

Urgent Call for Action from 53 Rights Groups on Systemic Abuses and Political Control in Hong Kong's Prisons

September 30, 2025

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Palais des Nations

CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Dear High Commissioner Volker Türk,

As a coalition of 53 civil society organizations committed to human rights and the rule of law, we write collectively to urgently raise serious concerns regarding the systemic abuses occurring inside Hong Kong's prisons, as detailed in the recent report by the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong (CFHK) Foundation, "[We Were Made to Suffer: Systemic Abuse and Political Control Inside Hong Kong's Prisons](#)" (September 2025).

The report documents harrowing violations such as prolonged and punitive solitary confinement far beyond internationally accepted limits; arbitrary and excessive use of solitary confinement and isolation to punish political prisoners; systemic physical, sexual, and psychological abuse tolerated by prison officials; chronic medical neglect resulting in severe deterioration and preventable deaths; widespread degradation of prison infrastructure and hygiene; and weaponization of psychiatric detention against dissidents. More than 700 political prisoners, including prominent human rights defenders, journalists, and pro-democracy activists such as Jimmy Lai, Leung Kwok-hung, Chow Hang-tung, and Joshua Wong, remain subject to extended isolation, communication censorship, and forced indoctrination through state-run "deradicalization" programs as they languish in jail.

Some of these violations have been documented by the UN human rights mechanism, including the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention opinions on [Jimmy Lai](#) and [Chow Hang-tung's](#) detention. Multiple UN member states have raised concerns about Chow's repeated solitary confinement in the UN Secretary-General's 2025 [report on reprisals](#).

These conditions blatantly violate Hong Kong's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention Against Torture, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners ("Mandela Rules"), and other binding international standards. They also constitute cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, and in many cases amount to torture.

High Commissioner, we urge you to strengthen your Office's monitoring of the human rights situation in Hong Kong and issue an independent report with findings and recommendations on Hong Kong prisons.

In addition, we urge you to:

- Demand unrestrained, independent access to all Hong Kong prisons, including facilities holding political prisoners;
- Call on the People's Republic of China and the Hong Kong governments to immediately end all solitary confinement and isolation lasting longer than 15 days in accordance with the Mandela Rules; and
- Condemn the systemic suppression of political dissent through imprisonment and reiterate calls for the release of all political prisoners and imprisoned human rights defenders and journalists.

We also appeal to all UN Member States to use diplomatic and economic leverage and support investigations into abuses to hold accountable those who authorize or facilitate them, including senior officials in the Correctional Services Department and the Committee for Safeguarding National Security.

The ongoing violations inside Hong Kong's prisons—which reflect patterns of abuse long inflicted on Chinese dissidents, Uyghurs, and Tibetans, as documented through the UN human rights mechanism—represent a profound affront to human dignity and international human rights law. We intend to submit cases to the special procedures through the mechanism and stand ready to provide further evidence and support for the international community's efforts to ensure justice and humane treatment for all persons in custody in Hong Kong.

Respectfully,

Alliance for Citizens Rights

ARTICLE 19

Australia Hong Kong Link

Bay Area Friends of Tibet

Bonham Tree Aid CIC

Canada-Hong Kong Link

China Aid

China Rights in Action (CRA)

Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation

Committee to Protect Journalists

Dandelion Aid for Resilience & Empowerment

Fortify Rights

Freiheit für Hongkong e.V.

Global Alliance for Tibet & Persecuted Minorities

Grupo de Apoio ao Tibete-Portugal

Hong Kong Aid (港援)

Hong Kong Committee in Norway

Hong Kong Democracy Council

Hong Kong Forum, Los Angeles

Hong Kong Human Rights Front (Taiwan)

Hong Kong Outlanders in Taiwan

Hong Kong Watch

Hong Kongers in San Francisco Bay Area

Hongkonger in Deutschland e.V. (香港人在德國協會)

Hongkongers in Britain (HKB)

Human Rights Foundation
Human Rights in China
Index on Censorship
International Campaign for Tibet
International Services for Human Rights
International Tibet Network
JF Books
Lady Liberty Hong Kong (LLHK)
Lamp of Liberty
Northern California Hong Kong Club
NY4HK
Nyc852Hker
PEN America
PEN International
Re-Water CIC
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
Safeguard Defenders
Santa Barbara Friends of Tibet
SEArrious For HKG
Students for a Free Tibet
The European Hong Kong Diaspora Alliance (歐洲香港人聯盟)
The Hong Kong Scots
The Rights Practice
Tibet Initiative Deutschland e.V.
Toronto Association for Democracy in China
Vancouver Society in Support of Democratic Movement (VSSDM)
Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation
World Organisation against Torture (OMCT)

Cc:

- Working Group on Arbitrary Detention
- Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression
- Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
- Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders
- Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief
- Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons
- Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
- Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences
- Working Group on discrimination against women and girls