

**#FREE
JIMMYLAI**



Press Release

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"A dark day for anyone who believes in truth, freedom and justice": Jimmy Lai's family react to his conviction and urge the British Government to bring him home to the UK before it is too late

Jimmy Lai was today convicted of sedition and conspiracy to collude with foreign forces in Hong Kong under the controversial National Security Law. Mr Lai, a 78-year-old prisoner of conscience, now faces a potential sentence of life in prison.

Mr Lai was convicted under the National Security Law for his work as editor and publisher of the popular, pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* and his advocacy for democracy and the rule of law in Hong Kong.

Responding to his father's conviction, **Sebastien Lai** said,

"Today is a dark day for anyone who believes in truth, freedom and justice. My family and I are saddened but not surprised by the guilty verdict in my father's case. We have always known that my father was being prosecuted solely for his courageous journalism and unwavering commitment to democracy. Today's conviction is the culmination of years of persecution at the hands of the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities. It is an attack on the values we all hold dear. It is now up to the UK Government to stand up for those values by securing my father's release, before it is too late."

Mr Lai's daughter **Claire Lai** said:

"Having spent the last few years in Hong Kong, I have personally witnessed my father's rapidly failing health. He is 78 and has spent five years in terrible conditions, and we are worried about how much more he can bear. This verdict proves that the authorities still fear our father, even in his weakened state, for

what he represents. We stand by his innocence and condemn this miscarriage of justice. We hope the United States will continue to exert pressure for my father to be returned to our family so that he can recover in peace."

Lead counsel of the international legal team, **Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC**, added:

"Today's verdict is a stain on a once enviable Hong Kong legal system. A brave, brilliant 78-year-old man has been convicted in this vindictive and grossly unfair verdict, condemned for nothing more than being a successful publisher and journalist and a dedicated peaceful pro-democracy campaigner. After five long years of imprisonment which violates international law, it is time to end this sham process and release Mr Lai. If China fails to release him immediately and unconditionally, the international community must hold China to account."

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has repeatedly called for Mr Lai's release and the UK Government has condemned the case against Mr Lai as a "[politically motivated prosecution](#)". This morning, the Foreign Secretary, Yvette Cooper said:

"The UK condemns the politically motivated prosecution of Jimmy Lai that has resulted in today's guilty verdict. Jimmy Lai has been targeted by the Chinese and Hong Kong governments for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. Beijing's National Security Law was imposed on Hong Kong to silence China's critics. The UK has repeatedly called for the National Security Law to be repealed and for an end to the prosecution of all individuals charged under it. We continue to call for Mr Lai's immediate release, for all necessary treatment and for full access to independent medical professionals."

Both Prime Minister Starmer and President Donald Trump have [raised](#) Mr Lai's case in bilateral meetings with President Xi of China. President Trump has consistently expressed his support for Mr Lai, both [whilst campaigning](#) and [whilst in office](#).

Jimmy Lai: Background

Mr Lai is a 78-year-old British citizen and renowned pro-democracy campaigner, media entrepreneur, and writer. He has been imprisoned in Hong Kong since December 2020, enduring more than 1,800 days in solitary confinement. He has faced multiple spurious prosecutions, including the charges that have led to today's conviction under the controversial Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong and Special Administrative Region ("**NSL**"). Mr Lai suffers from diabetes and heart problems, and his health has declined dramatically in custody. Following today's conviction, he may be sentenced to life imprisonment. Given his age and state of health, any lengthy prison sentence raises the real risk that Mr Lai will die in prison.

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, US, Australian, Canadian, Czech Republic, Italian and Liechtenstein governments have also called for his release, as has the European Union and Roman Catholic leaders; and resolutions calling for his release have been passed in the European and Canadian Parliaments.

*** ENDS ***

Notes to Editors

1. Jimmy Lai has been in prison in Hong Kong continuously since December 2020. He is currently held in Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre, where he has been imprisoned for the duration of his National Security Law trial. He was previously imprisoned in Stanley Prison.
2. Mr Lai's trial under Hong Kong's National Security Law (**NSL**) commenced on 18 December 2023. Closing arguments were in August 2025. The trial has lasted 156 days, and Mr Lai was on the witness box for 52 days.
3. Mr Lai is a British national (he holds a full British passport and no other passport). His family and his businesses have close ties to the USA, Canada, France and Japan.
4. Mr Lai faced two charges of conspiracy under Article 29 of the NSL ('Collusion with a Foreign Country or with External Elements to Endanger National Security') and one charge of sedition. The prosecution alleged:
 - In Count 1 (the sedition charge) that Mr Lai conspired to make 161 seditious publications, mostly newspaper articles published in Lai's newspaper *Apple Daily*.
 - In Count 2 (under the NSL) that Mr Lai engaged in substantially the same conspiracy as in Count 1, with the object of requesting a foreign country or an institution, organisation or individual to impose sanctions or blockade, or engage in other hostile activities against the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region or the People's Republic of China.
 - In Count 3 (under the NSL) that Mr Lai conspired with certain other individuals to request foreign countries to impose sanctions or blockade, or engage in other hostile activities against the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region or the People's Republic of China.
5. Given his convictions on NSL charges, Mr Lai now faces a custodial sentence of between 10 years and life. It is expected that his sentence will be towards or at the upper end of this range, given the gravity of the charges against him.

6. There will be a sentencing hearing early in the new year. It is listed for four days, on 12 – 15 January 2026. Lai has a right of appeal to the Hong Kong Court of Appeal and then to the Court of Final Appeal.
7. The international legal team is led by Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC and includes Jonathan Price KC, Tatyana Eatwell, Jennifer Robinson and Tatyana Eatwell. The international legal team is entirely separately to Mr Lai's legal team in Hong Kong.

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