

## Government statement in response to public procession

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In response to the public procession today (October 1), a Government spokesman said that the Basic Law provides constitutional protection to Hong Kong's legal system, judicial independence, human rights and the rule of law.

"Judges and judicial officers in Hong Kong have been deciding cases professionally and independently, including those relating to public order events and human rights. Judicial decisions are made independently after fair and open hearings on the basis of the evidence adduced in court and the applicable law. Political consideration does not come into play at all. Those convicted of criminal offences have the right to apply for review or appeal in regard to their convictions and sentences in accordance with legal procedures.

"The Department of Justice (DoJ) is committed to safeguarding the rule of law and judicial independence in Hong Kong, as well as keeping criminal prosecutions free from any interference. The DoJ has all along been handling all criminal cases in accordance with the applicable law, relevant evidence and the Prosecution Code. No political consideration is being taken into account at all. The allegations of political prosecution or persecution are entirely unfounded. Not only do these allegations ignore the evidence accepted by the court or undisputed evidence in these cases, they also disregard the decisions of the court," the spokesman said.

"As regards the case concerning the charging at the ground floor lobby of the Legislative Council Complex in 2014, and also the case involving Joshua Wong, Nathan Law and Alex Chow, the Court of Appeal pointed out clearly in the two Judgments concerning the application for review of sentence, that the defendants were not convicted or sentenced for exercising the freedom of assembly,

demonstration or expression; instead, they were convicted and sentenced because their conduct overstepped the line permitted by the law, including conduct involving violence."

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region fully respects freedom of speech and the rights to petition and hold public processions. However, as repeatedly pointed out by the court, those freedom and rights are not absolute. People must respect the law when exercising such rights.

Ends/Sunday, October 1, 2017