

**Joint Statement on Whether Education and Manpower Bureau Officials
Intervened in the Hong Kong Institute of Education's Affairs**

We are members of several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing student unions, human rights groups, labour unions, women's groups and Christian organisations. We are holding this press conference to express our deep concern about the controversy at the Hong Kong Institute of Education.

First of all, this issue is not merely an internal affair of the Hong Kong Institute of Education nor simply a conflict between the institute and Secretary for Education and Manpower Arthur Li. It also involves the interest of everyone in our city as the Hong Kong Institute of Education is the cradle of teacher training in our community.

Secondly, we are concerned about whether senior government officials of the Education and Manpower Bureau directly or indirectly interfered in the internal affairs of the institute to pressure the institute's officials to merge with Chinese University.

Thirdly, based on the comments of the institute's vice president for academic affairs, Bernard Luk Hung-kay, bureau officials also put pressure on the institute to lay off four teachers, an act, if substantiated, seriously challenges academic freedom in Hong Kong.

Our Demands

1. As NGOs in Hong Kong, we urge people in our community to stand up to protect academic freedom, for it is the foundation of our education system. Government officials have a responsibility to protect academic freedom, not threaten it.
2. In order to defend academic freedom, all universities and institutes of higher education in Hong Kong should enjoy independence and self-autonomy so that scholars can freely express their views without any external pressure.
3. In order to discern the truth behind this controversy, we urge the Legislative Council to set up a formal and independent commission of inquiry to investigate this issue. If the findings indicate that government officials did, indeed, interfere in the internal affairs of the institute, the officials should be held accountable, and the commission's full report should be released to the public.

Organizations:

Christians for Hong Kong Society
Hong Kong Christian Institute
Student Union of the Chinese University of Hong Kong
Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions
Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor
Hong Kong Students Christian Movements
Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong Catholic Diocese
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