Beijing looks to end Hong Kong protest movement

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Protesters in Hong Kong have continued to defy the authorities in the city and Beijing, despite police violence and other attempts to ban demonstrations. Clashes last weekend grew in intensity and have continued into this week. It is unlikely that Beijing will allow these clashes to continue much longer, making it all the more necessary for students and other demonstrators to turn to the working class as a whole.

On Wednesday, pro-Beijing lawmaker Junius Ho was stabbed while campaigning for the upcoming district council election on November 24. Ho was taken to a hospital with a non-life threatening injury, while the alleged attacker was arrested and also taken to a hospital with two of Ho's aides.

The attack is likely in retribution for Ho's role in promoting violence against pro-democracy demonstrators in July, when gangsters attacked people on a train returning from that day's rallies. Ho was seen afterwards giving the gangsters the thumbs-up, while referring to them as his friends and "normal residents, just like the protesters in your eyes."

There have also been several attacks on politicians and activists in the pan-democracy bloc, who are seen as allies of the protesters. On Sunday, a man identified as Joe Chen allegedly bit the ear off Andrew Chiu of the Democratic Party at a rally in a shopping mall in Tai Koo Shing. Chen is also accused of stabbing two other people with a knife while shouting pro-Beijing slogans. Chen was caught and beaten by rally participants before he was arrested. Roy Kwong, another Democratic Party lawmaker was attacked by three people in September.

On Saturday evening, protesters vandalized the offices of the official state-run Xinhua news agency in Hong Kong, smashing windows, spraying paint and hurling petrol bombs.

An incensed Chinese media demanded that "the full weight of the law" be brought down on the protesters, in the words of the *China Daily*. Referencing Beijing's claim that outside forces are to blame for youths' widespread anger at poor social and economic conditions, the paper declared that the protesters' actions were the result of "nothing more than adolescent hormones pumped up and primed by those willing to exploit them."

In a Facebook post Xinhua said: "The practice of the black rioters once again shows that 'stopping the violence and restoring order' is Hong Kong's most important and urgent task at present."

On Monday, as protests continued, Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Shanghai. Xi told Lam that "curbing violence, subduing chaos and restoring order remains Hong Kong's most important task at the moment."

Contradicting recent media reports that she would soon be replaced, Xi also told Lam: "The central government has a high degree of trust in you, and fully affirms the work that you and your governing team put in."

What form "restoring order" will take is as yet unclear. However, the Chinese Communist Party released a communiqué following the 19th Central Committee's fourth plenary session last week. It stated: "We must strictly govern the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Macau Special Administrative Region in strict accordance with the Constitution and the Basic Law, and safeguard the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macau."

Shen Chunyao, Hong Kong, Macau, and Basic Law Commission chief, said last Friday that Beijing would

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“improve” the method by which the chief executive is chosen but did not give any details. He added that measures would be taken to “safeguard national security” and to increase so-called patriotic education in Hong Kong’s schools.

While Beijing seeks to deflect blame for the protests onto “outside forces” or other scapegoats, the protests have been driven by legitimate concerns over democratic rights, access to safe and affordable housing and decent paying jobs, in one of the most unequal cities in the world.

The issues facing the city’s students and workers are not restricted to Hong Kong. Protests are taking place around the world against the assaults on jobs, wages, and living conditions. In Lebanon, mass demonstrations occurred in Beirut on Wednesday, with protesters seeking to shut government buildings down. Protests in Iraq are ongoing against corruption and poor economic conditions, despite hundreds killed by security forces. Mass demonstrations are also taking place in Chile, while a strike movement is developing in the United States.

The driving force behind all these demonstrations is a rebellion against the global capitalist system, which not only connects every country and city on the planet, but also unites the international working class with common interests. The gross social inequality in Hong Kong is not simply the result of Beijing’s rule, but of capitalism, stretching far back through the period of British colonialization.

Regardless of ethnicity, nationality, gender or other “identities” that the pseudo-left or right-wing nationalists use to divide people and defend capitalism, workers around the world must unite against their common exploiters in the capitalist class and fight for international socialism.

However legitimate Hong Kongers’ grievances are, resorting to vandalism, violence and anarchist-styled attacks on pro-Beijing figures plays into the hands of Chinese regime, providing it with a pretext for a bloody crackdown on the entire city. It expresses a lack of confidence in the ability of a mass workers’ movement to develop and defend democratic and social rights. Moreover, it hinders students and workers in Hong Kong unifying with the entire Chinese working class.

The reactionary appeals for intervention by United States or British imperialism made by a section of the protest movement separate the working class in Hong Kong from their greatest allies—workers across China and internationally, who face the same capitalist exploiters and repressive state apparatus.

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