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Hong Kong

# Massive rally "Citizens Stand Against Violence/Peaceful Resistance" called in Admiralty

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**After the attacks of yesterday and further threats by anti-Occupy groups to attack the protesters, large numbers have still turned out today undeterred. One pro-Beijing group, Caring Hong Kong Power, had earlier put out a call to its members to again go to Mong Kok. The message says that the use of violence against the protesters is necessary and that if necessary the PLA (People's Liberation Army, the Chinese Army) should be mobilised.**

Despite yesterday, however, protesters are still continuing to occupy the streets in Mong Kok and Causeway Bay. Furthermore tens of thousands were once again in Admiralty this evening, where a rally "Citizens Stand Against Violence/Peaceful Resistance" had been called. At the rally there were speeches from protesters who were attacked yesterday, as well as other students, lawyers, teachers, performers and Occupy Central leaders. Some performers also sang songs.

Meanwhile this evening the Hong Kong Students Federation have also issue another statement saying that it would meet to discuss with the government, provided the government meet two conditions: Firstly that the government promise to investigate the enforcement of the law over the last few days concerning the thugs (who attacked the protest), and secondly that they will only meet with the Chief Secretary Carrie Lam, and not Chief Executive CY Leung who has only continued to ignore public opinion and use the police to violently suppress the peaceful demonstrators.

I was only able to attend part of the rally, but below is a summary of some of what was said when we were there:

One lawyer, who was attacked yesterday in Mong Kok, said that when peaceful protesters are attacked by pepper spray or when a mob attack protesters it is an insult to the rule of law. He also reported how a friend was pushed to the ground in a supermarket for wearing a yellow ribbon. He said that he has never seen anything like this before in Hong Kong and that he was previously proud of Hong Kong for having the rule of law and giving high priority to civic values.

Another lawyer spoke of how on learning of yesterday's attack, lawyers lit 800 candles and held a vigil to symbolise how the light of democracy could not be blown away by any violence. He said that lawyers will continue to defend the students who are attacked and arrested and called on everyone to come out and defend the students.

Meanwhile a third lawyer appealed to the international media and described what we are seeing tonight as "the purest form of courage that you will ever see on this planet." He said that the presence of the media was extremely important in keeping the Chinese government from harming the students.

Academic Wong Wai-gwok read out a statement signed by a group of academics, condemning yesterday's attack. We want to tell the police that they shouldn't just fold their arms and we demand that the government respond to the citizens' aspirations for democracy. Only this can solve the crisis.

Chua Hoi-wai, the head of the Hong Kong Council of Social Services, said that he was moved by all the people who were there sharing their experiences. Yesterday when he watched TV he was distressed about what he saw happening in Mong Kok. He thinks that we should condemn the violence. However he then went on to appeal to the Hong Kong Federation of Students to review their decision not to talk to the government anymore. He said that leading a social movement is not easy as not everybody has the same idea, however he appealed to the protesters

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to follow the decisions and advice of Occupy Central, HKFS and Scholarism even if they decide it is time to call off the action.

A film director commented on how while there are lots of people in the performance arts who support the students but there are also those who are against their actions. He reported on how he had heard someone remark that it would be easy to get rid of the occupiers. All that would be required is to ask the communications companies to cut off their connections. He has also heard another actor express how he thought it would be good if the protesters were adversely affected by the weather, while another had complained about the occupation having a negative effect on the economy. He reported how he had felt very emotional when he heard this as they are his friends. However he then reported on a forth actress who had said that even if it seems useless to fight for democracy, we should still do this anyway.

A teacher, who said that she hasn't taught any classes recently as her students are boycotting classes, spoke about the two Hong Kongs that she has seen in the last few days; the beautiful Hong Kong, where everything is clean and tidy, there are poems written on protesters' banners, posters written in different languages, where educated people are sitting here and technically breaking the law by blocking the road, and the very ugly Hong Kong witnessed yesterday in the attacks.

One speaker spoke of how the road to democracy is very long and winding, but that the number of those who are awakening are huge and growing. "Now with so many people coming out we fear no more. I think the awakened citizens, young and old, should hold our hands together and confront the government."

Another speaker, who said that he had been at Admiralty since the early morning after hearing that the protesters might be attacked again, made the comment that in 1989 Zhao Ziyang had come out to meet the students but how today none of the high officials have ever greeted the students.

Amongst several singers who had come to perform songs at the rally, one commented on how they wanted to pay tribute to the young people who are not afraid to sacrifice their future careers to fight for the people. Despite foreseeing bigger difficulties in the future they appealed for the protesters not to be afraid. "Now there is lots of discussion about whether we should retreat or not. But in the long run there are still many tasks for us to do together. The silent majority, including my family do not understand. I want to abandon all the language used by the mainstream media, academia and politicians and instead use human language. It is simple. The present package is evil. If we use simple language then everybody can understand more easily."

*4 October 2014*