

Hong Kong to officially withdraw extradition bill from legislature : 'Too little, too late'

More to follow....

Wednesday 4 September 2019, by [CHAN Holmes](#), [CHEUNG Tony](#), [SUM Lok Kei](#), [TSANG Denise](#) (Date first published: 4 September 2019).

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Hong Kong's Carrie Lam set to formally withdraw extradition bill after months of protest - report

4 September 2019 17:13 (local time) - Holmes Chan (HKFP)

<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/09/04/breaking-hong-kongs-carrie-lam-set-formally-withdraw-extradition-bill-months-protest-report/>

(...) Lam initially axed the proposal on June 15, and then - on July 9 - she declared the bill "dead." However, she has never enacted any legislative mechanism to withdraw it.

Some democrats have stood their ground in reaction to the news:

- **Lawmaker Eddie Chu** on Facebook: *"(...) we will change our slogan to 'Four key demands, we will accept nothing less.'"*

- **Lawmaker Alvin Yeung** wrote: *"The so-called concessions from Carrie Lam are more white terror - arresting and beating up people all the time."*

- **Agnes Chow** from the political group Demosisto, who was recently arrested over the recent protests, wrote on Facebook: *"Our five core demands. Do not forget the companions we lost, do not forget our comrades who were injured. If we give up, Hong Kong will die."*

- **On the Reddit-like forum LIHKG** - a hub for the protest movement - one user wrote that the government's *"most devious tactic"* was to announce the withdrawal of the bill: *"Even if the government announces the bill is withdrawn today, we cannot see this as a response to our demands. It is all just a tactic!"* the user wrote, in a post that received over 1,300 upvotes. *"We need to clearly tell the government and the public: it is too late!"*

Demonstrators have been demanding a complete withdrawal of the bill, a fully independent probe

into police behaviour, amnesty for those arrested, universal suffrage and a halt to the characterisation of protests as “riots.”

Hong Kong to officially withdraw extradition bill from legislature, but still no independent commission of inquiry

4 September 2019, 17:56 (local time) - by Holmes Chan (HKFP) -

<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/09/04/breaking-hong-kong-officially-withdraw-extradition-bill-legislature-still-no-independent-commission-inquiry/>

Addressing the public, Lam added that she will appoint two new members to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC): former chairman of the Bar Association barrister Paul Lam, and retired senior civil servant Helen Yu Lai Ching-ping.

For the past two months, Lam has said that the IPCC was the appropriate body to look into the recent clashes – dismissing protesters’ demands that she set up an independent commission of inquiry.

On Wednesday 4, Lam maintained that the IPCC study was the way to go.

“I pledge that the government will seriously follow up the recommendations made in the IPCC’s report,” she said.

Lam also promised that her top officials will “go into the community” to listen to public feedback, and to invite people from different sectors to conduct studies.

The now-withdrawn extradition bill would have allowed case-by-case fugitive transfers to China, which has been criticised as lacking rights protections. Since June, large-scale peaceful protests have morphed into sometimes violent displays of dissent over Beijing’s encroachment, democracy, alleged police brutality, surveillance and other community grievances.

Demonstrators are demanding:

- **a complete withdrawal of the bill,**
- **a fully independent probe into police behaviour,**
- **amnesty for those arrested,**
- **universal suffrage,**
- **a halt to the characterisation of protests as “riots.”**

However, many protesters and democrats have said they **will not accept a partial concession from Lam**, repeating their slogan: ***“The five core demands, we will accept nothing less.”***

‘Too little, too late’: Hong Kong democrats and protesters vow further action despite extradition bill withdrawal

4 September 2019, 21:27 (local time) - Holmes Chan (HKFP)

<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/09/04/little-late-hong-kong-democrats-protesters-vow-action-despite-extradition-bill-withdrawal/>

Hong Kong's pro-democracy lawmakers have said that Chief Executive Carrie Lam's withdrawal of the controversial extradition bill is ***"too little, too late,"*** with some protesters urging more demonstrations in the coming days.

Lam conceded to one of the five core demands of the protest movement which has roiled Hong Kong since June.

But protesters are still demanding a fully independent probe into police behaviour, amnesty for those arrested, universal suffrage and a halt to the characterisation of protests as "riots."

On social media, many people reiterated a popular protest slogan: *"the five key slogans, we won't accept anything less."* Some also cited a quote from Winter on Fire, a documentary about the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine: "If we accept the government's conditions, our friends who have died won't forgive us."

Meanwhile, the pro-Beijing camp gave tentative approval to Lam's decision, with some lawmakers urging Lam to focus on healing social rifts.

Almost 14 weeks of – sometimes violent – protest have evolved into greater calls for democracy, as well as anger over Beijing's encroachment, alleged police brutality, surveillance and other community grievances. With some protesters already gathering Prince Edward on Wednesday night, and Lam set to meet the press on Thursday, HKFP rounds up the reactions from across the political spectrum:

Claudia Mo, lawmaker and convenor of the pro-democracy camp

"It took her three months to officially use the word 'withdraw.' This is too little, too late – the die is cast, grave mistakes have been made. Hong Kong's wounds and scars are still bleeding. This will leave a lasting mark in Hong Kong's history."

"As for the new members added to the IPCC [Independent Police Complaints Council], this is simply new wine in an old bottle, or old wine in a new bottle. It is totally meaningless. It is common knowledge that the two new members are in Lam's pocket."

"We are worried that Lam may use this as a feint... if you continue to protest, then Lam may say there will be good justification to crack down on you."

(...)

Joshua Wong 黃之鋒, activist from political group Demosisto

- 1. Too little and too late now — Carrie Lam's response comes after 7 lives sacrificed, more than 1,200 protestors arrested, in which many are mistreated in police station.
 - 2. The intensified police brutality in the previous weeks have left an irreversible scar to the entire HK society. And therefore, at this very moment, when Carrie Lam announced withdrawal, people would not believe it is a 'sincere' move.
 - 3. Instead, HK people are well-aware of her notorious track record. Whenever there are signs of sending a palm branch, they always come with a far tighter grip on exercising civil rights. Earlier today Ronny Tong has already advised using secret police.
 - 4. We urge the world too to alert this tactic and not to be deceived by HK and Beijing Govt. They have conceded nothing in fact, and a full-scale clampdown is on the way.
 - 5. In short, Carrie Lam's repeated failure in understanding the situation has made this announcement completely out of touch -
- She needs to address to ALL Five Demands: STOP PROSECUTION, STOP CALLING US RIOTERS, INDEPENDENT INQUIRY OF POLICE and FREE ELECTION!

Ray Chan, lawmaker from People Power

"We must be cautious. Now, Carrie Lam could use the bill's withdrawal as a pretext to frame protesters as perpetrators of violence. As the bill is withdrawn, the logic goes, then any ongoing protests must be serving ulterior motives, Hong Kong independence or a colour revolution."

Protest organiser, the Civil Human Rights Front

"Chief Executive Carrie Lam did respond to one of the demands, but if she wants to use this to resolve the crisis, then she has made a serious error in political judgment and will not fix the situation."

"Since March, the public has organised repeated protests, and from June to August there [were] marches with turnouts in the millions. Self-initiated actions have taken root in civil society. If Carrie Lam withdrew the bill in June, then there [would] not be repeated incidents of police violence and mob attacks."

We believe that Lam's administration tolerated these attacks from the police and triads out of her arrogance, which makes the situation not just about withdrawing the bill."

Man-Kei Tam, Director of Amnesty International Hong Kong

"While the formal withdrawal of this dangerous bill, at long last, is welcome, this announcement cannot change the fact that the Hong Kong authorities have chosen to suppress protests in a grossly unlawful way that has seriously damaged the people's trust and sense of legitimacy of the government," he said.

"A thorough and independent investigation into unnecessary and excessive use of force by police at protests is now needed more than ever. We continue to call on all governments to suspend transfers of less-lethal 'crowd control' equipment to Hong Kong until a full investigation is carried out and adequate safeguards are put in place."

"The problems with the Extradition Bill were clear from the start, and the Hong Kong government should have withdrawn it months ago. Instead, it chose to meet protests with tear gas and rubber bullets, inflaming tensions and leading to months of unrest. Today's announcement is a small step in the right direction, but it will take much more to show the world that the Hong Kong authorities are truly committed to upholding human rights, and send a clear message that people in Hong Kong can still enjoy these rights irrespective of their political beliefs."

Rights watchdog, the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor

The Human Rights Monitor pointed to the flaws of the IPCC, calling it a "toothless tiger."

"The IPCC lacks three things: the power to investigate, to make definitive judgments and to hand out penalties. It is a toothless tiger, because the complaints are investigated by the internal department, the Complaints Against Police Office. It is their own people investigating their own people, raising doubts about independence and credibility," the group said in a statement.

"The chief executive appointed her own ally Helen Yu to join the IPCC, which could not improve the independence of the watchdog body, let alone solve its systemic issues... The Hong Kong government should set up an independent commission of inquiry under the law, to investigate police abuse of power and use of unnecessary force, in order to keep in check a disciplinary force that has lost its discipline."

The Citizens Press Conference, a group of masked protesters

"Despite what Carrie Lam has said earlier today, we want the world to know the bill is not withdrawn. Do not be fooled again."

"Carrie Lam stated that the proposal for the bill's withdrawal will be raised in the legislature. However, LegCo will not be in session until October. Even more alarmingly, LegCo is not elected by the Hong Kong people and therefore consists mainly of pro-Beijing legislators."

"Hongkongers can see right through Carrie Lam's lies. She wants a way to shift her responsibilities, so that when the proposal is rejected by LegCo in October, she can say it is not her fault, and then legitimately proceed with passing the bill."

"To our friends around the world, please do not think this government has backed down, because it certainly has not. It is just seeking to create confusion, attempting to distract and escape accountability. Please don't let them succeed."

"If Carrie Lam had withdrawn the bill two months ago, that may have been a quick fix. But applying a band-aid months later onto rotting flesh will simply not cut it."

Additional reporting: Jennifer Creery.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam's bombshell withdrawal of extradition bill draws more scepticism than hope for end to weeks of protest turmoil

Published: 12:41am, 5 Sep, 2019, by Tony Cheung and Sum Lok-kei

<https://www.scmp.com/print/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3025753/embattled-hong-kong-leader-carrie-lams-bombshell-withdrawal>

*Protesters and politicians say it is too little, too late but business chambers welcome decision
Chief executive pledges to endorse probe by police watchdog and visit ground with officials to reach out to communities.*

Embattled Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor dropped a bombshell on Wednesday 4, announcing she would formally withdraw the hated extradition bill that sparked the city's protest crisis — but her dramatic U-turn drew more scepticism than hope for an end to nearly three months of turmoil.

Even though Lam was finally acceding to one of the demonstrators' five demands, protesters and politicians alike argued the concession came too little, too late.

Many doubted it would do much to ease roiling tensions fuelled by increasingly violent clashes between protesters and police over the past 13 weeks.

Lam's pro-establishment allies were among those leery of the move, fearful the flip-flop would affect their election chances in district council polls in November and Legislative Council elections next year.

Barely three hours after she appeared on a televised message, a group calling themselves representatives of protesters dismissed her withdrawal of the bill as applying a *"band-aid to rotting flesh"*.

All *"five demands, not one less"* had to be met before they would cease their actions, a protester representative said at a news conference outside the Legislative Council.

The protesters want Lam to formally withdraw the extradition bill; set up a commission of inquiry to investigate police conduct in tackling demonstrations; grant amnesty to those who have been arrested; stop characterising the protests as riots; and restart the city's stalled political reform

process.

In her announcement, Lam addressed but did not fully acquiesce to another key demand of protesters – the setting up of an independent commission of inquiry into the use of force by police. Instead, she said she would invite community leaders, professionals and academics to independently examine the deep-rooted problems in society and advise the government on new policies to map the way forward.

“The discontentment extends far beyond the bill,” a sombre-looking Lam said in the pre-recorded message broadcast on local television just before 6pm.

“It covers political, economic and social issues, including the oft-mentioned problems relating to housing and land supply, income distribution, social justice and mobility and opportunities for our young people. It also reflects the desire for the public to be fully engaged in government decision-making,” she said.

In place of a commission, she endorsed fully the work of the Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) to look into police actions.

She made it a point to stress that the police response to the Yuen Long attacks on July 21 would be investigated. On that day, white-clad men with wooden sticks and rods seemingly targeted protesters at the station and on a train; commuters were also beaten by the mob. Police were accused of arriving late to the scene.

To help the panel, Lam announced the induction of two new members: former Bar Association chairman Paul Lam Ting-kwok and ex-director of education Helen Yu Lai Ching-ping, along with overseas experts.

Lam also pledged she and principal officials in her cabinet would reach out to different communities to start a direct dialogue and find solutions.

“People from all walks of life, with different stances and backgrounds are invited to share their views and air their grievances. We must find ways to address the discontent,” she said.

The chief executive said she hoped that the four actions she outlined would help society move forward, as the protests had challenged the city’s rule of law and Beijing’s “one country, two systems” governing principle on Hong Kong.

Markets soared when the South China Morning Post first reported Lam’s decision to formally withdraw the bill at 2.05pm, well before her formal announcement. The Hang Seng benchmark index rose 995 points, or 3.9 per cent, to 26,523 at its closing at 4pm.

In similar vein, business chambers, such as the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong and the Chinese Manufacturers’ Association, as well as several pro-government legislators welcomed the move, which they said would help to calm current tensions.

The protest crisis, which began after an estimated 1 million people took to the streets on June 9 opposing an extradition bill, has morphed into an anti-government movement lobbying for the administration to meet its demands.

The bill would have allowed for the transfer of fugitives to jurisdictions that the city lacks an arrangement with, including mainland China. Critics had warned the bill effectively removed the legal firewall between the city and the mainland, where fair trials were not guaranteed.

Lam suspended the bill and then declared it to be “dead” but refused to withdraw it, even after an estimated 2 million people took to the streets on June 16. Protests have continued through the summer, often descending into chaos and violence.

The demonstrations have led to 1,183 arrests as of Wednesday and police firing at least 2,350 rounds of tear gas, as well as hundreds of rubber bullets, beanbag rounds and sponge-tipped rounds

in increasingly violent clashes with protesters.

Commentators and pro-Beijing politicians on Wednesday were doubtful that Lam's four measures would do much to quell the violence.

Pan-democrats and those who support the protesters said unless she addressed all five demands, tensions would not subside.

- **The camp's convenor Claudia Mo Man-ching** brushed off Lam's moves as "little measures". "Their demands are there and Carrie Lam couldn't get away with nebulous measures," she said.
- **Democratic Party chairman Wu Chi-wai** also described Lam's initiatives as "fake concessions", and a prelude to tougher actions against protesters.
- **Demonstrators** on their various encrypted social-media channels argued that public concern had shifted towards what they described as police's "brutal" or "excessive" use of force on protesters and ordinary citizens, and that Lam had to address these issues squarely or risk continuing the turmoil.

Lam's announcement came after a weekend in which the city experienced some of the fiercest battles between protesters and police, as the force launched a wave of mass arrests on the eve of a banned march, and demonstrators lobbed 100 petrol bombs at targets including police stations and government buildings.

Sources insisted that the chief executive's decision must not be interpreted as the government giving in to violence, but as a way to start dialogue with all parties.

In her video message, Lam said that the government would withdraw the bill when the legislature met again in October after its summer break. As required by the rules of procedure, the withdrawal needs formal resolution in Legco.

On the protesters' two other demands, Lam said the government would not back down on them. *"On the matter of the protests being a riot, we have explained that in fact there is no legal effect on how such incidents are described or categorised,"* she said.

"On dropping charges against protesters and rioters and shelving prosecutions, I have explained that this is contrary to the rule of law and is not acceptable."

However, Lam did not rule out the fifth demand — the relaunch of democratic reforms — noting that this was provided in the Basic Law. But she said it could only be done "in an atmosphere that is conducive to mutual trust and understanding, and without further polarising society".

Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO)

Her comments came a day after Beijing's top office on the city's affairs, the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO) said that universal suffrage must not only adhere to the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution, but also decisions by the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC).

It was the NPCSC, China's top legislative body, that set the rigid "831" framework for political reform on August 31, 2014, laying out election of the chief executive from a list of pre-vetted candidates.

In its news conference on Tuesday, the HKMAO spokesman also took pains to point out that peaceful demonstrations were allowed under the "one country, two systems" governing formula, in an oblique attempt to separate the majority from the radical protesters.

Meeting with the pro-establishment camp at Government House

Before her video message was broadcast, Lam held a meeting with the pro-establishment camp at Government House, her official residence. Those invited included all 43 pro-establishment lawmakers, together with Hong Kong deputies to the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

After the meeting, pro-Beijing lawmaker Paul Tse Wai-chun described the measures as "too little, too late".

"Why didn't Lam withdraw it earlier?" he asked, adding that the crux of the political crisis was no longer the bill, but tensions between Hong Kong and the mainland.

Others said pro-establishment lawmakers were ruining their election chances with the formal withdrawal, fearing that the move would be seen as indecisive by their supporters and that they would be punished at the ballot box.

The Post understands that the Hong Kong government did not seek Beijing's approval before deciding to withdraw the bill, although the measures announced on Wednesday had been communicated to Beijing.

Lam also issued a letter to all civil servants after the televised statement. She expressed appreciation to them for standing fast in their role amid the protests, and urged them to stay committed to their duties, "bearing the overall interests of Hong Kong in mind".

The chief executive's decision came a day before she leaves for Nanning in Guangxi for the annual pan-Pearl River Delta regional cooperation conference. It will mark her second official trip outside the city since the protests began on June 9.

In her remarks, Lam abhorred the use of violence, saying that it would damage the very foundations of society, especially the rule of law, and that it had to stop.

"Some people, though not many, attacked the central government's office in Hong Kong and vandalised the national flag and national emblem. This is a challenge to 'one country, two systems'. Both have put Hong Kong in a highly vulnerable and dangerous situation."

Lam ended her message with one plea: *"Let's replace conflicts with conversations, and let's look for solutions."*

Even as Lam extended an olive branch, stand-offs between protesters and officers lasted past midnight at two flashpoints in the city – outside Mong Kok Police Station and at Po Lam MTR station. In Mong Kok, protesters heckled officers in the station, pointed laser beams and blocked a road with foam boxes, while in Po Lam, a crowd gathered to demand answers from MTR staff about an earlier service closure.

Facilities were damaged at Po Lam station, with a confrontation between a protester and MTR staff member inside a train descending into a brawl, and police eventually moved in to clear the area.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam insists she decided to withdraw extradition bill, not Beijing

Published: 11:14am, 5 Sep, 2019 - by Denise Tsang, Tony Cheung, and Sum Lok-kei (SCMP)

<https://www.scmp.com/print/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3025773/hong-kong-leader-carrie-lam-meets-press-discuss-decision>

Embattled Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor dropped a bombshell on Wednesday 4, announcing she would formally withdraw the extradition bill that sparked months of protesting in the city.

But, her dramatic U-turn drew **more scepticism than hope** for an end to the turmoil.

Even though Lam was finally acceding to one of the demonstrators' five demands, **protesters and politicians from both the pro-Beijing and opposition camps argued the concession was too little, too late.**

In her televised announcement, Lam addressed, but did not fully acquiesce to another key demand – the setting up of an independent inquiry into the use of force by police. Instead, the chief executive said she would invite community leaders and professionals to examine the problems in society.

Lam met the press for the first time on Thursday 5 morning to explain her decisions, before she leaves for Nanning in Guangxi for an annual regional cooperation conference – her second official trip outside the city since the protests began on June 9.

More to follow...