

A senior Hong Kong official is warning protesters they face arrest if they do not clear the streets, where they have been camped out for weeks demanding democratic reforms.

Chief secretary Carrie Lam on Tuesday urged protesters to "quickly and peacefully" leave the roads, which she said are being "unlawfully occupied." She did not say if or when police would act to clear the sites.

Lam, the government's second-in-command, said she sees "no room for dialogue for the time being" with the student-led protesters, which she said have not demonstrated sincerity in previous talks.

On Monday, Hong Kong's High Court ruled that police could arrest protesters who defy attempts to clear the protest sites, raising fears of renewed clashes.

Past attempts by police to break up the protests have backlashed, causing the demonstrations to grow. At one point, tens of thousands of people joined the movement.

The protesters are calling for fully democratic elections in the semiautonomous Chinese territory's 2017 elections for chief executive. China ruled in August that all candidates must be approved by a committee stacked with pro-Beijing loyalists.