

Hong Kong Activists in UK Face Growing Threats from Beijing

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The British government has rightly condemned Beijing's brazen move to place bounties worth hundreds of thousands of dollars on pro-democracy activists residing in the UK. This alarming development, coupled with the Labour government's recent signals of renewing extradition talks with Hong Kong, raises serious concerns about the safety of the Hong Kong diaspora in Britain. Legal experts have warned that such co-operation could endanger

activists who have sought refuge here, exposing them to the Chinese Communist Party's long reach.

In an exclusive interview, Carmen Lau, a former Hong Kong politician now living in exile in the UK, shared her fears about the implications of these policies. "The Hong Kong government, and indeed the Chinese government, have a track record of weaponising non-political crimes to extradite so-called fugitives to Hong Kong," Lau said. "I'm a target with a bounty on my head, and while the UK has publicly pledged to protect us, I feel deeply unsafe if extradition agreements move forward."

Lau's concerns are not hypothetical. She discovered through news reports that Hong Kong authorities had placed a one-million Hong Kong dollar (£100,000) bounty on her under the draconian National Security Law imposed by Beijing in 2020. This law, widely criticised for its vague and sweeping provisions, is designed to silence dissent both in Hong Kong and among its diaspora. "It's a politicised tool to suppress voices advocating for democracy and human rights," Lau explained.

The activist's fears are compounded by disturbing incidents in the UK. "I've received anonymous letters sent to my neighbours, urging them to turn me in to the Chinese Embassy for the reward," she revealed. Such tactics suggest Beijing's willingness to intimidate and harass activists even on British soil, raising questions about the adequacy of current protections.

When asked what she expects from the UK government, Lau was unequivocal: "Protections for the Hong Kong community here are non-negotiable. The government must abandon any extradition agreements with Hong Kong and ensure human rights are not sacrificed for economic ties with China." Her plea reflects a broader sentiment among activists who see the Labour government's overtures to Beijing as a troubling departure from Britain's commitment to freedom and security.

The UK's response to this crisis will define its stance on human rights. With Beijing's authoritarian grip tightening, the Hong Kong diaspora deserves robust safeguards, not diplomatic compromises that risk their safety. The government must act decisively to ensure activists like Lau can live without fear of retribution.