

## Lam apologizes for causing ‘conflict’

Written by Taipei Times

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Protesters take part in a demonstration yesterday demanding the withdrawal of an extradition bill and the resignation of Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam.

**Photo: Reuters**

In a statement issued last night by her office, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥) apologized to the public with “utmost sincerity and humility,” after the second massive protest in a week over a proposed extradition bill that would allow people to be sent to mainland China for trial.

Lam’s statement, reiterating that the government has stopped work on the bill, came as hundreds of thousands of people clogged the streets in central Hong Kong dressed in black to demand that she step down, a day after she suspended the bill.

The marchers demanded that Lam first scrap an extradition bill and then resign.

Organizers said the protest might be larger than last week’s demonstration, when they estimated more than 1 million people filed through the central part of Hong Kong Island.

Hong Kong police said that rally drew 240,000 people.

At 7:30pm, five hours after the start of yesterday’s march, thousands of people were still gathering at Victoria Park to begin the nearly 3.2km walk to the Legislative Council building, in the Admiralty district.

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As night fell the huge crowds were still filling multiple major thoroughfares, including outside the legislature, with the police seemingly ceding the streets to the jubilant masses.

“For the public to express their opinions in a peaceful and rational way, the chief executive clearly heard and agreed that this is precisely the spirit of mutual respect and harmony that Hong Kong has always demonstrated as a civilized, free, open and pluralistic society. The government values — and cherishes these core values — of Hong Kong,” the statement from Lam’s office said.

“In view of the strong disparate views of the community, the government has stopped the work of the Legislative Council General on the revision of the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance. It is hoped that this will allow the community to restore calm and avoid any harm. The government reiterated that there is no timetable for restarting the process,” she said.

“Many members of the public are disappointed and saddened. The chief executive apologizes to the public and promises to accept it with the utmost sincerity and humility,” she added.

As the crowd choked the official route of the march, protesters began spilling into other roadways, including Harcourt Road in Admiralty and those in the Wan Chai district.

A crowd of people chanted the Cantonese word for “Retract!” over and over, a message to Lam to permanently scrap the bill.

One cafe along the route posted a sign to its front window: “Everyone keep up the hard work ... if you are tired, come in and we’ll give you a glass of water.”

One bright yellow sign carried by a protester in Admiralty read: “HK police force, you should be ashamed to call yourself Hongkongers.” Another read: “Salute to HK young people.”

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Earlier in the day, there was a mass rendition of *Do You Hear the People Sing?*, the anthem from the musical *Les Miserables*.

The rally drew marchers both young and old, some pushing strollers or carrying slumbering infants. Few wore masks or seemed to be trying to hide their identities, in contrast with demonstrations on Wednesday, when participants expressed worries over possible retribution from the authorities.

Many protesters wore ribbons on their shirts and carried placards showing protesters who had been beaten bloody on Wednesday.

"I'm really sad. I'm grieving," one visitor, Peron Kwong, said after tying a white ribbon to a street rail. "As a person born and raised in Hong Kong, I'm heartbroken when I see Hong Kong become like this."

Protesters were also unhappy with the way police handled that situation, with officers using tear gas, rubber bullets and other forceful measures when demonstrators broke through barricades outside the territory government's headquarters.

The police presence yesterday was considerably more relaxed, with officers deployed mainly to direct traffic as the protesters wound their way through Hong Kong's commercial center from a sprawling downtown park to government headquarters.

Farther down the parade route, mourners lined up to lay flowers and pay respects at a makeshift memorial for a man who fell to his death on Saturday after hanging a protest banner that read in part, "Make Love, No Shoot" and "No Extradition to China."

The man slipped from the grasp of rescuers after clinging for a time to scaffolding outside a shopping mall. He was declared dead at a nearby hospital.

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Pro-democracy activists were calling for a general strike today, despite Lam’s decision to suspend work on the legislation.

Some labor unions, teachers associations and other groups were planning boycotts of work and classes, demanding the Lam administration retire the proposed amendments and not bring them up again.

Chinese state media yesterday remained largely silent about the protest, with social platforms scrubbed clean of any pictures or mentions of the rally.

However, the Chinese Communist Party mouthpiece, the *People’s Daily*, said the proposed law was “supported by mainstream public opinion in Hong Kong.

The newspaper added that “the general public “is looking forward to blocking legal loopholes to prevent Hong Kong becoming a haven for sinners.”

Source: [Taipei Times - 2019/06/17](#)