kong's international image. We open the signature campaign again from today onwards to facilitate more people to join our appeal to the Government.

We urge:

The Chief Executive and the Government

- To demonstrate political moral courage as the top leader of the HKSAR government by taking practical steps to resolve the deepening conflicts in the community for the overall benefit of Hong Kong society;
- To solve political issues by political means, and refrain from pushing frontline police officers to the fore of conflict situations that are political by nature;
- To take the lead to bring reconciliation in society by appointing an independent Commission of Inquiry. The Commission shall adopt a broad perspective and approach in inquiring into the causes and development of the confrontations over the past month or so. The inquiry should be a truthful examination of how things had unfolded. Rather than being a finger-pointing exercise, it shall aim at facilitating reconciliation and rapprochement, based on the findings of the commission and the lessons drawn. During the course of the inquiry, the society can also buy time to ease hostility and let calmness restore. The call for an independent Commission of Inquiry is loud and clear and a consensus for it as a way forward is building up. We sincerely urge the Chief Executive to seriously consider this proposal.
- To command and instruct police to pursue in full force the criminals involved in the mass attack and the masterminds behind.

To the Protesters

- We understand the dissatisfaction and frustration of many marchers and protesters.
- We believe the public's right to express their views in a peaceful, rational and non-violent manner must be respected and protected.
- We urge them to refrain from, no matter how dissatisfied they are, pursuing their cause in ways that the lives of people and their personal safety would be endangered. The process is as important as the outcome in the pursuit of social causes. The key to success is to galvanize the support of the majority. Violence inevitably begets hatred. It not only divides the community, but also breeds more violence and derails the campaign from the original objective towards injuries, loss of freedom or even loss of life, either voluntarily or not.

To Police Officers

- We understand the work pressure of and challenges faced by police officers.
- We urge the senior management of the police force, when devising command strategy in handling emergencies, should put the best interest of society as the top priority, especially when handling unanticipated confrontations. We urge the police to prevent inflaming tensions during confrontations, and to give due consideration to the impact on the general public, the reaction of innocent citizens and protesters and the safety of frontline police officers when devising their action plans.
- Police officers must carry out their duties with professionalism and discipline to uphold the good impression of the police force in the eyes of the public.

- Action should be taken to wipe out triad forces, and to prohibit any attempts to leverage on triad forces or other violent means to interfere with peaceful expression of opinion and appeal.

On Freedom of the Press

- Freedom of the press is a core value of Hong Kong society. We ask that it be respected and protected by all sides.

Hong Kong is our cherished home. The development in the past months says a lot about the need to address some critical underlying issues as our society continues to move forward. Both police and the public are blameless at the start. At this critical moment, we hope the Chief Executive and the Government would demonstrate true courage as the leaders of our city, take the lead to resolve political issues with political means, and promptly set up an independent Commission of Inquiry. This is the key to reducing violent confrontation and to bringing the city out of the current crisis. All sides must exercise restraint so as to prevent the spread of hatred and further division in society. Together, we could give Hong Kong a chance to turn a page and move on.

Signatories (in personal capacity; and alphabetic order)

Chan, Chi-yuen Paul
Chan, Joseph Man (Prof)
Chan, Lung-sang (Prof)
Chan, Yan-ming (Rev)
Choi, Yuen-wan Philemon (Dr)
Choy, Linda
Fang, Christine Meng-sang
Kwan, Cheuk-chiu Andy (Dr)
Kwok, Kwok-chuen
Lam, Kin-che (Prof)
Lam, Pun-lee (Dr)
Lam, Sung-che (Rev)
Law, Wing-chung
Lee, Siu-nam Paul (Prof)
Leung, King-kwok Godfrey
Leung, Man-fuk Edward (Dr)
Li, Linda Che-lan (Prof)
Lo, Hing-choi (Rev)
Lo, Lung-kwong (Rev)
Lum, Yat-sang Terry (Prof)
Mok, Yee-tuen Zandra
Ng, Vincent Wing-shun
Po, Kam-cheong (Rev)
So, Y. K. Clement (Prof)
Sui, Stephen

Sung, Joseph (Prof)
Tai, Keen-man
Wong, Wai-kay Ricky
Wong, Ying-kay Ada
Yau, Shing-mu
Ying, Fuk-tsang (Prof)
Yip, Kan-chuen Frankie
Yuen, Kwok-yung (Prof)
Yuen, Shirley
Yuen, Tin-yau (Rev)
25.7.2019

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