

Occupy Hong Kong - An update on events of the last few days

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In the last few days the Occupy Central movement has continued to grow phenomenally. Following a very tense day and night on Sunday as police continually tried to disperse the protesters with force, firing numerous rounds of teargas, the large numbers and protesters determination to keep the roads meant that on Monday morning the streets were still occupied and the riot police were withdrawn from attacking the protesters. The atmosphere in Central by Monday night was a complete contrast to the night before as calm ensued and thousands more arrived to participate in the protests, appalled by the government's response and use of force the day before, to occupy large sections of the roads and calls for the Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying to step down were repeatedly shouted by the crowd. Thousands of protesters again stayed on the streets overnight on Tuesday, despite at times being battered by heavy rain, and yesterday was then National Day -the original planned start date of Occupy Central. However those initial plans of the OC leadership trio have long become worthless, paling in comparison to the dynamic the movement has taken on and the actions of ordinary people in their struggle for democracy. With a two day public holiday and many not having to go to work, even larger numbers have come out to take part. Protesters have gathered in their thousands over the last few days not just in Central District, but in Mong Kok and Causeway Bay, and yesterday also spread to Tsim Tsa Tsui.

The movement can now be considered largely leaderless. The OC trio and pan democrats are not trusted, while the student federation's call for people to return home on Sunday night in the face of the police assault was ignored as thousands remained to protect the streets. It has then been ordinary people themselves who are taking the initiative to come out and participate. Many have donated food and water and other supplies and volunteers are helping to distribute them and clean up any rubbish left behind. Some have set up microphones, allowing anybody to queue up to take a turn to speak, and debate on issues ranging from the present situation to pensions and the role of the free market can be heard. The walls around the protest sites have been turned into Democracy Walls, including on several abandoned buses in Mong Kok, where people have posted their demands, opinions and support for the movement. Meanwhile the protesters have been in good spirits and, as well as chanting slogans, participants have often broken out in mass singing of popular songs and lighting up the sky with their smartphone torches.

On Sunday night the HKCTU put out a call for a general strike, however its mobilising ability is not strong and the call has had a largely weak response. On Monday, however, some including Swire beverage workers, did take up the call and went out on strike.

One concerning issue is the actions of the right wing and pro-independence groups such as People's Power and those around the *Passion Times*. Yesterday morning at the flag raising ceremony for National Day one group raised a flag for Hong Kong independence, a very provocative act, and so trade unionists and students got together to block the flag from view and prevent them from disrupting the ceremony so that the protest could remain peaceful. Meanwhile, a small number of the posters, on the walls are from right wing localists and use vulgar language to attack some of the social activists for being left wing, not being radical enough and respecting the law and telling participants that they should not allow these activists to speak. There was also one incident

yesterday where the CTU had their flags up and then were confronted by a small group of young localists who started shouting at them, leading to the CTU taking its flags down. On the whole however, the influence of the right wing is very small.

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Latest news: Just another brief update: some of the students called for an escalation of actions including a blockade of the government offices if Leung Chun-ying did not step down by this evening. Since then people have been gathering outside government offices. In response the HK government has issued a statement calling on these protesters to disperse [1] Police has also been photographed and videoed this afternoon transporting what appears to be rubber bullets into the government HQ [2].

Also this afternoon the right wing also attempted to disrupt an on the street discussion being held by some of the comrades here, verbally attacking them. In the end they managed to diffuse the situation though.

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Footnotes

[1] see: <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201410/02/P201410020744.htm>

[2] see <http://hongkong.coconuts.co/2014/10/02/hong-kong-police-seen-transporting-rubber-baton-barrels>