

12 February 2021

Mrs Carrie Lam
Chief Executive
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

By email: ceo@ceo.gov.hk

Dear Mrs Lam

UCU calls on the Government of Hong Kong to respect labour and civil rights

On behalf of the University and College Union (UCU), representing more than 130,000 education workers in the United Kingdom, I am writing to express grave concern over the prosecutions of Cheuk-yan Lee, General Secretary of Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) and a leader of the labour movement in Hong Kong, amongst other labour and social activists that have been arrested by the Hong Kong SAR government since June 2019.

The right to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, expression and political participation protected by Convention No.87 on freedom of association and the right to organise of the International Labour Organisation, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; are protected under article 39 of the Hong Kong Basic Law. However, following the anti-extradition bill movement in 2019, catch-all arrests and arbitrary prosecutions have not ceased against democratic leaders, activists and protesters for exercising these rights.

The guarantee of these rights and freedoms in article 4 of the National Security Law passed in Hong Kong last year proves to be a sham. More arrests of trade unionists followed in January 2020, namely of Carol Ng, chair of HKCTU, Winnie Yu, chair of Hospital Authority Employees Alliance and Hoi-man Lau, officer of the Hong Kong Allied Health Professionals and Nurse Association.

The prosecutions against Lee for organising unauthorised assemblies, and the arrests of Ng, Yu and Lau for broadly-defined national security crimes when they were taking part in activities decided by the trade unions, infringe the legitimate right of trade unions to participate in social and economic affairs. Their arrests and prosecutions violate the principle of freedom of association.

We stand in solidarity with HKCTU and Cheuk-yan Lee as well as all the arrested activists. We urge your government to drop the charges against them in observance of your obligations under the ratified international labour and human rights treaties. We expect a response from you on substantive guarantees of the principle of freedom of association under the implementation of the National Security Law in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo Grady". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Dr Jo Grady
General Secretary