

The Rt Hon Keir Starmer MP, Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

21st May 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you as a group of people with personal experience of the profound trauma and distress caused by wrongful imprisonment abroad. We are survivors of arbitrary detention - former prisoners and former hostages – and family members who campaigned for the release of our loved ones.

We know firsthand the horror of these cases and the reality of living everyday with the knowledge you may never see your loved one again. We also know that resolving these cases and bringing British citizens home to the UK depends on robust, principled, strategic action by the UK Government.

Today we call on you and your Government to take urgent steps to secure the release of Jimmy Lai, before it is too late.

Mr Lai is a 77-year-old British citizen, a father and grandfather. He is a renowned media owner, journalist and pro-democracy campaigner. Despite widespread international condemnation, he has been imprisoned in solitary confinement in Hong Kong for over 1,600 days. From his concrete cell, he now faces the oppressive temperatures of a Hong Kong summer. We share the Lai family's grave concern for his wellbeing; it is clear that ongoing imprisonment poses a real threat to Mr Lai's life.

As a Prime Minister who has avowed your Government's commitment to human rights and the rule of law, we urge you to meet with Jimmy Lai's family as a matter of urgency and to work tirelessly with your Parliamentary colleagues and international allies to secure his immediate release. We are lucky that our families were eventually reunited. We now come together to ask that you do everything in your power to bring Jimmy Lai home so that his family can be reunited too.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Ratcliffe, husband of former hostage and prisoner, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe (Iran)

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, former hostage and prisoner (Iran)

Carine Kanimba, daughter of former prisoner, Paul Rusesabagina (Rwanda)

Anaïse Kanimba, daughter of former prisoner, Paul Rusesabagina (Rwanda)

Paul Rusesabagina, former prisoner (Rwanda)

Anoosheh Ashoori, former hostage and prisoner (Iran)

Elika Ashoori, daughter of former hostage and prisoner, Anoosheh Ashoori (Iran)

Vladimir Kara-Murza, Russian opposition politician, author, historian, and former political prisoner (Russia)

Evgenia Kara-Murza, President of The 30 October Foundation and wife of Russian opposition politician and former political prisoner Vladimir Kara-Murza (Russia)

Jason Rezaian, Director of Press Freedom Initiatives, The Washington Post; co-Executive Director, Center for Strategic and International Studies Commission on Hostage Taking and Wrongful Detention; and former hostage and prisoner (Iran)

Cheng Lei, journalist and former prisoner (China)

Dr. Matthew Hedges, academic & victim of torture and arbitrary detention (UAE)

Paul N. Whelan, former hostage and prisoner (Russia)

Yasser Eljuboori, former prisoner (Iraq)

Laura Wickham, wife of former prisoner, Yasser Eljuboori (Iraq)

Peter Greste, Executive Director, the Alliance for Journalists' Freedom; and former prisoner (Egypt)

Leopoldo López, Venezuelan political leader, pro-democracy activist and former political prisoner (Venezuela)

Felix Maradiaga, former political prisoner (Nicaragua)

Berta Valle, wife of Felix Maradiaga, former political prisoner (Nicaragua)

Alsu Kurmasheva, journalist, press freedom advocate and former prisoner (Russia)

Natan Sharansky, human rights activist and former prisoner (Soviet Union)

Maziar Bahari, journalist and former prisoner (Iran)