

Action against police violation of human rights in Hong Kong

Zi Teng

On Wednesday the 15 of June the Hong Kong public saw flashed across the Chinese language press, and on the 16 of June the SCMP, photos of a group of " 40 mainland women suspected of prostitution" rounded up , interned in a crowded (14 square metre) "cage", in much the same way as animals would be. This was in public view and for a period of 13 hours as reported in the article. The photos in both presses depict the women lying on the bare ground, without visible toilet facilities, privacy or food while male polices officers stand by. The image is poignant being one of powerlessness, vulnerability and visible shame, and voyeurism.

It is often said that the success of a nation should be measured in its treatment of it poor and disadvantaged people. Sex worker occupy some of the most marginalized positions in Hong Kong society, as women, migrants, low paid workers, with poor education, commonly as illegal workers, and politically powerless. Surely, as members of a civilized society, the Hong Kong public should be alarmed at this situation. It is a great indictment of contemporary Hong Kong that such a visible violation of human rights can take place today.

Sex work has an enduring place in history and global distribution, sex work is notable for the diversity with which different societies react to its presence. In Hong Kong sex work is not illegal but in the case of these women they were suspected of being in breach of conditions of stay. In Hong Kong, many sex workers are from Mainland China, impoverished backgrounds and are disadvantaged in nearly all sectors of their lives. They also face a diverse array of occupational hazards. These include sexually transmitted infections, physical violence from their clients and pimps, psychological disorders, and a life style associated with substance abuse. Despite all this sex workers are real people. They feel the same embarrassment, experience stigmatization, face real illnesses and experience real pain from circumstances often forced on them. Remember their occupation only exists as a response to a local market of desire. Action for REACH OUT (AFRO), a Hong Kong based NGO with a twelve-year history of working with sex workers on the streets and in night clubs of Hong Kong, calls for the Hong Kong public as well as other concern organisations to take a stance on this gross violation of human rights and dignity. In an advanced and so-called civilized society sex workers must be accorded the same respect afforded to all members of the community.

Please Let EVERYONE know

Nancy Leung
Action for REACH OUT



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Zi Teng (Sex workers concern group in HK) initiates a One-Person-Letter Action. This action is intended to fight against police's inhumane treatment towards the people who are suspected for violating the Migration Ordinance. (Sex workers or suspected sex workers) Please forward this email to the Security Bureau (sbenq@sb.gov.hk), to express our discontent over police's disrespect for basic human right. Your action is highly appreciated.

Please contact us by ziteng@hkstar.com if you need further information or have any comment.

Strongly object to the violation of human rights by the Hong Kong Police Force

As an international city, Hong Kong claims herself as a place of practicing the rule of law and respecting human rights. Nevertheless, our Police Force has committed such a shameful act, badly treating arrested people suspicious of working in Hong Kong without permits. The incident has become a shame for Hong Kong people and an international scandal in human rights overnight.

Three days ago, The Police Force launched its large-scale enforcement. They arrested a group of people suspicious of illegally working as sex workers, and treated them with torture. They retained over 80 people in a tiny iron cage of 200 square

metre. There was plenty of rubbish and leftovers inside the cage. The people there had to suffer from the heat emitted from air-conditioners nearby and the severe sunshine for thirteen hours, allowing other people to watch them and take pictures.

The incident is only tip of an iceberg. Zi Teng has received a lot of complaints from Mainlanders against the abuse of power by the Police Force. In its enforcement against the sex industry, all girls wearing sexy clothes would be arrested and afterwards be beaten, imposed with faked evidences and forced to sign the statement under threat. Once admitting their act of providing sex services, those girls would be repatriated. If denying the charge, the girls would be detained for four months to await court hearings and lose their freedom. The innocents have already been penalized. In the course of enforcement against this group of migrant workers who suffer from social discrimination, the Police officers will even take the chance to force the sex workers to provide sex services without paying the money just like raping them. For migrants, all complaint mechanisms are ineffective.

The above is the behaviour of a totalitarian state adopted to deal with her people. The Hong Kong Police Force use the same kind of violent acts and spiritual torturing to treat people suspicious of being 'illegal workers'. Even people convicted of crimes should receive the basic human right protection. What is ironic is that the Police Force has exercised such torture without court ruling against people from outside Hong Kong who have limited knowledge of local laws and legal procedures. We have justifications to believe that the Police Force, using such inhuman way to force people to admit the criminal charges, has seriously affected the rule of law in Hong Kong.

Zi Teng condemned the way that the Police Force arrested people found staying in Hong Kong illegally. Zi Teng strongly urges:

1. the Police Force to apologise;
2. the Police Force to disclose its legal procedures and guidelines on handling the arrest of people found illegally staying in Hong Kong;
3. the Security Bureau to set up an independent mechanism as an appropriate channel for migrants to lodge their complaints with a view to rescuing the reputation of Hong Kong as a place of respecting human rights and the rule of law;
4. immediately stop all kinds of abuse of power by the Police Force.

Initiated by Zi Teng (ziteng@hkstar.com)

Signature:

Organisation (if appropriate):