



THE STATE OF LABOUR IN HONG KONG 2025

*Hong Kong Labour Rights Monitor
Amplifying workers' voices from Hong Kong to the world*

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The State of Labour in Hong Kong 2025: Recent Developments in Labour Laws, Labour Standards Violation and Workers' Collective Actions

April 2026

1. Introduction

This report documents the latest developments in Hong Kong's labour laws and policies, labour standards violation, and trade union activities and worker's collective actions.¹ The Government has never demonstrated any genuine efforts to bridge the city's long-existing "decent work gaps". The newly adjusted wage floor still falls short of meeting grassroots workers and their families' basic needs. Recent amendment to the definition of "continuous employment" under the Employment Ordinance (EO) continues to deny a significant number of part-time workers of full statutory protection and benefits. Employment status of digital platform workers remains ambiguous, hindering their effective enjoyment of statutory benefits, and the Government's plan to grant food and goods delivery platform workers with statutory protection limited to work injury compensation is far from adequate. The Government also refused to suspend the labour importation scheme despite rising unemployment and evidence of local workers being displaced.

On the other hand, the National Security Law (NSL), unilaterally imposed by Beijing on 30 June 2020, remains the major hindrance impeding Hong Kong workers' full enjoyment of the rights to freedom of association. Since the implementation of the draconian NSL, dozens of trade union organizers have been arrested and prosecuted, and hundreds of trade unions and labour organizations have dissolved or ceased operation amid the worsening political environments. The Legislative Council (LegCo) amended the Trade Unions Ordinance (TUO) in June 2025, granting the authorities additional powers to further tightening the grasp on the city's worker's organizations. Apart from launching lawfare against activists, the Government also employed extra-legal suppression tactics, such as unreasonable tax probes and cancellation of venue bookings, to obstruct the smooth functioning of trade unions. Despite the fast shrinking civil society space, it is encouraging to note that there was a slight resurgence of worker's collective actions in 2025, such as Keeta riders' strikes, Hong Kong Baptist University sub-contracted janitors' sit-in protest and Coca-Cola workers' industrial action.

¹ A list of major events can be found at Annex 2.

2. Labour Laws and Policies

The Government introduced or announced several measures in 2025 to strengthen worker protection, yet the improvements are far short of closing the city's "decent work deficits". Hourly rate of the statutory minimum wage (SMW) was updated to HK\$42.1 starting 1 May 2025, a level which is inadequate to lift low-paid workers and their families out of poverty. The amended definition of "continuous employment", passed by the LegCo in June 2025, still excludes a large number of part-time employees from full statutory protection and benefits, and fails to prevent employers from exploiting loopholes to evade their obligations. The Government's plan to afford statutory protection to food and goods delivery platform workers with work-injury compensation only is way below international labour standards, and its repeated refusal to institute a comprehensive, effective and accessible mechanism to determine the employment status of platform workers is at odds with ILO recommendations. On the other hand, the Government declined to halt or scale down the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme (ESLS) amid the weakening of local labour market, and the detrimental impacts of the scheme on the city's grassroots workers are evidently felt.

2.1 Wage floor fails to lift grassroots working families out of poverty

The SMW was updated to HK\$42.1 per hour starting 1 May 2025. The new wage floor is, for the first time, fixed by adopting the adjustment mechanism approved by the Chief Executive (CE) in Council in April 2024. Starting May 2026, the SMW will be adjusted annually and the rate of adjustment will be calculated using the formula that taking into account of inflation (annual change in headline CPI(A), subject to a lower bound of zero) and economic growth factor ((real GDP growth rate minus 10-year trend growth rate) x 20%, subject to a lower bound of zero and an upper bound of 1%).²

Though adjusting SMW annually to maintain its purchasing power is a positive step to better protect low-paid workers and their families, the new formula however guarantees that the SMW can never keep pace with economic growth. While Hong Kong's nominal GDP grew by more than 13% between 2022 and 2024,³ the new wage floor increased by only 5.25% from the previous level fixed two years earlier, or 7.5 percentage points lower than economic growth. The rise in the wage floor also lags behind the movement of the city's general wage level; nominal wage index rose by 7.35% in the second quarter of 2025 from two years earlier, representing 2.1 percentage points higher than that of the SMW. The CE in Council approved on 10 February 2026 to raise the SMW by 2.4% (or HKS 1.0 per hour) effective from 1 May,

² Labour and Welfare Bureau (April 2024) *Enhancing the Review Mechanism of the Statutory Minimum Wage*, Legislative Council Brief, LD SMW 83-2/2/6(C), para. 6

³ Sources of the statistics cited in this report can be found at Annex 3.

further widening the gap between the wage floor and economic growth or general wage level.⁴

The SMW has so far failed to lift low-paid workers out of poverty. From the start, the Government has never intended to ensure all workers with decent remunerations and refuses to fix the wage floor at a rate sufficient to meet workers and their families' basic needs,⁵ which is a right guaranteed by Article 7(a)(ii) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The level of SMW is set so low that even if there are two full-time minimum wage workers in a 3-person household, it is still not enough to lift them out of poverty. Assuming a 40-hour working week, their average monthly income is about HK\$14,600, nearly HK\$1,800 (or 10.8%) lower than the average social security payment a 3-person family received in 2025,⁶ an unofficial poverty line commonly adopted in the city. Since the SMW has failed to keep pace with the growth of market wages, its coverage has significantly reduced from 6.4% of private sector employees when it was first introduced in May 2011 to a merely 0.4% in 2024 when the latest statistics is available.

2.2 Part-time workers deprived of certain statutory protection and benefits

The LegCo passed an amendment bill to the EO on 18 June 2025 to revise the statutory definition of “continuous employment”. Under the EO, only “continuous contract employees” are entitled to such protection or benefits as rest days, paid holidays and annual leave, maternity leave and pay, sickness allowance, severance and long service payments, remedies for unreasonable dismissal, etc., subject to the satisfaction of the qualifying periods stipulated therein. Prior to the above amendment, “continuous contract employees” were defined as those who had worked for the same employer for at least four consecutive weeks and had worked for at least 18 hours each week (“4-18 requirement”). A statistics report finds that there were nearly 160,000 private sector employees who usually worked less than 18 hours per week in 2019, almost triple the 56,300 in 2009. There were another roughly 10,000 employees who usually worked more than 18 hours per week but not every week. This means that those 170,000 part-time workers can never enjoy the benefits afforded to “continuous contract employees”, no matter how long they had worked for the same employer.

⁴ Government Press Release (2026.02.10) *Chief Executive in Council adopts recommendation on Statutory Minimum Wage rate* (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202602/10/P2026021000302.htm) [February 2026]. CPI(A) increased by 1.9% in 2025. According to the Government's latest estimates, Hong Kong's economy grew by 3.5% in real term, and 10-year trend growth rate is 1.2%. Using the above formula, the SMW's next adjustment rate = $[1.9\% + (3.5\% - 1.2\%) \times 0.2] = 2.4\%$, or HK\$1.0 per hour (HK\$42.1 x 2.4%).

⁵ See for example Legislative Council (2010) *Official Record of Proceedings* pp. 11,688 & 12,210

⁶ Labour and Welfare Bureau (January 2026) *Annual Adjustment to Social Security Payment Rates*, LC Paper No. CB(1)51/2026(01), Annex 1

The above amendment to the statutory definition of “continuous employment”, which came into operation on 18 January 2026, lowers the weekly threshold from 18 to 17 hours and provides an alternative of using the aggregate working hours in four consecutive weeks as a counting unit (in this case the threshold is set at 68 hours, “4-68 requirement”). Based on the data collected in the above 2019 survey, the amendment would benefit approximately 11,400 part-time employees.⁷ This means that majority (93%) of the employees who previously failed to meet the 4-18 requirement are still denied of the full enjoyment of statutory protection or benefits under the revised EO.

The Government wrongly maintains the legislative intent of instituting a weekly working hours threshold is to establish that full statutory benefits should only be afforded to “employees who provide a stable and considerable level of service”. When the EO was enacted in 1968, the sole purpose of adopting weekly working days and daily working hours thresholds in the definition of “continuous contract” of employment, which is deemed to be a contract for one month renewable from month to month, is to provide an objective basis for avoiding any confusion arising from different wage periods and modes of calculating wages.⁸ Back then, part-time workers were not regarded as “regular employees” and their exclusion from the coverage of the EO was taken for granted.

The Government’s position is incompatible with international labour standards. The *Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175)* establishes the principle of equal treatment of part-time workers.⁹ Article 8 of the Convention provides that if there is a working hours threshold for the entitlement of certain employee protection or benefits, the authorities should periodically review the threshold in force, including the reason therefor. Among countries or regions of comparable economic development level, Hong Kong is the only one adopting working hours threshold in its labour laws, resulting “non-continuous contract employees” to second-class workers under the law.

The “4-18 requirement” or “4-68 requirement” not only directly discriminates against part-time employees but also indirectly discriminates against women as they made up the majority of “non-continuous contract employees”. The amendment to the definition of “continuous employment” also fails to prevent employers from exploiting legal loopholes by engaging the employees under a series of fixed-term contracts and inserting a short break (say one month) between each contract, thus breaking employees’ continuity of employment, in order to evade their obligations to pay statutory benefits. The Court of Appeal sounded its dismay in 2006 that the

⁷ Labour and Welfare Bureau (March 2024) *Review of the “continuous contract” requirement under the Employment Ordinance*, LC Paper No. CB(2)342/2024(03), para. 8

⁸ *Hong Kong Legislative Council Official Report of Proceedings: Meeting of 23rd August 1968*, p. 373

⁹ Convention No. 175 does not apply to Hong Kong.

situation was clearly unsatisfactory and suggested that changes should be introduced to prevent employers from abusing the utilisation of fixed-term contracts.¹⁰ Regrettably, neither the Government nor the pro-Beijing trade unions raised this issue during the Labour Advisory Board and LegCo's deliberation of amending the definition of "continuous employment". It clearly demonstrates how the weakening of independent trade union movement compromises workers' fight for improving their rights and protection.

