



[Chinese Officials Signal an Intent to Reform Election Laws in Hong Kong to Favor Pro-Beijing Loyalists](#)

China plans to impose restrictions on Hong Kong's electoral system to root out candidates the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) deems disloyal, a move that could block democracy advocates in the special administrative region from running for elected office. The CCP already wields outsized influence over Hong Kong's political landscape, and the change could potentially pave the way for the mass disqualification of pro-democracy politicians who took almost 90% of 452 district council seats during the 2019 elections. A suggested bill on the issue would require community level district councils to pledge an oath of allegiance to the city's mini-constitution, and analysts argue that the measure is clearly aimed at suppressing pro-democracy forces there. Hong Kong's Legislative Council is slated to debate the bill in mid-March, with China's parliament expected to convene early next month to impose the series of electoral changes in an effort to strengthen its authoritarian grip on the city.

With its efforts, the regime in Beijing intends to limit the influence of opposition groups on Hong Kong's Election Committee by taking seats from pro-democracy officials and assigning them to pro-Beijing loyalists. The former made notable and significant progress after a resounding victory in Hong Kong district council elections back in late 2019. However, their impact on the body was diminished after the government delayed an election last year which could have resulted in democracy advocates securing another major win. Additionally, they were also negatively affected by the mass disqualification and subsequent resignation of lawmakers from the pro-democracy opposition camp in late 2020. Hong Kong's district councils are the only fully democratic institutions in the special administrative region, since the legislative council is stacked with pro-Beijing figures and its chief executive is not directly elected. In total, the district councils account for approximately a tenth of the votes on the 1,200-member election committee that meets every five years to elect the city's chief executive, with the remainder of it – by design – made up of pro-Beijing figures.

Experts fear that the proposal to reform the election laws in Hong Kong will open up the door for further human rights violations by the Chinese regime in the province and elsewhere. There are already concerns regarding the controversial national security law that was implemented in Hong Kong last summer, which has systematically cracked down on a variety of fundamental freedoms for citizens in the city. Furthermore, Hong Kong is not the only region to witness repressive policies at the hands of the CCP. China's central government has also been credibly accused of serious human rights violations against the Uyghur minority group in Xinjiang. There, ruthless measures have been taken against the local population under the guise of counter-terrorism and anti-separatism. Chinese authorities have subjected Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in Xinjiang to intrusive surveillance, arbitrary detention, and forced indoctrination. There has also been documentation of abuses committed by the CCP in Tibet as well.

Overall, the newest development in Hong Kong is just the latest example of the central Chinese government's array of suppressive behavior. The regime has continued to intimidate and prosecute human rights and democracy advocates, and its justice system has been plagued by unfair trials, reports of torture, and arbitrary use of the death penalty. The electoral reform attempts in Hong Kong fall in the category of political repression, as the CCP looks to weaken the dissenting pro-democracy voices which have gained traction there in recent years.