

Public Rally Held in Washington D.C. to Support Freedom
and Human Rights in Hong Kong
Clear Wisdom
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WASHINGTON - On June 28, people from across the US held a public rally at the National Mall in Washington DC to request the Hong Kong government to abolish Article 23 legislation, and to support the July 1st Grand March Against Article 23 Legislation in Hong Kong.

Global Coalition Against Article 23 Legislation
President Mr. Wang Tao said, "In the past few days, we have held a series of activities simultaneously in Canada, Australia, Europe, Taiwan, Hong Kong and San Francisco to support the Hong Kong people against Article 23 legislation, and to express the concerns of overseas people from all walks of life on China's extension of autarchy and suppression to Hong Kong." Wang Tao also said that recently, more than 10,000 people signed their names on the Global Coalition Against Article 23 Legislation website to oppose Article 23 legislation. As of June 27, the total exceeded 30,000 signatures.

The Global Coalition Against Article 23 Legislation and the Global Alliance of Democracy and Peace jointly held a public rally to support Hong Kong against Article 23 in Washington DC with the theme of "Safeguard Hong Kong, Safeguard Conscience." The sponsor expressed that Article 23 legislation severely undermines Hong Kong's freedom of speech, freedom of religious beliefs, freedom of assembly and association, and therefore impacts Hong Kong's social stability and economic development.

On June 28th at 11:30 a.m. (EST), the rally set off from the National Mall, marching through Chinatown and then returned to the National Mall. At 2:00 p.m., they held a public press event at the National Mall. Several renowned non-governmental organizations in the US such as Freedom House, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Heritage Foundation, the Global Alliance for Democracy and Peace, and Wei Jingsheng Foundation

participated in the rally. Senior member of the Asia Studies Center in the Heritage Foundation, Mr. Cusker, cancelled his scheduled activity and came to the rally to express his support.

U.S. Congressman Mr. Steve King said in a speech read by a representative, "Before 1997, Hong Kong was a beacon of hope, inspiring China to walk toward free markets and democratic government. Today, China is trying to impose its totalitarian rule upon Hong Kong, starting to restrict the freedoms of speech, religion and association promised in the agreement it signed with the UK on July 1, 1997... We must clearly tell the Chinese government: We hope they can follow their promise in the Hong Kong Basic Law with respect to a gradual and orderly transfer of democratic elections of the legislature and the chief executive."

The Executive Director of Freedom House in the US, Ms. Jennifer Windsor, expressed in her speech that the US Congress recently passed a resolution stating that the Hong Kong people should have a government elected by its own people. The current government is not elected by the people. If a government that is not elected by its own people passes such an important National Security Law it will restrict the Hong Kong people's freedom. They urged the American government to put stronger pressure on Beijing and the Hong Kong government to withdraw the Article 23 legislation. The Hong Kong government must be clear that they should respond to people's voices, and should also know that the international community backs up the people.

Ms. Jennifer Windsor especially arrived to attend the rally with her assistant. It was very hot on this day in Washington DC. The National Mall was sealed off due to the crowds of people participating in the parade and other activities. Ms. Windsor said, "... Today because of traffic jams and looking for a parking space, we drove around the National Mall for nearly two hours ..." She felt fortunate that she arrived in time and did not miss the speech.

Ambassador-at-large of the Chinese Democratic Party, Mr. Tim Cooper said, "Under Article 23, the Hong Kong people will have no freedom. Though Beijing's totalitarian rulers hide their subversion of Hong Kong's freedom under the 'legal' legislation, when I see these people's face here, when I think of people parading in Hong Kong's streets, I believe that today symbolizes the beginning of the end of Article 23!" He also expressed that if more people could stand up or could know the nature of Article 23, it would definitely not be passed as law.

