

November 19, 2020

The Economist

Dear Editor,

Your article “Hong Kong’s legislature has been stripped of a vocal opposition” (November 14, 2020) fails to accurately reflect the issues relating to the recent disqualification of four Hong Kong legislators.

On November 11, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government announced the disqualification of the four Legislative Council Members, each of whom had earlier been barred from running for re-election by the Returning Officers in accordance with the law. The Returning Officers decided that the four were not qualified for the election for not genuinely upholding the Basic Law and honouring their pledge of allegiance to the HKSAR, which is required under Article 104 of the Basic Law.

As the Legislative Council (LegCo) Elections, originally due to have been held on September 6, 2020, were postponed for one year owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a decision by the National People’s Congress Standing Committee, the highest organ of state power, was necessary. The logic is simple. People not qualified to contest in the election should not be allowed to continue to serve as legislators in the current extended LegCo term.

The HKSAR Government is not targeting any LegCo member. Nor are we going for political suppression, or silencing dissenting views. There is no question of LegCo becoming a “rubber stamp”.

Our rules relating to the behaviour of public officers are international norms. In the UK, Members of Parliament must take an oath of allegiance to the Crown before assuming office; and in the US, Members of Congress are required to swear to support and defend the US constitution or face criminal charges. Indeed, no country will turn a blind eye to the breaching of oaths or acts that endanger national security by public officers including legislators.

It is regrettable that 15 lawmakers subsequently chose to resign from LegCo. For them to abandon their monitoring role in providing checks and balances for the government is an unwise and irresponsible act that serves the interests of no one.

Yours sincerely,

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