

PRESS RELEASE
*** MONDAY 18th DECEMBER 2023 ***

Sebastien Lai and International Legal Team Welcome UK Foreign Secretary's Call for Jimmy Lai's Release

As Jimmy Lai's National Security Law trial gets underway in Hong Kong today, Monday 18 December 2023, the **Foreign Secretary, Lord Cameron**, has issued a [statement](#) calling for the Hong Kong authorities to “*release Jimmy Lai*”. His statement criticises the National Security Law (NSL) in Hong Kong as “*a clear breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration*” and states that “*its continued existence and use is a demonstration of China breaking its international commitments*”. Lord Cameron states:

“I am gravely concerned that anyone is facing prosecution under the National Security Law, and particularly concerned at the politically motivated prosecution of British national Jimmy Lai.

As a prominent and outspoken journalist and publisher, Jimmy Lai has been targeted in a clear attempt to stop the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.

I urge the Chinese authorities to repeal the National Security Law and end the prosecution of all individuals charged under it.

I call on the Hong Kong authorities to end their prosecution and release Jimmy Lai.”

The statement was issued overnight, hours before Jimmy's Lai trial on charges of foreign collusion under the NSL and sedition commenced in Hong Kong today.

Jimmy Lai, a British citizen, 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.

Responding to the Foreign Secretary's statement today, **Sebastien Lai**, Jimmy Lai's son, said:

“I am incredibly grateful that Lord Cameron and the UK Government have joined the call for my dad's release.

My dad, Jimmy Lai, has been jailed and persecuted for his journalism and advocating for democracy, values the UK holds dear. They have now joined my dad – a British citizen – in reminding Hong Kong of that.

I know the UK Government will do all they can to secure my dad's freedom.”

The **US Department of State** also issued a [statement](#) overnight, marking the start of the trial calling for Jimmy Lai's immediate release. The statement highlighted the US Government's concerns regarding the NSL generally and the targeting of Jimmy Lai in particular, stating:

“The United States condemns the prosecution of pro-democracy advocate and media owner Jimmy Lai in Hong Kong under the PRC-imposed National Security Law. Lai has been held in pre-trial detention for more than 1,000 days, and Hong Kong and Beijing authorities have denied him his choice of legal representation.

We urge Beijing and Hong Kong authorities to respect press freedom in Hong Kong. Actions that stifle press freedom and restrict the free flow of information... have undermined Hong Kong's democratic institutions and harmed Hong Kong's reputation as an international business and financial hub.

We call on Hong Kong authorities to immediately release Jimmy Lai and all others imprisoned for defending their rights."

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, who leads Jimmy Lai's international legal team, stated:

"Today is a dark day in Hong Kong. A once vibrant city which thrived due to freedoms unknown in mainland China has now become a shadow of its former self.

Jimmy Lai is on trial for his journalism and peaceful pro-democracy activities, charged under a law which should not exist and in a system which is no longer compliant with the rule of law. But the world is watching, and in truth it is the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities which are now under international scrutiny. Releasing Jimmy Lai immediately and unconditionally is not only the right thing to do: it is in Hong Kong's interests."

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.

ENDS