



Human Rights Now

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41th Human Rights Council Session

24 June 2019

Item 3: Clustered ID with SR on independence of judges & lawyers

Speaker: Karo Okandeji

Thank you, Mr President.

The recent protests in Hong Kong against a proposed bill have brought the world's attention to both the lack of an independent judiciary in China and the threat the bill poses to the independence of Hong Kong's judiciary and the safety of its lawyers.

Under the "one country, two systems" model, Hong Kong maintains an independent judiciary, which includes the power of final adjudication. However, the proposed bill would allow the city's Chief Executive to transfer criminal suspects from Hong Kong to China for prosecution without a formal extradition treaty and with little input from Hong Kong judges or prosecutors.

This seriously threatens the independence of the Hong Kong courts and puts activists and lawyers in Hong Kong at risk of punishment in China for their legitimate work, just as activists and lawyers in China currently are.

Chinese prosecutors and courts have used politically motivated criminal charges to harass and imprison lawyers who are critical of the government or work to protect people's rights. In 2015, China conducted a crackdown that resulted in the interrogation of hundreds of human rights lawyers and activists. Around two dozen were charged and detained over a year, a number convicted, and others are still under surveillance. Also in 2015, Chinese authorities abducted five staff members of a Hong Kong bookstore from different countries, including Hong Kong, after they distributed banned books.

Human Rights Now joins the demand of the protestors that the bill be explicitly withdrawn and that Hong Kong authorities make a commitment and take measures to guarantee the independence of Hong Kong's judiciary and protect activists and lawyers from punishment in China.

Thank you.