

LIGHTING A CANDLE IS NOT A CRIME THE TIANANMEN CRACKDOWN WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN

RELEASE CHOW HANG TUNG



A brilliant student from a top university, **Chow Hang-Tung** could have pursued all sorts of high-flying careers. Instead, she has dedicated her life to fearlessly protecting people’s rights as a human rights lawyer and activist.

Chow was the vice-chairperson of the Hong Kong Alliance, which organized the world’s biggest candlelight vigil commemorating the victims of the Tiananmen crackdown. In 1989, hundreds – possibly thousands – of people were killed in the streets around Tiananmen Square, Beijing, as troops opened fire, killing protesters peacefully calling for economic and social reforms. The Chinese government wants people to forget, but Chow has made it her mission to remember the victims.

In 2020 and 2021, Hong Kong authorities banned the vigil, citing public health reasons in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic. On June 4, 2021, Chow encouraged people on social media to commemorate the crackdown by lighting candles. She was arrested on that day for “advertising or publicizing unauthorized assembly”.

Chow Hang-tung was charged for “inciting subversion” under the National Security Law (NSL) on September 9, 2021 and faces potential 10 years’ imprisonment.

On December 13, 2021, Chow was sentenced to 12 months’ imprisonment for taking part in an unauthorized assembly after joining a peaceful candlelight vigil commemorating the Tiananmen crackdown on June 4, 2020. On January 4, 2022, she received a 15-month prison sentence in a second conviction on the charge of “inciting others to take part in an unauthorised assembly” for her social media post on June 4, 2021.

In the face of all this, Chow’s bravery shines through. “To say I’m not afraid would be a lie, but I’m not so afraid I dare do nothing”, she says.

On December 21, 2023, Chow’s application for bail in the national security case against her was turned down. The judge indicated the NSL “inciting subversion” trial against her, the Alliance, and two other former leaders will open in the second half of 2024.

On May 28, 2024, six individuals, including Chow Hang-tung, were arrested under Article 23 (Safeguarding National Security Ordinance) for allegedly committing offences in connection with seditious intention. A government press release stated that the arrests were related to social media posts commemorating “a sensitive day” (referring to June 4, the anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown).

Solidarity action

Send your message of solidarity and hope. Draw pictures of cats and alpacas (Chow is a huge fan) to accompany your message.

Guidelines for letters to Chow:

- Please avoid mentioning Amnesty International or other overseas organizations.
- The Hong Kong Correctional Services Department will remove the envelope and may inspect the contents of the letter, so please do not include any content that may breach the law, such as revolution or jailbreaking.
- Write or print on plain papers (can be color paper). You can write as many pages as you prefer.
- Do not staple or use glue/glitter/stickers.
- Do not use foul language or include sensitive information. You may use a nickname as you see fit.
- There should be nothing but the letter itself in the envelope.
- If you would like to receive a reply, please include your address in the letter as the envelope will be removed before the letter reaches Chow.
- Please do not write her name or yours on the envelope.

Address:

PO Box No.75
Ma On Shan Post Office
New Territories, Hong Kong

In October 2022, AI Taiwan received a response from Chow Hang-Tung for the solidarity actions they sent to her. Here's the English translation of her response:

Dear Taiwanese friends who wrote me letters:

Thank you for your letters. It feels so familiar seeing postcards from AI. I wrote a lot of postcards back then (I initiated the AI letters writing group when I was in the university). Life works in mysterious ways, I never thought I would become the recipient of AI's letters now. The dinosaurs, cats, and alpacas that you drew are really cute, and I especially like the cat that is all black except the two eyes (just like the one I have at home). With your support, how could I give up!