

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Jimmy Lai's International Legal Team Files Urgent Appeal with United Nations**

The international legal team representing renowned media entrepreneur, pro-democracy campaigner, and writer, Jimmy Lai, has today, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2022, filed an urgent appeal with the United Nations concerning the legal harassment against him and his imprisonment in Hong Kong, due to him exercising his internationally protected rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and the right to peaceful protest.

Mr Lai is a high-profile supporter of the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement and has been an outspoken critic of Beijing's control over Hong Kong for many years. He is a well-known advocate of peaceful assembly. He is the founder of *Apple Daily*, one of Hong Kong's most popular Chinese language newspapers until it closed in June 2021. In the days ahead of the closure, Hong Kong authorities arrested five *Apple Daily* senior executives and froze the company's assets, as well as Mr Lai's assets, leaving the newspaper with no choice but to close.

Hong Kong authorities have repeatedly targeted Mr Lai, now aged 74, and this has intensified since the passing of the controversial National Security Law in 2020. He was arrested in August 2020 and he remains in prison in Hong Kong. Mr Lai faces a barrage of legal cases, including four separate criminal prosecutions arising from his attendance at and participation in various protests in Hong Kong between 2019-2020, including most recently in relation to his participation in a vigil marking the 1989 Tiananmen massacre in Beijing, for which he received a 13 month prison sentence. He is currently serving concurrent prison sentences in relation to all four protest cases. Other charges against him include allegations of collusion with foreign forces and seditious publication in relation to various articles published by *Apple Daily*, including editorials critical of the Chinese and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) authorities, critical of the prosecution and targeting of protesters and reports on the protests. His assets have also been frozen, and he faces additional legal cases relating to his companies, including liquidation proceedings and voting rights proceedings, linked to his prosecution under the National Security Law.

Today's urgent appeal addresses the numerous national security, criminal and regulatory cases which have been lodged against Mr Lai and his newspaper over the past two years. It calls on

the United Nations experts to consider all of the cases against Mr Lai and the threats to him together, *“as they constitute prosecutorial, judicial and legal harassment of Mr Lai, because of his advocacy of democracy and the rights to protest and freedom of expression in Hong Kong SAR, and his work as founder and editor of Apple Daily.”* The appeal also highlights intimidatory tactics used against Mr Lai’s lawyers, which raise further concerns.

Mr Lai is represented by an international legal team, led by Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC, and including Jonathan Price and Jennifer Robinson.

**Sebastien Lai**, Mr Lai's son, said:

*“The HKSAR government has thrown many charges against my dad: for unauthorised assembly, for fraud, for colluding with foreign forces under the National Security Law. But his only crime, like so many other Hong Kongers behind bars for purely political reasons, is to demand democracy in the face of tyranny.*

*My dad’s trials are piling up with no end in sight. He is now serving concurrent sentences, in part for a vigil to remember activists who were killed in the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. The CCP may have swapped their guns for a gavel. But with patience, a gavel can do as much damage, and make much less noise. I urge the United Nations Special Rapporteurs to investigate what the CCP through the Hong Kong government is doing to my father and dozens of other brave Hong Kongers.”*

**Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC**, international counsel for Mr Lai, said:

*“Jimmy Lai faces a barrage of spurious cases and the risk of spending the rest of his life in prison simply for speaking out, and for seeking to defend freedom of the press, democracy and the rule of law in Hong Kong. Today’s urgent appeal details how the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities are weaponizing the law against him – using the pretext of national security and a range of legal measures not only to silence and punish him for expressing his views, but also to deter others from doing the same. Vital rights and freedoms – to free speech, a free media, the right to protest – are vanishing fast in Hong Kong. Urgent action by the United Nations and the international community to hold the authorities to account is now essential.”*

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