The arrests of Cardinal Joseph Zen, Margaret Ng, Denise Ho and Hui Po-keung constitute a further example of the continuing deterioration of the political situation in Hong Kong following the imposition of the National Security Law (NSL), which has led to an extensive erosion of space for pluralism, civil society and the rights and freedoms that were supposed to be protected until 2047. The High Representative/Vice-President publicly expressed the EU’s grave concerns about the arrests on the day they took place, calling for fundamental freedoms to be respected.1

The EU Office to Hong Kong closely and continuously monitors developments on the ground and maximises the opportunities for outreach and engagement, within the limits of this shrinking political space. Many political contacts and representatives of civil society have become reluctant to have contact with foreign diplomats, including with the EU Office, as they are wary of the provisions on ‘collusion with foreign forces’ under the National Security Law, which can lead to long prison sentences.

The EU Office also attends court hearings, including the first hearing of Cardinal Zen, Margaret Ng, Hui Po-keung, Cyd Ho, Denise Ho, and Sze Ching-wee that took place on 24 May 2022. The EU Office and Member States with a diplomatic presence in Hong Kong have also stepped up EU coordination on court hearing attendance, as agreed in the Council Conclusions adopted in July 2020, which also include support to civil society and other measures.2

The EU will continue to express its concerns on the deterioration of Hong Kong’s freedoms both publicly and directly to the relevant authorities, including at the highest level, and calls upon China to abide by international commitments made under the Basic Law and the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984.

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1 https://twitter.com/josepborrell/status/1524463674278264834?s=21&t=sqxzZCiCKD2HZRWFWkVBlw