



10 December 2025

Joint NGO World Human Rights Day Statement:

Hong Kong Should Immediately Release Chow Hang-tung and Lee Cheuk-yan

We, the undersigned legal and civil society organisations, urgently call upon the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government to release Chow Hang-tung and Lee Cheuk-yan without delay, to withdraw all outstanding criminal charges against them, and to quash their previous convictions. We further urge the authorities to cease bringing criminal proceedings against individuals exercising their human rights, particularly the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

We express our deep regret regarding the HKSAR Government's decision to further postpone the trial of Chow and Lee from 11 November 2025 to 22 January 2026. The two co-defendants are charged with “inciting subversion of state power” under the National Security Law (NSL) in connection with their involvement with the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (HK Alliance); they face conviction and a maximum sentence up to ten years’ imprisonment.

Both Chow and Lee have been repeatedly denied bail and their trial has been postponed not once but twice in the last year. The newly scheduled trial date of 22 January 2026 will come a painfully long 52 months after their initial arrest. This duration, according to Amnesty International research, is more than four times longer than the average pre-

trial detention period for national security-related prosecutions in Hong Kong, underscoring the punitive approach adopted by national security authorities.¹

Pursuant to applicable international law and standards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) - incorporated into the HKSAR Basic Law - it is incumbent upon the authorities to ensure that individuals held in pre-trial detention are brought promptly before a judicial authority and tried without undue delay. They are entitled to expeditious judicial proceedings and, if they are not adjudicated within a reasonable period of time, authorities must release them.

In 2023, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention determined that Chow's detention was arbitrary.² By extension, this determination should also include Lee; both have been deprived of their liberty solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Both Chow and Lee have consistently maintained their innocence in the lead-up to their trial. Their legitimate calls to Chinese authorities to disclose the truth about the Tiananmen crackdown and their roles in the HK Alliance should never have been used as grounds for prosecution. Yet, they remain arbitrarily detained under the pretext of upholding "national security".

Chow's and Lee's cases are a clear illustration of how the HKSAR Government uses the NSL, together with other vague and overly broad laws, as a mechanism of repression.

On the occasion of the World Human Rights Day, we call upon the HKSAR Government to uphold its human rights obligations. We urge that the human rights of Chow and Lee and all others detained and prosecuted in Hong Kong under national security provisions are fully respected in accordance with international law and standards, and that the HKSAR Government:

1. Immediately and unconditionally drop all national security charges against and release Chow Hang-tung and Lee Cheuk-yan, and additionally quash their previous convictions.
2. Cease the use of any criminal charge against individuals exercising their human rights, particularly the rights to freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms.
3. Allow and facilitate the peaceful commemoration of the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989, ensuring that everyone is free to honour the survivors, remember the

¹ Amnesty International: ***"The State Can Lock Up People, But Not Their Thinking": How Hong Kong's National Security Law Undermined Human Rights in Five Years***, 30 June 2025 (Index: ASA 17/9556/2025)

² Working Group on Arbitrary Detention: ***Opinion No. 30/2023 concerning Ms. Hang Tung Chow (Hong Kong, China)***, 1 May 2023 (UN Doc. A/HRC/WGAD/2023/30)

- deceased, and hold authorities to account without retaliation or obstructions to the free exercise of freedom of expression, association or peaceful assembly.
4. Repeal without delay all laws that infringe on human rights, particularly those that restrict the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, including the National Security Law and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance.

Initiated by:

1. Amnesty International
2. International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
3. International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

Co-signed by:

4. ARTICLE 19
5. Building and Wood Workers International (BWI)
6. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
7. Education International (EI)
8. Fortify Rights
9. Front Line Defenders (FLD)
10. Human Rights Foundation (HRF)
11. Human Rights Watch (HRW)
12. IndustriALL
13. International Association of People's Lawyers, Monitoring Committee on Attacks on Lawyers (IAPL)
14. International Domestic Workers' Federation (IDWF)
15. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
16. International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
17. International Observatory of Lawyers at Risk (OIAD)
18. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
19. International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)
20. Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC)
21. Public Services International (PSI)
22. Safeguard Defenders
23. Solidar
24. Trade Union Solidarity Center of Finland (SASK)
25. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
26. UNI Global Union
27. Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA