

# **We are heartbroken by Alex Chow's death - can we still have hope for Hong Kong?**

Friday 8 November 2019, by [MP](#) (Date first published: 8 November 2019).

Earlier this week while Alex Chow Tsz-lok was still critical in hospital, having fallen from a height while fleeing a police raid, we held a minute's silence in the UK Parliament for him and all those who have sacrificed for our movement. We are all heartbroken at the news and our love and thoughts are with his family. For now, we share messages of remembrance, hold vigils and think about how to honour his memory.

It seems every day, we wake up to fresh horrors. Last weekend, the police unleashed indiscriminate amounts of teargas in multiple residential neighbourhoods. One first-aider was struck by a tear gas canister, allegedly made in China, resulting in severe burns on their back. A pro-government supporter bit off part of a pro-democratic district councillor's ear, and another council candidate was violently arrested until he foamed at the mouth.

In spite of everything, we continue to come together, in this, the 2019 revolution of our times. The way we organise and protest have shown what a functioning, participatory democracy could look like. Decisions are taken by consensus; anyone can join a conversation or campaign at a click. Each person contributes what they can: first-aiders volunteer on the frontlines, social workers mediate between angry crowds and weapon-wielding police officers; lawyers provide pro bono support to arrested protesters; psychologists offer free counselling. All this, we do anonymously-- to keep ourselves safe against surveillance; but also as a way of levelling our differences, we are brothers and sisters, fighting in different ways to defend our home.

Can we still have hope? Today it is harder than ever. But just as Chow fought for his life in hospital, we will continue to resist. I am reminded of the days before China's National Day at the beginning of October, when rumours circulated that Beijing may send in tanks. But on the day, the streets were full of people in black--the colour of mourning. The atmosphere was one of quiet defiance.

As my friends and I walked into Wanchai, an entertainment district turned ghost-town, we saw people running. We looked backwards as a squadron of riot police officers appeared. A voice called, "Come in here! Quick!" The owner of a family-run restaurant waved us into her shop, and closed the shutters--but not before tear gas engulfed the place. My eyes burned; people around me were on the verge of vomiting. As the smoke subsided, I saw the restaurant was packed full of what must have been fifty secondary school and university-age students. Waiters started handing out saline to rinse out people's eyes. When my friends and I left, we tried to pay; the owner threw our money back to us, saying "This is what Hongkongers do: we have to look out for each other."

My friends and I walked into Causeway Bay, into the throng of protesters, many of whom had sat down to rest. Without their tear gas masks and helmets, I could see how young those protesters were, gangly and war-weary, and yet willing to risk a maximum of 10 years imprisonment--or worse. I have read interviews with protesters who are just 14 years old, who are willing to lay their lives on the line. My heart breaks for a lost generation.

Later this year, I will turn 22 -- the same age as Chow, the same age as the handover. When I turn

50 in 2047, my home may no longer exist. We Hongkongers refuse to accept this end point. We have dared to imagine a life beyond the reach of authoritarian violence. So will the British government dare to do the bare minimum, and hold China to its promises under a legally-binding international agreement?

This is not just a technical debate about treaty responsibilities, but about lives already broken or lost at the hands of a Government beholden to a superpower with no accountability. In a House of Lords debate, Lord Patten, the last governor of Hong Kong noted, young people have asked him the same question time and time again: what will the world do? What will Britain actually do?

I do not know how to communicate how difficult it is to keep persisting when everything seems bleak and impossible. I also do not know how to convey the incredible courage and bravery shown by every single person in Hong Kong when they refuse to let the violence of the state break their spirit. But the fight for Hong Kong extends beyond my home to all those facing suppression: in East Turkestan, Tibet, Taiwan, and beyond. Even if you don't join our struggle now, it will eventually catch up to you.

Often, when we Hongkongers want to lift each other's spirits, we invoke the "Promise of the Legco drum": we say to each other, one day, when we liberate Hong Kong, we will meet at our legislature, take off our masks, and see for the first time the faces of those we have been fighting alongside.

I see the establishment of an All Party Parliamentary Group, too, as a kind of promise. A promise Britain has not forgotten about its responsibilities. The question is whether the world will make good on its promises.

Demonstrators have been leaving messages and flowers at Chow's alma mater. It breaks my heart to read about one: "Rest well on the other side. We will continue walking down this road for you."

Chow will not be at Legco, but we will remember him. Hongkongers, keep fighting.

**MP is a member of the collective 'Stand with Hong Kong', and writes under a pseudonym for fear of her safety.**

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**P.S.**

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