

September 9, 2025

The Editor,
New York Post

Dear Editor,

We strongly oppose and categorically refute the allegations made in the opinion piece by Samuel Bickett titled *"I was an American political prisoner in Hong Kong – and saw the savagery and squalor firsthand"* (September 7). The claims regarding the operations of the Correctional Services Department (CSD) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) are utterly false and baseless and amount to a malicious smear on our department.

The CSD is committed to ensuring a secure, safe, humane, decent and healthy custodial environment and providing appropriate rehabilitation programmes to persons in custody (PICs) to help them turn a new leaf. The allegations that abuse, medical neglect, or substandard living conditions are prevalent within our correctional institutions are wholly unfounded.

The Department places the utmost importance on discipline and professionalism across all correctional facilities. There are no so-called “political prisoners” in Hong Kong. All PICs are treated equally, without discrimination on the grounds of background, political views or the nature of their offences. The CSD adheres strictly to the principles of impartiality and professionalism in all its operations. Any illegal acts committed by PICs or CSD staff are taken seriously and are referred to relevant law enforcement agencies for investigation in accordance with established mechanisms.

Contrary to the claims made in the article, medical care services provided to PICs are comprehensive and robust. The CSD provides basic medical care services to all PICs at the on-premises hospitals in correctional institutions where medical examinations and appropriate treatments or referrals to specialists of public hospitals are provided to PICs whenever necessary.

The CSD has also taken extensive measures to continuously improve the custodial environment and to ensure the well-being of PICs. These include the installation of anti-suicide safety fans, the progressive replacement of ventilation systems, the addition of industrial fans, and the installation of new gates and windows with improved ventilation efficiency. Further steps, including trials of heat-insulating coatings on buildings and

the provision of hand fans and ice cooling towels, have demonstrated our proactive approach to address hot weather conditions.

The Prison Rules (Cap. 234A) empowers the CSD to remove a PIC from association with other PICs for purposes such as safeguarding the interests or personal safety of the PICs. Request for removal from association may be made by PICs and CSD may make such arrangements after considering the relevant factors in accordance with the legal requirements and procedures.

In recent years, a number of radical offenders involved in serious offenses have been admitted to correctional institutions. Many were incited to commit illegal acts under the influence of extremist ideologies or misconceptions. To address the rehabilitation needs of these individuals, the CSD has introduced *Project PATH*. This initiative aims to assist PICs in developing a better understanding of Chinese history and culture, fostering a sense of national identity, reconstructing positive values, and rebuilding their lives. All PICs may join the project voluntarily. We condemn any attempt to demonise the rehabilitation programmes as “indoctrination”.

It is important to note that transparent and well-established complaint mechanisms are in place for PICs to raise grievances. PICs can lodge their complaints through various internal and external channels. Besides, the Justices of the Peace carry out relevant statutory duties such as investigating complaints made to them by PICs, inspecting diets and examining the physical conditions, hygiene and accommodation facilities of the institutions. Deaths in official custody must be reported to the coroner who is required by law to hold an inquest. Regarding Bickett’s imprisonment, our records confirm that he has never raised any complaints throughout his incarceration, be it about himself or other PICs.

The CSD will continue to discharge its duties in strict accordance with the law, ensuring the security of correctional institutions while safeguarding the rights, dignity, and welfare of all PICs. We urge the public to rely on verified facts, reject misinformation, and avoid falling prey to narratives that deliberately seek to discredit the CSD and the HKSAR Government.

WONG Kwok-hing

Commissioner of the Correctional Services Department

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region