

## Hong Kongers protest extradition law

Written by Taipei Times

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People march along a main street in a protest against a proposed extradition law in Hong Kong yesterday.

**Photo: AP**

Huge crowds yesterday thronged Hong Kong as anger swelled over a plan to allow extradition to mainland China, a proposal that has sparked the biggest public backlash against the territory's pro-Beijing leadership in years.

Tens of thousands of people marched in blazing summer heat through the cramped streets of the territory's main island in a noisy, colorful demonstration calling on the government to scrap its planned extradition law.

Hong Kong's leaders are pushing a bill through the legislature that would allow extraditions to any jurisdiction with which it does not already have a treaty — including China for the first time.

Coffee shop owner Marco Ng said he was closing his store to join the march.

"Our city matters more than our business," the 26-year-old said. "If we don't speak out, then there's no way that the government will listen to our concerns."

"The people's voices are not being heard," 18-year-old student Ivan Wong said. "This bill will not just affect Hong Kong's reputation as an international finance center, but also our judicial system. That has an impact on my future."

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The proposed law has sparked an opposition that unites a wide demographic, setting off the largest demonstrations since 2014 pro-democracy protests brought parts of the territory to a standstill for two months.

In the past few weeks lawyers have held sombre marches dressed in black, anonymous senior judges have given critical media interviews and the territory's two main legal groups have urged a rethink.

Business figures are also rattled, with multiple chambers of commerce and commercial groups expressing alarm, adding to criticism from the US, Canada, former colonial power Britain and many European governments.

Online petitions have been gathered by groups as diverse as stay-at-home moms, students, nurses and horse-racing fans.

Hong Kong's leaders, who are not popularly elected, have said the law is needed to plug loopholes and stop the territory being a bolthole for Chinese fugitives.

They have said dissidents and critics would not be extradited, and have urged quick passage of the bill to extradite a Hong Kong man who is wanted in Taiwan for murdering his girlfriend.

However, critics fear the law would entangle people in China's opaque and politicized court system and have said the government is using the Taiwan case as a Trojan horse.

The proposed law has been fast-tracked through the Hong Kong Legislative Council, which is dominated by pro-Beijing members and would on Wednesday receive its second reading.

The government has said it plans to have the law on the statute book by late next month.

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Previous sessions in the legislature have descended into chaos, with rival lawmakers scuffling.

The march was seen by organizers as an attempt to showcase how wide the opposition to the bill is ahead of the second reading.

The backlash creates a headache for Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥), who has staked her political reputation on the bill passing.

Pushing through the legislation could spark more protests or even a return to the unrest of 2014 — but backtracking might embolden opponents and anger Beijing.

Several senior Chinese Communist Party leaders have voiced support for the bill.

Source: [Taipei Times 2019/06/10](#)