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**PREFACE**

2020 was a turning point in local history, during which both Hong Kong and her Police Force have been put to a severe test, enduring much hardship, and were reborn.

In addition to dealing with riots and assisting in the fight against the pandemic, the Police have been facing a major challenge - they have continually been smeared by false information since the beginning of the anti-extradition law amendment bill turmoil. In the real world, the Police faced much street violence; in the virtual world, the Police were vilified in the media and on the Internet. The myriad fake news served only one purpose - to injure Hong Kong by undermining the Police, the cornerstone of society.

Fake news was maliciously published to slander police officers, accusing them of committing shocking yet fictional offences such as rape and murder. Allegations were made about police officers vaping electronic

cigarettes and playing chess, etc. while on duty. These allegations were intended to paint police officers as untrustworthy, and no effort was spared in undermining the work of the Police.

In the face of such an unprecedented smear campaign, the Police did not, and indeed could not, waver; instead, they even proactively and speedily addressed these accusations. At the same time, by enhancing transparency, the Police worked towards raising public awareness of police work to win public support.

This special issue offers a panoramic vision of the strategies deployed by the Police in response to such wicked and slanderous attacks, with the aim of helping the public identify and determine the facts and truths. Please do not get misled by lies and rumours, and let us all say "No" to fake news!

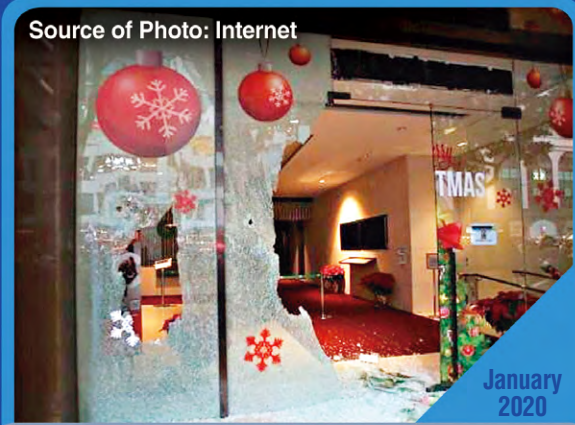


November 2019

**Falsehood:** On a flyover in Lam Tin, police officers threw bricks onto the road.  
**Truth:** Police officers were clearing bricks that scattered over the flyover and throwing them into the cargo compartment of a truck parked underneath, to prevent others from using the bricks for illegal purposes.

\*Number of views of HKPF Facebook (as of 30 December 2020) \*446,352 times

Source of Photo: Internet



January 2020

**Falsehood:** Plain-clothes police officers vandalised a bank in Wan Chai.  
**Truth:** Black-clad, masked rioters smashed panes of glass at a bank in Wan Chai and blamed the destruction on the Police.

\*188,361 times

Smeared by netizens again!




February 2020

**Falsehood:** A police officer holding toilet rolls was shopping for personal goods while on duty.  
**Truth:** Citizens saw the toilet rolls falling off a truck and reported the sighting to the Police. Then, officers retrieved the lost property and tried to return it to its owner.

\*375,818 times

HKPF's CLARIFICATION in response to reporting by online magazine



February 2020

**Falsehood:** Police officers and triad members attended the same banquet.  
**Truth:** Police officers attended a private dinner and did not know the patrons in other rooms of the restaurant.

\*378,395 times

# MALICIOUS SMEARING CAMPAIGN

One of the main challenges faced by the Police over the past year or so was the continuous and wanton smearing from those who endangered law and order in Hong Kong. They incited hatred towards the Police by various means, and even advocated violence, divided our society and stirred up riots, throwing our society into endless chaos. Their intention was evil, and many examples of such smearing are fanciful and absurd to the extreme.

The most outrageous among them was the so-called "Killing on 31 August inside Prince Edward MTR Station", which is nothing but conjecture, fabrication and fantasy. The report on a Thematic Study

Figure 1: Flowers used for paying respects to the fictitious victims of the "31 August Incident" were placed outside the Prince Edward MTR Station.



released by the Independent Police Complaints Council has clearly pointed out that the "31 August Incident" is simply unsubstantiated and unreliable, but a large number of people still visited the "mourning hall" to pay their respects (see Figure 1). About a year later, one of the persons allegedly killed on 31 August, said to be going by the name "Hon Bo-sun", uploaded a "selfie" video clip stating that he was the person involved and that his real name is Wong Mau-chun. He was indeed arrested by the Police on the day of the incident and later charged with "rioting" and other offences. He "vanished" from Hong Kong simply because he had absconded to the United Kingdom. The "reappearance of Hon Bo-sun" fully exposed the falsity of the "31 August Incident" (see Figure 2).

