



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**\* MONDAY 18<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2023 \***

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**Canadian Senate calls for Jimmy Lai's immediate release**

The Senate of Canada unanimously adopted a motion on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023 calling for the release of 76-year-old pro-democracy campaigner and publisher, Jimmy Lai. This follows the adoption of an [identical unanimous motion](#) by the Canadian House of Commons on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The adoption by the Senate makes the motion an official Motion of Parliament.

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

The motion was co-sponsored by eminent leaders of every political grouping, including a former Court of Appeal Judge and Canadian Armed Forces Rear Admiral, demonstrating the resonance of Mr Lai's case in legal and national security communities.

Senator Pierre Dalphond, who introduced the motion on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 on behalf of Senator Housakos, Senator Omidvar, Senator Miville-Dechéne and Senator Patterson, [described](#) Mr Lai as “a hero for democracy in Hong Kong” and a “peaceful man who dared to publish the truth”.



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

*“My father has spent the last three years in a maximum security prison, facing a litany of trumped up charges for defending freedom. His national security law trial starts today. The Hong Kong government wants my dad to think that he is alone. By unanimously joining the call of the Canadian parliament to demand my father's release, the Canadian senate is telling the Hong Kong government that Jimmy Lai does not stand alone.”*

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

*“The international community knows that what is happening to Jimmy Lai is wrong, that the National Security Law and its use against peaceful pro-democracy campaigners is a direct breach of China's international legal obligations, and that as long as someone like Jimmy Lai is persecuted in this way, Hong Kong can no longer be regarded as governed by the rule of law. The Canadian Parliament has spoken with one clear voice on these issues.”*

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

*“Parliament has unanimously spoken – Jimmy Lai should be released immediately.*

*With these Motions, the House and Senate affirms on behalf of all Canadians that Jimmy Lai represents the very best of our shared values. Democracy, decency, and human dignity are on trial in Hong Kong, and Canada is taking a clear stand. As Jimmy Lai's sham trial commences, he – and all of the people of Hong Kong – will know that Canada is in his corner.”*

We would like to thank Senator Dalphond, Senator Housakos, Senator Omidvar, Senator Miville-Dechéne and Senator Patterson 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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