Hong Kong democracy activists Joshua Wong (□□□), Alex Chow (□□□) and Nathan Law (□□□), who in 2014 shot to prominence as leaders of the territory's "Umbrella movement," were earlier this month nominated by a dozen US lawmakers for a Nobel Peace Prize.

In their nomination, the lawmakers said they wanted to recognize the trio's "peaceful efforts to bring political reform" and uphold the territory's rule of law and human rights.

"Hong Kong's pro-democracy advocates have made significant contributions to peace by actively seeking to safeguard the future of Hong Kong at precisely the time that Beijing has taken steps to undermine Hong Kong's long-cherished autonomy," the bipartisan group told the Nobel Peace Prize Committee in a letter.

The competition is tough, as the Norwegian Nobel Committee receives several hundred nominations annually. However, the nomination itself is significant, as it is not only recognition of the trio's efforts, but an encouragement to the many who continue the fight for democracy in the former British colony.

Hong Kong in 1997 was returned to Chinese rule as a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China. At the time, Beijing said that the territory would be governed under the "one country, two systems" framework and that it would enjoy wide-ranging autonomy.

However, the model has proven a failure, with growing concerns from critics and democracy advocates that liberties and freedoms are being eroded.

China is a signatory to the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but it still has a long way to go in respecting and implementing the document.

For example, the forced disappearance of five booksellers in 2015 flies in the face of several articles of the declaration, including Article 3, which states: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person," as well as Article 9, which says: "No one shall be subjected to

arbitrary arrest, detention or exile."

Beijing's suppression of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movements and the disqualifying of pro-democracy lawmakers from the territory's Legislative Council also brazenly violate Article 18 of the declaration, which says: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion," and Article 19, which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

It is alarming that Beijing and the Hong Kong government have been undermining the territory's Basic Law by abusing legal interpretations, not to mention manipulating Hong Kong's judicial system to neutralize pro-democracy campaigners.

In short, Beijing has for half a century broken its pledge to not interfere with Hong Kong's autonomy.

As Wong said in response to his nomination: "Hong Kong is not left with only three political prisoners — Hong Kong has many political prisoners. It is just that we three are fortunate or incidental to be noticed and be shown concern for by members of the international community."

Whether or not the trio are awarded the Nobel Prize in December, their nomination will hopefully direct more public and media attention to the dire straits of Hong Kong's democratic development and, more importantly, let the territory's pro-democracy activists know that they are not alone in their fight against Beijing's oppression.

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