



# ASIAN NETWORK FOR FREE ELECTIONS (ANFREL) FOUNDATION

105 SUTHISARN WINICHAI RD., SAMSEN NOK, HUAYKWANG, BANGKOK 10310 THAILAND

TEL: 66-2-2773627 FAX: 66-2-2762183

EMAIL: [ANFREL@ANFREL.ORG](mailto:ANFREL@ANFREL.ORG) WEB: [WWW.ANFREL.ORG](http://WWW.ANFREL.ORG)

**For Immediate Release: ANFREL Statement on Hong Kong Protests**

## **ANFREL Expresses Solidarity With Protesters in Hong Kong**

**BANGKOK, 01 OCTOBER 2014** – The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) Foundation joins the rest of the world in support of the protesters on the streets of Hong Kong that are standing up for their basic rights. ANFREL further calls on security forces to avoid further violations of the peoples' right to protest. Protesters have shown a commendable commitment to peaceful means to bring about a more democratic future. Their demands for representative elections are entirely consistent with both our shared universal right to select our own leaders as well as promises made to them by Beijing for universal suffrage by 2017. Security forces must refrain from excessive force or attempts to disperse otherwise peaceful protesters.

Peacefully organizing for the opportunity to freely elect candidates of their own choosing is exactly how civil change and progress can and should take place. The people of Hong Kong are right to see the system proposed by Beijing as a rigged system of electoral theatre.

As protesters correctly point out, government authority is legitimate when it reflects the will of the people as expressed via elections. Legitimacy comes from free elections based on universal suffrage with equal opportunities for everyone to vote or run for office. "Beijing's proposal to allow voting for pre-approved candidates only is a grave violation of the basic tenets of free elections," said ANFREL's Chairman Damaso Magbual. He continued, "Everyone has the right to participate in the affairs of government as a candidate or a voter. In a just society, the people determine their candidates and leaders for themselves."

Protesters rightly see elections as the primary just and peaceful means of transferring power, selecting their leaders, and providing legitimacy to a government to lead. The people of Hong Kong's demands to have an elected government are a sign of political maturity and are an inspiration for the rest of China and the region. Rather than cracking down on such an inspirational call for reform, their voices should be amplified, their plans encouraged as a model for others.

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**For further information, please contact:**

Mr. Ryan D Whelan (English) at [ryan\\_at\\_anfrel.org](mailto:ryan_at_anfrel.org) or

Mr. Pongsak Chanon (Thai) at [pongsak\\_at\\_anfrel.org](mailto:pongsak_at_anfrel.org)