2.3 Employment status of platform workers remains ambiguous

Access to employment rights depends to a large extent on whether an individual is worked as an employee. The traditional binary categorisation of "subordinate and dependent employee" versus "autonomous and independent self-employed" however gives rise to problem when the status of individuals is so unclear that they cannot be easily classified as being employees or self-employed. This problem becomes more acute as the existing classification fails to reflect recent growth of certain flexible or non-standard forms of employment, including casual work, zero-hours contracts, fixed term and task work, agency work, freelancing, "dependent self-employment" and platform work.

There are growing public concerns over the protection afforded to platform workers, particularly after several riders, who were killed or seriously injured in work-related traffic accidents, received little or no compensation from the digital platforms.¹¹ Amid the demand of labour organizations, the Government in 2023 agreed to explore the issue and commissioned the Census and Statistics Department to conduct a survey on the working conditions of platform workers. The statistical report, published in March 2025, reveals that there were about 12,900 persons taking up paid platform work in food and goods delivery services between December 2023 and March 2024;¹² among them, more than half were aged below 40, whereas about a quarter were aged 50 or above. Nearly all of the respondents reported that they could arrange their own working hours, with about one-fifth did not have regular weekly working hours. More than 90% of respondents said they took up platform work

¹⁰ *Wong Man Sum v Wonderland Seafood Restaurant O/B Long Yield Co. Ltd.*, **CACV 241/2005** (unreported)

¹¹ For instance, see 香港 01 (2023.05.14) *遇車禍開腦切脾險死賠\$9000 行業假自僱缺保障* (www.hk01.com/article/895788) and 集誌社 (2023.07.11) *遇車禍重創沒勞保 感恩活著 立志為外賣員爭權益* (thecollectivehk.com/逆權車手2) (both in Chinese) [February 2026]

¹² This figure is very likely an under-estimation of Hong Kong's total number of platform workers as the survey did not cover people working for location-based platforms other than food and goods delivery, such as ride-hailing (which is currently illegal in the city), domestic work and home-care nursing service. People working for other online web-based platforms were also excluded from the survey.

because of its job nature, such as ease of joining or quitting and flexible work style. In addition, about two-thirds of respondents stated that platform work was their main source of income, with 60% earned less than HK\$15,000 a month.

Most platform workers in Hong Kong are (mis)classified as independent contractors,¹³ hindering their effective enjoyment of statutory protection and benefits. Under the city's existing laws, disputes over whether a person is worked as an employee or independent contractor can only be settled through litigation. However, the outcome of court ruling is unpredictable, and the legal proceedings are cumbersome and expensive, which could be prohibitive for most workers. The Labour Tribunal ruled in May 2023 for the first time that the employment status of six delivery workers engaged by digital platform Zeek is in fact employee on the ground that the platform had dominant control over their work.¹⁴ In a District Court work injury compensation case in 2024, the presiding deputy judge however ruled that a Deliveroo rider, who was injured in a work-related traffic accident in 2022, was an independent contractor, mainly because Deliveroo had limited control over work, and the rider provided his own equipment and had the right to hire third parties to perform the delivery tasks.¹⁵ Shortly after Deliveroo ceased operation in Hong Kong, a group of couriers filed claims with the Labour Tribunal in April 2025 over unpaid compensation, including severance payment, and annual leave and statutory holiday pay. The proceedings were stayed indefinitely on 11 August, pending the result of another District Court work injury compensation case against Deliveroo.¹⁶ The delivery platform's liquidator asked a 70-year old courier, who withdrew his claim earlier, to pay legal fees amounted to about HK\$160,000. The liquidator later dropped the demand after the two parties reached a settlement.¹⁷

Given the limitations of litigation and underdevelopment of collective bargaining in Hong Kong, legislation is a more practical and effective means to better protect platform workers. The Government will introduce a bill in the second half of 2026 to establish a new regime of providing statutory work injury compensation for digital platform workers.¹⁸ Long before formal consultation kicks off, the Government has already expressed its opposition to classify platform worker as employee, claiming

¹³ Chris King-Chi Chan et al (2022) *Towards Fair Work: Working Condition of Grassroot Platform Labour in Hong Kong*, p. 10

¹⁴ *Cheung Ka Yan & others v Kin Shun Information Technology (Hong Kong) Ltd & others*, **LBTC 3170/2022** (unreported)

¹⁵ *Gurung, Sanjaya Man v Deliveroo Hong Kong Limited*, **[2024] HKDC 1932**

¹⁶ 庭刊 (2025.08.11) 多名外賣員入稟勞審處向 Deliveroo 追討年假等 (bit.ly/4ozAlsc) (in Chinese) [February 2026]

¹⁷ 法庭線 (2025.08.28) 清盤人原向撤訴外賣員反索逾 16 萬元訟費 與申索人達成和解撤申請 (bit.ly/41Zj9YF) (in Chinese) [February 2026]

¹⁸ Director of Administration (2026.01.21) *2026 Legislative Programme*, LC Paper No. CB(2)59/2026(01)

mandating employment relationship between digital platforms and their workers “may not be conducive to the development of the industry”.¹⁹ The Government’s position is incompatible with the principles enshrined in the *Employment Relationship Recommendation 2006 (No. 198)* that the authorities should address the uncertainty of employment status by instituting a comprehensive, effective and accessible mechanism to ensure that laws governing the determination of employee status apply to workers engaged under all forms of contractual arrangements (including those involving multiple parties) with a view to facilitating workers’ effective enjoyment of statutory protection. Moreover, according to a news report,²⁰ the Government plans to grant only food and goods delivery platform workers with statutory protection limited to work injury compensation, and refuses to extend the coverage to other platform services (such as domestic work) or other statutory benefits (such as platform operator’s Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) contributions). It is far short of the statutory benefits afforded to platform workers in other economies including China, where the quasi-legal guidelines on platform work cover minimum wage, maximum daily working hours and transparency with regard to algorithmic management, amongst others.

Separately, the LegCo passed in October 2025 an amending bill to the Road Traffic Ordinance, introducing a regulatory regime for ride-hailing services.²¹ The amendment does not cover the employment status of ride-hailing drivers and the pro-Beijing trade unions did not raise the issue during the deliberation. It is however worth noting that several provisions of the regulatory regime could be important factors that the court needs to consider when deciding any future litigation about ride-hailing driver’s employment status. First, the regime defines licensed platform’s services as accepting ride-hailing service bookings and matching drivers and passengers; whether the passenger services provided by a driver constitute the platform operator’s business could be a matter of legal dispute. Second, a ride-hailing vehicle must be registered in the name of an individual and be driven by its registered owner to provide passenger services; in other words, drivers must provide their own equipment in performing their services, which is an important consideration in determining a worker’s employment status. Third, platforms holding ride-hailing service licences must maintain proper and efficient services, and conduct due diligence on their vehicles and drivers; whether a platform operator’s monitoring of driver’s performance is merely fulfilling its statutory

¹⁹ Labour and Welfare Bureau (December 2023) *Protection for digital platform workers*, LC Paper No. CB(2)1132/2023(03), para. 16

²⁰ 信報 (2025.09.17) 政府消息：冀平台工作者保險與僱員保障相若 (www.hkej.com/instantnews/current/article/4197808) (in Chinese) [February 2026]

²¹ Government Press Release (2025.10.15) *Government welcomes passage of Road Traffic (Amendment) (Ride-hailing Service) Bill 2025* (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202510/15/P2025101500726.htm) [February 2026].

obligations or it can also be considered as an employer's management prerogative may be a question to be decided by the court.

2.4 Offsetting Arrangement of MPF revised

An amendment bill to revise the offsetting arrangement under the MPF Scheme was passed by the LegCo on 9 June 2022 and came into operation on 1 May 2025 (the transition date).²² The original offsetting arrangement allowed the employers to use the accrued benefits derived from their MPF contributions to offset severance payment and long service payment (hereafter, termination benefits), seriously weakening employee's retirement protection.

Under the new arrangement, termination benefits will be divided into pre-transition and after-transition portions. The pre-transition portion will be calculated on the basis of the monthly wages immediately preceding the transition date and the years of service before the transition date, whereas the post-transition portion will be calculated on the basis of the last monthly wages before termination of employment and the years of service starting from the transition date. Starting 1 May 2025, employers can no longer use the accrued benefits derived from their MPF mandatory contributions to offset the post-transition portion of termination benefits. The amendment however does not have retrospective effect. Employers are still allowed to use the accrued benefits derived from their mandatory contributions made before and after the transition date to offset the pre-transition portion. Accrued benefits derived from employers' voluntary MPF contributions as well as gratuities based on length of service can continue to be used to offset termination benefits (both pre- and post-transition portions).

Though the amendment is a positive step to better protect employees, the revised arrangement, which allows employers to offset pre-transition portion of termination benefits, could still weaken retirement protection for workers, particularly those nearing their retirement. Refusing to compensate for the employees' loss in provident fund, the Government instead pledged to commit more than HK\$33.6 billion public money to provide employers with subsidies for a 25-year period.²³

2.5 Nearly 120,000 workers imported despite rising unemployment

Amid the sharp decline in the city's workforce, the Government launched the ESLs in September 2023 to suspend, provisionally for two years, the general exclusion of the 26 job categories (such as waiter, junior cook, sales assistant, warehouse keeper

²² Labour Department (not dated) *Abolition of MPF Offsetting Arrangement* (www.labour.gov.hk/eng/news/aoa.htm) [February 2026].

