

HONG KONG SEES BIG PRO-CHINA RALLY

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For the regime: Demonstrators rallying in support of police outside the Legislative Council in Hong Kong on Sunday. AFP/ISAAC LAWRENCE

Thousands protested outside Hong Kong's Parliament on Sunday — this time to support police as they face mounting criticism over their use of tear gas and rubber bullets. The large crowds, most of them dressed in white or blue, illustrated the ideological fissures now running through the finance hub as it experiences its worst political unrest in a generation.

Sunday's rally — comprised of a noticeably older demographic, some waving Chinese flags — was smaller than the huge anti-extradition marches but nonetheless showed that the police and pro-Beijing establishment still had plenty of supporters.

Many supporters turned out with children in tow, portraying themselves as a silent and peaceful majority. But there were also tense moments. At one of the subway entrances near the rally some half a dozen pro-democracy protesters were hissed and booed by a much larger crowd of police supporters, some of whom shouted profanities. Police and other supporters had to step in to calm tempers.

Protesters clash

Others screamed insults at journalists and at pro-democracy protesters camped out at the entrance to parliament.

Much of the artwork and posters pinned to the city's Parliament walls by anti-extradition protesters were torn down by police supporters as they passed by.

The pro-democracy camp will hold another rally on Monday, with organisers expecting a huge turnout.

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