

# Hong Kong : On threats against the Hospital Authority Employees Alliance (HAEA)

Friday 17 September 2021, by [CHAU Candice](#), [CHEUNG Tony](#) (Date first published: 17 September 2021).

## Contents

- [Medical group aligned with](#)
- [Hong Kong Hospital Authority](#)

## **Medical group aligned with opposition in Hong Kong comes under official scrutiny for range of criticisms**

by Tony Cheung (SCMP) - 15 Sep 2021 -

<https://scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3148868/medical-group-aligned-opposition-hong-kong-comes-under>

*Hospital Authority Employees Alliance asked to provide details about eight issues, including comments about Chinese-made Sinovac vaccine.*

*The Labour Department's Registry of Trade Unions has given them until Friday 17 to respond, and delisting the group is one possible outcome.*

Hong Kong's labour union authority has required a pro-opposition medical group to submit information about its past work, according to its leader, sparking fears the body could be outlawed. The Hospital Authority Employees Alliance received a letter from the Labour Department's Registry of Trade Unions earlier this month asking for a written submission with the details by Friday 17, the group's acting chairman David Chan Kwok-shing told the Post on Wednesday 15.

*"We plan to comply. We noticed that there could be different outcomes, such as warnings or even disqualification, so we are still discussing with our legal team on how exactly we are responding,"* said the nurse from the Caritas Medical Centre public hospital.

**Last month the registry informed the General Union of Hong Kong Speech Therapists it would be deregistered as early October 13.** The authority cited the Trade Unions Ordinance that allows for unions to be delisted if they were used for any unlawful purpose. But they have at least two months to appeal the decision.

Five of its core leaders were charged with sedition under the national security law over a series of **children's books** about sheep defending their village from invading wolves. The content was deemed as inciting anti-government hatred.

The hospital employees' alliance, which emerged from the anti-government protest movement in 2019, has been highly critical of the government's public health policies since the first Covid-19 cases were reported in mainland China in late 2019.

The group launched a **general strike** among medical staff and urged the government to shut the border with the mainland.

Former chairwoman Winnie Yu Wai-ming was also charged over her role in **unofficial primaries the opposition camp held last year** and she was released on bail in July.

According to a source, the letter sent by the registry sought information from the alliance on eight issues. Apart from the strike and Yu's role in the primaries, the alliance was asked to explain:

- comments it made about the Chinese-made Sinovac vaccine;
- remarks on the government's "Leave Home Safe" app;
- its co-organising of screenings and street booths related to the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown and the rule of law;
- and its call for people to write to Yu and other activists detained under the security law.

A Labour Department spokeswoman confirmed that a letter was sent to a union on September 3 but declined to disclose any further details.

Dr Arisina Ma Chung-yee, former president of the Hong Kong Public Doctors' Association, urged the registry to treat the alliance's case fairly and *"without any political consideration"*.

*"Medical groups like the alliance made comments about public health issues to raise residents' understanding. Many medical issues were not black and white. If the government does not listen to opinions from different sides, a lot of people could be upset when new policies are rolled out,"* she said.

**Since June, at least nine opposition groups or unions have disbanded or announced they would.**

They included three medical groups:

- the Frontline Doctors' Union,
- Médecins Inspirés,
- the Pharmaceutical and Medical Device Industries Employees General Union – and two educators' bodies:
- the Progressive Teachers' Alliance,
- the Professional Teachers Union (PTU).

But new unions have also been set up. A day after the PTU passed a resolution on Saturday to break up, Kim Wong Kin-ho, a secondary school vice-principal, announced the launch of the Hong Kong Education Workers' Union.

Wong, a 36-year-old member of the **pro-establishment** Federation of Education Workers, told the Post he was not worried about being targeted by the trade unions registry.

*"If we focus on speaking up for teachers, and communicating with authorities reasonably, I think the situation might not be that pessimistic,"* he said.

## **Hong Kong Hospital Authority union denies gov't allegation it broke law**

by Candice Chau (HKFP) - 17 September 2021

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/09/17/hong-kong-hospital-authority-union-denies-govt-allegation-it-broke-law/>

*The union was accused by the government of using its funds for political purposes and "belittling" the China-developed Sinovac Covid vaccine.*

A pro-democracy medical union in Hong Kong has denied government allegations that it has violated

laws on trade unions and has used funds for political purposes.

The Hospital Authority Employees Alliance (HAEA) submitted a written response on Friday 17 to a letter it received in early September from the Registry of Trade Unions, which demanded the union submit information on eight events it held.

David Chan, vice-chairperson of the HAEA, told HKFP that the authorities demanded information about a **strike in February last year**. Thousands of the city's medical workers took part to demand the government close its border with mainland China at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Other events listed in the letter including the participation by the HAEA's former chairperson Winnie Yu in a primary election last year for the since-postponed Legislative Council election. Yu is one of 47 democrats accused of conspiring to commit subversion under the Beijing-imposed national security law, through involvement in the primary. She was granted bail in late July after being remanded in custody for five months.

The union was also asked to explain its posts on Covid-19 vaccines and the government's LeaveHomeSafe mobile application. The HAEA made posts on Facebook questioning the efficacy of Sinovac, and was accused by the government of "*belittling*" the China-developed vaccine. "*They asked us to prove how the events were in accordance with our charter,*" said Chan, adding that the registry's letter did not give detailed explanations of how the union had violated the ordinance.

In its reply, according to Chan, the union said that all the events it organised were in compliance with its charter and the law, and that "*industrial action fighting for reasonable rights*" were protected by the Basic Law and international conventions.

*"Since this union is for Hospital Authority employees, citizens' health is the issue we care the most about,"* said Chan. *"Therefore paying attention to issues affecting lives and humanitarian crises naturally is part of normal union activities."*

The vice-chairperson said the union did not hand over any information on members.

## **Unions under pressure**

The HAEA is one of several unions set up in the wake of anti-government protests in 2019. Officials are planning to deregister one such union, the General Union of Hong Kong Speech Therapists, after five members were accused of sedition over children's cartoon books featuring sheep and denied bail.

The city's longstanding and largest pro-democracy union coalition, the **Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU)**, is also in the process of disbanding.

**Chan said the medical union had held discussions over whether to disband but members had decided not to do so at present.**

*"We hope to continue our work connecting our members, and I'd like to thank the members for walking with us all along,"* he said.