Another outrageous case is the "San Uk Ling Incident". Hatemongers who incited hatred towards the Police spread rumours online, alleging that arrested female protesters were gang-raped and sexually



Said to have died in "31 August Incident"  
 Wong Mau-chun went to seek asylum in the UK

Figure 4: The Police posted a clarification on their Facebook page responding to accusations concerning the San Uk Ling Holding Centre.

Things to know about the "San Uk Ling Holding Centre"

- Used as a "temporary holding area" by the Police four times. The last time was on 2 September.
- At most, 75 arrested persons were held inside on a single occasion.
- Regardless of where the arrested persons are held, the Police will adhere to established procedures to ensure the detainees' rights are respected.
- The Police ceased to use the "San Uk Ling Holding Centre" in light of the avalanche of speculations and its remoteness.

Such accusations are completely baseless and intended to pull the wool over citizens' eyes.

Figure 5: The Police posted a message on Facebook regarding the conviction of a man who had incited others to surround San Uk Ling Holding Centre.

Long Arm of the Law

Date: 2019-9-19 to 21

**Case**  
 Under the pseudonym "Kim Jong-un", a 38-year-old man incited citizens on social media to besiege the San Uk Ling Holding Centre.

**Sentence**  
 Pleading not guilty, the defendant was convicted after trial of "inciting others to take part in an unlawful assembly" and sentenced to 160 hours' community service order.

Figure 2: One of the so-called deceased persons in the "31 August Incident" made a "selfie" video clip saying that he had fled to the UK.



Figure 3: A man smeared the Police in a Facebook post, with intent to incite others to participate in an unlawful assembly. He admitted at the trial that he had lied.

assaulted by police officers. After that, some netizens called on others to besiege the San Uk Ling Holding Centre, with intent to deepen hatred harboured by their so-called "comrades" against the Police (see Figure 3). However, the guile ended in failure - after a court hearing, the facts were presented to the public, justice was done, and the Police were vindicated (see Figure 5).



Video clip on Police Facebook explaining what actually happened at San Uk Ling Holding Centre.

# RUMOUR

Are Police officers dressing up as rioters to deface police stations?



October 2019

**Falsehood:** A man attacked and injured by rioters was a police officer who allegedly vandalised facilities at a police station.

**Truth:** A man who tried to stop rioters from vandalising facilities of the Tsim Sha Tsui Police Station was attacked by rioters. The man was then brought inside the police station by officers to prevent him being further attacked.



\*Number of views of HKPF Facebook (as of 30 December 2020) \*387,062 times



May 2020

**Falsehood:** A police officer was blatantly vaping an e-cigarette while on duty.

**Truth:** A police officer on duty in Mong Kok was drinking water with a tube.



\*263,625 times

新冠肺炎 | 西灣河12人家庭上門聚會 涉違反限聚令被票控



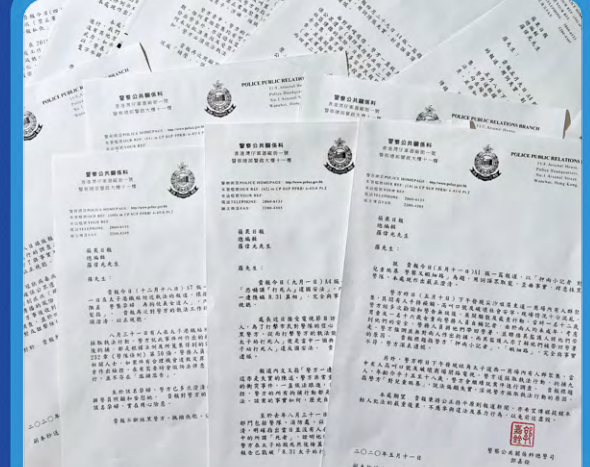
August 2020

**Falsehood:** Police officers summonsed and arrested civilians who were having a family gathering in a flat in Sai Wan Ho.


**Truth:** Some people posed as a local news organisation and published the fake news online.



\*164,723 times



The Police issued more than 100 clarification or rebuttal letters to a particular media organisation but never received a reply.



## PROACTIVE CLARIFICATION AND REBUTTAL

We used to believe that “the wise do not believe rumours” and that “a clean hand wants no washing.” However, the reality today is that rumours are like dust. They will not disappear on their own, but will accumulate unless you clean them up.

Rumours smearing the Police, spread by those who try to fool the public, run wild. In order to stop the rot, the Police actively and quickly clarified and refuted such rumours, showing zero tolerance for such false news. This is because, in the realm of public opinion, if you ignore the falsehoods against you, you are in effect giving up and letting them slide. As a result, lies and rumours will become even more rampant, leaving no room for facts and truths.

