

# People take to the streets Monday in Hong Kong for pro-democracy protest

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Level **990L**



Riot police use pepper spray against protesters after thousands of people block a main road to the financial central district outside the government headquarters in Hong Kong, Sunday, Sept. 28, 2014. AP Photo/Vincent Yu

Hong Kong pro-democracy activists occupied major streets Monday, forcing the closure of schools, banks and other businesses. Due to the demonstrations, government officials said they would cancel a major annual fireworks celebration. The holiday marks the founding of China and is its Fourth of July.

Hong Kong, a longtime British territory on the south coast of China, came under Chinese rule in 1997. China promised to run Hong Kong under a framework called “one country, two systems.” The Communist government of China, which rules over 1.3 billion people, agreed to allow the territory of 7 million almost complete self-rule for 50 years.

Thousands of activists took to the streets in neighborhoods throughout Hong Kong. They sat down at traffic lights and blocked streets. Police backed away from clashing directly with demonstrators after a violent encounter on Sunday when they fired 87 rounds of tear gas at the crowd. Tear gas is a chemical that irritates the eyes and is used to break up demonstrations.

The Chinese government had warned that the demonstrations could cause serious damage to Hong Kong's economy. However, the city's stock exchange seemed to be largely unaffected. Some workers went on strike and a number of businesses opened late or closed early. In many parts of the city, commerce continued as usual.

### **Protests Much More Widespread**

No one seemed sure what would happen next. The demonstrations have become unplanned and have attracted a wide variety of participants. Without a group of leaders directing things, "it's very difficult to predict" what will happen, said Chi-Keung Choy, a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

The protests were started by a group called Occupy Central, but Choy said they have become much more widespread. Choy said that government officials in Beijing and Hong Kong will need to extend a significant olive branch to get marchers off the streets. "They need to have major concessions from the government. No one can convince them, unless the government makes big concessions," he said.

The demonstrations began in response to new rules imposed by the Chinese government at the end of the summer. The rules would limit voters' choices in Hong Kong's 2017 election for the territory's top official to candidates approved by China.

But underlying the unrest is unhappiness over a range of issues. These include high housing prices and a growing income gap between the rich and poor. Hong Kong residents also aren't happy about the many visitors from mainland China. In addition, many of the young protesters have little sense of connection to China. Instead, they identify as Hong Kongers.

Western governments are concerned about the situation in Hong Kong. They have been careful about showing support for the demonstrators, though.

### **Beijing Warns Against Interference**

Hua Chunying, a spokeswoman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, warned that the Chinese government would not welcome foreign interference.

"Hong Kong belongs to China. Hong Kong affairs are purely China's domestic affairs," she said in Beijing. "We strongly oppose any countries interfering or supporting Occupy Central by any methods. We wish these countries to be cautious."

The U.S. consulate general in Hong Kong said the U.S. "strongly supports Hong Kong's well-established traditions" and "protections of internationally recognized fundamental freedoms." It encouraged all sides to keep the situation under control. It said the U.S. does not take sides.

But some Hong Kongers want greater support from overseas. A group of Hong Kong-based employees of Apple wrote to the company's chief executive, Tim Cook, calling for active support of the demonstrations.

Hong Kong has a rich tradition of protest. Demonstrations, though, are typically well organized and calm. People march along pre-planned routes with official permits. The free-form and unpredictable nature of the protests have surprised local residents. It has also encouraged many of them to stand with the protesters.

“It’s shocking to see armies of police equipped with tear gas guns, rifles and batons,” said Nan Hie In. He joined demonstrators Sunday night. “For a second I thought: Are we in Syria or Hong Kong?”

### **"Fighting For The Future"**

After Jerry Ip, 25, and a few friends were tear-gassed by police, he said, “I felt like I’d die.” Even so, Ip said he would not give up because “we’re fighting for the future of Hong Kong. This is our homeland.”

After the clashes between police and protesters Sunday night, Hong Kong government officials sought to calm the situation. Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying appeared on television, promising that police would treat the protesters respectfully. He also hoped people would “keep calm.”

Leung said over the weekend that local officials would soon launch a new round of talks over the 2017 election rules. On Monday, though, his government backed away from a timeline. It said the government would ask for people's thoughts about the rules at a later date.

On Monday afternoon, a group of protesters gathered outside the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. They urged office workers to show support for the demonstrations.

“Hong Kong people are not going to take this lying down,” said local legislator Alan Leong. “This is a people’s movement.”

## Quiz

- 1 Select the paragraph from the introduction [paragraphs 1-4] that BEST provides evidence that the impact of the protest on the Hong Kong economy is unclear.
- 2 Which sentence from the article shows that people are protesting about more than just the rules for the 2017 election?
- (A) Thousands of activists took to the streets in neighborhoods throughout Hong Kong.
  - (B) But underlying the unrest is unhappiness over a range of issues.
  - (C) But some Hong Kongers want greater support from overseas.
  - (D) Leung said over the weekend that local officials would soon launch a new round of talks over the 2017 election rules.
- 3 Which of these is the BEST explanation of the central idea of the article?
- (A) When people do not feel supported by their government, protests can become large and disruptive.
  - (B) If China wants to control Hong Kong completely, it must ignore threats from the west.
  - (C) If people do not behave, then they will not be able to celebrate national holidays.
  - (D) Protest has been an extremely effective way of making change in Hong Kong.
- 4 Which of the following details LEAST supports the main idea?
- (A) The Communist government of China, which rules over 1.3 billion people, agreed to allow the territory of 7 million almost complete self-rule for 50 years.
  - (B) The demonstrations have become unplanned and have attracted a wide variety of participants. Without a group of leaders directing things, "it's very difficult to predict" what will happen, said Chi-Keung Choy, a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.
  - (C) Western governments are concerned about the situation in Hong Kong. They have been careful about showing support for the demonstrators, though.
  - (D) The free-form and unpredictable nature of the protests have surprised local residents. It has also encouraged many of them to stand with the protesters.