



ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY, CHAIRMAN  
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**Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern**  
**Co-chair, Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

**Hearing on**  
**“The Dismantling of Hong Kong’s Civil Society”**  
**Tuesday, July 12, 2022, 10:00 a.m.**

**As delivered**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on the erosion of civil society in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong has long been a particular interest of this Commission. From the start, 20 years ago, our annual report has included a discrete Hong Kong chapter.

This is the sixth hearing on Hong Kong, or featuring a witness on Hong Kong, in my three and a half years as House cochair. The reason for this heightened attention is regrettable, however.

The changes in this time have been dramatic. Three years ago this summer, the world witnessed massive protests in the streets of Hong Kong. The trigger was an extradition treaty that put residents at risk of being forcibly sent to the mainland. The context was the steady erosion of democratic norms under Chinese government and Communist Party influence.

For our September 2019 hearing on the protests, witnesses flew in from Hong Kong. They would not be able to do that today.

One witness was Joshua Wong, a leader of the pro-democracy movement, making his second appearance before the CECC. Today he is in prison on political charges.

Another was Denise Ho, a democracy activist and singer. She was arrested and released on bail, and still faces charges of the crime of supporting democracy.

In 2020, the central government passed the National Security law, providing a “legal” basis for political persecutions of those deemed oppositional to the Party’s priorities.

Further, Hong Kong authorities have imposed measures aligned with the ideological priorities of the central government. These include removing books from libraries, pushing “patriotic education” in schools, revising history to suit Party narratives, and suppressing LGBTQ voices.

These impulses are not exclusive to Hong Kong or China. We see such evidence of authoritarian creep in many places at home and abroad.

Today we hear from citizens and residents of Hong Kong who have been first-hand witnesses to this extraordinary change. The fact that none of our witnesses remain in Hong Kong is indicative of the crackdown. We invite them to share their stories, and to speak for their friends and colleagues still in Hong Kong who are not able to speak for themselves.

We not only want to hear the state of civil society, but to receive recommendations on what U.S. policymakers can do to support those who still desire democracy and human rights.

I also welcome your recommendation on whether the U.S. should create humanitarian pathways for those fleeing repression in Hong Kong.

And lastly, let us not forget the prisoners of conscience who are in jail or on trial in Hong Kong -- Joshua Wong, Jimmy Lai, Cyd Ho, Claudia Mo and so many others. We continue to stand with them and to advocate for their release.

Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know the staff are working on analytical products in conjunction to this hearing, and I look forward to their publication. I look forward to the testimony.