

To the Student Council at the University of British Columbia,

I hope everyone is well.

I am writing to UBC Student Council not as a member of the UBC community (I am an alumnus of Columbia University in New York) but as an activist and concerned citizen with regards to the democracy movement that is occurring in Hong Kong at the moment.

I'm sure you have seen or heard the situation, which is being extensively covered in the media, but if you are not aware of the context, here is a primer: According to the Basic Law of Hong Kong, as Hong Kong's constitution is known, when the United Kingdom transferred sovereignty over Hong Kong after 150 years of British rule to China on July 1, 1997, under the Sino-British declaration, Beijing promised that Hong Kong would enjoy a high degree of autonomy. However, Beijing is reneging on that promise. It has consistently undermined the 'one country, two systems' principle and infringed upon the democratic freedoms, civil liberties, rule of law and, now, human rights of 7 million Hong Kongers. Hong Kongers came out en masse (2 million strong) to protest for democracy back in June and since then, HK chief executive Carrie Lam (puppet of Beijing) has increasingly used harsher measures to clamp down on free speech, which is enshrined under the Basic Law. Additionally, the Hong Kong police force, once known as "asia's finest"--under the direction of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)/ Beijing--has used brutalist measures to silence democratic voices. The HK police are hurting the very civilians they swore an oath to protect. In the most recent example, which is widely circulating through HK social media, a first-aid nurse was shot point blank by the HK police with a rubber bullet. She is now blind and the police are accusing other protesters as being the perpetrators. Hong Kong has become a human rights issue.

What am I trying to do?

I am trying to organize a coalition of universities that can 'stand with Hong Kong' at this critical juncture in their history. The events occurring in Hong Kong are not solely a HK issue, they are a world issue. Hong Kong is one of, if not *the*, freest markets in the world and the most potent bastion of democratic values and rule of law in all of the Sino-sphere. Hong Kongers are literally and figuratively at the front-lines guarding democracy from attacks by Beijing. There is a clear global trend of authoritarian regimes extending control over their own citizens and encroaching upon democratic values of autonomous territories. Hong Kong is the clearest example of this but certainly not the only. The vast majority of those at the front-lines are young people--universities students, young professionals, high schoolers and even junior high schoolers. While there are many adults that are supporting the democracy movement in various ways, it is the students that are taking the rubber bullets to their bodies. In the past weeks and months, the student unions of HK universities have been representing the voice of the young protesters by publishing official stances of their views. Specifically, the student union at Hong Kong University has been representing all of the other major universities. You can see the official statements they have published using the 2 links below.

<http://www.hkusu.org/en/home-ablaze-in-barbarity-a-letter-to-all-hongkongers-from-the-hong-kong-university-students-union/>
<http://www.hkusu.org/en/category/declaration/>

Can the UBC Student Council stand with the student unions of Hong Kong and take a public stance defending democracy and the core democratic/American/British values that Hong Kongers are fighting to retain?

Committed Universities So Far:

- Columbia: Awaiting their response.
 - Harvard: I have received enthusiastic responses from a few organizations at Harvard that are very interested in such a coalition and am currently in active discussion with them.
 - UC Berkeley: Awaiting their response
 - UCLA: Awaiting their response
 - Yale: Awaiting their response
 - Princeton: Awaiting their response
 - New York University: Currently in discussion with the student council.
 - Oxford University: Awaiting their response
 - American University: Awaiting their response
 - Georgetown: Awaiting their response
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- Stanford: Awaiting their response
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- MIT: Awaiting their response
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- Sarah Lawrence: Awaiting their response

About me

I participated in 2014's Umbrella Movement (in which Hong Kongers demanded the Universal Suffrage promised by Beijing under the joint Sino-British Declaration, but reneged upon) and as such, I am sympathetic towards Hong Konger's demonstrations to protect their democratic freedoms and what remains of their civil liberties. It is difficult to watch the police brutality and excessive use of force on both ordinary HK citizens and journalists without somehow participating to support their cause this time around.

I am attaching a video that a friend shot first hand last week, as well as images from the front lines to exemplify the attack on HK democracy by Beijing. Below is one clip making the rounds on HK social media: <https://twitter.com/HongKongFP/status/1160560753742508033?s=09>

On a separate front, I am working with leading academics/foreign policy experts/activists to urge congress pass **House Resolution 3289 (Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act)** before another Tiananmen Square massacre occurs. (see google doc below)

Petitions to Congress to support Hong Kong. I Would greatly appreciate if UBC Student Council can circulate these as wide as possible:

Global:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeUuCmYMS9hQbrP7ShZ6BauqAJpvuSoOkDMqKw30IWWIBZ8hQ/viewform>

U.S.: https://actionnetwork.org/letters/co-sponsor-hong-kong-human-rights-and-democracy-act-of-2019?source=direct_link&

Global: <https://www.change.org/p/act-now-to-protect-hong-kong-s-freedom-and-democracy?signed=true>

UK: -

https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/264610?fbclid=IwAR2ERYs4dqXSdBOizm5KPRWaxp6S Wk7jltY6Zu3nFiTwS9wC_i4cRjioGSg

[-https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/244402](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/244402)

Below are some resources on what is happening in HK:

- Hong Kong Free Press (grassroots funded): <https://www.hongkongfp.com/>
- South China Morning Post: (the NYT of HK but bought by Alibaba) <https://www.scmp.com/>
- Grassroots Pro-democracy organization: <https://standwithhk.org/>
- Video Primers by New York Times:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/08/world/asia/hong-kong-protests-explained.html>
<https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/asia/100000006649109/laser-pointers-and-traffic-cones-creative-ways-hong-kong-protesters-are-organizing.html>
- United Nations statement:
<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3022623/united-nations-human-rights-body-takes-aim-hong-kong-police>
<https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2019/08/13/world/asia/13reuters-hongkong-protests-un.html>

If the UBC Student Council has any questions, don't hesitate to reach out. If the UBC Student Council has any creative ideas to support HK or know of leaders at other US/UK schools that may be interested, please let me know.

Many Thanks,
Pete