

Should a law being enacted to make police insults become illegal in Hong Kong?

A conflicting relationship between the Hong Kong Police Force and the public has been a long time, but it was typified and became a hot controversy after a Youtube video was publicized on 14th July 2013. The clip showed that Ms Alpais Lam Wai Sze, a teacher at Pui Ling School of the Precious Blood in Fanling, shouting profanity at the police officers while they were handling a confrontation between the Falun Gong and the Youth Care Association. The debate about whether a law should be enacted to make police insults illegal in Hong Kong thereby stemmed from the incident. Below please find the for and against arguments on the topic:

<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>
Law enforcement has become a difficult task with a loss of respect for the police force. The rising difficulty has been pushing the force on the brink of using a higher level of defensive mechanism, such as the use of pepper spray, to deter the protestors, which subsequently draws more criticism. This in turn results in a vicious cycle between the two parties. The respect to police officers as professional law enforcers shall be restored. As the former president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, once pointed out “Obedience of the law is demanded; not asked as a favour.”	Mr Lee Cheuk Yan from the pan-democratic Labour Party said dignity should come from impartiality when enforcing the law. "The police commissioner is to be blamed for the plunging respect upon the police force because of the unreasonable restrictions he and other senior officers have put on protests." Recall what Martin Luther King once mentioned “Law exists for the purpose of establishing justice, when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress.” We have to ask if the law against police insults is a means for establishing justice or conversely, destroying it.
Mr Lai Tung Kwok, the security chief, said that while there were no plans for such a law, the government would monitor officers' mental well-being and provide counselling when needed. Without doubt, being humiliated could be detrimental to the mental health of the police officers, therefore affecting their performance and efficiency at works. A law to prevent police insults can allow zero tolerance to offenders, hence protecting the police officers from mental breakdown.	It will foreseeably be difficult to define “police insults”. As the feeling of being humiliated is always subjective. A series of legislation might be needed for further elaboration in this regard. But as what the renowned ex-Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Winston Churchill suggested “If you have ten thousand regulations you destroy all respect for the law.”
The law could help to avoid deliberate and malignant instigations against the police force, which are actually deviated from the protest groups' genuine motives.	The law will be another action that further widens the contradiction between the police force and public, turning an initially reciprocal relation to confrontations and conflicts.

<p>The law could enhance the police force’s work efficiency in the course of investigation or crowd control etc. For instance, if there is no tolerance to police insults, the conflict between Ms Alpais Lam and the police force will probably not prevent the officers from handling the confrontation between the Falun Gong and the Youth Care Association.</p>	<p>It will be challenging to formulate the punishment terms and to prosecute the violators. Should “police insults” be further categorized as severe insults or mild insults, etc.? And what shall be the benchmarks for these punishment terms? The discussion would inarguably draw much more controversies and oppositions.</p>
<p>A law to prevent police insults can help to rejuvenate police officers and to boost up the force’s morale, which is an essential element for the disciplinary force to carry out its functions effectively.</p>	<p>The law will undoubtedly hamper Hong Kong’s well-acclaimed democratic and liberal rights. The Freedom of Speech/Assembly will be demolished and so to the city’s international image, as a possible result of deteriorated democracy.</p>

Last but not least, whether a law should be enacted to make police insults illegal will take some time to be figured out. But more importantly, it is only through working together with the community that the police force serve are they able to be effective. The force should always place a high priority upon their community relations as it is the most important factor that makes Hong Kong such a prosperous and safe city.