Hong Kong: first person charged under new security law

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/06/hong-kong-first-person-charged-under-new-security-law>

China has begun putting its [new Hong Kong security law](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/01/hong-kongs-security-laws-usher-in-new-era-of-chinese-control) into action, as a 23-year-old man became the first person on Monday to be charged under the legislation and authorities announced a purge of literature from libraries and schools.

The law, imposed last week following anti-government protests in [Hong Kong](https://www.theguardian.com/world/hong-kong) last year, classes as illegal all activities the government deems to be secessionist, subversive, or terrorist, as well as foreign intervention in the city’s internal affairs.

Any activities such as shouting slogans or holding up banners and flags calling for the city’s independence are a violation of the law regardless of whether violence is used. The maximum penalty is life imprisonment.

Since the law went into effect, the government made clear that the popular protest slogan “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our time” has separatist connotations and is [therefore criminalised](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/02/hong-kong-protesters-laying-low-following-mass-arrests-china).

Tong Ying-kit was remanded into custody on Monday, charged with terrorism and inciting secession after he allegedly drove a motorbike into a group of police officers last week, wounding three, while flying a “Liberate Hong Kong” banner. Tong was denied bail.

After [removing books by prominent Hong Kong pro-democracy activists from public libraries](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/05/hong-kong-books-by-pro-democracy-activists-disappear-from-library-shelves) over the weekend, the authorities announced that it was part of a broader purge of literature from libraries and schools.

“In accordance with the four types of offences clearly stipulated in the law, the school management and teachers should review teaching and learning materials in a timely manner, including books,” the education bureau said.

“If they find outdated content or content that may concern the four aforementioned offences, they should remove them,” the bureau added.

Joshua Wong, a prominent 23-year-old activist, called on the international community Monday to “stand with” Hong Kong.

“We still have to let the world know that now is the time to stand with Hong Kong,” he told reporters, ahead of his court appearance on Tuesday.

“With the belief of Hong Kong people to fight for freedom, we will never give up and surrender to Beijing.”

China’s ambassador in London, Liu Xiaoming, [warned the British government not to implement its plan to offer a path to citizenship to up to 3 million Hong Kong people](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jul/06/chinese-ambassador-uk-ban-on-huawei-would-damage-trust-hong-kong). The offer, Liu said in a virtual press conference in London, was “a gross interference in China’s internal affairs and openly trampled on the basic norms governing international relations”.

“No one should underestimate the firm determination of [China](https://www.theguardian.com/world/china) to safeguard its sovereignty, security and development,” Liu said. “Attempts to disrupt or obstruct the national security law will be met with the strong opposition of 1.4 billion Chinese people. All these attempts are doomed to failure.”

Facebook and its messaging service WhatsApp announced on Monday they were suspending [requests from the Hong Kong government and law enforcement authorities for information on users](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/06/facebook-whatsapp-pause-hong-kong-user-data-requests).

The pause would take place “pending further assessment” of the new law and would include “formal human rights due diligence and consultations with human rights experts”, a Facebook company spokesman said in a statement.

“We believe freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and support the right of people to express themselves without fear for their safety or other repercussions,” the spokesman said.

Digital rights group ProPrivacy called Facebook’s move “a win for both digital privacy and human rights in the region”.

Meanwhile in Beijing , a professor who criticised China’s handling of the coronavirus crisis was detained by authorities in the latest sign of a more aggressive effort to suppress dissent. Xu Zhangrun, who has been under house arrest, was taken away by a large number of police officers from his Beijing home on Monday.