

By email

Letters to the Editor
The Telegraph

Dear Letters Editor,

The article “WHO has shown ‘yawning silence’ to China’s harassment of Hong Kong doctors, says leading medic” on your website of 22 August contains a number of unfounded allegations, and I would like to set the record straight.

In response to the claims made in Dr Darren Man’s article in the Lancet about the protests in Hong Kong last November, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government Spokesman had rejected the claims in a press release¹, and the piece was also published in the Lancet².

As conveyed by the HKSAR Government Spokesman, arrangement had been made for ambulance crews to attend the scene, but this offer was rejected by protesters. This was also confirmed by Dr Mann.

In fact, the Hong Kong Police Force enabled the access of the Hong Kong Red Cross (HKRC) volunteers to the campus to provide first aid service. In light of rumors about the arrangement of their service, HKRC has also issued an official statement³ which affirmed that its first aid team provided first aid service to anyone in need in the campus, without any delay, obstruction or impolite treatment.

It has been a common tactic of rioters to disguise themselves as first-aid workers or media representatives to escape detection and arrest. Owing to the large numbers leaving the campus and the prolonged chaotic situation, the Police did detain people claiming to be first-aid workers and media representatives to confirm their identities and credentials. Those who could prove their bona fides were released whilst those who could not were arrested.

The accusation of law enforcement agencies in Hong Kong using ambulances to transport personnel and equipment is false and groundless. Snap shots showing

¹ <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201911/28/P2019112800736.htm>

² [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30369-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30369-X/fulltext)

³ www.redcross.org.hk/en/press_room/press_release_2019/20191122.html

police officers on board ambulances should not be taken out of context as there are different occasions when police officers are on board ambulances, e.g. escort of seriously injured people.

With regard to the claim that people in Hong Kong no longer trust the territory's hospitals to keep their details private from the Government, it should be pointed out that there are clear provisions under the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy and everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference. Medical information is personal data, which is protected under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (the Ordinance). If any information in a medical report is to be used for the investigation of crime and apprehension of offenders, there is an established mechanism for the Police to apply to a magistrate for a warrant to search for and take possession of the relevant medical reports. The Police would also need to comply with the provisions of the Ordinance on the retention, use and security of and access to personal data when handling the medical reports being obtained.

Safeguarding national security by way of legislation is an international practice. The National Security Law for the HKSAR only targets offenders of four specific types of crimes that endanger national security, namely, secession, subversion, terrorist activities, and collusion with foreign or external forces to endanger national security. The allegation that the Law has further increased the intimidation of medical staff due to the threat of long sentences for providing medical care is wholly unfounded.

Sincerely,

Miss Winky So
Director-General, London ETO