

# Hong Kong Christian leaders urge release of Nobel laureate Liu

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Hong Kong, 8 October (ENI)--Hong Kong Christian leaders have urged the government in Beijing to release 2010 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Liu Xiaobo, who was honoured for his "long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China".

Representatives from the Roman Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong and the Christian Concern Hong Kong Society joined activists in petitioning the Chinese government's liaison office in Hong Kong soon after the announcement of the prize in Oslo on 8 October.

They asked Beijing to release Liu, who initiated the "08 Charter" that asked for greater democracy and respect for human rights. More than 10 000 people in China and overseas had signed the charter.

In 2009, one year after the release of the charter, Liu was sentenced to 11 years in prison and two years' deprivation of political rights for "inciting the subversion of State power". Liu has consistently maintained that the sentence violates both China's constitution and fundamental human rights.

The Hong Kong Catholic commission and a number of civil groups said in a joint statement that Liu is a long time defender of human rights and deserves the Nobel honour.

It also criticised the Chinese government for pressuring the Norwegian Nobel Committee and warning it not to confer the prize on Liu.

Speaking in his personal capacity, the general secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, the Rev. Po Kam Cheong, told ENInews he was overjoyed with the result and believes that Liu "absolutely" deserves the prize. "Liu has spent many years in the struggle, in a peaceful way, for greater democracy in China," Po said. "And he has

suffered for this cause."

In announcing the result, the Norwegian Nobel Committee said that China has achieved economic advances in recent years and that its new status brings increased responsibility. It said China "is in breach of several international agreements to which it is a signatory, as well as of its own provisions concerning political rights".

Liu Xia, the wife of Liu Xiaobo, said in Beijing she was joyful at the result and was proud of her husband. She said that she would tell Liu the news when she visits him the following day. She said she wished that her husband will soon be released to enjoy freedom again.

In Beijing, China's foreign ministry said in a statement that Liu is a criminal, and that he has nothing to do with the spirit of the Nobel Peace Prize.