

CHINA HALTS HK EXTRADITION PACTS WITH CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND U.K.

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Wang Wenbin

China announced the suspension on Tuesday of Hong Kong's extradition treaties with Canada, Australia and Britain in a tit-for-tat move following similar decisions by those countries over a controversial new security law.

Western nations have angered Beijing over their responses to the law imposed on Hong Kong which they see as an erosion of the civil liberties and human rights the city has enjoyed since its handover from Britain in 1997.

Canada, Britain and Australia are part of the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance. The other members are New Zealand, which suspended its extradition treaty with Hong Kong earlier on Tuesday, and the United States, which has signalled it is preparing to do the same.

China has accused the countries of interfering in its internal affairs and defended the security law as crucial to restore order in Hong Kong following a wave of pro-democracy protests marred by violence.

"The wrong action of Canada, Australia and the U.K. in politicising judicial cooperation with Hong Kong has seriously hurt the basis of judicial cooperation," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin at a regular press briefing.

"China has decided to suspend extradition treaties between Hong Kong and Canada, Australia and U.K., as well as criminal justice cooperation agreements."

Mr. Wang accused the countries of having used the national security law as "an excuse to unilaterally announce the suspension of extradition treaties" with Hong Kong.

Britain suspended its extradition treaty last week, following moves by Australia and Canada, saying the security law had "significantly changed key assumptions", including a provision to try certain cases in mainland China.

London and Canberra have also angered Beijing by offering pathways to citizenship or residency to Hong Kong citizens looking to leave because of the new law.

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