

Hong Kong protests: read full transcript of Carrie Lam's leaked 'quitting' talk

Tuesday 3 September 2019, by [Reuters](#), [South China Morning Post](#) (Date first published: 4 September 2019).

SCMP

The audio recording, which ran for 24 minutes, captures the bulk of a closed-door meeting Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor had last week

In it, she appears to say she would quit if she had a choice. She has since denied ever offering to resign over the city's current political crisis.}

A transcript of the talk given by Hong Kong [1]'s embattled leader in which she appeared to say she would quit if she had the choice has been released.

Chief Executive Carrie Lam [2] Cheng Yuet-ngor on Tuesday insisted she had never offered to resign [3] over the political crisis and social unrest she sparked with her now-abandoned extradition bill [4] and rejected suggestions that Beijing was stopping her from quitting.

She was responding to a Reuters report the previous day based on an audio recording of a closed-door meeting. Lam also said on Tuesday that she was "very disappointed" her private remarks had been recorded and said she had been trying to explain that resigning might be an easy option for her personally.

People who attended the talk said Lam spoke for about half an hour. The recording, which ran for 24 minutes, captures the bulk of the event but does not include a short question and answer session after her talk. Parts of the transcript have been redacted to remove the names of individuals mentioned by Lam, as well as details related to the meeting.

Transcript begins:

"In the last two years, one of the policy areas that I have spent most time in is innovation and technology. Now, I actually personally chair the steering committee.

"In less than three months' time, Hong Kong has been turned upside down, and my life has been turned upside down. But this is not the moment for self-pitifulness, although [name redacted] nowadays it's extremely difficult for me to go out.

"I have not been on the streets, not in the shopping malls, can't go to a hair salon, can't do anything because my whereabouts will be spread around the social media, the Telegram, the LIHKG, and you could expect a big crowd of black T-shirts and black-masked young people waiting for me.

"I'm still brave enough to go and this afternoon, I'm still planning to go if my security guards tell me later on that I can still go. But it's really, I don't want to cause disruption, inconvenience to the organisers.

"But as I said, this is not the time for me to self-pity myself. This is a time I come here, and I do other closed-door sessions from time to time with people from all walks of life, and the two things I said is, it's not about self-pityness, it's about making a plea for forgiveness and then appeal for love.

"I don't want to spend your time, or waste your time, for you to ask me what went wrong, and why it went wrong. But for a Chief Executive to have caused this huge havoc to Hong Kong is unforgivable. It's just unforgivable. If I have a choice, the first thing is to quit, having made a deep apology, is to step down. So I make a plea to you for your forgiveness.

"This is something that no matter how well intended, I just want to put this message across. This is not something malicious. This is not something instructed, coerced by the central government. This is out of a good intention, myself and some of my key colleagues to try to plug legal loopholes in Hong Kong's system, very much prompted by our compassion for a single case, and this has proven to be very unwise given the circumstances.

"And this huge degree of fear and anxiety amongst people of Hong Kong vis-a-vis the mainland of China, which we were not sensitive enough to feel and grasp. And, of course, it has been exaggerated and misrepresented through very effective propaganda, if I may say so.

"Now I want to make an appeal for love. It's not to pity me, or to sympathise with me, but love for Hong Kong. [Name redacted]

"Then the question we need to ask, each one of us, is how to fix it, how to fix it? I have to say that I have no sort of ready solutions, because the scene changes so quickly. [Details redacted]

"But, of course, I'm sure in your hearts you will feel, and I'm sure a large number of people feel that I do have a solution, that is a political one. But I have to tell you that this is where the crux of the matter lies.

"Once an issue has been elevated to the situation [name redacted], to a national level, to a sort of sovereignty and security level, let alone in the midst of this sort of unprecedented tension between the two big economies in the world.

"The room, the political room for the Chief Executive who, unfortunately, has to serve two masters by constitution, that is the central people's government and the people of Hong Kong, that political room for manoeuvring is very, very, very limited.

"Because we were not trained to have that sort of national perspectives, and I could only keep on putting in what I feel is the Hong Kong situation and the Hong Kong sentiments.

"But whether those Hong Kong sentiments could override the national perspective and the national sentiments? I'm sure you know that now 1.4 billion mainland people already have formed a view about what is happening in Hong Kong.

