

## Hong Kong protests at half-year mark

Written by Taipei Times

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Pro-democracy protesters march on a street in Hong Kong yesterday.

**Photo: AP**

Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators yesterday crammed into Hong Kong's streets, their chants echoing off high-rises, in a mass show of support for a protest movement that shows no signs of flagging as it enters a seventh month.

Chanting "Fight for freedom" and "Stand with Hong Kong," a sea of protesters formed a huge human snake winding for blocks on Hong Kong Island, from the Causeway Bay shopping district to the Central business zone, a distance of more than 2km.

The crowds were so large and dense that the march ground to a standstill at times. Protesters spilled into narrow side streets, crying "Revolution in our times."

One protester crawled part of the route prostrated on her hands and knees, dragging bricks and empty soda cans behind her. It was an apt metaphor for the pro-democracy movement, which has become a long-haul push to preserve Hong Kong's freedoms that make it unique among China's territories.

"This is just the beginning. We have a long way to run," said demonstrator Louisa Yiu, an engineer.

Many marchers held up five fingers to press the movement's five demands. They include democratic elections for Hong Kong's leader and legislature and a demand for a probe of police

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behavior during the six months of continuous protests.

Marchers said they hoped the huge turnout might help win concessions from the government of Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥).

Protesters spanned generations. One man's young son marched in his Spider-man suit.

"So many people are still supporting this movement. You can see how determined Hong Kong people are," said demonstrator Justin Ng, a 20-year-old student.

"I heard a small kid yelling slogans — four, five years old," Ng said. "That really encouraged me, because it's not just this generation, but future generations, too."

Marchers said protesting has become part of the fabric of their lives since demonstrations erupted in June against a now-withdrawn bill that would have allowed criminal suspects to be sent for trial in Chinese Communist Party-controlled courts in China.

The protests have since snowballed into a broad, sustained anti-government movement, presenting the communist leadership in Beijing with a major headache and battering Hong Kong's economy.

Police in riot gear deployed in numbers on the edges of the march.

Earlier in the day, they arrested 11 people and seized a cache of weapons, including a firearm with more than 100 bullets.

Police said the suspects apparently planned to use the weapons during the protest to frame police, who have been accused of using excessive force against the protesters.

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Civil Human Rights Front vice convener Eric Lai (賴國權) called for police restraint and for no use of tear gas.

“We hope this will be a signature for our movement after six months to show to Carrie Lam as well as to the world that people are not giving up. People will still fight for our freedom and democracy,” Lai said.

Chief among the protesters’ complaints yesterday was that police have been overly heavy-handed, making thousands of arrests since June.

“They are out of control,” said Ernest Yau, a 28-year-old consultant.

“We understand our common enemy,” he said. “We understand that we have to be united to fight against China.”

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