



Submission to the Human Rights Committee
for the Adoption of List of Issues on Macao, China at Its 129th Session
May 2020

Submitted by the Macao Youth Federation
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The Macao Youth Federation (MYF) was established on 15 September 2006. Its founding purpose is to reach out to young people and youth organizations from all walks of life, and to strengthen communications and exchanges among the young people from Macao and those from the rest of the world. This submission aims to provide information for the reference of the Committee on Macao's implementation of relevant articles on freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association stated in *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (hereinafter ICCPR).

I. On Freedom of Expression (Article 19 of ICCPR)

1. Associations in Macao enjoy freedom to publish. The Macao Youth Federation, for example, has two types of publications: the annual reports *Quantitative Analysis of Public Opinion* and *Surveys on the Participation of the Macao Youth in Politics* and the monthly magazine *Contempo*. These publications are youth-oriented, focusing on social issues concerned by the youth.
2. Associations in Macao have the freedom to express their opinions to the public. For instance, the annual report *Quantitative Analysis of Public Opinion* covers a wide range of youth-related topics, such as the degree of participation of youth in public affairs, opinions on governmental policies, career aspiration in the Chinese mainland. The magazine *Contempo* has multifarious columns, reporting social hotspots and inviting youngsters to speak out their thoughts.
3. Associations are free to establish their publicity channels and release information. Many associations have their websites and social media for releasing information and interacting with individuals from targeted social groups. For instance, the Macao Youth Federation has its own website and accounts of Facebook and WeChat. Besides, the Macao Youth Federation also cooperates with other associations in operating a website www.Limemacau.org, catering to the needs of youth.



4. The youth in Macao have the freedom to access online information and express their views via various media. A study in *Quantitative Analysis of Public Opinion of 2017* demonstrates the various channels for the youth to obtain information and express their opinions. Among 601 interviewees, paper media (34%), television or radio (54%), websites (26%), online forums (4%), social media (70%), emails from the government, associations or other organizations (27%), discussions with friends, colleagues, teachers or students and associations (27%), public digital billboards or posters (2%) are shown to be the preferred ways to obtain information and express opinions.
5. The degree of participation in politics of the youth in Macao is reported to be moderate. According to a study in *Surveys on the Participation of the Macao Youth in Politics of 2015*, among 806 interviewees, 23.2% are reported to be active participants (taking part in 8 to 12 events per year), 57.5% are moderate participants (taking part in 4 to 7 events per year), and 19.3% are inactive participants (taking part in 0 to 3 events per year). The study covers activities such as expression of thoughts in public media, participation in community services (donation to or assistance for the disadvantaged groups, volunteers and participation in activities of associations or of other organizations), campaigns for special political requests and legal rights, and consultation with the government.
6. Freedom of speech is limited only under some specific situations and events such as typhoons and pandemics for the sake of public interest. For example, in 2019, the Legislative Assembly of Macao Special Administrative Region enacted *the Basic Law on Civil Protection*. The law prescribes that, once a state of emergency is announced, whoever makes or transmits fake news that perturbs public tranquility is punishable with imprisonment of up to two years or a fine. The intention of the law is to prevent the creation of a panic among the public that obstructs the recovery of the city from the emergency.

II. On Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (Article 21 of ICCPR)

7. All the residents of Macao enjoy the rights to peaceful assembly and protest. According to *the Law on Right to Assembly and Protest*, except those which purposes are contrary to the law, every individual can initiate or participate in an assembly or a protest only by noticing the Public Security Police Force of Macao 3 to 15 workdays in advance.
8. From the perspective of the Macao Youth Federation, the police are obligated to maintain the stability and order of society. For this reason, the police may impose some reasonable restrictions on the time and venue of an assembly or a protest. However, only under certain circumstances (for example, when an assembly or a protest seriously undermines public security or the free exercise of rights of people) can the police interrupt an assembly or a protest.



9. The residents of Macao can defend their rights to assembly and protest through judicial redress. If a resident of Macao deems that the police's restrictions and interruption are not reasonable, he/she can appeal to the court to overturn the decision of the police. The well-established system of appeal safeguards the rights of the residents of Macao.

III. On Freedom of Association (Article 22 of ICCPR)

10. All residents of Macao enjoy freedom of association. According to the data released by the Macao government, by the end of 2017, there are nearly 7,000 associations in Macao: 704 are professional, 324 labor, 584 employers, 315 educational, 1,525 charity, 1,668 cultural, and 1,540 sports.
11. Associations in Macao can organize various activities. In 2019, the Macao Youth Federation organized 38 activities, covering the areas such as research, publications, training programs, seminars, conferences, competition events, external relations, promotion activities, festivals, and fellowship programs. Activities organized by associations have enriched social and political life of the residents of Macao.
12. About one-third of the residents in Macao are members of at least one association. According to a study *an Inquiry on the Degree and Satisfaction of the Participation of the Residents of Macao in Associations* published in 2012 by the Macao Youth Federation, among 1,164 interviewees, 29.1% are members of at least one association. The phenomenon demonstrates that associations have constituted an essential part of the residents' social life.
13. The residents in Macao have sufficient ways to make their voices heard. The government consults with associations regularly during its policymaking and implementation. In Macao, associations are regarded to be representatives from different sectors through which public opinions can be transmitted to the government. In addition, any residents of Macao can express their opinions on economic, social and political policies of the government by sending letters to the government or publishing his/her articles in a newspaper.

IV. Suggestions for Further Improvement:

14. The government may establish more channels of communication tailored to different communities and groups, so as to collect more accurately and completely the diverse opinions of our society on civil and political issues, which will be conducive to maintaining social harmony and achieving integral development.
15. To some proposed laws or measures concerned by the public (like the above-mentioned *the Basic Law on Civil Protection*), the Macao government may provide more explanations to the public on its intentions of the introduction of those laws and measures and to elaborate their terms of implementation in order to dispel the public's misgivings.



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16. It is very common that residents or associations do not agree to the government's positions on some social issues and events. In the right to peaceful assembly and protest, the public display of political demands and thoughts is very important to social development, while the exercise may potentially conflict with the government's obligation of maintaining social stability. However, considering the significance of these rights, the government should show its greatest extend of tolerance to those lawful and peaceful assemblies and protests and restrain from imposing restrictions on the reasonable exercise of those rights.
17. The differences or disputes between the governments and the residents or associations should be settled through open and constructive communications or judicial methods, so as to uphold the value of the rule of law.