

POWER AND DYNAMICS OF CIVIL RESISTANCE

ICNC Educational Seminar for Graduate Students and Faculty

Co-organized by

The Centre for Chinese Law (CCL) &

The Centre for Comparative and Public Law (CCPL)

Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong

Dates: Oct. 10-13, 2011

Time 9:00am-5:30pm

Location: Convocation Hall, Main Building, HKU

Despite the practice of civil resistance or strategic nonviolent actions that goes back to at least the eighteenth century and notwithstanding a number of recent popular nonviolent insurrections, including Tunisia and Egypt and other Arab popular revolts, the phenomenon of civil resistance is little understood, studied or acknowledged by academics, policy makers and mainstream media alike.

Historically, political change in countries that curtail freedom and ignore international human rights norms has been difficult to achieve. Violent revolution or the use of armed force by external actors is typically seen as the primary means of overcoming oppression. Yet civil resistance, relying on a variety of methods of nonviolent action, has been used for this purpose for well over a century in different parts of the world, by different peoples and societies, in different cultures and political systems, and with some impressive results as well as some apparent failures. This phenomenon has only recently started gaining greater recognition as a potentially formidable strategic force by policy makers, political observers and scholars. The sweeping political ferment taking place in North Africa and the Middle East since the end of 2010 provides new, dramatic evidence of how civil resistance can drive political change. Furthermore, countries that experience bottom-up, civilian-based resistance are known to have a better track record of successful democratic transitions than the states that initiated their systemic transformation after a protracted civil war, or due to top-down, elite-to-elite negotiations or external military interventions.

This short but very intensive course is designed to provide an in-depth and multi-disciplinary perspective on civilian-based movements and campaigns that defend and obtain basic rights and justice around the world with the use of nonviolent tactics and strategies. We will look, among others, at issues of agency and structure, strategic planning and mobilization, formation, sustenance and dynamics of nonviolent movements, backfire and security divisions, digital actors and tools, negotiations and democratic transitions, role of third party actors and finally, historical and contemporary cases of civil resistance around the world.

The seminar will be led by the academic advisors and staff of the **International Center on Nonviolent Conflict** (ICNC). ICNC (www.nonviolent-conflict.org) is an independent, non-profit international education foundation that develops greater understanding and disseminates knowledge about grass-root, popular nonviolent movements.

Please contact Ms D W Choy (dwchoy@hku.hk) for registration and further information.