

#FREE JIMMY LAI



Press Release

22 January 2026

"Severe consequences for EU-China relations"

The European Parliament condemns Jimmy Lai's conviction and repeats its call for his immediate and unconditional release

Today, Thursday 22nd January 2026, the European Parliament has passed by an overwhelming majority an Urgent Resolution condemning Jimmy Lai's conviction and reiterating its call for his immediate and unconditional release.¹

The Resolution on '[The conviction and imminent sentencing of Jimmy Lai in Hong Kong](#)' is the fourth time that the European Parliament has formally and robustly condemned Jimmy Lai's unlawful imprisonment, unfair trial and ongoing mistreatment at the hands of the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities.² Mr Lai's conviction under the National Security Law on 15th December 2025 is one of the most urgent global issues being considered by the Parliament during its Plenary session this week.

The Resolution, having noted Mr Lai's detention in solitary confinement on "*multiple politically motivated charges*" since 2020, stresses that he is being held "*under life-threatening conditions*" in breach of China's international legal obligations. It emphasises that Mr Lai's "*arbitrary prosecution exemplifies the*

¹ The full text of the Urgent Resolution (2026/2571(RSP)) is available here:
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-10-2026-0068_EN.html

² The earlier Urgent Resolutions are available at:
- European Parliament Resolution of 28 November 2024 on Hong Kong, notably the cases of Jimmy Lai and the 45 activists recently convicted under the application of national security law ([2024/2950\(RSP\)](#))
- European Parliament Resolution of 15 June 2023 on the deterioration of fundamental rights and freedoms in Hong Kong, notably the case of Jimmy Lai ([2023/2737 \(RSP\)](#))
- European Parliament resolution of 8 July 2021 on Hong Kong, notably the case of Apple Daily, P9 TA ([2021/2786\(RSP\)](#)).

systematic use of state security laws to eliminate independent media, free speech and political opposition in Hong Kong".

The Resolution powerfully condemns Mr Lai's conviction and warns China that if he is sentenced to a lengthy prison term, there will be "severe consequences for EU-China relations".

The Resolution passed by an overwhelming majority of 503 in favour, 9 against, with 100 abstentions.

Speaking today, following the vote, Jimmy Lai's son, **Sebastien Lai**, said:

"Today the European Parliament has, once again, powerfully condemned the wrongful arrest, imprisonment and conviction of my father. This is the fourth time the Parliament has declared that my father's treatment at the hands of the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities is unacceptable and will have severe consequences for EU-China Relations. As we await what we fear will be a very long sentence for my father, I am grateful to the Parliament for reiterating the urgent call for his immediate and unconditional release, showing beyond doubt that Europe stands with my father and my family. I call upon Hong Kong and China to heed the warnings from Europe: release this 78 year old prisoner of conscience and allow him to return home to London to live out his final years in peace, before it is too late."

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

"The European Union's aims, enshrined in Article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty, include upholding and promoting its values and interests in its relations with the wider world, and ensuring strict observance of international law and the protection of human rights. The Hong Kong authorities' treatment of Jimmy Lai over the past five years flies in the face of these European values. He has been wrongly arrested and arbitrarily detained; he has faced a barrage of lawsuits persecuting him for exercising rights protected under international law; his newspaper has been shut down; he has endured life-threatening prison conditions; he has been through a protracted show trial on trumped charges resulting in an unfair conviction, and he now faces life imprisonment.

We thank all MEPs who used their voices today to demand an end to the politically-motivated persecution of this elderly, frail man, before it is too late. Now the European Council, EEAS and EU Member States must follow Parliament's lead and take robust, concrete action to secure Mr Lai's liberty – and save his life."

During the debate, that took place on Wednesday 21st January 2026, speakers from across the European Parliament Political Groups condemned Mr Lai's conviction and the deterioration of human rights and the rule of law in Hong Kong, and reiterated their call for concrete action to secure Mr Lai's release.

- **Miriam Lexmann MEP** (EPP) said: *“Jimmy Lai faces life imprisonment following a sham trial based on fabricated offenses. This is the real face of the brutal Chinese Communist Party. Jimmy Lai...represents the best of Hong Kong – its love of freedom...China has breached its international obligations...we must act – Jimmy Lai must be freed.”*
- **Marius Kaminsky MEP** (ECR) said: *“Jimmy Lai is 78 years old and every year could be his last. We cannot accept his mistreatment: we call for the release of Jimmy Lai.”*
- **Engin Eroglu MEP** (Renew) said: *“We wholeheartedly condemn Jimmy Lai’s conviction and demand his immediate release before it is too late.”*
- **Marketa Gregorova** (Greens) said: *“Jimmy Lai faces the possibility of life imprisonment for exercising rights that are explicitly protected under international law. The reason for that is simple: to silence further dissent and intimidate others into passivity. This Resolution must not remain symbolic. It must be followed by action, action to secure the immediate release of Jimmy Lai and bring an end to politically motivated prosecutions in Hong Kong.”*

Commenting on Mr Lai’s case and the actions taken by the EU, Executive Vice President of the European Commission, **Roxana Minzatu**, said:

“The trial against Jimmy Lai was politically motivated. He was prosecuted for his support for freedom of expression and democracy in Hong Kong. The independent newspaper that he founded – Apple Daily - was forced to shut down in 2021. His case demonstrates the dramatic decline in the rights of people in Hong Kong since Beijing imposed the National Security Law...Criminalising speech and political dissent breaches Hong Kong’s international commitments and its own Basic Law. The prosecution of Jimmy Lai further undermines confidence in the rule of law, a cornerstone of Hong Kong’s attractiveness and success as an international business hub...”

