

# Hong Kong: Thousands rally in solidarity with detained protesters ahead of Lunar New Year

Thursday 23 January 2020, by [CHENG Kris](#) (Date first published: 23 January 2020).

Thousands rallied outside the Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre on Wednesday 23 evening in solidarity with those detained inside.

The gathering was organised by social worker sector lawmaker Shiu Ka-chun, ahead of the Lunar New Year holidays from Saturday to Monday. Shiu said that 8,000 people had attended.

Ongoing large-scale protests began last June in response to a now-withdrawn extradition bill that would have enabled fugitive transfer to mainland China. The movement has since evolved into calls for an investigation into police misconduct and democratic reform, among other demands.

**More than 7,000 people have been arrested, some of whom were held in reception centres across the city.**

Wednesday's event had been approved by police but Shiu said officers had threatened to use tear gas if protesters blocked surrounding roads. The Correctional Services Department placed metal barriers outside the reception centre in preparation for the rally.

Organisers distributed masks to attendees, urging them to prevent the spread of the new SARS-like coronavirus from Wuhan in China.

*"Support our brothers and sisters until the end!"* protesters chanted. *"Release the righteous, give us back justice!"*

*"Liberate Hong Kong, the revolution of our times! Five demands not one less!"* crowds also chanted.

A protester, who had been detained at the reception centre and later bailed out, spoke on stage saying that there used to be a "Lennon Wall" message board in support of the pro-democracy movement inside, but it had been removed.

He said the centre's hygiene conditions were poor, with rats and cockroaches inside the kitchen, and detainees' food was often undercooked.

*"They could have cooked it well, but they chose to give us raw food,"* he said. *"They can try to kill us all. But as long as there is one of us left, we will keep fighting."*

Crowds also chanted *"Happy birthday"* after the organisers said it was the birthday of one of the detainees inside the centre on Tuesday.

Before they left, they sang popular protest song "Glory to Hong Kong" at 10pm, when lights are usually switched off inside the reception centre,

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**P.S.**

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