²³ Labour and Welfare Bureau (Novemner 2024) *Implementation of the Subsidy Scheme for Abolition of MPF Offsetting Arrangement*, LC Paper No. LC Paper No. FCR(2024-25)37

and clerical worker) as well as less-skilled posts (such as cleaner, security guard and dish washer) from labour importation under the original scheme. In addition, sector-specific labour importation schemes were also introduced for residential care homes, construction and transport (aviation, and public light bus / coach) sectors. As at end of 2025, more than 96,000 quotas of imported workers have been approved under the ESLS, with about 60% of which (more than 55,000) falling within the previously excluded posts. Together with sector-specific schemes, nearly 120,000 non-local workers were imported in 2025 (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of imported workers under various schemes

Scheme	Quota approved
ESLS	96,195 (as at end of 2025)
<i>26 job categories previously excluded</i>	<i>At least 38,372 (waiter: 13,904; junior cook: 10,326; sales assistant: 7,095; warehouse keeper: 4,557; clerical worker: 2,490)</i>
<i>Less-skilled posts</i>	<i>At least 16,861 (cleaner: 6,444; dish washer: 5,433; security guard: 4,984)</i>
Construction	9,056 (active quota as at mid-June 2025)
Residential care homes	6,781 (as at end of May 2025)
Aviation	4,162 (as at end of May 2025)
Public light bus and coach	1,773 (including replacement drivers, as at end of May 2025)
Total	117,967

“Accommodation and food services” is the sector imported the most workers. As at end of 2025, more than 43,000 foreign workers have arrived, meaning that roughly one in six persons engaged in the sector is imported worker. More worryingly, it is estimated that more than 47,000 (or 18.3%) local workers in the sector have been replaced by non-locals since the introduction of ESLS. The impact of importing a large number of workers is evidently felt. The sector’s unemployed persons rose by nearly 60% in the third quarter of 2025 from two years earlier when the ESLS started, while underemployment more than doubled and vacancies almost halved over the same period. Wage growth also slowed markedly; nominal payroll index increased by 3.3% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2025, down from 5.4% two years ago (Table 2).

Table 2: Imported workers in accommodation and food services

	2023	2025	% change
Persons engaged (Q3)	259,554	254,662	-1.9%
Imported workers (end of year)	627*	43,011	6,759.8%
Local workers[#]	258,927	211,651	-18.3%
Unemployed persons (Q3)	10,900	17,400	59.6%
Underemployed persons (Q3)	2,900	6,900	137.9%
Vacancies (Q3)	8,780	4,503	-48.7%
Nominal payroll index (Q3)	5.4%	3.3%	-38.9%

* Assuming the number of import workers at end of 2023 = quota approved in 2022 and 2023

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Assuming the number of local workers = persons engaged minus imported workers

Though the Government repeatedly stresses that applicant employers must undertake local open recruitment and accord priority to employing suitable local workers, there are systemic flaws in the recruitment process. Artist-cum-activist **Luke Ching**, along with several grassroots jobseekers and university students, applied for jobs listed under the ESLS and found elements of fake vacancies and fake recruitment, including “employers being unresponsive or failing to provide clear job descriptions for weeks, telling local applicants that a position was already filled or that the work was ‘too tough’ for them, and creating an overly complex application process for a low-skilled job”.²⁴ Moreover, the Catering and Hotels Industries Employees General Union alleges that some employers in the industry dismissed local workers or reduced their working hours after successfully imported foreign workers.²⁵ A pro-Beijing trade union also called for suspending the ESLS amid evidence of local workers being replaced.²⁶

The Government however declined to halt the ESLS and will not conclude a comprehensive review of the scheme before mid-2026. Instead, the CE announced in his Policy Address 2025 two measures to tighten the criteria for importing waiters and junior cooks.²⁷ Starting 18 September, employers must employ at least two full-time local staff in the same position for every imported one, where previously the ratio is based on total headcount of the establishment. The mandatory local recruitment period is also extended from four to six weeks, and applicant employers must attend weekly on-site job fairs organized by the Labour Department.

3. Labour Rights Violations

The draconian NSL remains the major hindrance impeding Hong Kong workers’ full enjoyment of the rights to freedom of association. Since the promulgation of the NSL, at least 15 trade union organizers have been arrested or prosecuted, and hundreds of trade unions or labour organizations have dissolved or ceased operation. The amendments to TUO, passed by the LegCo in June 2025, could seriously impair trade union’s right to freedom of association (in particular collaboration with overseas

²⁴ 集誌社 (2025.07.14) 向聘外勞公司 實測「本地招聘」(bit.ly/4nUukel) (in Chinese); South China Morning Post (2025.09.30) *Why Hong Kong’s tightened imported labour rules still rankle local workers* (www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/hong-kong-economy/article/3327292/why-hong-kongs-tightened-imported-labour-rules-still-rankle-local-workers) [February 2026]

²⁵ 飲食及酒店業職工總會 (2025.04.30) 規管未見成效 應暫停輸入外勞以作檢討 (www.facebook.com/share/16w2Uvu2MY) (in Chinese) [February 2026]

²⁶ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.04.25) *Hong Kong catering union calls for mechanism to halt labour import scheme after ‘200 workers replaced’* (hongkongfp.com/2025/04/25/hong-kong-catering-union) [February 2026]. The union however changed its stance to demand adjustments to the ESLS after the Government refused to suspend the scheme.

²⁷ Labour and Welfare Bureau (September 2025) *Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau*, LC Paper No. CB(1)1399/2025(03), para 14

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organizations) and right to organize their administration and activities. China Labour Bulletin and the Riders' Rights Concern Group decided to cease operation on the eve of the fifth anniversary of the NSL. Extra-legal suppression methods have also been adopted to silence the city's remaining independent trade unions and labour organizations.

3.1 Amendments to TUO further tightening the grasp on trade unions

An amendment bill to the TUO was passed unanimously by the opposition-free LegCo on 25 June 2025 and took effect on 4 January 2026. The Trade Unions (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 empowers the Registrar of Trade Unions (Registrar) to refuse applications for new trade union registration on national security ground, bar trade unions from receiving overseas contributions and donations, and search trade union's non-domestic premises without warrant; and increases the penalties of existing offences under the TUO, amongst others. Together with the NSL and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (locally known as Article 23 Legislation), which was hastily passed on 19 March 2024, the Ordinance provides the authorities with all sorts of "weapons" to target independent trade unions and their leaders. The Ordinance's major provisions and their potential impacts on trade union rights are as follows:

Refusal of applications for new registration or amalgamation of trade unions

The Ordinance empowers the Registrar to refuse any application for new registration or amalgamation of trade unions if it is necessary for safeguarding national security. There will be no appeal mechanism against the Registrar's decision, though the decision is amenable to judicial review. Any person who is an officer, or acts as an officer, or takes part in the management or administration, of a trade union that is not registered under TUO is subject to a fine at level 5 (currently HK\$50,000) and imprisonment for 3 years on conviction on indictment (increased from a fine at level 1 (HK\$2,000) and imprisonment for 6 months on summary conviction).

Given the imprecise and overly broad definition of "national security" under Section 4 of Article 23 Legislation, which includes "the welfare of the people, sustainable economic and social development, and other major interests of the state", the additional powers conferred to the Registrar to refuse any application for new trade union registration on national security ground are open to abuse. The absence of an appeal mechanism is also at odds with the ILO's principle of freedom to association that the right to appeal "constitutes a necessary safeguard against [...] ill-founded decisions by the authorities".²⁸

²⁸ ILO (2018) *Compilation of decisions of the Committee on Freedom of Association 6th edition*, para. 456

Prohibition of persons convicted of national security offence from assuming office

The Ordinance enacts new provisions permanently prohibiting a person who has been convicted of an offence endangering national security from assuming office in any registered trade unions or from serving as a promoter of any new union registration applications from the date of conviction. These restrictions cannot be lifted by the CE in Council, unlike the case of prohibiting those convicted of other offences (fraud, dishonesty, extortion and membership of a triad society) for five years under the existing TUO. A person, who has been convicted of an offence specified in Schedule 1 of the TUO, acts as a trade union officer is subject to a fine at level 5 and imprisonment for 3 years on conviction on indictment.

Banning persons convicted of national security offences from holding office of trade union for life is excessive and disproportionate (not to mention many acts or activities under existing national security “crimes” should not be criminalized in the first place), constituting a serious infringement of their right to freedom of association. The ban may also violate the principle laid down in the *Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)*, which states that trade unions shall have the right “to elect their representatives in full freedom”.²⁹

Restrictions on overseas contributions and donations

The Ordinance prohibits trade unions from receiving overseas contributions and donations without prior approval of the Registrar. The new provisions require trade unions make an application to the Registrar declaring the source(s) and usage of contributions or donations provided by an “external force” (as defined in Section 6 of Article 23 Legislation). Not only legitimate foreign non-governmental organizations but also the United Nations and its agencies, such as the ILO, could fall within the scope of “external force”. Any trade union which receives overseas contributions or donations without the Registrar’s prior approval, fails to return the contributions or donations after the Registrar disapproved the application, or expends the contributions or donations for any purpose other than that approved by the Registrar, is subject to a fine at level 6 (HK\$100,000) on summary conviction or a fine of HK\$200,000 on conviction on indictment.

Trade unions are prohibited from using overseas contributions or donations for local elections. The Ordinance also requires trade unions to keep separate and detailed accounts of the contributions or donations provided by an “external force”, and report such accounts to the Registrar annually. Any trade union which fails to comply with the requirements is subject to a fine at level 5 and level 4 (HK\$25,000) respectively on summary conviction.

