

Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office
Government of the Hong Kong Special
Administrative Region of the
People's Republic of China
Rue d'Arlon 118
1040 Brussels
Belgium

Brussels, 22 January 2020

To:
Libération
Paris

Sir,

In her op-ed “Uncivil disobedience at the heart of the “water revolution” in Hong Kong” (14 January 2020), Candice Delmas questions “the ubiquitous calls for nonviolence and civility” when protests erupt, arguing that “in the Chinese repressive context, calling on protesters to remain nonviolent and civil seems politically and morally obtuse.”

With its return to the motherland in 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. It enjoys a high degree of autonomy under the “One Country, Two Systems” principle. Hong Kong is a free and open society where protests have been peaceful for decades. When public order and public safety are severely under threat, the Police must take appropriate action to maintain law and order and safeguard public safety and peace. If the public expresses their views in a peaceful and lawful manner, the Police will not use any force.

For months now, the world has seen Hong Kong people exercise freedoms of speech, of the press, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration. Since early June 2019, over 900 protests, processions and public meetings have been staged in Hong Kong. But a worrisome escalation of violence by radical protesters has emerged, with some demonstrations ending in violent confrontations. Masked rioters have vandalised public facilities and shops, committed arson, hurled petrol bombs as well as wantonly attacked police officers and people with different views. An innocent man was set on fire in broad daylight by protesters while a government contract cleaner was killed by a brick thrown at him. No protesters have been killed as a direct result of police action, while a total of 520 police officers have been injured during operations since last June, some seriously. The severity of the situation has often brought our city to a chaotic halt, with many citizens suffering from severe disruption to daily life and fear for their personal safety. This fear is not

confined to physical violence, but to the immense pressure of being bullied or harassed simply because of their background and opinions.

I would like to stress that the Police does not initiate action against protesters. Police have to respond when protesters take part in illegal activities like those described above.

We must reject violence and restore law and order to create an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and a peaceful resolution to all grievances. While we respect that everyone has their own aspirations and concerns, violence is never the means to achieve their goals and cannot be condoned.

Yours faithfully,

Eddie Cheung
Special Representative for Hong Kong
Economic and Trade Affairs
to the European Union