

**Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng Yeuk-wah**

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Dear Secretary Cheng:

I am writing to express my grave concern for **Chow Hang-tung** (鄒幸彤), a barrister who has been arrested and charged for “advertising or publicising unauthorised assembly”. It is alarming to learn that she was targeted simply for writing social media posts asking people to commemorate the Tiananmen crackdown in a private manner. This act is a mere peaceful expression of opinion, which is permissible under international human rights law and standards, and must not be criminalized.

I find it distressing that the authorities increasingly use the Public Order Ordinance to target activists and human rights defenders who exercise their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Over the past two years the authorities have arrested, charged and sentenced at least nine members of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China for taking part in unauthorized assemblies.

As you will be aware, under international human rights law and standards, participating in and organizing peaceful assemblies does not require prior permission by the state. Failure to notify the authorities of an assembly should not render participation in the assembly unlawful and should not in itself be used as a basis for either arresting the participants or organizers or imposing undue sanctions, such as charging them with criminal offences.

**I therefore call on you to:**

- **Drop all charges against and release Chow Hang-tung immediately and unconditionally, as she was charged solely for peacefully exercising her rights;**
- **End the practice of bringing criminal charges against those who have simply exercised their right to freedom of expression or other human rights;**
- **Review and amend all laws and regulations, and end all related measures, that violate the exercise of human rights, in particular to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.**

Yours sincerely,