

# Response to the incident of 17<sup>th</sup> Dec protest

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Hong Kong People's Alliance on WTO

The sixth Ministerial Conference of WTO in Hong Kong is entering the last day. Rich countries have so far still dominating the negotiation which refused to stop dumping immediately and there was no progress on cancellation of their export agricultural subsidies; at the same time rich countries are pressurizing poor countries to further open their public service market for international capital, which in effect put the livelihoods of millions of farmers and workers into serious threat. Over the past few days, we have seen over dozens of peaceful rallies, and in particular, Korean farmers demonstrated their strong will by bowed down for every three steps. The Hong Kong public was deeply moved by such sincere and humble action and expressed their strong support to the Korean peasants. It is a great disappointment to civil society and demonstrators in Hong Kong, that trade negotiations at the WTO have shown no genuine will to support poor countries to achieve sustainable livelihood. Therefore it is completely understandable that demonstrators want to express their strongest demand at this very critical moment.

The objective of the demonstrators is reaching the WTO venue at this critical moment, pressurizing trade ministers to put priority to endangered livelihoods of billions of farmers and workers in the negotiations. The reason of confronting with police is to get as near to Convention Centre as possible. During the whole demonstration, no shop and public property was damaged, it is totally misleading and completely untrue that the police force has described the incident as "riot".

During the demonstration, Korean farmers shouted "we love Hong Kong, we love peace", winning a lot of support from Hong Kong people. It was very moving to see Hong Kong people provide water, tissue, lighting, providing help to the injured and even joining the rally.

We regret that police has used unnecessary excessive force in the incident. Tear gas was applied without prior warning to the public and reporters on the spot. We regret the fact that considerable numbers of demonstrators and Hong Kong citizens were injured, even reporters were hurt by water cannon and tear gas.

We strongly condemn the delay of arrival of ambulance and first aid assistance to the injured people. Our volunteer first aid helpers were not allowed to enter the spot to help the injured people; at the same time demonstrators were not allowed to leave the spot. Also, the police hotline repeatedly asked whether the injured people are Hong Kong citizens or the demonstrators. Fifteen injured demonstrators upon discharge were sent straight to the police station at Kwun Tong and were charged by illegal gathering. We strongly condemn these inhuman treatment to those injured people.

We strongly demand the police to release all detained and arrested demonstrators, and we express our deepest concern to all injured people.

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