Perhaps many people will remember that a former Legislative Council member once uploaded onto Facebook a photo showing a little girl in Christmas costume and police officers looking at each other, and even added personal remarks to create the impression that the police officers were “intimidating” the girl (see Figure 6), with a view to misleading the public into hating the Police and dividing our

▼ Figure 6: A former LegCo member posted a message on Facebook, creating a false impression that police officers were “intimidating” a little girl.

“I have been fighting for freedom for our kids like this little girl in Christmas costume, so that they will not have to hear the police and the CCP taking away their freedom, human rights and the rule of law. If you're not a human rights supporter, you're not a human being.”



▲ Figure 7: “A righteous person sees no malice in anything.” The Police published a post on the same day to restore the truth.

society. The truth is that the girl and her family were taking pictures with on-duty police officers (see Figure 7).

Another person made use of a photo taken at the New Town Plaza in Sha Tin to accuse the Police of assaulting citizens, with a view to besmirching the law enforcement action of the Police (see Figure 8). The truth is that the anti-riot squad were doing their utmost to protect civilians and rescue them from the riot.

To enable the public to tell right from wrong, the Police



programme was of doubtful accuracy and that the comments made in the

◀ Figure 8: The anti-riot squad that rescued innocent civilians from a riot at the New Town Plaza in Sha Tin were falsely accused by netizens of attacking civilians.

posted more than 2,100 messages on Facebook in 2020, doubling the number of posts in 2019. Meanwhile, for false accusations originating from certain public officers or organisations, including members of the Legislative Council, District Councillors and the media, the Police promptly issued clarification or rebuttal letters to them. To a particular media outlet which repeatedly issued misleading and false information, the Police sent more than 100 clarification or rebuttal letters, but the situation did not improve. Noticing that a number of episodes of a current affairs satire programme produced by a local broadcasting station smeared the Police with false accusations and mockeries, the Police wrote to the station concerned expressing their dissatisfaction and lodged a complaint with the Communications Authority (“CA”). The CA concluded that the complaint was substantiated, that the content of the



◀ Figure 9: The Communications Authority issued a warning to a broadcasting station in respect of a current affairs satire programme.

programme did suggest incitement of hatred. The CA decided to issue a warning to the broadcasting station concerned (see Figure 9).

In the face of fake news or smearing campaigns, why did the Police lose no time in debunking them? This is because rumours do not necessarily stop spreading beyond the wise. Many lies and rumours were carefully calibrated to target the Police by cunning people who would do whatever they could to disseminate falsities. If the Police did not act fast to respond with clarifications and refutations, such lies and rumours would cast an evil spell on even more people.



Link to Police webpage showing clarification letters issued to the media

**Standing tall, female officers look just as strong as their male counterparts**



So, it's not always easy to tell them apart **September 2019**

**Falsehood:** A male police officer conducted a search on a female in Tung Chung.  
**Truth:** All the police officers who conducted the search on the female were female officers.



\*Number of views of HKPF Facebook (as of 30 December 2020) **\*732,493 times**

**Police strongly condemn inaccurate accusations**

Regarding the "arrest" of a Mentally Incapacitated Person, the Police have the following clarification:

**False claims by lawmaker**

- ✗ The "Appropriate Adult" for the arrested man was not notified.
- ✗ The mother of the arrested person learnt that he was in the police station only after multiple attempts.

**June 2020**

**Falsehood:** After arresting a Mentally Incapacitated Person, the Police did not notify the "Appropriate Adult" for him.  
**Truth:** Pursuant to guidelines, the Police immediately notified the mother of the arrested person in order to protect his interests.



**\*181,334 times**



**August 2020**

**Falsehood:** Police officers, without producing their warrant cards, blatantly "abducted" a citizen off the street.  
**Truth:** Making a lawful arrest of the lawbreaker, the police officers had already produced their warrant cards and explained the reason for the arrest.



**\*124,136 times**

Source of Photo: Internet (Arrested afterwards on suspicion of "wasteful employment of police officers")



**November 2020**

**Falsehood:** A District Councillor claimed to have been intimidated, subdued and denied his right to contact his lawyer in Yuen Long during his arrest by the Police.  
**Truth:** The District Councillor was never arrested nor taken to the police station by officers that night. He later admitted that the post was nothing but a sheer fabrication.



**\*120,303 times**

# ENHANCING POLICE TRANSPARENCY

The biggest difference between a rumour and a fact is that a rumour can be amplified infinitely, while there can only be one fact.

Another strategy adopted by the Police in wiping out rumours was to enhance transparency at work so that rumours and lies would simply implode.

Ways to enhance transparency include holding press conferences (see Figure 10), media briefings (see Figure 11) and media interviews (see Figure 12) in order to directly answer questions and allay public concern. In 2020, the Police held a total of 69 press conferences and 462 media briefings, while the Commissioner of Police also attended 34 media interviews, hitting a record high.

