

# A PETITION FROM THE READING AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GROUP

## To the Prime Minister of the UK

We, the undersigned, urge you to use your power to implore the authorities in **Hong Kong** to release human rights lawyer and activist, **Chow Hang-tung** and **Jimmy Lai**, founder of the pro-democracy newspaper “Apple Daily” and all other political prisoners, immediately and unconditionally.

This petition was organised by:-

Helen Ball

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<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/reading>

## A PETITION FROM THE READING AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GROUP

Dear Prime Minister,

During 2024, the **Reading Amnesty International Group** campaigned for political prisoners in **Hong Kong**.

In the last couple of years, a significant number of Hong Kongers have left their homeland and made the UK their home. A large number have moved to the Reading area. They have left Hong Kong largely due to the massive deterioration of human rights since the introduction of the National Security Laws.

We have worked alongside a group of local Hong Kongers who have remained active in seeking freedom and democracy, despite the risks to their own safety.

We have been collecting signatures on this petition addressed to you, Sir, as our Prime Minister, in the strong hope that you will take action for Hong Kong.

This is a particular responsibility for the leader of the UK, given that Hong Kong became a British Crown Colony in 1871, then a Dependent Territory of the United Kingdom as recently as 1997. In 1984, the Sino-British Declaration was signed, stating that Hong Kong should remain a “Special Administrative Region” until at least 2047, with a “one country, two systems” approach during these years. The National Security Laws passed in 2020 and 2024 (Article 23) have turned this declaration on its head - Amnesty International has proclaimed these laws as “devastating ... for human rights for Hong Kongers living anywhere in the world”.

As you will know, Hong Kong now has a significant number of people in prison, sentenced under sedition laws, accused of “conspiracy to commit subversion”. These include journalists, human rights defenders and lawyers or those who simply wear a slogan T-shirt or encourage others to light a candle.

We have particularly named two prisoners in our petition, both of whom Amnesty International considers to be **prisoners of conscience**.

- **Chow Hang-tung** is a human rights lawyer – Chow was a leading member of a group which organised an annual Tiananmen candlelight vigil. This is viewed as evidence of “endangering national security”.
- **Jimmy Lai** – Amnesty says, “It seems clear that Jimmy Lai and Apple Daily were targeted due to the newspaper’s criticism of the Chinese and Hong Kong governments - this is an unjustifiable restriction of the right to freedom of expression.”

However, we consider all people held under these National Security Laws, who have peacefully called for freedom and democracy, to be deserving of immediate release from prison.

The petition reads:-

### To the Prime Minister of the UK

We, the undersigned, urge you to use your power to implore the authorities in **Hong Kong** to release human rights lawyer and activist, **Chow Hang-tung** and **Jimmy Lai**, founder of the pro-democracy newspaper “Apple Daily” and all other political prisoners, immediately and unconditionally.

We have collected **well over 1,000 signatures**, which is a huge number when most campaigning takes place online. We were delighted that several local Amnesty groups also took the petition to their meetings and local events; these include Sutton, Cardiff, Chipping Norton, Saffron Walden and North Lincolnshire.

- We have attended events with our local Hong Kongers, including a vigil for the Tiananmen Square massacre, showing solidarity for their loss of freedom.



- We have been alongside local Hong Kongers as they held street actions to raise awareness in Reading town centre.



- We attended local festivals to raise awareness of the situation in Hong Kong.



- We held a special event called “An Evening Without Chow Hang-tung and Jimmy Lai – Human Rights in Hong Kong”



We look forward to hearing from you, as you outline steps you will take to work for the release of political prisoners in Hong Kong.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Ball  
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 Secretary of the Reading Amnesty International Group  
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<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/reading>

CC

**Our local MPs**

- Mr Matt Rodda – MP for Reading Central
- Ms Yuan Yang – MP for Woodley and Earley
- Ms Olivia Bailey – MP for Reading West and East Berkshire

**Amnesty International**

- Sacha Deshmukh – CEO of Amnesty International UK
- Nabila Hanson – Country co-ordinator for China, AIUK
- Paul Wong – Country co-ordinator for Hong Kong, AIUK

**Amnesty International local groups who have contributed to this petition**

- Sutton
- Cardiff
- Chipping Norton
- Saffron Walden
- North Lincolnshire

**Reading UK Stands with Hong**

- a local group of Hong Kongers who promote “Hong Konger’s background and belief in democracy, freedom and justice against China’s authoritarianism to the public.”

Further information about Amnesty International’s concerns for Hong Kong.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/human-rights-hong-kong>