

Hong Kong vs China: A Snapshot of Eroded Human Rights

It's a no-brainer that personal, commercial and political freedom is restricted in China. Do you know that these have been happening in Hong Kong as well? Let's take a look at each individual freedom.

Freedom of Movement



On 9 July, 2015, more than 300 human rights lawyers and activists across the country were targeted; 27 were forbidden to leave the country, 255 were temporarily detained or got forcibly questioned, and 28 were held in custody.



One of the booksellers of "Causeway Bay Books"—known for selling books that are banned in China—was last seen in Hong Kong has disappeared in 2015, and eventually revealed to be in Shenzhen, China without the travel documents necessary to have crossed the border. He was held in the custody of mainland Chinese authorities.

Simon Cheng, a pro-democracy supporter who works for the British consulate was missing since 9 August, 2019. On 21 August, a spokesman from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Simon was put in administrative detention for 15 days. His family claimed they had not received any administrative notice, which is supposed to be sent out within 24 hours of a person's detention.

Right to Fair Trial



Zhao Lianhai (趙連海), a man who tried to seek justice for families affected by a tainted milk powder scandal in 2008, was sentenced on 10 November 2010 to 2½ years of imprisonment for "disturbing social order".



Police arrested university student Keith Fong for possession of laser pointers, which are considered "weapons" according to the authorities.

Freedom from Fear



According to the Chinese bar association, between 1997 and 2001, at least 143 lawyers were arrested, detained or beaten in China for working on criminal cases.



Amnesty International documented multiple instances of arbitrary and unlawful arrests during the protest, as well as numerous cases where police denied or delayed access to lawyers and medical care to detainees. Timely access to lawyers, family members and medical professionals for detained individuals is supposedly a legal right in Hong Kong and an important safeguard against torture and other ill-treatment.

Freedom of Speech



At least a dozen mainlanders have been held or threatened by Chinese authorities after having participated in the Hong Kong demonstrations.

Ai Weiwei (艾未未), a Chinese contemporary artist and activist who has been openly critical of the Chinese Government's stance on democracy and human rights, was held for 81 days without charge; officials alluded to allegations of "economic crimes".



The Chinese government has forced Cathay Pacific Airways to bar staffers who support or participate in the protests from doing any work involving flights to mainland China.

Right to Life



Li Wangyang (李旺陽), a Chinese labor rights activist, was found hanged in a hospital room. Shaoyang city authorities initially claimed suicide was the cause of death with no suspicions. Fellow pro-democracy activists called for a death investigation. They noted that Li, despite his poor health, seemed to be in good spirits. How could a person who had served 22 years in jail take his own life?

In 2019, September, an 18-year-old university student Li Xincao (李心草) was found dead in Panlong River, Yunnan. The city authorities said the cause of death is suicide while intoxicated; it was concluded to be unsuspicious. Her mother later found a CCTV footage from a bar showing that Li was groped and beaten by someone before her death.



The body of a 15-year-old female ardent protester Chan Yin-lam (陳彥霖) was found naked in the waters near Yau Tong. Police have classified the case as a suicide without suspicions, without any investigation. The body was then cremated without the release of the autopsy reports. Before her death, she sent a text message with the words "on my way home".

The sudden surge in suicide rate has instigated fear and distrust of the authorities amongst Hong Kong residents.

Freedom of Religion



The Chinese government has destroyed crosses, burned bibles, shut down churches and forced Christian believers to sign papers renouncing their faith.

They have also been holding over 1 million Uyghurs in internment camps which is officially called "re-education camps".

Will the freedom of religion in Hong Kong be next?