In the ever-changing world and an ever-progressing society, the Hong Kong Police Force has to go faster and further to meet new challenges. The "Social Media Live Team" established by the Police in 2020 has also helped increase transparency. For example, during previous large-scale public events,

very often the public saw only the enforcement action of the Police but not the reasons behind; in other words, the public saw only the "consequences" but not the "causes". With the "Social Media Live Team", the Police can broadcast the dangers and challenges faced by frontline police officers in real time, especially when dealing with violent and provocative lawbreakers, so that the public can see what is actually going on. This goes a long way towards curbing unfounded hype (see Figure 13).



▲ Figure 10: During the turmoil surrounding the extradition law amendment bill, the Police held a press conference at 4 p.m. every day to answer questions from the media.



◀ Figure 11: The Police took the initiative to hold media briefings to convey the latest information to the public.



▼ Figure 12: The Commissioner of Police being interviewed by the media.

In addition, bearing in mind that people nowadays love to see photos and short videos but seldom read texts, the Police produced thematic short videos and uploaded them onto social media to help citizens learn the facts and dispel doubts (see Figure 14).

▼ Figure 13: Live reporting by on-duty officers of the Police Social Media Live Team.



▲ Figure 14: The Police produced and uploaded thematic short videos for public viewing.



Link to videos on Police Facebook (clarifications, statements, appeals)



**Falsehood:** Two traffic police officers slacked off at work by playing chess or barbecuing.  
**Truth:** The officers were operating a digital radar detector to catch speeding vehicles and persons driving in an unlawful manner.



\*Number of views of HKPF Facebook (as of 30 December 2020)

\*273,653 times



**Falsehood:** Police officers stopped and searched a schoolgirl without valid reasons.  
**Truth:** The schoolgirl sought the assistance of police officers after losing her purse. The officers asked the schoolgirl to produce her identity card in order to record her personal particulars as the informant.



\*367,901 times

### Conclusion

The Internet is boundless, but cannot be lawless. The public has the freedom of speech, but they must not spread falsehoods and rumours, or even go beyond the parameters set by the law.

As a professional law enforcement agency, the Police, even when put to the test by overwhelming rumours and smearing, will continue to enforce the law with determination as well as proactively and promptly rebutting fake news and false information, in order to prevent the public from being misled.

Nowadays, with advanced technology and rapid dissemination of information, the Police will use various platforms to release information in a timely manner, so as to ensure that the correct information is conveyed and to help the public identify the facts and truths.

In this new policing environment, the Police will also take the initiative to strengthen communication with members of the public, especially young people, and will actively cooperate with stakeholders in different sectors of society, actively explore new communication channels and seize opportunities to connect with the community and schools, with the objective of enhancing the relationship between the Police and the public, to win the public's trust and support.

## PROFESSIONALISM AND STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

For many people, “seeing is believing” and “photographs are the best evidence.” Those who spread fallacies capitalised on this side of human psychology and sought to deceive the public by doctoring pictures.

Those determined to tarnish the image of the Police have distorted pictures by blurring the lines between black and white, mixing the spurious with the genuine and even concocting stories out of thin air. For example, traffic police officers who were using a speed detector to enforce the law were falsely accused of dereliction of duty for playing chess at work. Members of the public who do not stay vigilant, exercise their judgement and conduct “fact-checking” for everything will easily be misled.

Whenever a photo is doctored to discredit the Police, the Police will lose no time in clarifying the facts. Indeed, even if the photos are not doctored, people may still be

deceived. Those with ill intentions may, even without doctoring a photo, take things out of context and deliberately misinterpret the actual story behind, which can also achieve the effect of smearing. For example, police officers who assisted a girl in locating her lost property have been falsely accused of stopping and searching her for no reason, as well as intimidating her. Although the photo concerned had not been doctored, fabricated narratives were added to mislead the public into believing that the police officers were abusing their power, neglecting their duties and bullying others. The purpose behind all these was to incite hatred.



▲ Figure 15: The Police will continue to safeguard Hong Kong by enforcing the law in a professional, confident and impartial manner.

Even though they continue to be discredited and slandered, the Police, standing at the forefront of law enforcement, will continue to strive for improvement and perform their duties in an even more professional manner. As always, police officers will perform their duties diligently and impartially, in order to win public recognition.

### 《KNOW THE FACTS – Rumours and Lies Can Never Be Right》

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《KNOW THE FACTS - Rumours and Lies Can Never Be Right》

# How can you **SMASH** a lie?

Stop and think

Don't believe rumours and hearsay so easily

Alert relatives and friends: don't be led by emotions

Separate facts from lies by "fact-checking"

Not sure if something is true or false? Don't share it!