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For Immediate release

Hong Kong: HRN requests peaceful settlement with respects of freedom of assembly and speech for the current situation

1. Human Rights Now (HRN), a Tokyo-based international human rights NGO, expresses its concern about the human rights situation in Hong Kong regarding the freedom of expression and personal liberty and strongly requests that the government of Hong Kong stop unwarranted interventions into demonstrations and rallies held by its citizens.

2. After the National People's Congress (NPC) affirmed its imposition of qualifying limits to the candidates for the 2017 election for the position of Chief Executive of Hong Kong, a number of Hong Kong citizens are currently expressing their protest by holding a rally and a sit-in.

According to news reports, these protests lodged by the citizens are held peacefully and based on a principle of non-violence. However, the government of Hong Kong is attempting to suppress these protests through forceful means, such as launching tear shells at demonstrators on September 29th 2014 and arresting many of those who staged a sit-in in front of Hong Kong's Government headquarters on a charge of "participating in an illegal rally".

3. HRN is greatly concerned about the Hong Kong government's such response towards the participants of demonstrations.

In Hong Kong, "One Country, Two Systems" was adopted in 1997 when Hong Kong was returned to China from the British Empire, and considerable degree of autonomy was granted to Hong Kong under this system. Article 27 of the Hong Kong Basic Law, serving as the "Constitution" of Hong Kong that was enacted when it was returned to China, ensures Hong Kong citizens' freedom of expression, freedom of assembly including freedom of participating in demonstrations, and article 28 of the same Law prohibits illegal arrests.

The aforementioned forceful response of the government of Hong Kong against the demonstrators is against the provisions of the human rights protection stated above and is clearly deviant from the established international human rights standards. Media reported that some dialogues to be held between the government of Hong Kong and the leaders of demonstrators: this needs to be done so with respects of freedom of assembly and speech and towards peaceful settlement.

4. Hence, HRN calls upon the government of Hong Kong to

1) Respect demonstrators' freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of participating in demonstrations, and not to use violent and forceful methods to clear peaceful demonstrations;

2) Respect personal liberty of demonstrators and immediately release all arrested who have been detained on charges of participating in demonstrations;

3) Conduct elections for the Chief Executive of Hong Kong under a fair system supported by many people of Hong Kong by conducting direct dialogues with demonstrators.