



GMB
Mary Turner House,
22 Stephenson Way, Euston
London, NW1 2HD
020 7391 6700
info@gmb.org.uk
www.gmb.org.uk

Catherine West MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Indo-Pacific
Department for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
King Charles St.
London SW1A 2AH
Email: fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk

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UK action to support detained trade unionists and pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong

Dear Under-Secretary of State,

We are writing to raise with your Office the prison sentences issued by the Hong Kong government on 19th November 2024 to trade unionists and activists for defending democracy and a workers' voice in politics.

GMB strongly condemns these unjust sentences handed to 45 activists of between four and ten years, including to Carol Ng, Chair of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) and Winnie Yu, President of the Hospital Authority Employees Alliance (HAEA).

Their 'crime' was standing in an election together to ensure Hong Kong workers have an effective voice in the Legislative Council elections, exercising their legitimate rights to political participation in democratic process.

These sentences form the latest crackdown in a campaign over many years by Hong Kong authorities to harass and intimidate those exercising their basic rights and fundamental freedoms, under its repressive National Security Law brought in following protests against human and trade union rights violations.

Carol Ng and Winnie Yu have already spent 1,361 and 1,141 days in a prolonged pre-trial detention as part of the Hong Kong government's strategy to silence their dissent. They have now been sentenced to four years, five months and six years, nine months in prison respectively.

We also note that the United Nations Human Rights Committee has called on the Hong Kong government to repeal its National Security Law, which it regards as having an "overly broad interpretation and arbitrary application" that undermines judicial process and right to a fair trial.

GMB is calling for the Hong Kong government to immediately release the 45 sentenced, to respect freedom of association and expression enshrined in international law, and to stop using its National Security Law to stifle dissent and dismantle trade unions.

And while the 45 remain unjustly imprisoned, the UK government to do everything it can to hold the Hong Kong authorities accountable for its human rights violations.

We also ask the UK government to ensure that Hong Kong human rights and workers' rights activists living here in the UK are kept safe, after previous attempts by Hong Kong Police to enforce their political abuse of judicial processes extraterritorially through issue of Interpol arrest warrants.

We urge the UK government to also make these calls on the Hong Kong authorities and to strongly condemn their ongoing criminalisation of trade unionists and trade unionism. The right of citizens to participate in peaceful public activity individually and collectively to bring about changes in society must always be protected.

Yours sincerely,



Gary Smith
General Secretary



Barbara Plant
National President