

## **HRC55 – STATEMENT FOR ID OF UNSR ON COUNTER-TERRORISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **CONTRIBUTION TO DEBATE ON BEHALF OF INTERNATIONAL PEN**

Mr President, thank you for the opportunity to address the Council on behalf of International PEN.

We welcome the Special Rapporteur and congratulate him on his appointment.

In recent years, Hong Kong has abused criminal laws to target and imprison pro-democracy campaigners and journalists. This has included the abuse of the draconian National Security Law.

Broadly defined offences of “subversion” and “collusion with foreign forces” incur maximum penalties of life imprisonment. When the law was imposed by Beijing in 2020, UN experts warned that the law would lead to “arbitrary interpretation and enforcement” and would undermine human rights.

And they were right.

The NSL and sedition laws are being abused to imprison students for liking social media posts, to convict children’s book authors – and to prosecute journalists and pro-democracy campaigners. Among them is 76 year old Jimmy Lai, a renowned campaigner, writer and founder of the newspaper Apple Daily.

My name is Jennifer Robinson and I am a member of his international legal team.

Mr Lai is currently on trial under the NSL and sedition laws. Every day in the trial we see new, ludicrous allegations, which make clear that – in truth – Jimmy Lai is accused of conspiracy to commit journalism. He is also being accused of colluding with foreign forces for raising concern about human rights abuse with international organisations and foreign parliamentarians.

These are not crimes. They are actions protected under international law.

International PEN calls on China and Hong Kong to repeal the NSL and drop all charges against Mr Lai, and all those arbitrarily detained for their peaceful expression.

Mr Special Rapporteur, how will you use your mandate to address this important case?