

# **Protest on fifth anniversary of '831 framework' a reminder electoral reform remains a burning issue in Hong Kong**

Sunday 1 September 2019, by [LAM Jeffie](#) (Date first published: 31 August 2019).

*Stringent measures handed down by Beijing for election of city's chief executive triggered protests that led to Occupy Central*

*Government remains non-committal on universal suffrage though opposition says matter is at root of recent turmoil.*

On the same date **five years ago [2014]**, amid a familiar sense of anger and frustration, thousands of Hongkongers gathered in Tamar Park in Admiralty, vowing to **protest against Beijing's decision to control the electoral process** in the city.

Their solidarity came hours after the National People's Congress Standing Committee – the country's top legislative body – handed down the **"831 [August 31] framework", which would effectively allow the central government to screen candidates in the local elections for the chief executive.**

The stringent framework eventually triggered the **pro-democracy Occupy movement on September 28, 2014**, which paralysed part of the city's business hubs in an unprecedented lockdown for **79 days**.

Fast-forward to 2019, tens of thousands of Hongkongers defied a police ban to again join a march, which marked the fifth anniversary of Beijing's announcement of the framework which was eventually rejected by Hong Kong.

*"The government needs to heed the young generation's opinions. They're the future of Hong Kong and they should have a say in how to elect the city's leader,"* said Sai, a 63-year-old retiree who joined the Saturday march.

The latest protest came amid the months-long social unrest in Hong Kong, which was first triggered by the now-suspended **extradition bill and has gradually morphed into an anti-government and pro-democracy movement.**

The implementation of universal suffrage has also been listed as **one of the five key demands** by the protesters, alongside calls for a complete withdrawal of the bill and an independent investigation into the police's use of force.

But Hong Kong's government has remained non-committal about restarting political reform despite the political storm turning the city into a war zone.

On Saturday 31, it dismissed a joint appeal by 24 pan-democratic lawmakers, who called on Beijing to restart the constitutional reform as way forward to resolve the deep-rooted conflict in the city.

*"Issues relating to constitutional development are extremely controversial and the government must act prudently,"* a **government spokesman** said.

*"Rashly embarking on political reform again will further polarise society, which is an irresponsible act."*

The spokesman said the failed efforts of 2014 had created serious conflicts in the community, adding that it would assess the situation carefully before taking the matter forward.

**But Civic Party leader Alvin Yeung Ngok-kiu** slammed the government, accusing it of being evasive and irresponsible.

The stagnant constitutional system, he said, was in fact the cause of the city's quagmire today.

*"The current unrest is based on the unfair and unjust political system," he said. "To restore trust and confidence, the government must directly introduce universal suffrage as promised in the Basic Law."*

**Jeffie Lam**

### **Links**

[1]

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/1773233/road-universal-suffrage-timeline-hong-kongs-journey-votes>

[2]

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hongkong/politics/article/2117084/dontexpect-consensus-universal-suffrage-between-beijing-and>

---

### **P.S.**

• SCMP. Published: 11:00pm, 31 Aug, 2019:

<https://scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3025230/protest-fifth-anniversary-831-framework-reminder-electoral>