

Christians lend an anthem, and a pacifist spirit, to protests in Hong Kong

by [Alexandra Radu](#) in the [September 25, 2019](#) issue

Since protests began more than 12 weeks ago over an extradition bill that would allow Hong Kong residents to be sent to mainland China for trial, the city's Christian community has taken an active role.

Groups of Christians regularly participate in the marches that have coursed through Hong Kong's streets every weekend since June, and their pleas for peaceful protests, hymns, and prayers are often heard along with protest chants. One hymn, "Sing Hallelujah to the Lord," written in 1974, has caught on as an anthem of the protests, sung by believers and nonbelievers alike.

The Christian hymn not only inspires: it grants the protesters some protection under a technicality in Hong Kong law of public assembly that exempts religious gatherings.

The bill that brought the protesters out into the streets has since been suspended, but the demonstrations have continued, turning into a larger campaign for democracy and for maintaining the "one country, two systems" model agreed upon when the former British colony returned to China in 1997.

The protests have sometimes turned violent. While some Hong Kong residents see violence as the only way to obtain their demands, many, including most Christians, choose to support the protests through peaceful means. The city's Christians number about 900,000, or 12 percent of Hong Kong's population of roughly 7.5 million.

Several Christian organizations have officially voiced their concerns over the extradition bill, including the Hong Kong Christian Council, the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong, and the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church Union of Hong Kong. They have also urged the protesters to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

The protests have provided Christians with an opportunity to voice their concerns about religious freedom. If China ends the one country, two systems status quo,

they fear, the persecution of religious denominations in mainland China may spread to Hong Kong.

On August 23, tens of thousands of people gathered in Chater Garden for the first large-scale political rally specifically for Christians. With the motto “Salt and light, for justice we walk together,” the rally aimed to “provide all Christians a platform to express themselves outside the church, hoping people would safeguard Hong Kong by singing, praying, worshipping God and at the same time speaking up for justice and standing together with all the Hongkongers in difficult times,” said a press release from the rally organizer. —Religion News Service