²⁹ Note 28, ILO (2018) *Compilation*, para. 620

Contributions or donations from foreign or international organizations used to be an important source of fundings for Hong Kong's independent trade unions. They have however become a taboo since the enactment of the NSL and Article 23 Legislation imposing heavy penalties on collusion with external forces endangering national security. Many trade unions have stopped receiving external fundings, as the authorities can use this as a pretext to conduct covert surveillance on the unions and their members, and even raid their premises, seize documents and arrest and detain their leaders. The new restrictions under the Ordinance could further tighten the Government's grasp and deprive trade unions of sufficient financial resources necessary for their effective functioning.

Restrictions on affiliation with external organizations

A trade union is allowed to affiliate with an organization of workers or employers, or a relevant professional organization established in a foreign country if it is so authorized by ballot of its members. The Ordinance maintains this arrangement but enacts new provisions prohibiting a trade union from affiliating with an external political organization. A trade union is also prohibited from affiliating with any other organization established in an "external place" without the CE's prior approval. The Registrar is empowered to serve a written notice on a trade union requiring it to cease to be a member of an external organization. A trade union which fails to comply with the notice is subject to a fine at level 6 on summary conviction or a fine of HK\$200,000 on conviction on indictment.

In the era of globalization, it is unavoidable that local trade unions have to collaborate with other regional or international organizations over a wide range of issues that may have impacts on the interests of their members, combating climate change for instance. The new restrictions under the Ordinance could probably deter the city's trade unions from affiliating with external organization, compromising their functions of promoting labour rights and worker's welfare.

Restrictions on assuming office of external organizations

While a trade union officer is allowed to assume office of an external organization with which the trade union is affiliated, the officer is prohibited from holding office of a non-affiliated external organization without the CE's prior consent. The Registrar is empowered to serve a written notice on a trade union and its officer who is assuming office of an external organization, requiring the officer to cease holding office in the trade union. A trade union officer who fails to comply with the notice is subject to a fine at level 6 and imprisonment for 6 months on summary conviction, or a fine of HK\$200,000 and imprisonment for 1 year on conviction on indictment.

The Registrar's powers to order a trade union officer to cease holding office is a breach of the officer's right to freedom of association. The provisions are also

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incompatible with international labour standards that trade unions shall have the right to elect their officers in full freedom.

Additional powers conferred to the Registrar

The Ordinance empowers the Registrar or any authorized officer enter any non-domestic premises occupied by a trade union or its branch without warrant to inspect and make copy of the trade union's records, documents or information which may be necessary to ascertain whether requirements of TUO or the trade union rules are complied with. The Registrar or any authorized officer is also empowered to conduct examination and ask questions as necessary, and seize any evidence related to suspected contravention of TUO or the trade union rules, or an offence under TUO during the inspection. Any person who obstructs or prevents the Registrar or authorized officer from entering the premises and performing her or his functions is subject to a fine at level 6 and imprisonment for 6 months on summary conviction, or a fine of HK\$200,000 and imprisonment for 1 year on conviction on indictment.

The Ordinance also grants the Registrar new powers to issue written notice to a trade union or its officers, ordering the union or officers to refrain from performing the act or activity suspected to be inconsistent with the union rules. Failure to comply with the notice is subject to a fine at level 4 and imprisonment for 3 months on summary conviction or a fine at level 6 and imprisonment for 6 months on conviction on indictment.

The ILO repeatedly stresses that the inviolability of trade union premises is a civil liberty which is essential to the exercise of trade union rights; and any entry into or search of trade union premises without a court warrant constitutes an extremely serious infringement of freedom of association.³⁰ The Registrar's powers to restrict activities suspected to be inconsistent with the union rules could lead to abuses, and is not in full conformity with the principles of freedom of association that trade unions have the rights to freely pursue lawful activities for the furtherance and defence of the interests of their members without undue interference of the authorities.

Increases in penalties for offences relating to picketing, intimidation and annoyance

The Ordinance increases the penalties for offences relating to picketing (for example, leading to a breach of the peace), and intimidation and annoyance (for example, using violence to or persistently following any person with a view to compelling the person to abstain from doing or to do any act), from a fine at level 1 and imprisonment for 6 months on summary conviction, to a fine at level 4 and imprisonment for 2 years on summary conviction or a fine at level 6 and imprisonment for 5 years on conviction on indictment.

³⁰ Note 28, ILO (2018) *Compilation*, para. 276, 279, 281 & 283

While a legal provision that prohibited pickets from disturbing public order and threatening others is legitimate, it could lead to abuses under the current political climate in Hong Kong. In various occasions in last few years, the police ordered peaceful striking workers to disperse and warned them of breaching the rules of unlawful assembly.³¹ The heavier penalties under the Ordinance may deter workers from participating in peaceful industrial action and picketing, jeopardising their rights to freedom of association.

3.2 Two more labour organizations ceased operation

Two more labour groups decided to stop operation before the fifth anniversary of the NSL's promulgation. The China Labour Bulletin (CLB) posted a statement on its website on 12 June 2025, announcing the Hong Kong-based NGO's decision to dissolve because of financial difficulties and debt issues.³² The CLB was founded in 1994 by **Han Dongfang**, a labour activist during the Tiananmen Democratic Movement of 1989. Receiving fundings from a range of government or quasi-governmental bodies, trade unions and private foundations, the CLB had regularly published research and commentaries on labour situations in China and kept track of strikes and industrial accidents across the country, which served as a source of information for activists, journalists and scholars on worker issues and unrest in China. All social media platforms and research findings of the CLB were however removed on 13 June.

Hours after the CLB's announcement to fold, the Government published a press release revealing Hong Kong Police coordinated with China's Office for Safeguarding National Security in the city, and conducted a joint operation on 12 June to investigate six people and an organization suspected of colluding with "a foreign country or with external elements" endangering national security from November 2020 to June 2024. The police searched the homes of the six persons and the office of the organization in Kwai Chung, and seized exhibits, including bank documents, devices, etc., for further investigation.³³ The identities of the organization and the six persons are not known to the public because of the confidentiality terms in a regulation made under Section 110 of Article 23 Legislation that took effect a month earlier. When approached by Taiwan's

³¹ For example, Hong Kong Free Press (2021.11.16) *Hong Kong police warn striking Foodpanda workers to disperse or face possible force* (hongkongfp.com/2021/11/16/hong-kong-police) & 集誌社 (2025.09.05) *太古飲料罷工... 警曾指非法集會* (in Chinese) (bit.ly/4m0208i) [February 2026]

³² Hong Kong Free Press (2025.06.13) *Hong Kong-based NGO China Labour Bulletin dissolves after 3 decades, cites financial strife* (hongkongfp.com/2025/06/13/hong-kong) [February 2026]

³³ Government Press Release (2025.06.12) *Joint operation by Office for Safeguarding National Security ... and Police National Security Department* (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202506/12/P2025061200951.htm) [February 2026]

Central News Agency, Han reiterated that the reason behind his decision to dissolve the CLB was financial difficulties and declined to answer other questions.³⁴

Weeks later, the Riders' Rights Concern Group issued a statement in the evening on 30 June 2025, announcing its decision to cease operation immediately without giving any reason.³⁵ The Concern Group, which was a working team of the Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee, had campaigned for the rights of workers engaged by food and goods delivery platforms since 2021. It supported Foodpanda's riders in their strikes in 2022 and assisted Keeta's workers after their accounts were mistakenly suspended in 2024.

The Concern Group's decision to fold came just days after a commentary published in the *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, revealing LegCo members had been "reminded" not to actively discuss four issues, including platform workers' rights, which could lead to social unrest.³⁶ Hundreds of Keeta's delivery workers staged a series of strikes in various districts in April and May 2025, protesting against the platform's unilateral pay cut and demanding for a fair system of calculating remunerations.³⁷

3.3 Journalists' union chair sues Wall Street Journal over unlawful dismissal

Selina Cheng initiated private prosecution proceedings against *The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* on 13 February 2025 over her dismissal by the American newspaper just weeks after she was first elected the chair of the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) in June 2024.³⁸ Prior to her dismissal, *WSJ* editors "pressured Cheng to withdraw from running in the HKJA election as chair and to resign from the executive committee, which she refused to".³⁹ It is a criminal offence under Section 21B of the EO for an employer to dismiss an employee on grounds of trade union membership or activities. The Department of Justice however reportedly advised the Labour Department in December 2024 against criminal proceedings. *WSJ* pleaded not guilty

³⁴ 中央通訊社 (2025.06.13) *中國勞工通訊解散 創辦人韓東方：財政問題* (in Chinese) (www.cna.com.tw/news/acn/202506130216.aspx) [February 2026]

³⁵ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.07.01) *Hong Kong delivery workers' rights group ceases operations* (hongkongfp.com/2025/07/01/hong-kong/) [February 2026]

³⁶ 信報 (2025.06.27) *議員獲溫提「四不講」 慎言熱點敏感議題* (in Chinese) (www.hkej.com/dailynews/commentary/article/4121565) [February 2026]

³⁷ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.05.22) *Around 270 Keeta delivery riders strike to protest 'unfair' system, reduced pay* (hongkongfp.com/2025/05/22/around/) [February 2026]

³⁸ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.02.13) *Wall St Journal breached Hong Kong labour law by firing journalist who took on union leadership role, court hears* (hongkongfp.com/2025/02/13/wall-st-journal/) [February 2026]

³⁹ HKJA Press Release dated 17 July 2024 (hkja.org.hk/en/press-release/the-hkja-condemns/) [February 2026]

in November 2025, and the case was adjourned to 24 February 2026 after Cheng finished her testimony.⁴⁰

Cheng, who was re-elected as the chair of the HKJA in June 2025, also filed a claim for civil remedies to the Labour Tribunal under Part VIA of the EO in November 2024, after her request for reinstatement through mediation was declined.⁴¹ The hearing was adjourned pending the conclusion of the criminal proceedings.