The Director of the Global Alliance for Democracy and Peace, Mr. Wu Heyi, expressed in his speech, "Article 23 legislation turns Hong Kong into China's appendage. Hong Kong's democracy will reverse back to the 16th century, about four hundred years ago." He criticized that China suppresses Falun Gong when the whole world supports it. He said, "It's not that Falun Gong is illegal, but the Chinese government itself is illegal." He mentioned in his speech the resolution of the US Congress held on June 27, in which 99.8% members opposed the Article 23 legislation, with only one vote supporting it. In a recent survey of public opinion, 52% of citizens opposed the legislation, and only 2% supported it. The Hong Kong government's intention to enact the legislation is highly unpopular.

Wei Jingsheng called upon people living in the free world to step forward to oppose the malevolent law. Human rights connect with everybody. If today you don't step out to oppose injustice, soon or later you would suffer persecution. He believed that regardless if one is currently free or not, living under Article 23, one would definitely have no freedom.

A representative of the National Endowment of Democracy, Ms. Melissa E. Birchard gave a speech at the rally to support the July 1st Grand March in Hong Kong against Article 23.

Spokesperson Ms. Zhang Lijuan for the Global Coalition Against Article 23 Legislation revealed, "Today, many organizations are holding activities, including parades

at the National Mall, in the afternoon. No parking spaces were available. Several other famous organizations including the Amnesty International and the AFL-CIO originally had sent people to give speeches at the rally, and a legislative assistant of the US Congress and several other human rights organizations could not be present in time."

The rally lasted for three and a half hours. The attendees finally passed the resolution against Article 23 legislation proposed by the Global Coalition Against Article 23 Legislation. The resolution requests that the Hong Kong SAR government abolish Article 23 and safeguard the "One Country, Two Systems" policy in Hong Kong. The rally concluded with the attendees calling out three times, "No Article 23."

During the rally, some passersby expressed that since Hong Kong's people do not like the Article 23 legislation, the government should follow the people's voices. A Taiwanese man expressed that he hopes negative things will not occur relating to human rights. China's treatment of Hong Kong is a good example for Taiwan. It shows whether China is sincere or not. If China insists on its totalitarian rule, it would bring its negative influence to Taiwan.

On June 26, the US House of Representatives passed a motion proposed by Congressman Cox against Article 23 in Hong Kong on a vote of 426 to 1.

The resolution denounces any restriction to freedom of thought, expression and association in Hong Kong; urges the Hong Kong and Chinese governments to stop implementing Article 23, which would reduce the Hong Kong people's basic freedoms; calls on the People's Republic of China, People's Standing Committee and other organizations appointed by China to transfer power and emend Hong Kong's law to have the Legislature generally elected by people. They also urged to immediately follow the Hong Kong people's wishes to vote and select Hong Kong's Legislative Council; called upon the Chinese government to respect the autonomy and independence of Hong Kong's Chief Executive,

administrative affairs committee and judicial system, Hong Kong police and the Independent Anti-Corruption Committee.

US Congressman Cox said in his motion, that since 1997, Hong Kong's Legislative Council has changed from being elected to being appointed by the Central government. The Chinese government once vetoed the decision of the Hong Kong Court, and some US visitors with dissenting opinions were denied entry to Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong government intends to implement Article 23 legislation under pressure from Mainland China. Article 23 targets treason, subversion, sedition and leakage of secrets, and is similar to the law in China used to arrest journalists, trade unions members, Internet creators and scholars. It threatens the freedom of seven million Hong Kong people.

The legislation can convict an individual who attempts to commit the crime of "subversion" that has no definition, and convict members of organizations that Beijing does not approve of, and people who attend meetings sponsored by such organizations may also be found guilty. This threatens the freedom of religion, freedom of trade unions members, freedom of various political activities and freedom of individual and public expression on a large scope.

The US Congress members emphasized in the resolution that the legislation will also give the appointed Secretary of Security a wider power to ban organizations that are not in favor, and this will threaten groups such as Falun Gong and Roman Catholics.

The members of the US Congress called upon the American government and other governments of the world, the American people and people of the world, to support Hong Kong's freedom.

It is reported that expected participants of Hong Kong's July 1st Grand March against Article 23 legislation increased from an original estimate of 50,000 to more than 100, 000, with the highest estimate

being 200, 000. The Hong Kong police have prepared to take measures such as blocking roads to control the crowds.