

Hong Kong police raid local media outlet, arrest six for ‘seditious publication’

Hong Kong police raided the office of local media outlet Stand News and arrested six current and former staff on Wednesday for “seditious publication”.

Suppression of Hong Kong’s local press has increased in the wake of huge and often violent democracy protests two years ago and the subsequent imposition of a sweeping national security law.

More than 200 officers were deployed to search the Stand News office with court authorisation to seize journalistic materials, police said, confirming six arrests.

An AFP reporter saw Stand News acting editor-in-chief Patrick Lam being led handcuffed into the office building.

Shortly before dawn, Stand News had broadcast live on Facebook that national security police were outside the door of deputy assignment editor Ronson Chan.

In the brief video, officers were seen telling Chan they had a warrant to investigate charges of “conspiracy to publish seditious publication” — under a British colonial-era law.

Chan’s home was searched, but he was not arrested.

Stand News is the second Hong Kong media company targeted by the authorities after Apple Daily, which shut down in June after its assets were frozen under the national security law.

Hong Kong authorities have repeatedly criticised Stand News, with security chief Chris Tang this month accusing it of publishing “biased, smearing and demonising” reports on prison conditions.

Police also arrested ex-chief editor Chung Pui-kuen and searched his residence, local media reported.

Four former board members were also arrested, including Hong Kong pop star Denise Ho, barrister Margaret Ng, Christine Fang, and Chow Tat-chi, according to local media reports.

The city has long served as a regional media hub, though it has tumbled down press

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freedom rankings in recent years as Beijing asserts greater control over the city.

Exiled activist Nathan Law tweeted the arrests illustrated the persecution by the authorities of journalists and media that "dare to challenge them and speak the truth".

Sunny Cheung, a prominent campaigner currently seeking asylum in the United States, said Beijing was eradicating all room for opposition.

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