3.4 Press union warned after issuing statement on Apple Daily trial

The HKJA posted a statement on its Facebook page on 15 December 2025 after *Apple Daily* founder Jimmy Lai was found guilty of colluding with external forces under the NSL, saying individuals in the case were “imprisoned for engaging in journalism,” and that the situation “dealt irreversible damage to Hong Kong’s press.”⁴² A day later, the Government strongly condemned the HKJA for turning a blind eye to the court’s conviction judgment in an attempt to mislead the public, and urged the press group to do the right thing to stop any form of infiltration and activities of a subversive nature, including brainwashing young people for external forces.⁴³

The HKJA immediately removed the Facebook post after the Government warned it would absolutely not condone any acts endangering national security that incite the public to betray the interests of the country and the people. The HKJA stayed silence after the court sentenced Lai to 20 years imprisonment and six former *Apple Daily* senior editors and journalists up to ten years in jail on 9 February 2026, and its chair Selina Cheng told reporters that she was not free to speak her mind on the *Apple Daily* sentencing.⁴⁴

3.5 Unreasonable tax probe targeting trade unionists

Unreasonable tax probe is one of the intimidation tactics authoritarian regimes often employed to target dissidents, the Hong Kong authorities are now copying their playbook. In May 2025, Selina Cheng revealed several independent media outlets and

⁴⁰ 庭刊 (2026.01.23) 被指選舉前拒與公司協商 [...] 因公司已作決定非徵詢意見 (in Chinese) (bit.ly/4bft65c) [February 2026]

⁴¹ Hong Kong Free Press (2024.11.12) *Hong Kong press group chief Selina Cheng sues Wall Street Journal over ‘unlawful dismissal’* (hongkongfp.com/2024/11/12/hong-kong-press) [February 2026]

⁴² Hong Kong Free Press (2025.12.16) *Jimmy Lai verdict: Gov’t slams journalist union for ‘whitewashing’ media tycoon, as foreign press club silent* (hongkongfp.com/2025/12/16/jimmy-lai) [February 2026]

⁴³ Government Press Release (2025.12.16) *HKSAR Government strongly condemns Hong Kong Journalists Association and foreign anti-China media for misleading public and whitewashing Lai Chee-ying* (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202512/16/P2025121600693.htm) [February 2026]

⁴⁴ The Guardian (2026.02.10) *Hong Kong’s once-vibrant press stays silent or celebrates Jimmy Lai’s 20-year jail sentence* (www.theguardian.com/world/2026/feb/10/jimmy-lai-jail-sentence-hong-kong-press) [February 2026]

20 journalists, including herself, were facing unreasonable probe and tax demand by the Inland Revenue Department (IRD).⁴⁵ The HKJA itself also received in January 2024 a tax bill of HK\$400,000, after the IRD reviewed its 2017-2018 accounts.⁴⁶

Former Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) **Mung Siu-tat**, currently in exile, was also probed by the IRD. He received a notice with a business registration number and was asked to pay profits tax for 2018-2019 financial year even though he did not conduct any business.⁴⁷

Days before HKCTU's announcement to disband on 19 September 2021, Mung fled the city because of "imminent political risks and safety concerns".⁴⁸ He is one of the founders of the Hong Kong Labour Rights Monitor, an UK-based labour group aiming to speak up for the workers of Hong Kong and amplify their voices around the world, and has been the Executive Director since its founding in May 2022.

The police announced on 3 July 2023 arrest warrant had been issued against Mung for suspicion of violating the NSL, and offered HK\$1 million in reward money for information leading to his arrest.⁴⁹ The Secretary for Security later specified him as absconder under the provisions of Article 23 Legislation and cancelled his passport on 12 June 2024.⁵⁰

3.6 HKJA's venue bookings cancelled, again

Extra-legal suppression methods, such as intimidating organizers or erecting barriers to obstruct the smooth functioning of civil society organizations have increasingly been adopted to silence critics. Being one of the most vocal and influential trade unions remained in the city, the HKJA is undoubtedly a major target of the authorities.

The city's civil society organizations have struggled to find venues to host their events for the past few years. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department suddenly

⁴⁵ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.05.21) *Hong Kong's independent news sector – inc. companies, staff and family members – face tax audits and demands* (hongkongfp.com/2025/05/21/hong-kongs) [February 2026]

⁴⁶ Hong Kong Free Press (2024.01.25) *Hong Kong press group says it received fresh HK\$400,000 tax demand, with 6 years of accounts to be vetted* (hongkongfp.com/2024/01/25/hong-kong-press) [February 2026]

⁴⁷ 集誌社 (2025.05.23) *蒙兆達被追 8.5 萬薪俸、利得稅* (in Chinese) (tinyurl.com/26wd3z33) [February 2026]

⁴⁸ South China Morning Post (2021.09.19) *Hong Kong's largest opposition trade union confirms disbandment, expects to fold by early October* (www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3149319/hong-kongs-largest-opposition-trade-union-confirms) [February 2026]

⁴⁹ Government Press Release (2023.07.03) *Persons wanted for alleged contravention of Hong Kong National Security Law* (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202307/03/P2023070300526.htm) [February 2026]

⁵⁰ Government Press Release (2024.06.12) *Specification of absconders ... under Safeguarding National Security Ordinance* (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202406/12/P2024061200018.htm) [February 2026]

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announced to close a pitch at Happy Valley Recreation Ground starting 7 February 2025 for “repair works”, just a day before the HKJA’s scheduled football tournament.⁵¹ The Regal Hongkong Hotel also axed the HKJA’s venue booking on 13 February 2025, two days before its scheduled annual dinner. The hotel cited “water leakage causing unstable power supply.” The HKJA rescheduled the event to 24 February . On 20 February, however, the press union said its venue reservation was also axed by Eaton HK, with no reason given.⁵² Cancelling venue bookings at the last minute has become the city’s “new normal”, aiming to obstruct the smooth functioning of civil society organizations.

3.7 Social workers’ registration suspended for participating in social movement

At least 15 social workers’ registrations have been suspended for six months to five years because of their convictions of offences related to the large scale social movement in 2019 since the Social Workers Registration Board was restructured in July 2024⁵³. Another two social workers, who were convicted in May 2024 of “conspiracy to commit subversion” over their participation in the democracy camp’s primary election, were permanently stripped of their social worker registration under an amendment made to the Social Workers Registration Ordinance in 2022.⁵⁴

Social worker **Jackie Chen**’s registration was suspended for five years in June 2025, after she was convicted earlier of rioting and sentenced to three years and nine months.⁵⁵ Frequently seen on the frontlines during the 2019 protests, Chen had volunteered to monitor police behaviour, liaise between protesters and the police, as well as provide emotional support at demonstrations. Another outspoken social worker **Eddie Tse** was suspended for three years in September 2025, after he was charged with defrauding the government to collect welfare benefits from an elderly subsidy scheme and sentenced to 120 hours of community service in July after pleading guilty.⁵⁶ Tse told a press conference in June 2024 that 95% of social workers

⁵¹ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.02.05) *Hong Kong press group’s football tournament hits another snag after gov’t closes pitch for repairs* (hongkongfp.com/2025/02/05/hong-kong-press-groups) [February 2026]

⁵² Hong Kong Free Press (2025.03.17) *Hong Kong press union hails ‘best fundraising results in years’ after gala axed over hotel venue cancellations* (hongkongfp.com/2025/03/17/hong-kong-press) [February 2026]

⁵³ 集誌社 (2025.03.12) *陳虹秀罪成 | 社工續牌「審核」逾月* (bit.ly/41JkVMx) (in Chinese) [February 2026]

⁵⁴ Labour and Welfare Bureau (May 2022) *Social Workers Registration Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 2) Notice 2022*, Legislative Council Brief LWB CR45/2041/86. Under the amendment, a person convicted of an offence endangering national security will be banned from being registered social worker, unless all prevailing members of the Social Workers Registration Board resolve otherwise.

⁵⁵ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.06.12) *Hong Kong social worker Jackie Chen loses licence for 5 years over rioting conviction* (hongkongfp.com/2025/06/12/hong) [February 2026]

⁵⁶ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.10.25) *Hong Kong social work licensing board upholds suspension order for activist Eddie Tse* (hongkongfp.com/2025/10/28/hong-kong-social-work) [February 2026]

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surveyed said the Government's proposed amendments to the registration board would undermine the autonomy of their profession and affect their ability to safeguard human rights and justice.⁵⁷

The sanctions imposed on Tse and other social workers convicted of offences relating to the 2019 social movement are disproportionately harsh when comparing with a social worker, who was found guilty of making false statement under the Housing Ordinance, was suspended for registration for only one year. It is not unreasonable to perceive that the registration board's decisions were politically motivated to silence social workers who are critical of the government. Social workers' right to work irrespective of their political belief and opinion is compromised.

Social work sector has been an important member of Hong Kong's democratic movement since the 1980s. Social workers have also actively participated in fighting for worker's rights and welfare, such as instituting a universal retirement protection scheme and establishing a statutory minimum wage. Their influential role in the city's social movement made them a target of the authorities' relentless crackdown on civil society. The LegCo passed a bill to reconstitute the registration board in July 2024 that gave government appointees, who are not required to be social workers, a 60% majority. The board is empowered to set and review the qualification standards for the registration of social workers as well as conduct inquiries in case of disciplinary offence. The government was dissatisfied with the board's past performance, citing only light sentences were imposed on social workers despite their grave misconduct. Amid the government's aggressive enforcement of the draconian NSL and the overhaul of the registration board to discipline dissent, social workers, once the most vocal group in the city, have become silenced.

3.8 Updates of trade unionists arrested since the NSL

Since the implementation of the NSL, at least 15 trade union organizers have been arrested or charged by the authorities. A summary of their latest statuses as at end of 2025 can be found at Annex 4.