"So, without going into a lot more details, I can only share with you discreetly that the room for me to offer a political situation in order to relieve the tension, nor to reduce the pressure on my frontline police officers in order to at least respond, or pacify the large number of peaceful protesters who are so angry with the government, with me in particular, of absolutely dead silence despite repeated participation in the protests, is what causes me the biggest sadness.

"So without that, what other means we have is Hong Kong's core value, that is the rule of law. The rule of law takes several forms, of course law enforcement, our police officers who have been suffering tremendously this time, especially on an occasion when they are supposed to celebrate 175 years of police establishment, and especially at a time when they were so proud of the crime figures which are still coming down.

"In fact, the first half year we still saw a drop of 4 per cent of total crimes in Hong Kong, and that was the best seen in Hong Kong since 1972. And also they have commissioned a survey to commemorate this occasion done not by a pro-establishment group but by [name redacted], which

indicated that confidence in the police after Occupy Central has rebounded to a historic high. That was the sort of background to how much the police have suffered.

“So the rule of law requires law enforcement, so we have to tackle this escalating violence by arresting those offenders and then put them through the justice system, whether it’s prosecution by the Department of Justice in an impartial manner without any interference from myself or from the central people’s government, and then finally in the courts.

“With a little bit of hope that may help because we are seeing the numbers reducing. We started off by an estimate of about one to two thousand protesters who are very violent. Or put it that way, they are very willing to resort to violence.

“They may not be violent by nature but they are very willing to resort to violence, so, as described by one expert, this is the, sort of, early signs of anarchism, that they don’t trust the establishment, they don’t mind destroying things even if they don’t know what destruction will bring.

“[Details redacted] I’ll be very honest with you, it would be naive for me to paint you a rosy picture, that things will be fine or I have a deadline. But I can assure you that Beijing does not have a deadline. They know this will ripple on.

“So we have made special arrangements and there will be a October 1 national day celebrations but still having a lot of disruptions. So we are going for a modest, but solemn type of celebrations on October 1, which means that they and ourselves have no expectations that we could clear up this thing before October 1.

“Another thing I want to assure you, that is my own feeling the pulse and through discussions, CPG [central people’s government] has absolutely no plan to send in the PLA. They are now doing, sort of, acts which I’m sure you’re quite aware of amongst the Communist Party, they’re just quite scared now. Because they know that the price would be too huge to pay.

“Maybe they don’t care about Hong Kong, but they care about ‘one country, two systems’. They care about the country’s international profile. It has taken China a long time to build up to that sort of international profile and to have some say, not only being a big economy but a responsible big economy, so to forsake all those positive developments is clearly not on their agenda.

“But they’re willing to play long, they are willing to play long, so you have no short-term solution. Hong Kong suffers, you lose tourism, economy, you lose your IPOs and so, but you can’t do much about it. But after everything has been settled the country will be there to help with maybe positive measures especially in the Greater Bay Area. So our work on the Greater Bay Area has actually not stopped. [Name redacted]

“[Name redacted] Of course, every one of you has your own circle, you have your own friends, you have your own connections, you have your business contacts, so try to impress upon them that we really need to put an end to the violence, this is totally alien to Hong Kong and try to, as I said, appeal for understanding and love.

“We love this place, we love the people here. People used to be very peaceful and inclusive and so on. Instead of taking a position on every issue, either your friend or your foe, and so on.

“When the time comes, now Hong Kong has survived the death pronounced by some people before 1997. At this point in time, although I’m actually pessimistic, but Hong Kong is not dead yet. Maybe she is very, very sick but she is not dead yet. We still have fundamentals here, we still have the nation behind us.

“ So Hong Kong will have to go through several stages. The first is stamping out the violence, maybe doing other things in time to come which at the moment are not very available. Having gone through this stage, the next stage will be, in accordance with the Bible, would be resurrection.

“We will need to come back to life, some life. So thereafter we want a reborn Hong Kong and a relaunching of this Hong Kong brand. [Name redacted]

“Thank you very much.”

Links

[1] <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong>

[2] <https://www.scmp.com/topics/carrie-lam>

[3] <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3025440/hong-kong-protests-carrie-lam-insist-she-has-never-offered>

[4] <https://www.scmp.com/topics/hong-kong-extradition-law>

[5] <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3025440/hong-kong-protests-carrie-lam-insist-she-has-never-offered>

[6] <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3025582/hong-kong-protests-police-use-pepper-spray-against>

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<https://scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3025579/hong-kong-protests-read-full-transcript-carrie-lams-leaked>