

**23 July 2019**

**Carrie Lam**

Chief Executive,  
Office of the Chief Executive, Tamar, Hong Kong  
[ceo@ceo.gov.hk](mailto:ceo@ceo.gov.hk)

**CC: John Lee Ka-chiu**

Secretary for Security  
10th Floor, East Wing, Central Government Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong  
[lee@sb.gov.hk](mailto:lee@sb.gov.hk)

**CC: Stephen Lo Wai-chung**

Commissioner of Police  
42th Floor, Arsenal House, Police Headquarters, No.1 Arsenal Street, Wan Chai, Hong Kong  
[cp@police.gov.hk](mailto:cp@police.gov.hk)

Dear Chief Executive Lam,

**Re: Open letter to Hong Kong Chief Executive, Carrie Lam**

I write to you on behalf of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), representing over 600,000 in 146 countries. As the voice of journalists globally, including Hong Kong, we write regarding recent events impacting journalists in Hong Kong. Since large scale demonstrations began in June 2019, the IFJ has logged a string of violations against Hong Kong's media.

The IFJ and its global affiliates respectfully urge now for a response from the Hong Kong government regarding these incidents. Importantly, we are seeking assurances for the protection of press freedom in Hong Kong. Among the violations monitored are excessive force used by police, harassment of journalists, obstruction, physical and verbal assaults.

Incidents relating to the obstruction of the media's work by the authorities were:

- 9-10 June: After the [large scale march](#) against the Hong Kong government's extradition bill on June 9, some demonstrators set up camp near the Legislative Council council building. [A number of journalists from various media outlets reported](#) that police tried to expel them from scene, obstructed their work, humiliated and pushed them.
- 12 June: Amid conflict between the police and demonstrators, [were reported attacks](#) from police on reporters, despite being clearly identified as media. Journalists were shot with tear gas at close range, hit with batons, pushed and expelled from reporting, shoved with riot shields, prevented from filming police arresting protesters and body searched without justified reason.
- 27 June: Several journalists [were treated roughly by police](#) outside the Hong Kong Police Headquarters while conducting an interview with Chief Superintendent Rupert Dover.

- 2 July: At a press conference convened by the Chief Executive, a press release with a speech transcript and reporter questions was released. This followed a break-in by a group of protesters into the Legislative Council Building (the Parliament of Hong Kong). However, the Hong Kong Journalists Association(HKJA) reported that [sensitive question asked by reporters were removed from the transcript](#).
- 7-8 July: [During a protest clearance](#) of Nathan Road, Mong Kok, from late evening on July 7 to the early hours of July 8, police were involved in various incidents of violence toward the media. They were witnessed pushing frontline journalists and their cameras away with shields, verballing and yelling at reporters and physically assaulting journalists to obstruct their reporting. Many journalists wore reflective vests with the word “PRESS” (in traditional Chinese or English). The IFJ is told that they also showed their press cards and retreated to cooperate with police actions, yet were continued to be pushed by police at the scene in spite of these clear identifications as media reporting in the public interest.
- 13 July: At 6pm, [in Sheung Shui district](#) after a rally, police pushed the cameras and bodies of frontline reporters multiple times. Some reporters were hit by batons or pushed by police shields repeatedly.

The IFJ also notes that the media’s work was obstructed in other incidents which are also yet to be acted upon by authorities:

- 27 June: A TVB News cameraman was surrounded, pushed, insulted and driven away by a group of people outside Justice Place, as stated [in the statement issued by HKJA](#).
- 30 June: During [an assembly to support police](#), journalists were insulted, splashed with water, spat on, kicked and their equipment hit and covered, according to [the HKJA](#) and the Hong Kong Press Photographers Association (HKPPA).

Other incidents where press freedom and freedom of expression were infringed include:

- 13 June: Encrypted messaging service Telegram suffered a major cyber-attack that appeared to originate from China, the company’s CEO said, linking it to the ongoing political unrest in Hong Kong.
- 1 July: According to [media reports](#), around 2:45am, four men wearing masks forced their way into the offices of an underground broadcaster Citizens' Radio and smashed its door, windows and broadcasting equipment. Equipment that was to be used to cover the July 1 rally was also damaged. Tsang Kin Shing, founder of the station, estimated the damage between HKD20,000-30,000 (US\$2,560-US\$3,845).

[In the statement issued with its annual report](#), HKJA said that “despite its pledge of upholding press freedom, transparency and accountability, HKJA holds the view that the Government has done little to strengthen institutional safeguards including laws on archives and information access and improve practices in the dissemination of information.” This is in light of the now-suspended

extradition bill, the incidents of harassment toward the Foreign Correspondents' Club in 2018 and the Ma Jian case.

The IFJ was especially concerned about the incident on 21 July, in Yuen Long district that, assailants dressed in white have assaulted journalists, leaving one bleeding in his mouth while the other one has to be sent to hospital for further treatment. It was reported that, the residents nearby said the police "did not appear" even they called the emergency number. The police arrived only after the assailants left, and failed to protect the safety of journalists and citizens there.

We remain extremely concerned about the recent spike in incidents in Hong Kong and condemn violence initiated by the authorities (particularly the police) on journalists, as well as the failure to ensure safety of journalists and citizen against vicious assaults from those claiming "would beat up protesters" actually assaulted everyone. All these serves to seriously infringe upon press freedom. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) has been ratified in Hong Kong and as such the Hong Kong government has the obligation to protect freedom of expression and press freedom.

However, we note that your government is yet to give any formal response on these matters, nor to issues regarding the personal safety of journalists during recent protests.

Journalists play an integral role in any democratic society. Attacks against them must be taken very seriously and their attackers reprimanded, to ensure that press freedom and free speech cannot be silenced by a culture of impunity.

As Hong Kong's Chief Executive, you hold considerable power and opportunity to lead government and its authorities, to provide a response to the recent incidents outlined and to put a stop to a culture of impunity for crimes against journalists.

We look forward to your reply and are available to discuss these matters with appropriate officials at your convenience. To this end, we welcome your dialogue to find proper and effective solutions to these challenges confronting Hong Kong's media.

Sincerely,



**Anthony Bellanger**  
**General Secretary**  
**International Federation of Journalists**