

**Question for written answer E-002404/2020
to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs
and Security Policy**

Rule 138

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Subject: Hong Kong police arrest 15 pro-democracy leaders during the Coronavirus crisis

On 18 April 2020, Hong Kong police arrested 15 opposition figures, accusing them of organising and participating in an unlawful protest that occurred last year. These arrests followed months of massive protests, in which millions participated to express their dissatisfaction concerning China's moves to assert control over Hong Kong's internal affairs.

It seems the arrests were made in order to intimidate and weaken the pro-democracy forces ahead of the elections in September. This fact, combined with the global focus on containing the virus and the impossibility of protesting, gives the impression that China is using the Coronavirus crisis to crush the democratic movement in Hong Kong ahead of the elections ¹.

This move is a clear violation of universal human rights and EU fundamental values and is therefore not acceptable.

1. Does the VP/HR agree that this move violates the universal value of freedom of expression, and therefore needs to be condemned in a public statement?
2. The British, American and Australian governments have expressed their concerns regarding this matter: will the VP/HR contact them to form a diplomatic front to address this issue?
3. Will the VP/HR engage with the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to ensure that it protects basic rights such as the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression?

¹ <https://www.ft.com/content/50d5dcfe-e860-4fcc-9ce8-673b5f86aa502>