

**For information
on 16 February 2016**

**Legislative Council Panel on Security
Police's handling of riots**

Introduction

Hong Kong residents enjoy the freedom of and the right to peaceful assembly, procession and demonstration under the Basic Law. When expressing their opinion, members of the public must abide by the law, act in a peaceful and orderly manner, and refrain from any illegal or violent act. The Police have the responsibility to maintain public safety and public order, and safeguard people's life and property. If there is any act endangering personal safety or upsetting public safety and public order, the Police will not tolerate such act and will definitely enforce the law stringently.

Police's handling of riots

2. Riots pose a direct and serious threat to the lives and safety of citizens. Riots also cause serious damage to personal and public property, and endanger social peace and public order. Section 19 of the Public Order Ordinance (Chapter 245) states that when any person taking part in an assembly which is an unlawful assembly by virtue of section 18(1)¹ commits a breach of the peace, the assembly is a riot and the persons assembled are riotously assembled. Any person who takes part in a riot shall be guilty of the offence of riot and shall be liable, on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for 10 years; and on summary conviction, to a fine at level 2 and to imprisonment for 5 years.

3. If a riot happens, the Police's first and foremost tasks are to take resolute measures to end the riot as soon as possible, restore public order,

¹ Section 18(1) of the Public Order Ordinance (Chapter 245) states that when 3 or more persons, assembled together, conduct themselves in a disorderly, intimidating, insulting or provocative manner intended or likely to cause any person reasonably to fear that the persons so assembled will commit a breach of the peace, or will by such conduct provoke other persons to commit a breach of the peace, they are an unlawful assembly.

and protect the safety of life and property. The Police will make operational deployment and deploy manpower and equipment in accordance with the actual situation.

4. The Police are equipped with a range of anti-riot equipment. Most police officers also undergo anti-riot training at the Police Tactical Unit. The Police will, having regard to the actual circumstances and the needs of individual operations, give instructions on what suitable equipment officers should be fitted with for the execution of duties and determine whether police officers with anti-riot equipment would need to be deployed. After the riot, the Police will definitely make all efforts in the investigation. The Police will arrest and prosecute those rioters involved with no toleration of any violent act.

The riot in Mong Kok

5. In the early hours of 9 February this year, there was a riot in Mong Kok. During the incident, a large number of rioters charged police cordon and attacked police officers with various hard objects, including paving bricks, stones, rubbish bins, broken glass bottles and wooden planks etc. The Fire Services Department received 22 fire calls in Mong Kok during the period. Rioters set fires at various locations and obstructed firemen's fire-fighting operations, as well as damaged police vehicles and set fire to a taxi. During the incident, the Police deployed a large number of officers to the scene. The riot eventually ended in the morning of 9 February. More than 90 police officers and several members of the media were injured in the incident. As at 14 February, the Police have arrested in total 66 persons for allegedly taking part in a riot, unlawful assembly, assaulting police officers, resisting arrest, obstructing police officers, possession of offensive weapons and disorderly conduct in public place etc. The Police have already prosecuted 40 of them for riot and one person for unlawful assembly. The Police are now making all efforts to apprehend other rioters involved and bring them to justice.

6. As in the case of all large-scale operations, the Police will sum up after this riot and examine various aspects of the operation including deployment, manpower, resources and equipment etc in order to meet future operational needs.

7. The HKSAR Government strongly condemns the acts of the rioters in this riot. During the riot, under such a violent and adverse environment, police officers continued to stand fast to their posts in the face of danger to their lives. We pay our solemn tribute to the professional and fearless spirit of our police officers.

Security Bureau
Hong Kong Police Force
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