

# Smear campaign targets Hong Kong unionists and journalists

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*A series of false allegations and smears have this week targeted journalists and unionists in Hong Kong known for speaking out against attacks on media. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its affiliate, the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) condemn the attacks against media workers and commends the solidarity of Hong Kong journalists in the face of such relentless attacks.*

Since the “Prohibition on Face Covering”, otherwise knowns as the “anti-mask law”, was passed on October 4, **media workers and their union, the Hong Kong Journalist Association (HKJA), have week endured a targeted campaign of smears and false allegations** published online and in newspapers including state newspaper China Daily.

**The HKJA is among those strongly criticising the colonial era Emergency Regulation Ordinance** that has allowed the government to ban the use of face masks – an action which jeopardises the safety not only of journalists but ordinary citizens caught up in tear gas attacks by the territory’s police.

On October 5, HKJA received a fake report claiming it “*is racing against time to issue 10,000 press cards*”. The false claim went viral on social media, despite HKJA’s rigorous defence and explanation of its eligibility requirements and application process for membership.

Then, on October 7, Mark Pinkstone wrote in the China Daily that HKJA was “*in the pocket of the NED/NDI*”; a non-profit organisation funded by US Congress that invests in democratic movements worldwide.

**The article went on to defame HKJA chairperson, Chris Yeung** alleging he attended “anti-China” meetings in the United States recently, even though the leader has not travelled to the country since 2007.

The HKJA said it deplored the “groundless and defamatory” article.

HKJA chairperson, Chris Yeung, said: “*We trust your paper will take factual mistakes and unfounded allegations seriously and would take promptly action to set the record straight and make an apology for the remarks. To seek legal remedy for the damages caused to us is the last things we want.*”

This week, Hong Kong Free Press reported comments by Hong Kong Executive Council member Ip Kwok-him, stating that the government “*would not rule out a ban on the internet*”. The IFJ strongly condemned such a move that would only further erode the right to free expression and democracy of Hong Kong.

The IFJ said: “*Persistent attacks on the media this week is evidence of the continued erosion of Hong Kong’s democracy and the fragile state of press freedom.*

*We strongly condemn the use of state media to spread defamatory and false statements about journalists and activists who are in the fight of their lives to defend Hong Kong’s press freedom.*

*The IFJ expresses solidarity with Chris Yeung and will stand with the HKJA through these attacks.”*

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<https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/hong-kong-campaign/article/hong-kong-smear-campaign-targets-hong-kong-unionists-and-journalists.html>