

To: The Economist (May 3, 2020)

Dear Editor,

I refer to your allegation that Beijing has torn a 'hole' in the Basic Law which underpins Hong Kong's "One Country, Two Systems" in your articles "A Pandemic of Power Grabs" and "The Long Arm of Beijing" (April 25th, 2020).

Your allegation that Beijing has breached Article 22 of the Basic Law which prohibits interference in Hong Kong affairs betrays your habitual ignorance about the organizational structure of the Chinese Government and your reluctance to accept China's sovereignty over Hong Kong.

Regarding the two Chinese government offices which had commented on Hong Kong affairs recently, the Liaison Office's precursor was the Xinhua News Agency, which had operated in Hong Kong for more than 50 years before the handover and re-named in 1999. As such, it is definitely not a department of the Chinese Government established after 1997 in accordance with Article 22 of the Basic Law.

The same holds true for the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council. It has been in existence soon after the birth of the People's Republic of China and charged with the special responsibility of dealing with affairs relating to Hong Kong and Macau. As an office of the State Council which predates the Basic Law, Article 22 of the Basic Law is again inapplicable.

All personnel posted by the Chinese Government to Hong Kong must, of course, abide by the law. But as a mirror image of the arrangements before 1997, the laws of Hong Kong permit saving of the right of the state, just as they had permitted saving of the right of the Crown before 1997.

As our sovereign power, Beijing of course has overall responsibility for our welfare. How could it be otherwise? The legislature is one of the the key pillars of Hong Kong's governance institutions. Our legislature has ceased to function properly since last October, except in financial matters, because of filibuster by the self-proclaimed "democrats" in the Legislative Council, who have no respect for other people's rights and freedoms nor the welfare of Hong Kong. It would be an abdication of Beijing's responsibility for Hong Kong if it sat on its hands and refrained from making even verbal condemnations.

As for the recent arrest of high-profile politicians involved in unauthorized public protests, it is indeed true that no one is above the law, whatever his or her political persuasion. We should

leave it to our courts to determine whether offences had been committed and impose appropriate sentences.

After almost a year of sustained anti-government protests, at times involving violence devastating Hong Kong's otherwise peaceful society, for many of us who helped build Hong Kong as it is, enough is enough. It is imperative that our government should enforce the law strictly and take all appropriate measures to restore peace and stability in Hong Kong.

Regina Ip

Executive Councillor
Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region