

To:  
cc:  
Subject: Article 23

2002/12/23 10:43 AM

Dear LEGCO member,

I am an Australian citizen who has visited <?xml:namespace prefix = st1 ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:smrttags" />Hong Kong several times and I know many people from Hong Kong who are living in Australia. I have been diligently following the press accounts and web site postings regarding Article 23 and am also of the opinion that this is the greatest threat to Hong Kong's sovereignty under the "one country, two policies" system to date. Although the SAR agreed to enact some form of laws prohibiting subversion, secession, treason and sedition after the handover of Hong Kong to China from British rule, Article 23 goes far beyond these requirements and is a potential threat to anyone in Hong Kong who doesn't strictly toe Beijing's line and dictates. It appears the Hong Kong government is in danger becoming little more than a puppet of Beijing.

Almost every group in Hong Kong, from Falun Gong to the Catholic Church, to pro-democracy groups, to the media, to the banking system, to human rights groups such as the Asian Human Rights Commission and Amnesty International, and the list goes on, oppose this legislation for the very real threat it poses to individual freedoms of speech, assembly and belief. Any restrictions in these regards simply are not acceptable.

One of the greatest problems is in the refusal of the SAR government to publish a white paper informing people of the particulars of this legislation, which could either allay their fears or substantiate them. The Chinese government has never been known for its openness in such matters and this is creating much of the backlash in this situation. Hong Kong's history has been one of freedom and openness and these freedoms have created the foundation for today's vibrant system and unparalleled economic growth. If these freedoms are eroded in any way, the entire structure upon which Hong Kong is built will be prone to collapse.

Not only do these proposed laws impact Hong Kong residents both in Hong Kong and overseas, but also foreign nationals living in Hong Kong. If Hong Kong becomes "just another Chinese city", ruled with an iron fist through fear rather than freedom, foreign investment will evaporate overnight and Hong Kong's economy will be threatened with total collapse.

It is very important to listen to the voice of the people, particularly in this case where so many divergent groups are voicing their concerns. At the very least, a white paper needs to be published giving details of these proposed laws. If the SAR government bows to pressure from Beijing and strong-arms this legislation into law without thorough consultation with the people of Hong Kong, the result will be devastating.

The entire world is now watching the development of Article 23 legislation in Hong Kong and many of these countries have already voiced their opposition to this proposed legislation. It behoves the SAR Government to carefully reconsider its approach to this issue and seriously listen to the concerns of its citizens and world opinion. Both Mainland China and Hong Kong must act in accordance with recognised world standards.

Yours sincerely,

John Andress