

Chairman Mike Gallagher Speech
Address to the Freedom in Hong Kong October Symposium
as prepared for delivery
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“Our bodies are held captive, but our pursuit of freedom cannot be contained.”

Joshua Wong wrote these words from a prison cell in 2017. He is back in a prison cell today.

Two years ago today, 47 Hong Kong citizens, including Joshua Wong, were charged for their alleged attempts to subvert state power under the Chinese Communist Party’s National Security Law.

A law drafted and imposed without any consultation. A law that threatens freedom still today.

The CCP claims the legislation is intended to protect. To keep Hong Kong safe.

But in reality it is a promise broken. A dismantling of the “one country, two systems.” A breach of China’s international commitments — and yet another CCP attempt to shackle free minds.

The 47 accused — what did they do? They held a vote. They held a vote in an unofficial primary to pick candidates for Hong Kong’s legislative elections.

But for Beijing this is already too much.

In an authoritarian system like the CCP’s, the only acceptable preferences are the state’s preferences. All others — and those who hold them — have to be disappeared.

The 47 include politicians, journalists, and academics. Some of their friends and fellow activists are here today with us.

If the 47 are given the maximum sentence available, all could die in jail.

This is not the behavior of an open society. This is not the behavior of a state that believes in the dignity of human life.

I’ve written a letter to Secretary of State Blinken imploring him to demand the release of the Hong Kong 47 and all political prisoners.

I have also urged him to hold the Hong Kong Government accountable for their actions, to include by revoking the privilege, exemptions and immunities of Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (HKETOs) in the United States.

And I have joined my counterparts in the UK Parliament in asking the board of HSBC why it seized the pensions of Hong Kong residents overseas on the orders of the CCP.

I am here today - we're all here today – to send a message to the CCP and to prove Joshua Wong right — you can hold the brave activists captive, but you can't contain their pursuit of freedom.

We cannot allow tyranny to advance — let alone succeed.

The world is watching.

Hong Kong matters. Hong Kong is not a decided question.

Hong Kong's story is the story of millions around the world weary of oppression, yearning for freedom.

Dignity, human rights — these are not just American ideals but universal, human hopes.

Beijing's authoritarian vision does not stop at its borders. It does not stop at Hong Kong. A world in which people are free is a world unsafe for the CCP, so it is trying to change it.

I want to end by talking about a little newspaper most Americans have never heard of.

Apple Daily was an unlikely symbol of freedom. It was a tabloid, started by a garment businessman with a penchant for criticizing the mainland government.

Everyone predicted it would fail. But, where larger, fancier papers sold their souls, that little tabloid grew to be the most important pro-democracy voice in Hong Kong. Why? Because it spoke the truth.

This is the last copy of the newspaper from June 2021.

That little tabloid that started in 1995 that was never supposed to amount to anything? Hundreds of thousands of Hong Kongers started lining up in the middle of the night to buy the last issue. By the morning, the newsstands were empty. They'd sold 1 million copies.

This copy hangs in the offices of The Select Committee on the CCP.

We want every guest, every witness, every journalist, to see this issue when they walk in.

To remind us all, if we could have a small fraction of Jimmy Lai and the Hong Kong 47's courage in our work, we can move mountains.

We will fight for freedom. We will stand with Hong Kong.