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Joint Statement from Civil Society Groups on the Hong Kong Government's Targeting of Exiled Activists' Families

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We, the undersigned civil society and human rights organizations, strongly condemn the Hong Kong government's escalating repression of activists in exile and their family members in Hong Kong.

On May 2, 2025, Hong Kong national security police formally charged the father of a prominent US-based activist, Anna Kwok, with a national security crime, marking the first such prosecution of a family member of an exiled activist.

Kwok Yin-sang, 68, faces one charge of “directly or indirectly” dealing with the finances of an “absconder” under section 90 of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, which carries a punishment of up to seven years in prison. Police also arrested Anna Kwok's brother on April 30 on the same allegation but have released him on bail pending further investigation. We call on the Hong Kong authorities to immediately drop all charges against Kwok Yin-sang and release him.

Anna Kwok is the executive director of Hong Kong Democracy Council, a nongovernmental organization based in Washington, DC. In July 2023, she was among a first group of eight people against whom the Hong Kong police issued arrests warrants and HK\$1 million (US\$129,000) bounties for violating Hong Kong's National Security Law.

So far, Hong Kong authorities have issued similar baseless arrest warrants and bounties against 19 exiled Hong Kong activists and have harassed and threatened their families. Most recently, between January and April, national security police took away and interrogated over a dozen relatives and associates of the UK-based activists Carmen Lau and Tony Cheung, and the academic Chung Kim-wah, as well as the US-based activist Frances Hui. In February, the Hong Kong authorities confiscated HK\$800,000 (US\$103,000) from ex-lawmaker Ted Hui, an Australian resident, and his family for having allegedly violated the National Security Law.

In June and December 2024, the Hong Kong government cancelled the passports of 13 wanted activists, including Anna Kwok.

It seems clear that the police actions against Anna Kwok's relatives are in fact aimed at punishing her for her activism. Punishments and harassment against individuals for the alleged actions of another person is a

form of collective targeting, prohibited by international human rights law.

The Chinese government has used two draconian national security laws, the National Security Law of 2020 and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance of 2024, to dismantle Hong Kong's democracy movement and take away Hong Kong people's fundamental freedoms. The Chinese and Hong Kong governments' actions severely contravened human rights guarantees enshrined in Hong Kong's de facto constitution, the Basic Law, and violated the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is incorporated into Hong Kong's legal framework via the Basic Law and the Bill of Rights Ordinance.

The 19 wanted activists live in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australia. The US government has sanctioned six officials in Hong Kong for using the National Security Law "extraterritorially to intimidate, silence, and harass" the activists. The other three governments have issued statements condemning the arrest warrants, but have not taken action to hold Hong Kong officials accountable.

In response to the Chinese government's international intimidation campaign against the Hong Kong diaspora, we urge concerned governments to take concrete actions to hold accountable government officials implicated in these abuses.

Governments should also put in place effective measures to protect exiled Hong Kong activists and other critics of the Chinese government against Beijing's long arm of repression, including by establishing national systems to track cases of transnational repression, and impartially investigate and prosecute, where appropriate, those responsible who are within their jurisdictions.

Signatories

1. Amnesty International
2. ARTICLE 19
3. China Aid Association
4. Chinese Human Rights Defenders
5. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
6. Fortify Rights
7. Freedom House
8. Georgetown Center for Asian Law
9. Hong Kong Watch
10. The Human Rights Foundation
11. Human Rights Watch
12. International Service for Human Rights
13. Judicial Reform Foundation
14. PEN America
15. The Rights Practice
16. Safeguard Defenders
17. Students for a Free Tibet, Japan
18. Taipei Bar Association Human Rights Committee
19. Taiwan Bar Association Human Rights Committee
20. Uyghur Human Rights Project
21. Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation
22. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
23. World Uyghur Congress

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