

Human Rights Seminar Series: A Panel Discussion on Hong Kong's Unified Screening Mechanism

Monday, 8 October 2018, 12:30 – 14:00
Academic Conference Room, 11/F., Cheng Yu Tung Tower
Centennial Campus, The University of Hong Kong

In response to a series of landmark judicial decisions, the Hong Kong Government established a Unified Screening Mechanism (USM) in March 2014 to determine claims made by individuals who fear torture, other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, violations of the right to life, or persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group if returned to their countries of origin. Since the system began operating, more than 13,000 claims have been decided and only 0.8% of those have been substantiated. This extremely low rate by international standards raises questions about procedural fairness, the reasons for rejection, decision-makers' legal reasoning, and access to legal aid and quality legal representation.

The Hong Kong government initiated a review of the system in 2016 and may consider amending the USM. The Legislative Council House Committee has also formed a "Subcommittee to Follow-up Issues Relating to the Unified Screening Mechanism for Non-refoulement Claims" which will hear public views at its upcoming meeting on 18 October 2018. In addition, a number of United Nations human rights bodies, most recently the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, have raised concerns about the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in Hong Kong.

Panelists, including legal experts involved in the system and academic researchers, will share their experience and knowledge of the operation of the USM to date, the potential impact of possible legislative amendments, and the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in Hong Kong generally. Points raised during this seminar will be shared with relevant government bodies and members of the Legislative Council Subcommittee.

Confirmed panelists:

Mark Daly, Partner, Daly, Ho and Associates
Patricia Ho, Partner, Daly, Ho and Associates
Lo Pui-yin, Barrister, Gilt Chambers
Kelley Loper, Director, Centre for Comparative and Public Law



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