

## UK Condemns Hong Kong Bounties on Exiled Activists

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The United Kingdom has strongly criticised Hong Kong authorities after they offered cash rewards for information leading to the arrest of pro-democracy activists living overseas, including in Britain. The move has raised concerns about transnational repression and freedom of speech in the UK.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy and Home Secretary Yvette Cooper issued a joint statement on Friday condemning Hong Kong's actions, calling them a "clear example of transnational repression." Their remarks came after the Hong Kong Police Force offered bounties ranging from 200,000 to one million Hong Kong dollars (approximately £20,000 to £100,000) for help in apprehending 19 activists accused of breaching the 2020 national security law imposed by Beijing.

At least five of the targeted individuals are known to be living in the United Kingdom. The British ministers urged China to "cease its attempts to intimidate those who have sought refuge and safety on UK soil."

The national security law, implemented following large-scale protests in Hong Kong in 2019, criminalises acts of secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign forces. Critics argue it has been used to silence dissent and curtail freedoms once guaranteed under the "one country, two systems" framework.

This marks the fourth time Hong Kong has issued reward notices for overseas dissidents. Western governments have widely condemned the practice, viewing it as a tool to pressure political opponents abroad. China has rejected this criticism, accusing other countries of meddling in its domestic affairs.

The UK suspended its extradition treaty with Hong Kong in 2020 following the enactment of the law. However, recent discussions within the British government on reforming extradition procedures have raised fears that future cooperation with Hong Kong could resume. Civil liberties groups and lawmakers have urged the government to uphold its commitment to protecting freedom of expression and the safety of those who fled political persecution.

Lammy and Cooper reaffirmed that "this Government will continue to stand with the people of Hong Kong, including those who have made the UK their home." They stressed that the rights and safety of individuals in the UK must not be undermined by foreign governments.