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PUBLIC STATEMENT

LATEST DEVELOPMENT
March 6, 2026

Hong Kong should release Jimmy Lai and protect independent journalism

Amnesty Freedom calls for the release of Jimmy Lai, founder of Apple Daily. His case has serious consequences for publishers and journalists in Hong Kong.

What we know

A court found Jimmy Lai guilty in a national security case on December 15, 2025, and sentenced him on February 9, 2026, to 20 years in prison. On February 26, 2026, a separate fraud conviction was overturned, which left his national security sentence in force. On March 6, 2026, his lawyer said he would not appeal the security conviction or sentence. [1–5]

Our position

Publishing news and speaking to foreign organizations are not crimes. A prison term of this length for a publisher can be expected to chill independent journalism across Hong Kong. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which applies in Hong Kong, protects freedom of expression. [4, 6–7]

Our calls

Amnesty Freedom calls on the authorities to:

1. Release Lai.
2. Ensure he has appropriate medical care and meaningful access to family and counsel.
3. Review laws used to criminalize peaceful journalism.
4. Protect public-interest reporting and lawful contact with foreign organizations under the expression guarantees applicable in Hong Kong.

Supporting information

1. Jimmy Lai sentenced to 20 years in prison in Hong Kong's biggest media trial - Committee to Protect Journalists
2. Hong Kong: Publisher Jimmy Lai Sentenced to 20 Years | Human Rights Watch
3. Jimmy Lai Chee-ying - Committee to Protect Journalists
4. Six-monthly report on Hong Kong: 1 January to 30 June 2026 - GOV.UK
5. Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai will not appeal outcome in landmark security case
6. United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
7. UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 34 on freedom of expression

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Note to editors: *This statement is based on the public sources listed above. The date shown is that of the most recent development recorded in those sources; later developments may not be reflected.*

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