

We, the undersigned Parliamentarians, and foreign affairs experts from twenty-two countries and the European Union Parliament, are united in our condemnation of the ongoing arbitrary detention and unfair trial of Jimmy Lai, a British citizen, peaceful pro-democracy campaigner, publisher, and prisoner of conscience.

Jimmy Lai is 77 years old and his health is deteriorating. He has been held in solitary confinement in a maximum security prison in Hong Kong for almost four years. This is inhumane. He is being tried on trumped up charges arising from his peaceful promotion of democracy, his journalism and his human rights advocacy. The trial itself is tainted with unfairness. It is before hand-picked judges, evidence allegedly obtained by torture is being used against him, and it has been subject to lengthy delays. Meanwhile Jimmy Lai, a practising Catholic, has been denied Holy Communion for almost a year.

On the eve of the recommencement of his trial, we urgently demand Jimmy Lai's immediate and unconditional release. We stand with the UK Government, the US Government, the Canadian Parliament, the European Parliament, five UN Special Rapporteurs, and leaders of the Catholic Church in calling for the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities to free Jimmy Lai so that he may return home to the UK, before it is too late.

These calls are supported by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, that, on Friday 15th November, published its Opinion that Jimmy Lai is unlawfully and arbitrarily detained and called for his immediate release. The Working Group found multiple violations of Mr Lai's rights and freedoms, and stressed that Jimmy Lai should not be on trial at all.

The world is watching as the rule of law, media freedom and human rights in Hong Kong are eroded and undermined. We stand together in our defence of these fundamental freedoms and in our demand that Jimmy Lai be released immediately and unconditionally.

Signed,

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