Family members of students barricaded inside Hong Kong Polytechnic University hold up signs during a protest near the university in Hung Hom yesterday.
Photo: AFP

About 100 protesters yesterday remained holed up at Hong Kong Polytechnic University surrounded by police on the third day of the most prolonged and tense confrontation in more than five months of conflict in the territory.

About 600 protesters surrendered to authorities at the campus in Kowloon overnight, after police allowed two representatives to mediate between the two sides, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam (□□□□) said.

Activists were yesterday morning evacuated to seek medical help.

Riot police surrounded the red-brick campus that protesters took over and turned into a fortress, firing tear gas at groups who tried to escape.

Police urged the activists to surrender peacefully.

Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets over the past three days in attempt to reach the protesters at the university, prompting intense clashes with riot police firing tear gas, rubber bullets and, in a few incidents, live rounds.

Police said that they have arrested about 1,100 people since Monday.

The Hong Kong Hospital Authority said that it has received almost 300 injured people from the university and asked the public not to go to accident and emergency departments unless absolutely necessary.

In her first public remarks since the crisis began with clashes between police and protesters on Sunday, Lam said that 200 of those who surrendered were children and were not arrested.

However, she said that authorities reserved the right to make further investigations.

The other 400 who left the campus have been arrested, she added.

Groups of protesters have tried to escape the tight police cordon around the campus.

Late on Monday, dozens were seen rappelling down a footbridge — as police fired tear gas — and were driven away on motorbikes.

Others tried to flee by crawling through maintenance holes into sewers, before firefighters arrived on the scene to warn them it was unsafe.

As Hong Kong's political crisis reaches new heights, Beijing has issued increasingly severe warnings, prompting fears of intervention.

Following a Hong Kong High Court ruling on Tuesday that a ban on masks was unconstitutional, the Chinese National People's Congress said that only it has the power to rule on the constitutionality of legislation under the territory's Basic Law.

Chinese Ambassador to Britain Liu Xiaoming (□□□) on Monday said that the Hong Kong government was “trying very hard to put the situation under control.”

“But if the situation becomes uncontrollable, the [Chinese] central government would certainly not sit on our hands and watch,” he said. “We have enough resolution and power to end the unrest.”

An English-language editorial in the Chinese state-run Global Times yesterday said: “The rule of law can save Hong Kong, but the premise is that the rioters must be punished. The mob’s terror-like violence is bound to be punished.”

Several trains connecting China with Hong Kong have been suspended for yesterday and today.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong Commissioner of Police Chris Tang (□□□) yesterday took office with a warning that “fake news” was undermining the reputation of his 30,000-strong force and called for the territory’s residents to help end the turmoil.

Tang replaced Stephen Lo (□□□), who had presided over months of unrest.

Jasper Tsang (□□□), a pro-Beijing politician and former head of the Hong Kong Legislative Council who helped mediate the surrender of students on Monday, told reporters that there could be bloodshed if the police entered the university campus by force, where they were likely to meet strong resistance.

“This is something that we want to avoid,” he said.

Source: Taipei Times - 2019/11/20