



PRESS RELEASE
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Canadian House of Commons calls for Jimmy Lai's immediate release

The Canadian House of Commons unanimously adopted a motion on Tuesday 12th December 2023 calling for the release of 76-year-old pro-democracy campaigner and publisher, Jimmy Lai.

Jimmy Lai has been imprisoned in Hong Kong since 2020 as a consequence of his peaceful pro-democracy campaigning, writing and the work of *Apple Daily*, the popular Chinese language newspaper he founded in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

The call for his release by the House of Commons of Canada follows the same call made by other states and bodies, including the US Government, the European Parliament, and the UN Special Rapporteur on Peaceful Assembly.

The Canadian House's motion states:

“By unanimous consent, it was resolved, — That, given that,

- a Jimmy Lai stands for so many of the values championed by Canadians, most importantly media freedom, respect for the rule of law, and standing up for what is right,*
- b Mr Lai is a peaceful pro-democracy campaigner and publisher whose hugely popular newspaper Apple Daily was shut down for political reasons in 2021,*
- c Mr Lai has just spent his 76th birthday in prison where he has been for the last three years on charges brought under the National Security Law, whose provisions are inconsistent with international human rights law,*
- d Mr Lai is about to face trial on yet further charges arising from his pro-democracy writing and campaigning that could see him spend the rest of his life behind bars,*

the House call upon the Hong Kong authorities to release Jimmy Lai and cease prosecuting him and others charged under the National Security Law and the House reaffirms journalists and media workers everywhere have the right to operate in an environment free from intimidation and harassment by state authorities.”

Responding to the motion, **Sebastien Lai**, Jimmy Lai's son, said:

“I am deeply grateful to the Canadian House of Commons for this unanimous motion calling for my father's release. It is a reminder that the defenders of freedom are not alone.

I thank Canada for its moral clarity, championing so clearly its democratic values. Canada has stood by my father and made us all more hopeful that we will see him free.”



Professor Irwin Cotler, International Chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, said:

“The case and cause of Jimmy Lai represents the most fundamental values of Canadian and international law, media freedom and human dignity. This Unanimous Consent Motion calling for his release embodies the very best traditions of Canadian human rights leadership, and which will be followed by further global action.”

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, who leads Mr Lai’s international legal team, said:

“We are grateful to the Canadian MPs from all parties who proposed and supported this motion with such courage and commitment. This initiative is in keeping with Canada’s proud history of showing leadership on issues concerning media freedom and human rights. Jimmy Lai has already spent over three years in prison for journalism and peaceful pro-democracy campaigning. He must be released before it is too late.”

Jonathan Price, a member of Mr Lai’s international legal team, said:

“This is an impressive show of resolve from all sides of the House, and underlines Canada’s unwavering and unilateral support for those standing up for press freedom, the rule of law, and democracy, no matter where in the world.”

We would like to thank the Government of Canada for its support of this Unanimous Consent Motion; Liberal MP Judy Sgro for presenting this Motion; and the Leader of His Majesty’s Loyal Opposition Pierre Poilievre, Conservative MP Shuvaloy Majumdar, NDP MP Jenny Kwan, and Bloc Québécois MP Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe for championing and driving all-party support for this Motion, and for standing up for freedom and democracy for the people of Hong Kong.

In international law matters, Mr Jimmy Lai and Mr Sebastien Lai are represented by an international legal team led by [Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC](#), which includes [Jonathan Price](#), [Tatyana Eatwell](#), [Jennifer Robinson](#), and [Sarah Dobbie](#), barristers at Doughty Street Chambers. In Canada, they are joined by an expert team, [Professor Irwin Cotler](#) and [Brandon Silver](#) of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights.

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