

# Security Bureau appeals to public not to participate in unauthorised assemblies

A spokesman for the Security Bureau today (September 28) said that, following a hearing, the Appeal Board on Public Meetings and Processions had upheld the police decision regarding its objection to a public procession on October 1. The activity concerned is an unauthorised assembly. Anyone advertising or publicising the procession, or taking part in it, may violate the law.

The Security Bureau is aware that some people on the Internet claim that they will continue to take part in the procession regardless of whether it is authorised or not, and advocate the use of violence, including hurling petrol bombs and illegally blocking roads, in making their demands. Such acts seriously breach public peace and the offences are punishable by long-term imprisonment.

According to the Hong Kong Bill of Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the freedoms of procession and assembly are not absolute, and may be subject to restrictions as prescribed by law in the interests of public order, public safety and the interests of others, etc. Court rulings have also pointed out that once a protest involves the use or the threat of using violence, the protest would have gone beyond the constitutionally guaranteed bounds of peaceful demonstration.

Anyone who commits the offence of taking part in an unauthorised assembly is liable to a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment. Anyone who commits the offence of riot is liable to a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment. In addition, the procession may be in breach of relevant offences under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation regarding prohibited group gatherings, and the gathering is likely to increase the risk of spreading COVID-19 in the community.

The Security Bureau calls upon the public to refrain from advertising or publicising or taking part in any unauthorised assembly, as well as taking part in a prohibited group gathering. The Police will take resolute enforcement action in strict accordance with the law against any illegal act in order to protect public order and public safety.