

Your Honour,

I have pleaded guilty as charged but I do not admit to wrongdoing.

My guilty plea relates to making a public appeal on the 30th of September for citizens to join the "October 1 Demonstration" and on the next day marching shoulder-to-shoulder from Causeway Bay to Central with the mass of people who turned out. I shall not waste time on this because I would rather give a full account.

I do not admit to wrongdoing because I have a clear conscience and there is no wrongdoing to admit to.

On that day, tens of thousands of citizens responded to the call to gather together, united as one, to reveal public opinion and show the power of protest. Where is the wrongdoing?

From beginning to end, the "October 1 Demonstration" took place as planned and was carried out peacefully. It was nothing more than the exercise of rights bestowed by the "Basic Law" and the longstanding freedom of political expression. Where is the wrongdoing?

If I must be remorseful for this, then surely every one of the citizens who participated in each of the three one-million strong demonstrations in 2019 must also sincerely repent.

Your Honour, at this juncture I must emphasise that the freedom to participate in demonstrations, meetings and protests is not an ancient right. These freedoms are the result of ceaseless struggles of wave upon wave of ordinary people. Despite these rights gradually being recognised as universal values, and their incorporation into international treaties and national constitutions, history shows that when rulers encounter persistent and growing civil protests, they resort to suppressing dissent and openly infringing these hard-won rights.

I did not seek the police's permission for the demonstration as a protest against the authorities for their unreasonable prohibition of similar activities organised by the Civil Human Rights Front. And I wanted to expose the duplicitous regime of Carrie Lam. Her regime strangles the freedom to protest and intimidates the masses from participating in protest movements. We called on the population to refuse to yield, to join the October 1 demonstration, to protest with direct collective action, to arouse civil indignation, to amass greater strength, and guard Hong Kong's freedoms.

I knew I would suffer political persecution, but I do not hesitate to challenge the law. My abilities are limited, but I employ them to fulfill my obligations to disobey unjust laws and lead the call to the people to participate in marches.

Your Honour, the idea of civil disobedience is close to my heart. I believe people have innate rights. I refuse to obey tyrannical laws imposed by rulers. I believe it is vital to pledge ourselves to peaceful collective actions. In the face of coercive suppression, it is right to be fearless and unyielding, to represent society's conscience, to inspire the people to awaken, to bolster

resistance, and so stimulate greater resolve among the citizenry. Working together, united as one, the citizens can resist those in power in a movement of total non-cooperation, one that will force an unjust regime to abandon a system that violates justice and the will of the people.

Not only do I have a clear conscience for organising the October 1 march, I was duty bound to do it.

I am duty bound because I know that the moment the citizens submit meekly to the Carrie Lam regime wantonly riding roughshod over their rights, is the moment freedom to protest will exist in name only and all other freedoms will vanish without a trace. Hong Kong will be reduced to a society where not a single citizen's voice will be heard.

Your Honour, I came to the heartfelt realisation that the wave of demonstrations in 2019 expressed the aspiration of the people of Hong Kong to fight for their future. In 2014, tens of thousands were inspired to participate in "Occupy Central with Love and Peace" and the "Umbrella Movement". They upheld the right to collectively engage in peaceful resistance in opposition to the August 31 decision that would strangle the rights of Hong Kong citizens to vote and enjoy universal suffrage.

Although it did not succeed, that movement left an indelible mark. Five years later, their opposition to Carrie Lam regime's forcing through an evil law prompted the people to rise up in resistance. This brought about the mass movement around the "Five Demands", with unprecedented numbers of protesters engulfing the whole of Hong Kong. Despite suppression the people became ever more courageous and momentum surged. Ultimately, the strength of the movement was due to ordinary people never losing sight of their beliefs. Without a doubt, it is a democratic movement that embodies the spirit of resistance of the people of Hong Kong.

For many years, I have been dedicated to fighting for democracy and justice. Both within and outside the legislature I have fought for the realisation of universal suffrage. When the people of Hong Kong join together to fight for the same cause, I have no choice but to do my utmost to stand with the masses to resist the suppression of the Carrie Lam regime. Taking the lead in the October 1 Demonstration and standing by the people of Hong Kong is consistent with my conscience.

Your Honour, I am not making excuses in this petition, rather I wish to clarify the original intention and reasons for the October 1 Demonstration. Civil disobedience is fundamentally an honourable act of people's conscience. It is not a deed that needs disguise, or a plea for mercy.

I have chosen the path of resistance. I certainly know it is a rocky road. Jail is but a station along this route.

My heart is at ease for my deeds are honourable. Though in peril, my spirits are undimmed.

I conclude with this [poem by Chen Duxiu, a co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party] and share my encouragement with the people of Hong Kong.

Leung Kwok-hong

23/5/2021

Lai Chi Kok Detention Centre