



15 December 2025

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

Dear Prime Minister,

Today, British citizen Jimmy Lai has been found guilty in his trial in Hong Kong, on two national security law charges of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces and a charge of conspiracy to publish seditious material. He faces a sentence of up to life imprisonment. He has been imprisoned for 1,800 days, most of which in solitary confinement. He is 78 years old and in failing health. Unless he is released, he will almost certainly die in prison.

The time for ‘raising concerns’ about these matters is past. Australia, Canada, and Ireland have all secured the release of detained or imprisoned citizens from China. The United Kingdom must show similar willingness to stand up for wrongfully prosecuted British citizens. This is particularly the case where, under the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, the United Kingdom has an international treaty obligation to guarantee rights and freedoms in Hong Kong – rights that have been repeatedly violated in the case of Jimmy Lai.

If and when you visit the People’s Republic of China in the New Year, as reported in the press, any trade deal or economic concession offered to Beijing must be contingent upon the release of Jimmy Lai. The UK government must be prepared to demonstrate that it will not sacrifice the freedom of its citizens in order to receive vague assurances and promises of trade and investment in return.

If Beijing is serious about acting as a responsible business partner in its relations with the United Kingdom, the release of Jimmy Lai should be a reasonable show of good faith. If not, it demonstrates the disregard with which this authoritarian regime treats the citizens of the United Kingdom and serves as a sharp warning of the risks involved in courting closer ties.

We, the undersigned, trust that you will sincerely commit to doing everything in your power to free Jimmy Lai and let him reunite with his family.

Yours sincerely,

Hong Kong Watch  
Fight for Freedom, Stand With Hong Kong  
Hongkongers in Britain  
The Rights Practice  
Index on Censorship  
World Uyghur Congress  
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)  
Nottingham Stands with Hong Kong  
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)  
Birmingham HongKongers  
Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation  
Hong Kongers in Leeds  
Re-Water  
Assembly of Citizens' Representatives, Hong Kong (ACRHK)  
The Hong Kong Scots  
Scottish Hongkongers  
Hong Kong Society in Scotland  
Britons in Hong Kong  
Fortify Rights  
Democracy for Hong Kong (D4HK)  
Bonham Tree Aid  
Sutton Hongkong Culture and Arts Society  
Independent Committee for Hong Kong Advocacy (ICHKA)  
Reading UK Stands with Hong Kong  
Hong Kong Aid  
Hong Kong Democracy Council (HKDC)  
Human Rights in China  
International Tibet Network  
The European Hong Kong Diaspora Alliance  
Safeguard Defenders  
Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)  
English PEN  
PEN International