“The EU has repeatedly raised these concerns in public and in private meetings with the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities. Today the EU repeats its call for Jimmy Lai’s immediate and unconditional release.”

The international legal team for Jimmy Lai and Sebastien Lai is led by [Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC](#), together with [Jonathan Price KC](#), [Tatyana Eatwell](#), [Jennifer Robinson](#) and [Martha Spurrier](#), all of Doughty Street Chambers, London.

Further Background:

Jimmy Lai is a 78-year-old British citizen and renowned pro-democracy campaigner, media entrepreneur, writer, and [prisoner of conscience](#). He is currently imprisoned in Hong Kong and has been detained there, in solitary confinement, since December 2020. He was initially held on remand in pre-trial detention and was then convicted and sentenced to lengthy terms of

imprisonment for participation in peaceful pro-democracy assemblies and a vigil marking the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests and massacre of 1989. He is currently serving a sentence of imprisonment in relation to a spurious fraud conviction said to arise out of the breach of a commercial lease which has been widely condemned as an abuse of the law to silence dissent and freedom of speech. For example, the United States [condemned the conviction and](#) described the sentence as a "[grossly unjust outcome](#)" which "*[b]y any objective measure... is neither fair nor just*", a view supported by the UN Working Group's findings in its Opinion concerning Mr Lai's case, published on 15th November 2024.

Mr Lai's trial on charges of sedition and conspiracy to collude with foreign agents under the controversial National Security Law (NSL) began – after significant delays – on 18th December 2023. On the eve of his trial, 17th December 2023, the then United Kingdom Foreign Secretary, Lord Cameron, [called](#) on the Hong Kong authorities to end its politically motivated prosecution of Mr Lai and to release him. On the Prosecution's own case, Mr Lai was accused of practising journalism, speaking to politicians about politics, and raising concerns about accountability for human rights violations in Hong Kong.

On 22nd January 2024, five Special Rapporteurs released a [statement](#) calling for Mr Lai's immediate and unconditional release.

On 31st January 2024 the UN [announced](#) that the Special Rapporteur on torture had written to the authorities in China to address claims that the evidence of a key prosecution witness in Mr Lai's trial had been obtained through torture, and calling for an immediate investigation into the allegations.

On 16th October 2024 the UK Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, [confirmed](#) to Parliament that Mr Lai's case is a priority for the UK Government and called on the Hong Kong authorities to immediately release Mr Lai, and raised concerns regarding Mr Lai's deteriorating health with President Xi during their bilateral meeting on the fringes of the G20 Summit in Brazil, on 17th November 2024. On 23rd October 2024, in response to questions in Parliament concerning the Foreign Secretary's recent visit to China, the then Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, [confirmed](#) that he had reiterated the Government's call for Mr Lai's immediate release in meetings with his counterpart in Beijing.

In 2025, successive UK Government Ministers raised Mr Lai's case with their Chinese counterparts and called for his release, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves during her [visit](#) to Beijing in January 2025, the Energy Minister Ed Miliband during his [visit](#) in March 2025 and the Science Minister Lord Vallance during his [visit](#) in November 2025. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, Yvette Cooper, have repeatedly reiterated their call for Jimmy Lai's

release in the House of Commons, a call echoed by Government Ministers on multiple occasions in the UK House of Lords.

In the USA, President Trump has repeatedly voiced his strong support for Jimmy Lai and his commitment to working with the UK to secure his release. The President raised the case directly with President Xi in December 2025.

Mr Lai's NSL trial concluded with a conviction on all counts on 15th December 2025. In her statement, Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper strongly condemned Mr Lai's conviction and his "*politically motivated prosecution*" and called again for his immediate and unconditional release, emphasising that "*no state can bully and persecute the British people for exercising their basic rights*".

The G7 Foreign Ministers (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, the USA and the EU) also issued a statement condemning Mr Lai's conviction, reiterating their concern about "*deteriorating right and freedoms*" in Hong Kong and calling for Mr Lai's immediate release.

Mr Lai's sentencing hearing concluded on 15th January 2026 and Mr Lai and his family now await the sentence, which is expected soon. It is anticipated that Mr Lai will be given a lengthy sentence of many years, and possibly life imprisonment.

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