

Hong Kong : National security, 2 more Hong Kong democrats see case transferred to High Court, where max penalty is life in prison

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Former district councillor Tiffany Yuen and ex-chairwoman of the now-defunct Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions Carol Ng saw their case moved from the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts to the higher court on Tuesday.

Two more defendants in the high-profile national security case involving 47 Hong Kong pro-democracy figures have been committed to the High Court, where a conviction over their subversion charge could land them life behind bars.

Former district councillor **Tiffany Yuen** and ex-chairwoman of the now-defunct Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions **Carol Ng** saw their case moved from the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts to the higher court on Tuesday.

They will join 44 co-defendants – including former law professor **Benny Tai** and prominent activist **Joshua Wong** – to face trial or sentencing over an alleged conspiracy to commit subversion under the Beijing-imposed security law.

The group was said to have organised and participated in an **unofficial primary election held in July 2020**, with a view to achieve a controlling majority in the legislature. They stand accused of, if elected, intending to abuse their power as lawmakers to veto budget bills, paralyse government operations and ultimately force the chief executive to resign.

Tiffany Yuen and Carol Ng were the third batch of democrats to be transferred to the High Court, where the maximum penalty for committing subversion is life imprisonment. This left activist **Gordon Ng** – better known by his pseudonym “Lee Bak Lou” on discussion forum LIHKG – as the only defendant yet to be transferred.

The 47 democrats were first brought to court in March last year. At present, only 13 of them are on bail pending trial. Others have been detained for more than 15 months awaiting a trial date, while some are serving jail sentences for offences linked to the 2019 unrest.

Upon hearing the conclusion of their committal proceeding, which first began in July last year, Tiffany Yuen and Carol Ng smiled and pressed their heads lightly against each other.

Inside the dock were some other defendants who were committed last Wednesday and on Monday. They included journalist-turned activist **Gwyneth Ho**, activist **Ventus Lau**, who helped organise rallies during the extradition bill protests, and ex-student protest leader Joshua Wong.

They waved at their family members, friends and supporters in the courtroom when they were led away by police and corrections officers after the hearing ended.

"Take good care of yourself," a man in the public gallery shouted.

"We will wait for you to come out," another court attendee said.

Reporting restrictions surrounding committal proceedings - whereby a magistrate determines whether there is enough evidence for a case to be transferred to the Court of First Instance of the High Court for trial or sentence - mean that written and broadcast reports are limited to including only the name of the defendants, magistrates, and lawyers, the alleged offence, the court's decision, whether legal aid was granted, and future court dates.

The principal magistrate, who is also a designated national security judge, adjourned the committal proceeding of Gordon Ng to July 4, to allow the court to handle legal matters that would affect the transfer of the activist.

Senior Counsel Gladys Li and barrister Yvonne Leung were among the defendants' legal representatives.

P.-S.

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