Former General Secretary of the HKCTU **Lee Cheuk-yan** was arrested (while in prison) on 9 September 2021 and charged with inciting subversion of state power under the NSL for his role in the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China. The offence, if convicted, carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment. Twice delayed, the trial, which is scheduled to last for 75 working days,

⁵⁷ Hong Kong Free Press (2024.06.28) *Almost 90% of social workers say helping marginalised groups to be made harder under gov't-proposed overhaul* (hongkongfp.com/2024/06/28/almost-90/) [February 2026]

finally began on 22 January 2026.⁵⁸ Lee pleaded not guilty before a panel of three national security judges handpicked by the CE without a jury.

Lee was first arrested and charged on 28 February 2020 for organizing an unauthorised rally on 31 August 2019. He was later charged with organizing unauthorised assembly in another three incidents: the rallies on 18 August and 1 October and the June 4th Candlelight Vigil in 2020. He was convicted of all the charges in three separate District Court trials in 2021 and was sentenced to a total of 20 months in jail.⁵⁹ Lee has been remanded in custody since finished serving his jail term on 30 September 2022. The High Court declined his application for bail on 2 December, citing the risk he could continue to commit acts endangering national security.⁶⁰

Former chair of the HKCTU **Carol Ng** and former chair of the Hospital Authority Employees Alliance (HAEA) **Winnie Yu** were sentenced to jail for 53 months and 81 months respectively on 19 November 2024, over their participation in the democracy camp's unofficial primary election held in July 2020.⁶¹ Both were arrested on 6 January 2021 and were charged on 28 February with "conspiracy to commit subversion" under the NSL. The trial was presided by a panel of three national security judges without a jury and started in February 2023, almost two years after they were charged.

Ng stood for the primary election on the platform of striving for better protection of labour rights and strengthening the role of workers in the fight for the city's democracy through union organizing. She had been detained since 28 February 2021. A High Court national security judge declined her appeal for bail on 20 December, claiming she "has an international influence as a result of her trade union work, therefore, it would be very easy for her to connect with her colleagues aboard to further the hostility against the authorities".⁶² She was released in July 2025 after serving her jail term.

Yu won the democracy camp's primaries in the Health Services functional constituency. She is one of the founders of the HAEA, which staged a 5-day strike, with an estimated 6,000 strong medical workers taking part, amid the COVID outbreak in February 2020, demanding for adequate personal protective equipment to HA staffs and boarder closure to stop the virus spreading to the city.⁶³ A High Court judge

⁵⁸ Hong Kong Free Press (2026.01.22) *There are 'no lawful means' to end CCP leadership, prosecution says as nat. sec trial of Tiananmen vigil activists starts* (hongkongfp.com/2026/01/22/there) [February 2026]

⁵⁹ The Standard (2021.12.13) *Eight Hong Kong activists jailed for up to a year and two months over June 4 vigil* (www.thestandard.com.hk/breaking-news/article/184432) [February 2026]

⁶⁰ Hong Kong Free Press (2022.12.06) *Ex-Hong Kong Tiananmen vigil leader denied bail as court cites 'strong' evidence in national security case* (hongkongfp.com/2022/12/06/ex-hong-kong) [February 2026]

⁶¹ [2024] HKCFI 3298, para. 254 & 337

⁶² [2022] HKCFI 1061, para. 17

⁶³ Wikipedia: Winnie Yu (nurse) (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winnie_Yu_(nurse)) [February 2026]

allowed her appeal for bail on 28 July 2021, noting there was “no evidence that she ever had any international connection”.⁶⁴ Yu was arrested again on suspicion of violating bail conditions on 7 March 2022 and her bail was revoked the next day by a magistrate judge, seemingly because of posts she made to social media criticising the Government’s handling of the Omicron outbreak, which had left nearly 3,000 people dead (as of early March 2022) and hospitals overwhelmed.⁶⁵

Yu was found guilty when the court handed down its verdict on 30 May 2024.⁶⁶ She lodged an appeal against her conviction and sentence a week after the High Court’s sentencing.⁶⁷ At a hearing in July 2025, her counsel told the Court of Appeal that she did not receive a fair trial because of excessive judicial intervention, and was not given the chance to properly explain her intention when she participated in the primary election.⁶⁸ The court however dismissed her appeal on 23 February 2026.⁶⁹

4. Trade Union Activities and Worker’s Collective Actions

Amid the fast-worsening political environments, hundreds of trade unions or labour organisations have been dissolved, stopped operations or withdrawn from Hong Kong. A total of 266 trade unions cancelled their registration since the NSL’s implementation, and union membership fell by nearly 18% in 2024 from five years earlier. With the Government’s tightening control on civil societies, trade union activities were largely confined to those relating to narrow occupational interests. Despite all the difficulties, it is encouraging that there is a slight resurgence in worker’s collective actions in 2025.

4.1 Decline in trade union membership

19 trade unions cancelled their registration in 2024 through dissolution or at their own request, with another seven ceased to exist, according to the records of the Registry of Trade Unions. Between 2021 and 2025, a total of 266 trade unions had cancelled their registration, compared with 18 during the preceding five-year period. In addition, the General Union of Hong Kong Speech Therapists and the Hong Kong White Collar (Administration and Clerical) Connect Union were de-registered by the

⁶⁴ [2021] HKCFI 2562, para. 16

⁶⁵ Radio Free Asia (2022.03.10) *Former Hong Kong healthcare union founder sent back to jail over social media posts* (www.rfa.org/english/news/china/hongkong-unionist-03102022105118.html) [February 2026]

⁶⁶ [2024] HKCFI 1468, para. 585 – 593

⁶⁷ Hong Kong Free Press (2024.11.27) *4 Hong Kong democrats seek to challenge conviction and sentence in landmark subversion case* (hongkongfp.com/2024/11/27/4-hong-kong/) [February 2026]

⁶⁸ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.07.16) *2 jailed Hong Kong activists had unfair trial, lawyers tell court in appeals against subversion convictions* (hongkongfp.com/2025/07/16/2-jailed/) [February 2026]

⁶⁹ Hong Kong Free Press (2026.02.23) *Court rejects appeals of all 12 activists in landmark ‘Hong Kong 47’ national security case* (hongkongfp.com/2026/02/23/breaking-court-rejects-appeals/) [February 2026]

authorities in 2021 and 2023 respectively, on the ground that they were allegedly being used for purposes inconsistent with their objects or rules.⁷⁰

The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (HKPTU), the city's largest independent trade union, passed a special resolution to disband on 11 September 2021, a month after Beijing's propaganda apparatus, the *People's Daily* and *Xinhua*, simultaneously published two commentaries accusing the union of "encouraging anti-China activities that mess up Hong Kong" and blasting it as a "poisonous tumour" that must be "eradicated".⁷¹ As at end of 2025, the HKPTU has not been officially removed from the Trade Union Register.

Although the number of registered trade unions increased by nearly 55%, from 917 in 2019 to 1,412 in 2024, union membership was actually declined over the same period. Discounting the HKPTU, the number of declared trade union members fell by more than one-sixth, from 934,170 in 2019 to 769,208 in 2024. Consequently, the average size of union almost halved, from 1,019 in 2019 to 545 in 2024. At the same time, the number of unions with membership of 50 or less almost tripled, from 287 in 2019 surged to 769 in 2024.

Contrary to the Government's claim that the increase in the number of trade unions shows that Hong Kong's trade union rights are "strong and intact as ever",⁷² the decline in union membership and union size actually reflects the further weakening and fragmentation of trade union movement. Some organizers reveal that they face great challenges in recruiting and retaining members, partly because workers feel that the risk is too great or there is little can do under current political environments.

4.2 No Labour Day rally for six years in a row

No application had been made to the police for staging a rally on Labour Day 2025. As a result, there had been no Labour Day rally for six consecutive years. Between 2020 and 2022, all public gatherings of more than four persons were banned under the strict social distancing measures amid the pandemic. With the lift of the restrictions towards the end of 2022, two former executive committee members of the HKCTU **Joe Wong** and **Denny To** applied to the police "in their own names" on 9 April

⁷⁰ The Standard (2021.08.20) *Govt to revoke registration of speech therapists' union* (www.thestandard.com.hk/breaking-news/article/179110); Hong Kong Free Press (2022.02.17) *Hong Kong gov't deregisters pro-democracy union that called for protest ahead of security law* (hongkongfp.com/2023/02/17/hong-kong-govt-deregisters) [February 2026]

⁷¹ Hong Kong Free Press (2021.08.10) *Hong Kong's largest teachers' union to disband following pressure from gov't and Chinese state media* (hongkongfp.com/2021/08/10/breaking-hong-kongs) [February 2026]

⁷² For instance, Government Press Release (2023.03.07) *HKSAR Government strongly objects to unfounded and misleading concluding observations of UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202303/07/P2023030700015.htm) [February 2026]

2023 for staging a Labour Day rally.⁷³ They however withdrew their application on 26 April after Wong had gone missing for four hours in that morning. To later explained that Wong was taken away by the police but not arrested, adding Wong had experienced “emotional meltdown” and suffered “tremendous pressure”.⁷⁴ To did not elaborate further, citing confidentiality terms under Article 63 of the NSL.

