



AS IT IS

Artist Wants Hong Kong Sculpture Back

October 13, 2021

A Danish artist is seeking to get back his **sculpture** in Hong Kong that memorializes the victims of China's 1989 Tiananmen Square **crackdown**.

The **deadline** for its removal passed on Wednesday. The artist, Jens Galschioet, said in an email that he hopes to bring the sculpture out of Hong Kong “under orderly conditions and without it having suffered from any damage.”

Last week, Hong Kong University demanded the removal of the artwork “Pillar of Shame” by Wednesday morning.

The university said in an emailed statement, “We are still seeking legal advice and working with related parties to **handle** the matter in a legal and reasonable manner.”

However, an activist group, the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, released a letter from lawyers representing the university. The letter said the artwork would be considered abandoned if it were not taken away by the deadline.

Galschioet had loaned “Pillar of Shame” to the group. The group was broken up last month as officials suppressed political activism in Hong Kong. The sculpture has been in place for 24 years.

China's leaders sent in the military to end pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989. Hundreds or possibly thousands of people died in the crackdown.

The ruling Communist Party has since barred any public discussion or memorializing of the events in mainland China. For years, people in Hong Kong held memorial observations there. But Hong Kong officials have banned such gatherings for the past two years. They said concerns over COVID-19 were the reason for the ban.

Galschioet told the Associated Press that he wants the sculpture to remain in Hong Kong. But, as a second choice, he said, the artwork could be placed elsewhere until it can be brought back to the city or another area in China.

“We don’t exactly know where we should put it, but we think we have a possibility in Taiwan, we have a possibility in the United States, in Washington D.C., maybe in front of the Chinese embassy, and in Europe,” he said.

The artist said last week that it would take time to move the sculpture. He expressed concern that the short deadline set by the university meant officials looked to destroy it. “It’s an attack against the art, and it’s an attack against the memory about the Tiananmen crackdown,” he said at the time.

Galschioet said his lawyer had sent a letter Tuesday requesting a hearing on the issue. The artist added, “I would like to **emphasize** that I consider any damage to the sculpture to be the responsibility of the university.”

I’m Caty Weaver.

Hai Do adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on reporting from the Associated Press. Ashley Thompson was the editor.

Words in This Story

sculpture - n. a piece of art that is made by carving or molding clay, stone, metal, etc...

crackdown - n. a serious attempt to punish people for doing something that is not permitted

deadline - n. a date or time when something must be finished

handle - v. to deal with

emphasize - v. to give special attention to something
