



International  
Federation  
of Journalists  
ASIA-PACIFIC  
國際記者聯合會

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IFJ Asia-Pacific Director  
ELISABETH COSTA  
General Secretary

14 Mar. 2012

Dear Mr. James To Kun-Sun, Chairman off Security Panel

*Re: Review of Security Arrangements During Visits of Political Dignitaries to Hong Kong*

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) is writing to express its gratitude for your actions defending press freedom during the visits of political dignitaries to Hong Kong in the last year.

Having seen the recent review produced by the Hong Kong Police on the above subject, i.e. the *Review of Security Arrangements During Visits of Political Dignatories to Hong Kong* (the Review), the IFJ would like to highlight some best practice examples which are widely accepted by a number of democratic countries and cities. It is our wish that the Chairman and members of the Security Panel consider recommending these practices for implementation in future by the Hong Kong Police.

We welcome the statement that police will strengthen their management and improve their relationship with the media. However, IFJ fears that police often put a lesser weight on freedom of the press when they are exercising their duties when political dignitaries visit Hong Kong or during public demonstrations.

We would like to reiterate that the rights of the media are already enshrined in *Article 27* of Hong Kong's *Basic Law*, which provides that all Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of speech, freedom of the press and of publication; freedom of association and assembly, freedom of procession and of demonstration; and the right and freedom to form and join trade unions and to strike.

We have experience with various law enforcement personnel in democratic areas such as United States, Britain, Netherland, Thailand, Indonesia and Taiwan etc. In such jurisdictions, Police generally respect press freedom and seldom prevent the media from exercising their reporting duties, even during public demonstrations.

The Police Operations Plan for some countries even provide that all individuals possessing official media identification, or claiming media affiliation, are allowed to engage in activity afforded to media personnel. Great efforts are also taken to ensure that the right of the media during times of civil unrest are respected.

We understand that police have a duty to protect the safety of all political dignitaries, conduct crowd control and undertake security checks upon people entering into limited access zones. However, such security checks should not cause any unnecessary nuisance and should respect individual privacy.

It is the duty of the media to report all relevant aspects of the visit of political dignitaries and society's response. During this process, it is anticipated that people may exercise their rights to express their concerns.

In the Review it is mentioned that Hong Kong Police are considering allocating particular reporting zones for media. IFJ is concerned that this kind of arrangement might jeopardise the rights of the media and endanger press freedom.



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In many democratic countries, police do not restrain the movement of the media. In some police operational plans, the media are permitted to observe at close enough access to the arrestees to record their names. Often, even after a dispersal order has been given, clearly identified media are permitted to carry out their professional duties in any area where arrests are being made, unless their presence would unduly interfere with the enforcement action.

The IFJ believes that the media of Hong Kong have been exercising their professionalism for many years, and appreciate the importance of not interfering with the activities of police.

With respect, the IFJ wish the Chairman of the Panel, Commissioner of Police and members of the Panel to consider the following suggestions:

- 1) Police should put insert the following requirement into the Plan of Operations - "All personnel should respect the right of the media"
- 2) No restraint of media movement
- 3) Any special zones allocated for the media should be a closer distance to the political dignitaries than the general public, if introduced at all.
- 4) An increase in personnel allocated to relations between the police and the media.
- 5) The highlighting of press freedom issues in the training course for all law enforcement personnel.
- 6) Greater respect for individual privacy during security checks.

The IFJ understands that the Hong Kong Police have a duty to protect public safety, and have shown a commitment to respecting the rights of the people and media of Hong Kong, as enshrined in Hong Kong's *Basic Law*.

We, therefore, respectfully urge the Security Panel of Hong Kong's Legislative Council to consider the above-mentioned best practice examples which have been successfully implemented in many democratic countries.

We believe with their adoption would demonstrate the good governance of the Hong Kong Police, without jeopardising their duty to protect public safety.

Your Sincerely,

IFJ Asia-Pacific

Attention:

Deputy Chairman Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP

Members Hon Albert HO Chun-yan

Dr Hon Margaret NG

Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong

Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS



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