

Comments by **Kathryn Bradbury, Partner and Head of the Citizenship & Immigration department at Payne Hicks Beach** originally published by yahoo news online on 1 July 2020 and reproduced with kind permission <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/citizenship-rights-offered-british-nationals-hong-kong-raab-120800777.html>



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## Hong Kong: Dominic Raab offers citizenship rights to 2.9 million British nationals

British citizenship is being offered to 2.9 million people living in Hong Kong in light of controversial security laws imposed by China.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab confirmed the move he touted several weeks ago, saying "we will not duck our historic responsibilities".

He said the "bespoke" visa route would let British Nationals Overseas and their dependents come from [Hong Kong](#) to work or study in the UK for five years.

They will then be able to apply for settled status and if successful, one year later can apply for citizenship.

Mr Raab condemned the [arrests in Hong Kong on Wednesday morning](#) of people displaying pro-independence banners and flags, but whose activities were non-violent.

Police fired pepper spray hand guns and tear gas, with water cannon also used to disperse protesters.

Thousands of demonstrators gathered for an annual rally marking the anniversary of the former British colony's handover to China in 1997.

The new security law drawn up by Beijing makes secessionist, subversive, or terrorist activities illegal in Hong Kong - as well as foreign intervention in the city's internal affairs.

Mr Raab said the implications for Hong Kong are severe as it "violates its autonomy and threatens the strangulation of its freedoms".

He accused China of a "grave and deeply disturbing" breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration that aimed to smooth the transition when the territory was handed back in 1997.

The Foreign Office has confirmed there will be no "quota" on the number of those who can apply to come to the UK.

But an immigration lawyer claimed the process "lacks certainty" and will be "extremely costly" given application fees to the Home Office could total £3,000.

Kathryn Bradbury, partner and head of citizenship and immigration at Payne Hicks Beach solicitors' firm, said: "It would be much more equitable to simply confer full British citizenship to these persons given their BNO status."

Tom Cheshire, Sky News' Asia correspondent, said: "Beijing will protest furiously that this is foreign interference in a domestic affair, and perhaps go further - especially as a decision over the involvement of Huawei, the Chinese tech giant, in telecommunications networks, still looms.

"If the experience of Canada is anything to go by, two of whose citizens have been arbitrarily detained for more than 500 days, it may not be a good time to be British in China.

"It's unlikely 3 million people will take up the UK offer.

"But it may prompt other countries - Australia, Canada, the US and others, where people from Hong Kong have historically emigrated - to follow the UK's lead. And that will at least give the people of Hong Kong more options."

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