Without Labour Day rally, Wong, To and members of the Cleaning Service Industry Workers Union set up a booth in Shatin on 1 May 2025, expressing their concern on grassroots workers’ appalling working conditions. To told reporters that they insisted on holding the small-scale public event with a view to showing people that “trade unions are still here” despite the city’s civil society landscape has completely changed.⁷⁵ Four members of pro-worker political party League of Social Democrats, which announced its dissolution days before the fifth anniversary of the NSL, also read a statement outside the Government Headquarters on Labour Day, calling for defending worker’s dignity and protecting working people’s livelihoods.⁷⁶ Days earlier, around 15 members of the Hong Kong Women Workers’ Association went to the Government Headquarters on the Sunday ahead of the Labour Day, urging the Government to halt the labour importation scheme and instituting a living wage.⁷⁷ The women workers’ group hastily scrapped a police-approved Women’s Day rally in 2023 just a dozen of hours before the event being held without giving any reason. The police later said that some violent groups vowed to attend and “hijack” the rally, adding the organizer decided to cancel the event after “balancing the interests of all parties”.⁷⁸

4.3 Worker’s collective actions

Amid the Government’s tightening grasp on civil society activities, worker’s strikes or industrial actions in Hong Kong have become rare. Many trade unions have opted to stay silence, while other unions that continue to voice their opinions have deliberately chosen the mildest way, such as issuing statements or holding press

⁷³ Hong Kong Free Press (2023.04.12) *Two ex-members of Hong Kong pro-democracy union group apply to hold public rally on Labour Day* (hongkongfp.com/2023/04/12/two-ex-members) [[February 2026]

⁷⁴ South China Morning Post (2023.04.26) *Former leader of defunct Confederation of Trade Unions in Hong Kong withdraws Labour Day rally application after ‘being taken away’* (www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3218407/former-leader-defunct-confederation-trade-unions-hong-kong-withdraws-labour-day-rally-application) [[February 2026]

⁷⁵ 集誌社 (2025.05.01) *勞權回顧 ... 第六年沒 5.1 遊行* (bit.ly/434QIJP) (in Chinese) [February 2026]

⁷⁶ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.05.02) *Hong Kong’s League of Social Democrats calls for ‘dignity’ for workers on Labour Day* (hongkongfp.com/2025/05/02/hong-kongs-league) [February 2026]

⁷⁷ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.04.28) *Suspend labour import scheme, women workers’ group urges gov’t ahead of Labour Day* (hongkongfp.com/2025/04/28/suspend-labour-import) [February 2026]

⁷⁸ Hong Kong Free Press (2023.03.04) *Hong Kong women’s group cancels rally night before demo; police say ‘violent groups’ sought to attend* (hongkongfp.com/2023/03/04/hong-kong-womens) [February 2026]

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conferences. Yet, despite the challenging political environments, 2025 saw a slight resurgence of worker's collective actions that caught the public's attention.

Keeta riders' strikes

Hundreds of riders working for Keeta, a food delivery digital platform owned by Chinese tech giant Meituan, staged a series of strikes in April and May 2025, protesting against reduced remunerations and demanding for fair treatments. On 22 May, around 270 riders working in Central, representing 95% of delivery workers in the district, took the day off work. They demanded a minimum fee of HK\$50 per order, proper contracts for riders and the cancellation of the "Grab the Task" alert feature, which distract workers on the road by making them fight for orders and increases the risk of traffic accidents.⁷⁹ Riders in other districts, including Kwai Chung on 29 April, Tsuen Wan on 10 May, Kowloon City on 17 May, Tin Shui Wai on 25 May and Yuen Long on 28 May, also went on strike fighting for similar demands.⁸⁰

Keeta launched a price war and employed a growth-before-profit strategy when it entered the Hong Kong market in May 2023, and topped the market share in food delivery service in the first quarter of 2024. Soon after Deliveroo ceased operation in Hong Kong in April 2025, Keeta started cutting costs, including lowering the pay rate of each delivery and introducing a "K Go" scheme, which assigns higher priority for combining several delivery tasks in a single service order but receives a lower pay rate per task.

Riders' industrial actions have however died down without achieving much. A political top brass reportedly "reminded" LegCo members in June 2025 of not to publicly discuss platform worker's protection and cautioned that riders' protests might embarrass the authorities and trigger hype from opposition online media, diverting public attention from the Government's focus on economic development.⁸¹

Baptist University outsourced janitors' sit-in protest

More than 20 Hong Kong Baptist University sub-contracted janitors staged a sit-in protest on 1 August 2025 demanding better remunerations.⁸² The cleaners faced a wage freeze and lost statutory holiday pay when the university awarded a new contractor for its cleaning service. In the final week of July, organizers of the Cleaning Service Industry Workers Union, together with a dozen of volunteers, some of whom

⁷⁹ Note 37, Hong Kong Free Press (2025.05.22)

⁸⁰ Note 37, Hong Kong Free Press (2025.05.22); Oiwan Lam (2025.06.14) *Hong Kong workers strike against the exploitation of Keeta, a food delivery platform* (globalvoices.org/2025/06/14/hong-kong) [February 2026]

⁸¹ Note 36, 信報 (2025.06.27)

⁸² Yahoo 新聞 (2025.08.19) *浸大外判清潔工抗爭記錄 年輕力量與清潔姨姨的工運* (hk.news.yahoo.com/share/7846ec86-6ea3-4161-b8b4-f237fb495f4f) (in Chinese) [February 2026]

are the university's students, went to the campus and gathered opinions from more than a hundred janitors. They also held three meetings with the workers and reached a consensus to organize an online petition to solicit public's support for their cause. When more and more cleaners joined the sit-in, the contractor was forced into negotiations and finally agreed to grant workers with a contractual monthly cash allowance between HK\$300 and HK\$500.

Coca-Cola workers strike over unfair dismissal of a union officer

The Swire Beverages (HK) Employees General Union launched an indefinite strike on 5 September, protesting against the dismissal of an executive committee member of the union who worked for the bottler as a lorry driver for 18 years.⁸³ Around 180 workers gathered outside the company's factory in Shatin and called for the driver's reinstatement. The management alleged the driver did not wear a seatbelt when he reversed his lorry in Tseung Kwan O and injured an elderly woman a month earlier, breaching the company's safety guidelines. The union however claimed that the driver was targeted because of his union position, as the company rarely dismissed employees involved in traffic accidents in the past.

Mediated by the Labour Department, the bottler and the union agreed to settle their disputes through dialogue. After a three-hour negotiation, the management agreed to reinstate the driver and promised not to retaliate against the striking workers. The union later called off any further industrial action and agreed to a "peace clause", serving a five-day notice period before the union stages strikes in future. The union maintained that a notice period would serve as a "buffer" during which the union could try to resolve disputes through negotiation, without the need to launch industrial action.⁸⁴

The Swire Beverages (HK) Employees General Union is one of a handful of trade unions in Hong Kong recognized by the management for purposes of representation and consultation. The union signed a collective agreement with the bottler in 2014, a year after the union staged a strike against the company's plan to outsource its delivery service.⁸⁵

5. Epilogue

Since the promulgation of the NSL, Hong Kong's independent trade unions and labour organizations have been crushed on a massive scale. The period of mass arrest of social activists may have gone, but it does not mean the Government has loosened

⁸³ Note 31, 集誌社 (2025.09.05)

⁸⁴ Hong Kong Free Press (2025.09.08) *Coca-Cola's Hong Kong plant reinstates driver fired over traffic accident after union strike* (hongkongfp.com/2025/09/08/coca-colas) [February 2026]

⁸⁵ 誌 (2025.04.30) *疾風勁草 太古工會的重啟與「集體談判」的誕生* (ly.hkfture.com/NDMER) (in Chinese) [February 2026]

its grasp on Hong Kong's civil society. Amendments to the TUO, passed in June 2025 and took effect in January 2026, grant the authorities additional powers to restrict the normal functioning of trade unions and open the door for the Government to censor and interfere into trade union operations. On the eve of the fifth anniversary of the NSL, nearly all policy secretaries took turns to speak to the media on the work of combating "soft resistance" under their portfolios. The authorities' crack down on civil society will certainly become even more sophisticated and all-encompassing, and the employment of extra-legal suppression tactics will undoubtedly be more frequent. In the foreseeable future, trade unionists and labour right activists will unavoidably have to carry out their work in a climate of fear and harassment.

The significant weakening of the city's civil society and independent trade union movement has made it more difficult than ever for people to effectively push the Government to close "decent work deficits". Pro-Beijing trade unions' primary concern is co-operation with the Government; they also lack the capacity and intention to scrutinize the administration's policy proposals or put forward viable policy options. The last year thus saw the SMW fixed at a starving rate, part-time employees still denied of certain statutory benefits, amendment to the definition of "continuous employment" failed to prevent employers from exploiting loopholes to evade their obligations, employment status of platform workers remained ambiguous, and large number of non-local workers imported under the ESLs despite rising unemployment.

Despite the narrowing of civil society space, it is encouraging that there was a slight resurgence in workers' collective actions last year, such as Keeta riders' strike, Baptist University sub-contracted janitors sit-in protest and Coca-Cola's workers' industrial action. Whether the revival will continue remains to be seen; and it is also difficult to tell whether these industrial actions would cross the "red line", provoking the authorities' suppression. Nevertheless, their courage to stand up have proven that worker's resistance will never disappear because of adverse socio-political environments.

