

**ON JIMMY LAI'S BIRTHDAY, HIS INTERNATIONAL LEGAL TEAM CONDEMNS HIS CONVICTION ON FRAUD CHARGES  
AND ASKS THE UK GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ACTION**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**London, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

On Jimmy Lai's birthday, his international legal team, led by Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, has condemned last week's judgment of the Hong Kong District Court, convicting him of fraud charges relating to the lease of the premises for his pro-democracy media organisation, *Apple Daily*, and has called for the UK Government to take action to secure his release ahead of his upcoming National Security Law trial.

75-year-old Mr Lai is a renowned media entrepreneur, pro-democracy campaigner, and writer, and a recipient of RSF's 2020 Press Freedom Prize. He has been imprisoned in Stanley Prison, Hong Kong, since 2020, following convictions for his attendance at pro-democracy protests in 2019-20. He faces further spurious charges under Hong Kong's draconian National Security Law, carrying a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. His trial is due to commence next month, on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

On Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2022 Mr Lai was convicted of fraud charges. Ahead of the verdict, on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2022 a number of experts in relation to Hong Kong, the rule of law and media freedom met in the House of Lords and discussed Mr Lai's case: former, and final, Governor of Hong Kong, **Lord Patten of Barnes**; Foreign Correspondent and BBC News World Affairs Editor **John Simpson CBE**; **Baroness Helena Kennedy KC**, Director of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute; **Rebecca Vincent**, Director of Operations and Campaigns, Reporters Without Borders (RSF); and **Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC**, barrister and leader of Mr Lai's international legal team. All denounced the charges against Mr Lai and his continuing detention.

At the event Mr Lai's son, Sebastian Lai, had a message for all those gathered in the House of Lords, read by John Simpson CBE. **Sebastien Lai** said:

*"I trust that there isn't a single soul here in Parliament that would disagree with – and would not fight for – the rights that my father campaigned for in Hong Kong. Nor a single person that would disagree that freedom of speech and association are fundamental pillars of our society protected by the full force of British democracy.*

*In order to incriminate Dad, a British citizen who has now been in prison for 2 years, they have had to corrupt the Hong Kong justice system, twisting and bending it to fit their whims.*

*So today I call on the UK Government to take urgent action to protect him and secure his freedom. We are days away from a verdict in a spurious fraud case, and weeks away from a national security and sedition trial which makes a mockery of the rule of law and could condemn my father to the rest of his life behind bars. The UK must do all it can to stop this, and do it now."*

Speaking today, **Lord Patten** said:

*"The treatment of Jimmy Lai is a major attack on Hong Kong's freedoms and its way of life. This is an outrageous assault on Hong Kong's previously free press, and mistreatment of a principled man. The National Security Law looms large over Hong Kong society, resembling what Professor Emeritus Perry Link called "a giant anaconda coiled in an overhead chandelier." Everyone in its shadow adjusts their behaviour for fear of what may befall them otherwise. Jimmy Lai's case reminds them of just how great the risks are."*

Leader of Mr Lai's international legal team, **Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC** added:

*"Jimmy Lai's case is deeply concerning in itself: he faces a barrage of spurious legal cases and risks life behind bars, all due to his work as a writer, media owner and peaceful pro-democracy campaigner. His case is also emblematic of wider concerns in Hong Kong: the use of the draconian National Security Law to silence critical voices, the weaponization of a range of other laws to target journalists and peaceful protestors, and the dismantling of the rule of law.*

*Mr Lai is a UK national, imprisoned in Hong Kong for speaking truth to power. The multiple prosecutions against him and his imprisonment since August 2020 flagrantly violates international law and international standards, and has attracted widespread international condemnation. We ask the UK Government to treat this case with the urgency it deserves and to speak out in support of its citizen.”*

Commenting today on Mr Lai’s conviction for fraud and the latest developments in the case, **Baroness Helena Kennedy KC** stated:

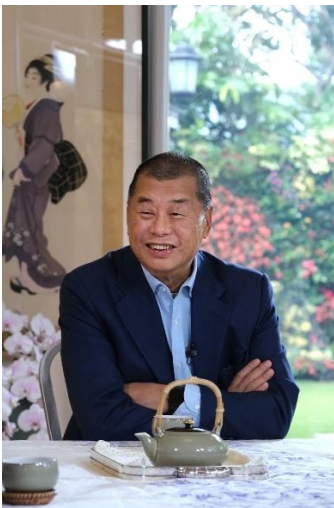
*“I have no doubt that these were manufactured charges, designed to reduce the reputation of Jimmy Lai in the eyes of the world and to break his moral courage. Oppressive states that hold democracy, the rule of law and a free media in contempt will go to any lengths to discredit their critics. Jimmy Lai stood his ground in peaceful opposition to the power of the Chinese government. This is the price it is exacting.”*

**Rebecca Vincent** said:

*“We condemn the newest verdict against Jimmy Lai, and remain deeply concerned by the possibility he faces of life in prison on further bogus national security charges. We campaign in Lai’s support as a matter of priority, given the emblematic nature of the case against him and the forced closure of Apple Daily, along with the arrests of several other senior members of the newspaper. This has all been part of a severe deterioration of press freedom in Hong Kong, which experienced one of the biggest global declines in RSF’s 2022 World Press Freedom Index. It’s time for the Hong Kong authorities to reverse this alarming trend, to release Jimmy Lai and the other 12 jailed journalists, drop the pending cases against all other journalists, and cease this relentless targeting of independent media.”*

Mr Lai’s fraud conviction also prompted international condemnation. In a [statement](#), the US government said: “The United States condemns the October 25 verdict against Hong Kong democracy advocate Jimmy Lai, founder of the Apple Daily newspaper, on spurious fraud charges. We remain deeply concerned about the deterioration in protection for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the systematic dismantling of Hong Kong’s autonomy under the National Security Law (NSL).” They urged China “to restore respect for press freedom in Hong Kong, where a once-vibrant independent media environment has all but disappeared.” International NGOs including [RSF](#) and [CPJ](#) have also denounced the judgment. The litany of cases against Mr Lai has been widely viewed internationally as an attempt to oppress his pro-democracy campaigning and his media outlet’s reporting critical of China. The [European Union’s External Action Service](#) and [European Parliament](#), the [US Senate](#), and the [United Nations](#) have all expressed alarm over Hong Kong’s crackdown on Mr Lai and other pro-democracy campaigners.

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



**Jimmy Lai.** Photograph by Next Animation Studios.