

## **Statement of the European Parliament's informal Hong Kong Watch Group concerning Hong Kong District Council 'elections'**

Today, Hong Kong authorities have held elections for all 18 Hong Kong District Councils. In these District Council Elections, Hong Kong's democratic opposition was systematically shut out and authorities vetted candidates to make sure that only "patriots" can run for the remaining seats that stand for election. The authorities feared that an election of even just one democratic opposition candidate would destroy the false official narratives about Hong Kong's purported happiness with the hard national security oppression. While more than 400 seats were up for direct election in the last election in 2019, which the democrat camp won in a landslide, the Hong Kong authorities have slashed that number to 88. Other councillors will be handpicked by CCP controlled authorities.

We condemn the conduct of these 'elections', which we consider neither free nor fair and a sham that further exemplifies the dramatic deterioration of freedom and the rule of law in Hong Kong after the introduction of the so-called National Security Law. This sham election will not provide any legitimacy for the political regime in Hong Kong. We will not forget the peaceful opposition and free media that have stood courageously against this repression.

In line with previous statements and resolutions of the European Parliament, we reiterate our call for targeted sanctions against John Lee, intensified trial observation, refraining from normalizing the relationship with his regime and steps to educate European companies active in Hong Kong on the political risks of doing business there.

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