

Court imposes sentences in accordance with law

In response to the comments from overseas politicians concerning the sentences imposed by the District Court today (April 16), the Department of Justice (DoJ) made the following statement:

The case in question involves nine defendants who were jointly charged with organising and knowingly taking part in an unauthorised assembly. Two of the defendants pleaded guilty before trial while the remaining seven were convicted of all the charges by the court on April 1. The judge set out the reasons for the verdict in her judgment on the same day, which is publicly available at the Judiciary's website. In imposing the sentences today, the judge also stated the sentencing principles in court.

The Government has repeatedly pointed out that where a defendant pleads guilty or is found guilty after trial, it is the court's duty to impose a just and appropriate sentence, applying the relevant principles to the circumstances of the crime and those of the offender. It is crucial that where there is any dissatisfaction over the sentences imposed by the courts, any redress ought to be taken up by means of an appeal or review.

We are appalled by open demands for the immediate release of the defendants who admitted to their wrong doing by either pleading guilty to their criminal act or were convicted after trial by the court. Such demands, absurd and menacing as they are, are in blatant violation of international laws and basic principle of non-intervention. Baseless attacks on sentences imposed by the court, which properly and aptly exercises judicial power independently as guaranteed under the Basic Law, manifest a total disrespect to the rule of law. Statements that create a real risk of prejudice to court proceedings in that the public confidence in the due administration of justice is undermined may amount to contempt of court.

The DoJ also reminds members of the public that no one should comment arbitrarily on cases in respect of which legal proceedings are still ongoing as the matter is sub judice.