

Hong Kong labour activists push for iPhone boycott

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Protestors from SACOM (Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour) burn effigies of Apple products during a demonstration near the offices of Foxconn in Hong Kong. Hong Kong labour activists said Tuesday they plan to kick off a worldwide boycott of Apple's newest iPhone after a spate of suicides at a southern Chinese factory that makes the iconic device.

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A group of two dozen protested outside the Hong Kong office of Taiwan-based Foxconn, calling on the technology giant to improve working conditions at its giant plant across the border in the city of Shenzhen.

The group said Foxconn -- a manufacturer for Apple and other electronics giants -- should probe the suicides, which have reached 10 since the start of the year after a 19-year-old employee fell to his death

at the factory Tuesday.

"The reason we're staging the protest is the high death rate due to some workers committing [suicide](#) within five months, which we think is abnormal," Debby Chan, spokeswoman for Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour, told AFP.

"Foxconn should evaluate its management style.... We strongly urge Foxconn to start a committee to look into the reasons they died."

The deaths, apparent suicides, have raised questions about the conditions for millions of factory workers in [China](#), especially at Foxconn, where labour activists say long hours, low pay and high pressure are the norm.

The death Tuesday was the ninth at Foxconn's Shenzhen facilities this year.

Witnesses said Li Hai, a 19 year-old man, jumped from the fifth floor of the training centre building, China's official Xinhua news agency reported.

Police found a note left by Li, according to Xinhua, in which he told his father: "I have no capabilities. I have got what I deserve."

Chen Hongfang, deputy director of Foxconn's labor union, said Li had only worked in the South China Training Centre in Foxconn's Guanlan plant for 42 days, the agency reported.

Another company employee died at a plant in northern China in January, according to state media reports. Two more have suffered serious injuries in similar falls.

The group's founder Terry Gou on Monday denied that Foxconn's

employees were being worked too hard and driven to kill themselves, saying he was not running "blood and sweat factories".

Chan said interviews with about 30 Foxconn workers in recent days suggested that they "suffer from pressure but just learn to internalise it".

The planned boycott would likely kick off ahead of the new iPhone's release next month, Chan said, adding that the group was also targeting United Win Technology, another Taiwan-based Apple supplier with operations in China.

Foxconn, known in Taiwan by the name of its parent Hon Hai Precision, is the world's largest maker of computer components.

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