Annex 1: Lists of Abbreviations

Article 23 Legislation	Safeguarding National Security Ordinance
CE	Chief Executive
CLB	China Labour Bulletin
CPI(A)	Consumer Price Index (A)
EO	Employment Ordinance
ESLS	Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HAEA	Hospital Authority Employees Alliance
HKCTU	Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions
HKJA	Hong Kong Journalists Association
HKPTU	Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRD	Inland Revenue Department
LegCo	Legislative Council
MPF	Mandatory Provident Fund
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSL	National Security Law
Registrar	Registrar of Trade Unions
SMW	Statutory minimum wage
TUO	Trade Unions Ordinance
WSJ	Wall Street Journal

Annex 2: Sources of Statistics Cited

Consumer price index (A), Underlying

www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/web_table.html?id=510-60002

Employees earning minimum wage

www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?scode=210&pcode=B1050014

GDP, nominal and real (Hong Kong)

www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/web_table.html?id=310-31001

Imported workers, various schemes

ESLS: www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202601/28/P2026012800260.htm

Sector-specific schemes: www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202507/02/P2025070200422.htm

Imported workers in accommodation and food services before ESLS: *Replies to initial questions raised by LegCo Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-25, Reply Serial No. LWB(L)020* (www.legco.gov.hk/yr2025/english/fc/fc/w_q/lwb-l-e.pdf)

Non-418 employees

Thematic Household Survey Report No. 72

(www.censtatd.gov.hk/wbr/B1130201/B11302012025XX01/att/en/B11302012025XX01.pdf)

Persons employed and job vacancies by industry (excluding civil service)

www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/web_table.html?id=215-16001

Persons working for food and goods delivery platforms

Thematic Household Survey Report No. 81

(www.censtatd.gov.hk/wbr/B1130201/B11302012025XX01/att/en/B11302012025XX01.pdf)

Salaries index, nominal by industry

www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/web_table.html?id=220-19021

Trade union registration and membership

Registry of Trade Unions (various issues) *Annual Statistical Report of Trade Unions in Hong Kong* (www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/content2_4a.htm)

Registry of Trade Unions (2026) *Preliminary 2025 Statistics of Trade Unions in Hong Kong* (www.labour.gov.hk/tc/public/pdf/rtu/PSTUHK2025.pdf)

Underemployed persons by industry

www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/web_table.html?id=210-06503

Unemployed persons by previous industry

www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/web_table.html?id=210-06405

Wage index, nominal

www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/web_table.html?id=220-19001

Annex 3: Major Events Relating to Hong Kong's Labour Rights and Trade Union Activities in 2025

Date	Events	Section (page)
Jan & Feb 2025	HKJA's venue bookings for its football tournament and annual dinner were cancelled at the last minute	Section 3.6 (p. 17-18)
13 Feb 2025	HKJA's chair Selina Cheng initiated private prosecution proceedings against <i>WSJ</i> over her dismissal	Section 3.3 (p. 15-16)
17 Mar 2025	A statistics report published, revealing there were 12,900 persons taking up paid platform work in food and goods delivery services	Section 2.3 (p. 5-7)
17 Apr 2025	A group of Deliveroo workers filed claims with the Labour Tribunal over unpaid compensation; the proceedings were later stayed indefinitely	Section 2.3 (p. 6)
Apr to May 2025	Keeta's riders staged a series of strikes in various districts demanding better remunerations and fair treatments	Section 4.3 (p. 23-24)
1 May 2025	No Labour Day Rally for six consecutive years	Section 4.2 (p. 22-23)
1 May 2025	SMW uprated to HK\$42.1 per hour which is inadequate to lift grassroots working families out of poverty; the rate will raise by HK\$1 per hour starting 1 May 2026	Section 2.1 (p. 2-3)
1 May 2025	Revised MPF offsetting arrangement came into operation	Section 2.4 (p. 7-8)
21 May 2025	HKJA revealed independent media outlets and journalists were unreasonably probed by the tax authorities; former chief executive of the HKCTU Mung Siu-tat was also probed by the IRD	Section 3.5 (p. 16-17)
12 Jun 2025	The China Labour Bulletin announced its decision to dissolve on the same day the police conducted a joint operation with China national security office in the city to investigate six people and an organization suspected of colluding with external forces	Section 3.2 (p.14-15)
12 Jun 2025	Social worker Jackie Chen's registration was suspended for five years after she was convicted of rioting during the 2019 protests	Section 3.7 (p. 18-19)
18 Jun 2025	LegCo passed a bill to amend the definition of "continuous employment" (the 4-18 requirement) under the EO, which still denies part-time employees of certain statutory benefits; the amendment came into operation on 18 Jan 2026	Section 2.2 (p. 3-4)
25 Jun 2025	LegCo passed a bill to amend the TUO to further tighten the Government's grasp on trade unions; the amendments came into operation on 4 Jan 2026	Section 3.1 (p.10-14)
30 Jun 2025	The Riders' Rights Concern Group announced its decision to cease operation days after a commentary revealing LegCo members had been "reminded" of not to publicly discuss platform workers' statutory protection	Section 3.2 (p. 15)
Jul 2025	Artist-cum-activist Luke Ching and co. applied for jobs listed under the ESLS and found elements of fake vacancies and fake recruitment	Section 2.5 (p. 9)
17 Jul 2025	The hearing of HAEA former chair Winnie Yu's appeal of her conviction and sentence was finished	Section 3.8 (p. 20-21)
28 Jul 2025	HKCTU former chair Carol Ng was released after finishing her 53-month jail terms	Section 3.8 (p. 20-21)

1 Aug 2025	Hong Kong Baptist University’s sub-contracted janitors staged a sit-in protest against wage freeze; the contractor agreed to grant the cleaners a monthly cash allowance	Section 4.3 (p. 24)
Date	Events	Section (page)
17 Aug 2025	Deliveroo’s liquidator asked a 70-year old courier, who withdrew his civil claim earlier, to pay legal fees amounted to about HK\$160,000	Section 2.3 (p. 6)
4 Sep 2025	Social worker Eddie Tse’s registration was suspended for three years after he was sentenced to 120 hours of community service	Section 3.7 (p. 18-19)
5 Sep 2025	Coca-Cola union staged a strike protesting against the dismissal of a driver, who is also an executive committee member of the union; the bottler agreed to reinstate the driver after a three-hour negotiation	Section 4.3 (p. 24-25)
15 Oct 2025	LegCo passed a regulatory regime for ride-hailing services which does not clarify the employment status of ride-hailing drivers	Section 2.3 (p. 7)
16 Dec 2025	HKJA removed a statement on the verdict of the Apple Daily trial after the Government strongly condemned the union for misleading the public	Section 3.4 (p.16)
18 Dec 2025	WSJ pleaded not guilty when the private prosecution proceedings against the newspaper over Selina Cheng’s dismissal started	Section 3.3 (p. 15-16)
22 Jan 2026	Former General Secretary of the HKCTU Lee Cheuk-yan pleaded not guilty over his charge of inciting subversion of state power when the trial started after twice delayed	Section 3.8 (p. 19-20)
23 Feb 2026	Winnie Yu’s appeal was dismissed	Section 3.8 (p. 20-21)

Annex 4: List of Trade Union Organizers Arrested and/or Prosecuted since the Promulgation of the National Security Law (as at end of 2025)

Name	Trade union	Date of first arrest	Charges (reason of arrest if not charged)	Status
Lee Cheuk-yan	General secretary, HKCTU	28 Feb 2021	Organizing and knowingly participating in unauthorised assemblies (18 & 31 Aug and 1 Oct 2019 and 4 Jun 2020)	Sentenced to a total of 20 months imprisonment; finished serving on 30 Sep 2022; Court of Appeal in Aug 2023 allowed his appeal against the conviction of organizing unauthorised assembly held on 18 Aug 2019; Court of Final Appeal in Aug 2024 dismissed his appeal against the conviction of knowingly participating in unauthorised assembly held on 18 Aug 2019
		(Summon)	Obstructing a police officer	Sentenced to three weeks imprisonment (one week concurrent); finished serving on 30 Sep 2022
		9 Sep 2021	Inciting subversion	Denied bail on 2 Dec 2022; pleaded not guilty when the trial started on 23 Jan 2026
Carol Ng	Chair, HKCTU	6 Jan 2021	Conspiracy to commit subversion	Denied bail on 4 Mar 2021; appeal for bail dismissed on 20 Dec 2021, pledged guilty on 3 Nov 2022, sentenced to 53 months imprisonment on 19 Nov 2024; released on 28 Jul 2025
Winnie Yu	Chair, HAEA	6 Jan 2021	Conspiracy to commit subversion	Denied bail on 4 Mar 2021; granted bail on 28 Jul 2021; bail revoked on 8 Mar 2022; pledged not guilty on 6 Feb 2023; convicted on 30 May 2024; sentenced to 81 months on 19 Nov 2024; appeal heard in Jul 2025 and dismissed on 23 Feb 2026
Joseph Lee	Chair, AHKNS*	6 Jan 2021		On police bail

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Name	Trade union	Date of first arrest	Charges (reason of arrest if not charged)	Status
Cyrus Lau	ExCo member, AHPNA**	6 Jan 2021	(Conspiracy to commit subversion)	
Lai Man-ling	Chair, GUHKST	22 Jul 2021	Publishing and circulating seditious materials	Denied bail on 23 Jul 2021; sentenced to 19 months imprisonment on 10 Sep 2022; finished serving on 10 Oct 2022
Melody Yeung	Deputy chair, GUHKST	22 Jul 2021		
Sidney Ng	Secretary, GUHKST	22 Jul 2021	Publishing and circulating seditious materials	Denied bail on 30 Aug 2021; sentenced to 19 months imprisonment on 10 Sep 2022; finished serving on 10 Oct 2022
Samuel Chan	Treasurer, GUHKST	22 Jul 2021		
Marco Fong	ExCo member, GUHKST	22 Jul 2021		
Joe Wong	Chair, HKCTU	(Summon)		
Leo Tang	Vice-chair, HKCTU	(Summon)	Failing to supply information to the Societies Officer	Fined HK\$8,000 on 1 Nov 2022
Chung Chun-fai	Treasurer, HKCTU	(Summon)		
Elizabeth Tang	Director, AMRC	9 Mar 2023	(Colluding with a foreign country or with external elements)	Released without charge in May 2024
Marilyn Tang	Executive Director, HKCTU Training Centre	11 May 2023	Perverting the course of justice	Sentenced to six months imprisonment on 21 Dec 2023; finished serving in April 2024

* Association of Hong Kong Nursing Staff; ** Allied Health Professionals and Nurses Association

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