

# Foreign Secretary declares breach of Sino-British Joint Declaration



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Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Beijing's imposition of new rules to disqualify elected legislators in Hong Kong constitutes a clear breach of the legally binding Sino-British Joint Declaration.

China has once again broken its promises and undermined Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy. The UK will stand up for the people of Hong Kong, and call out violations of their rights and freedoms. With our international partners, we will hold China to the obligations it freely assumed under international law.

## Background

On 11 November 2020, China's National People's Congress Standing Committee decided that any Hong Kong legislator who promote or support Hong Kong independence, refuse to recognise China's sovereignty over Hong Kong, seek foreign countries to interfere in the affairs of Hong Kong, or endanger the national security of Hong Kong, will be in breach of the Parliamentary oath and should be disqualified from membership of the Hong Kong Legislative Council. This Decision led to the immediate removal of four elected members of the Legislative Council who were - at that moment - sitting in the Chamber. .

The Decision is part of a pattern apparently designed to harass and stifle all voices critical of China's policies. The new rules for disqualification provide a further tool in this campaign, with vague criteria open to wide-ranging interpretation.

We judge that this Decision breaches the legally-binding Sino-British Joint Declaration. It breaches both China's commitment that Hong Kong will enjoy a 'high degree of autonomy' and the right to freedom of speech guaranteed under Paragraph 3 and Annex I of the Declaration.

This is the third time since 1997 that China has breached the legally-binding Joint Declaration. The first was in 2016. The second was in June 2020 when Beijing introduced the Hong Kong National Security Legislation.

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