

Foreign Affairs Committee

Committee Office House of Commons London SW1A 0AA
Tel 020 7219 6106 | Email FAC@parliament.uk
Website www.parliament.uk

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London, SW1A 2AH

11 October 2018

I note with concern the decision by the Hong Kong Government, announced on 24 September, to outlaw the operation of the pro-independence Hong Kong National Party (HKNP).

This decision comes in the context of a number of troubling developments relating to freedom of expression and political association in Hong Kong, several of which you noted in the latest Six-Monthly Report, released on 6 September. Since that report, the *Financial Times's* Asia news editor, Victor Mallet, has also been denied a visa renewal by the Hong Kong authorities. As you have said, 'in the absence of an explanation from the authorities we can only conclude that this move is politically motivated.'

The FCO has said it is 'concerned' by the decision to ban the HKNP, noted that this is the first time a party has been banned under the Societies Ordinance since the handover of Hong Kong, and reiterated the UK position that it 'does not support Hong Kong independence, but Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and its rights and freedoms are central to its way of life, and it is important they are fully respected'. You have expressed your own concern about Mr Mallet's visa denial; noted that it undermines freedom of speech and of the press, and that it increases the pressure on 'One Country, Two Systems'; and urged the Hong Kong authorities to reconsider.

I hope you will agree with me that the UK has a legal, political and moral obligation to ensure that the Sino-British Joint Declaration – a treaty registered at the UN, and part of the rules-based international system – is upheld, and that Hong Kong's autonomy is protected.

In that context, I would like to ask you the following:

1. Does the banning of the HKNP constitute a breach of the Joint Declaration?

2. Does the UK agree with the Hong Kong government's position, as stated by Secretary for Security John Lee, that 'What the agenda of the Hong Kong National Party aims to [*sic*] is in strict contravention to the Basic Law and also is against national security'?
3. Does the UK believe that advocating Hong Kong independence is *per se* incompatible with either the principle of 'One Country, Two Systems' or the Basic Law?
4. What representations, if any, has the FCO made or does it plan to make to the Hong Kong Government regarding the banning of the HKNP?
5. What explanation of Mr Mallet's visa denial, if any, has the FCO received from the Hong Kong Government? What further actions, if any, is the FCO planning to take regarding this matter?

I would be grateful for a reply to this letter by Thursday 25 October. We will be placing this letter, and your reply, in the public domain.

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair