

J. C. M. P.

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Advice sought on protest ban

Pressure groups are seeking clarification on whether the recent court order banning protests outside the Housing Authority's headquarters in Homantin is a blanket ban covering future protests.

The director of the Society for Community Organisations, Mr Fung Ho-lap, said his group is seeking legal advice on the validity of the order regarding future protest action.

Mr Fung said the order had stripped protesters of one of their powerful weapons — the sleep-in — in negotiation with the Housing Department for better rehousing.

"But we will not give up

until our legal advisers confirm that the order also covers future protests.

"If we can find a loophole in the order, we will use it to help needy people get better housing," he said.

The society and other pressure groups are believed to be supporting the 400 protesters from the Kowloon Bay Transit Centre in their campaign for better housing.

The protesters ended their 13-day sleep-in on Saturday. About 260 of them had fasted for 11 days. They had refused rehousing at the Shuen Wan temporary housing area in Taipo.

A Housing Department official yesterday stressed that the order is a blanket

ban to prevent all protesters from turning the podium outside the building into a camp site.

The housing manager, Mr Barry So, said a senior Crown counsel involved in the case had explained to him that such an order is applicable indefinitely to make the podium a "legal no-go" area for protesters.

But concessions would be given to petitioners who stay only temporarily, he added.

Mr So said the senior Crown counsel also advised him always to have a copy of the order posted on the wall outside the building, warning potential protest parties of the court order.