

Hong Kong : A public letter from a union leader in jail

Monday 6 September 2021, by [HKCTU](#), [LAI Lorie](#) (Date first published: 6 September 2021).

Note : Lorie Lai, Chair of General Union of Hong Kong Speech Therapists (GUHKST), was arrested with the whole ex-co (2) by the National Department of the Police Force for the Union's allegedly seditious series of children storybook on 22 July.

- *She and the other vice-chairperson (3) were charged and put to remand on the following day.*
- *The rest of the ex-co members (4) were also charged and put to remand on 30 August.*
- *In addition, the authorities notified in mid-August to revoke GUHKST's registration (5), citing the reason of "usage of the union for purpose unlawful or inconsistent with its objects or rules".*

Dear all,

I'm very grateful that people come to visit me every day. I also look forward to phone calls to the staff every afternoon, and I'm thrilled when they call my registration number. Thank you all for not forgetting me. The other most-anticipated moment was receiving letters. With smartphones, conversations and idea exchanges in modern life become easier and more immediate—there is no barrier in communication. Yet not until being held on remand did I realize the importance of communication. Every letter to me is a bridge to the world, and every word in it carries significance. Sorry for being sentimental

From time to time, many people have asked me in letters or during visits about how I would like to deal with this and that. Only then did I find out it is difficult to make decisions with limited information, especially when no one is here to advise or talk to me (I really like to admit my weaknesses); I indeed need everyone. And today, in the letters, I have read about Tonyee Chow's writing (6) regarding her high court bail application (7), which made me ponder deeply about the meaning of my remand, the whole case, as well as my views regarding my current circumstances.

To be honest, was I mentally prepared for the arrest? I would say yes. The police officer who took me to court also asked if I have foreseen these consequences. 'But people like you do what you do out of faith, isn't it?' S/he added.

Nonetheless, does having mental preparation mean my actions were unjust? Perhaps it was a real hustle when I made my ways in here, which made me keep on having the following thoughts lately—the longer the remand, the shorter the imprisonment; the earlier this happens, the better it is. The rule of law no longer exists in this city, so I'm doomed to captivity sooner or later. The overwhelming practical concerns made me blind to the legitimacy of the whole arrest process, going to court and remand—am I truly guilty? If not, what are the grounds to arrest and remand me?

I recall an interview report titled 'Not Bowing to the Cruel Reality...'. (8) Look at me now, am I fully defeated and thus submitting to the cruel reality? How about my faith and aspirations? Have they

been worn away? It's undeniable that the past couple of days of captivity have been fairly cozy with a daily routine of eating, sleeping, reading, writing and answering nature's call. Although I'm not sure if the coziness is real or if I'm just fooling myself, it seems to settle for comfort and resign to reality can make one give up on thinking in adversity.

Remember to keep your heads even if you are imprisoned. The dangerous thing is, once you are used to not thinking, you will as well give up struggling and defending your own rights. Although the odds are more and more unfavourable today in Hong Kong, our states of mind have an effect on how we perceive the society and reality. Our bodies can be held captive, yet our minds will always be free. I hope all of us can hold on to our faith, and persevere.

Lorie Lai

4.8.21 (The 12th day of remand at Tai Lam Centre for Women)

Before we are bringing you more updates later this week regarding the recent attacks on the trade unions in Hong Kong over the last few months, you are most welcome to write and show support to the jailed leaders of GUHKST.

WRITE to the jailed GUHKST leaders

olivialau hkctu.org.hk

Notes :

2.
<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/07/22/national-security-police-arrest-5-hong-kong-trade-union-members-for-conspiracy-to-publish-seditious-material/>
3.
<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/07/23/hong-kong-women-who-published-seditious--childrens-books-about-sheep-remanded-in-custody>
4.
<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/30/security-law-hong-kong-court-denies-bail-to-speech-therapists-behind-kids-book-about-sheep-and-wolves>
5.
<https://www.thestandard.com.hk/breaking-news/section/4/179110/Govt-to-revoke-registration-of-speech-therapists'-union>
6.
<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/05/hong-kong-tiananmen-massacre-vigil-organiser-chow-hang-tung->

