

PRESS RELEASE

*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – WEDNESDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2024 ***

**Grave Concerns Over Jimmy Lai’s Prolonged Imprisonment and Solitary Confinement
Raised before United Nations**

Jimmy Lai’s ongoing arbitrary detention in solitary confinement in Hong Kong was raised during the 57th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, at the interactive dialogue with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Jimmy Lai and his son Sebastien are represented by an international legal team led by [Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC](#), and including [Jonathan Price](#), [Tatyana Eatwell](#), [Jennifer Robinson](#) and [Sarah Dobbie](#). The international legal team has filed a number of UN complaints on behalf of Mr Lai, including an [urgent appeal to the Working Group](#) about Mr Lai’s arbitrary and unlawful detention, and to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture about [the prolonged solitary confinement](#) Mr Lai has suffered during his imprisonment.

The United States called for the ‘immediate release’ of Mr Lai in its remarks during the interactive dialogue.

Dr Tatyana Eatwell of the international legal team, addressing the UN Human Rights Council with support of **Redress**, said:

“Mr Lai, has now been detained in solitary confinement for over 3.5 years, since December 2020 in circumstances that pose grave risk to his health – in violation of China’s obligations under the Convention against Torture... He is now on trial and faces life imprisonment under the draconian National Security Law for, as the prosecution’s own case has made clear, his fearless journalism at Apple Daily, his discussion of politics and accountability in Hong Kong, and his campaign for democracy in Hong Kong – for exercising his internationally protected rights and freedoms.

We call on China and the Hong Kong authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Mr Lai. We urge the Working Group and the Council to raise Mr Lai’s case along with the cases of all those who are being unlawfully and arbitrarily detained in Hong Kong for exercising their internationally protected rights, and to call for their immediate and unconditional release.”

Dr Eatwell’s address was made amid ongoing controversy over reprisals against the international legal team and Mr Lai’s son for raising Mr Lai’s case at the UN, which was included in [the UN Secretary-General’s report last week](#). After submitting a further UN urgent appeal last week about Mr Lai’s prolonged solitary confinement, the Hong Kong government issued [a public statement](#), accusing the international legal team and Sebastien Lai of ‘defaming the city’s judicial system by appealing to the United Nations’ and that this action had ‘undermined the rule of law’.

During the interactive dialogue, the Nordic states, EU, France, Ireland, Belgium and Mauritania raised concern about the arbitrary detention of journalists and political opponents, and reprisals against those engaging with the Working Group and the UN.

Speaking in Washington D.C. today, where he is due to appear at a meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in honour of his father, **Sebastien Lai** said:

“Time is running out for my father. He’s already spent over three and a half years in a maximum security prison simply for printing a newspaper and for peaceful pro-democracy campaigning. I am grateful to the US for again calling for my father’s release. I hope the UN Working Group will now take urgent steps to hold China to account for its persecution of my father. He must be released – before it is too late.”

Jennifer Robinson of Mr Lai’s international legal team, in Geneva with Dr Eatwell on behalf of the **International Federation of Journalists**, said:

“Mr Lai is a renowned pro-democracy campaigner, media entrepreneur, and founder of Apple Daily. Apple Daily was a pro-democracy newspaper – and the most popular Chinese language paper in Hong Kong...”

Mr Lai is being prosecuted for exercising his internationally protected rights of freedom of expression. Mr Lai’s case is emblematic of the systematic assault on freedom of expression and the rule of law in Hong Kong, and the use of unlawful and arbitrary detention to target journalists, publishers, and pro-democracy campaigners... We call on Hong Kong to immediately and unconditionally release Mr Lai – and all journalists being arbitrarily detained.”

Anthony Bellanger, General Secretary of the **International Federation of Journalists**, said:

“The use of the draconian National Security Law to silence critical voices and destroy independent media in Hong Kong must cease. We urge the Hong Kong authorities to end the protracted legal persecution of Apple Daily founder Jimmy Lai that violates fundamental rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The authorities must immediately release Jimmy Lai, and all journalists arbitrarily imprisoned”.

ENDS

Notes:

1. The joint statement by five UN experts calling for Mr Lai’s release, 22nd January 2024, is available here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/hong-kong-sar-un-experts-urge-authorities-drop-all-charges-against-jimmy-lai>
2. Background information concerning Jimmy Lai’s case is available at www.supportjimmylai.com or on social media using the hashtag #FreeJimmyLai.
3. The event advisory for the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee meeting regarding Mr Lai is available here: https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/dem/release/event-advisory_honoring-jimmy-lai-a-stand-for-democracy-and-free-speech-in-hong-kong