

#FREE JIMMYLAI



Press Release

4 September 2025

New research reveals risk to life for elderly, diabetic prisoners in Hong Kong; Jimmy Lai's international legal team files Urgent Appeal with UN over risks to life

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The international legal team for Jimmy Lai and Sebastien Lai has submitted a new Urgent Appeal on behalf of Jimmy Lai to the United Nations (“**UN**”) experts in relation to the serious and immediate risk to Mr Lai's life posed by his ongoing detention. The Urgent Appeal contains new evidence and analysis conducted by the international legal team of an apparent systemic failure of the Hong Kong authorities to treat the deteriorating health of older and diabetic prisoners; and it addresses mounting concerns about Mr Lai's deteriorating health and the risks to his life.

The urgent appeal was filed with the Special Rapporteur on torture, Dr Alice Edwards, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Mr Morris Tidball-Binz, and the Special Rapporteur on the right to health, Ms Tlaleng Mofokeng.

Jimmy Lai

Mr Lai is a 77-year-old British citizen and renowned pro-democracy campaigner, media entrepreneur, and writer. He is currently imprisoned in Hong Kong, and has been detained continuously since December 2020. He has faced multiple prosecutions, including for alleged sedition and alleged conspiracy to collude with foreign forces under the controversial Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong and Special Administrative Region (“**NSL**”). The closing submissions in the NSL trial concluded on 28th August 2025 and a verdict is awaited. If convicted, Mr Lai could be sentenced to life imprisonment.

Last year, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [ruled](#) that Mr Lai is unlawfully and arbitrarily detained, calling for his immediate release. Five UN Special Rapporteurs have also joined a [statement](#) calling for Mr Lai's immediate and unconditional release. The UK, the US, Australia and the EU have also called for his immediate release, as has the Canadian Parliament and Roman Catholic leaders.

New Evidence and Analysis

The Urgent Appeal contains new evidence and analysis conducted by the international legal team, reviewing the deaths of prisoners in Hong Kong in the period 2014 – 2025. The results are described in the Urgent Appeal as “deeply disturbing,” as they indicate a significant number of deaths of older prisoners and diabetic prisoners in circumstances where there appears to have been a failure to identify a person's deteriorating health condition in prison and a failure to transfer them to hospital in time for life-saving treatment.

In summary, in the period 2014 – 2025, 50 per cent of prisoners who died of ‘natural causes’ were older prisoners and 13 per cent were diabetic prisoners. 36 per cent of prisoners who died of natural causes were transferred to hospital less than 24 hours before being pronounced dead; and the majority of diabetic prisoners were transferred to hospital fewer than three days before their death, potentially signifying a failure to identify and treat deteriorating health and provide life-saving treatment.

The Urgent Appeal states that,

“it is chilling to note that twelve prisoners who died during the period 2014 – 2025 closely match Mr Lai's profile, being older, male diabetic prisoners. The most recent death of a diabetic prisoner was just last month, on 28th June 2025, of a man aged 74.”

The Urgent Appeal

The Urgent Appeal addresses a number of issues regarding Mr Lai's health and the risk to his life in prison, including:

- The new evidence and analysis, indicating a systemic failure of the Hong Kong authorities to treat the deteriorating health of older and/ or diabetic prisoners with the same profile as Mr Lai, and the failure to provide life-saving treatment;
- Mr Lai's advanced age (77 years) and his history of chronic health conditions, including diabetes, high blood pressure and a heart condition, which places him at higher risk of poor - and potentially fatal - health outcomes;

- Mr Lai's detention in prolonged solitary confinement for over four and a half years in circumstances which pose a grave risk to his physical and mental health, and to his life, given his age and underlying medical conditions;
- Mr Lai's ill-health. Closing arguments were held in his trial last month and had to be [postponed](#) due to serious concerns about Mr Lai's health. Mr Lai had been suffering from heart palpitations and fatigue. He has subsequently been fitted with a cardiac monitor. Despite this episode of serious ill-health he has not had an adequate independent medical assessment nor received proper treatment;
- The ongoing denial of access to independent medical care, and the lack of specialised medical care, which increases his risk of long-term complications linked to his diabetes;
- The grossly disproportionate threat of imposition of a life sentence on conviction for entirely peaceful acts.

Responses to the Urgent Appeal

Concerning his father's treatment in detention, and the new Urgent Appeal, **Sebastien Lai** said today:

"My father, Jimmy Lai, is 77, diabetic and has been in solitary confinement for almost five years. He is showing extraordinary courage in standing up for the values of press freedom and democracy in the face of unspeakable abuses of his human rights. But I fear he will die in prison unless urgent action is taken by the British Government. I ask the Prime Minister to take concrete steps to free my father - a UK national - and save his life."

International counsel for Mr Jimmy Lai and Mr Sebastien Lai, **Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC**, added:

"The evidence is deeply disturbing. It is clear that there have been a significant number of deaths of older prisoners and diabetic prisoners in Hong Kong, in circumstances where there appears to have been a failure to identify a person's deteriorating health condition in prison, and a failure to transfer them to hospital in time for life-saving treatment."

"We have long known that Jimmy Lai's life is at risk in prison in Hong Kong. This new analysis is a stark indication of a risk even higher than we had previously anticipated. It is imperative that robust, swift action is taken to secure Mr Lai's release and his return home to his family in London, before it is too late."

The international legal team for Jimmy Lai and Sebastien Lai is led by [Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC](#) (Associate) and includes [Jonathan Price KC](#), [Tatyana Eatwell](#), [Jennifer Robinson](#) and [Martha Spurrier](#) (Associate).

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