

# **“Yet I have chosen to live in truth” : Statement to the court by labour union leader LEE Cheuk-yan, imprisoned in Hong Kong**

Wednesday 26 May 2021, by [HKCTU](#), [LEE Cheuk Yan](#) (Date first published: 26 May 2021).

*Below is the full text of Lee Cheuk-yan's mitigation, submitted on 24 May, for his case on the unauthorised assembly on 1 October 2019. The case is pending sentencing on 28 May. Earlier Lee has been sentenced to 14 months for two other cases.*

*You are invited to write to him like a pen pal. Details and guidelines are available at the end of this mail.*

Your Honour,

It is well acknowledged, as your Honour has once made it clear, that a decision on conviction or sentencing should be based on the law but not politics.

Nonetheless, I wish to make the following submission to assist this Honourable Court in comprehending the political beliefs behind the events of the present case, which I would refer to as the peaceful demonstration on 1 October 2019.

In 1975, I was admitted to study at the Department of Civil Engineering of the University of Hong Kong. Same as many university students of my generation, I was deeply influenced by the student movement at that time which advocated *“Knowing China and Caring for the Society”*. I began to ponder my responsibility towards the society and my country.

I still remember one of the propositions from those days, *“Where should China go”*. It has provoked my endless self-reflections over the years and has remained as relevant as of today. It sowed the seeds of my following 40 years of commitment in search of a way forward for China.

After graduation, I have devoted myself to labour and democratic movements as well as participating in campaigns for human rights in China. This is because I firmly believe that democratic reform is the answer to China's way forward.

In particular, the Chinese civil movement in 1989 has changed my life.

At first I was committed to mobilising support in Hong Kong for the movement and helped found the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (HKA).

Later on 30 May 1989 I brought some of the donation raised by HKA to Tiananmen Square in Beijing, where I visited students, workers and intellectuals in the movement.

On the night the June Fourth Incident happened, I was made to leave as I heard that the military was about to evacuate Tiananmen Square with force. All night long I could hear gunshots from my hotel. I saw tanks entering Tiananmen Square at the early hours of the day and three-wheeled tricycles passing by my hotel on Chang'an Avenue transporting corpses and injured people non-stop.

On 5 June 1989 I was arrested and taken into custody, and the following 3 days were the most fearful days of my life. Fortunately, some Hongkongers came to my rescue and I managed to return to Hong Kong on 8 June 1989. My hope and optimism for a democratic China turned sharply into

hopelessness. I believe that a lot of Chinese and Hongkongers at that time have shared my feeling, but we did not give up. We struggled against all odds in the hope of a free and democratic China.

Since then, on National Day which falls on 1 October every year, there has been no room for any celebration. We could not help but painfully express our grief towards the national tragedy. On 1 October 2019, we were performing the same rituals on the streets, making the same demands for a vindication of the June Fourth Incident and a call for democratic establishment.

Your Honour, for over 40 years I have strived for democratic reform in China. This is my unrequited love, the love for my country with such a heavy heart. I remember a quote of sorrow from Bai Hua, an iconic writer from China's "Scar Literature" era, "*You love your country, but does your country love you?*"

Recently the term "Patriot" has been widely discussed across the city as the Chinese government advocates the "Rule of Hong Kong by Patriots". However, who is a true patriot? If the love for the country means the love for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), things would have been much easier as the political principles of CCP entail absolute obedience.

There was a famous saying that to follow the CCP means "*to implement when understood, to implement when not understood, and to understand in depth while implementing*", which I believe explains it all.

Yet I have chosen to live in the truth and persist in thinking the way I am. By my own definition patriotism is to love my people. The function of the state is to protect the freedom and dignity of its people, but not to control their minds and behaviour.

Your Honour, this is the path of democracy which I have chosen. For all these years I took to the streets, and all along I have stayed faithful to my original intentions and commitment.

**LEE Cheuk-yan**

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## **WRITE TO LEE CHEUK-YAN**

- 1) Post to 19/F, Wing Wong Commercial Building, 557-559 Nathan Road, Yaumatei, Kowloon, Hong Kong;
- 2) Email of the scanned copy to [olivialau@hkctu.org.hk](mailto:olivialau@hkctu.org.hk), or
- 3) Clicking the button above to fill in the Google form  
<https://hkctu.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5d45a16aad1da797c2519048c&id=51c960235a&e=599833ae6e>

The letters will be inspected by the officers by removing the envelopes. To observe the official guidelines, help us group the letters and protect privacy from the official inspection, whether by post or email, please:

- Write on paper in A4 size WITHOUT staples, stickers, glitters and 3D decorations;
- Use NO correction fluid or tape;

- DO NOT include illegal content and foul language;
  - Use abbreviations, pseudonyms and codes for sensitive information and names;
  - Put NO page number in your letter, although the number of pages is unlimited;
  - Put your address on a separate sheet of letter, if you expect a reply;
- Include nothing more than the letter in the envelope.

It normally takes 4 to 6 working days for the letter to reach Lee after we forward it. We will publish his open letters from time to time, in addition to forwarding his private replies to you. You are also welcome to invite trusted friends personally to write to him.

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**P.S.**

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