

# [***Hong Kong Media Mogul Jimmy Lai Faces Landmark Security Trial***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69WV-NKY1-DXVP-5359-00000-00&context=1516831)

Forbes.com

December 18, 2023 Monday

Copyright 2023 Forbes LLC All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 601 words

**Byline:** Zinnia Lee, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** Lai has been charged with sedition and colluding with foreign forces, which carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

**Body**

<figure>

<figcaption>

Jimmy Lai, founder of Apple Daily.

AFP via Getty Images

</figcaption></figure>

Jimmy Lai, founder of the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper**Apple Daily**, appeared in court on Monday as his long-awaited national security trial finally commenced in Hong Kong.

The 76-year-old media tycoon had been a prominent supporter of Hong Kong s anti-government protests in 2019, but now he faces charges of colluding with foreign forces and conspiring to publish seditious material under the Beijing-imposed security law.

Lai is accused of calling for sanctions on Hong Kong and China through articles published in**Apple Daily**, interviews with various overseas media and posts on Twitter, now called X.

If convicted, Lai could spend the rest of his life behind bars. The trial, which isbeing heard by a panel of three judges without a jury, is expected to last for about 80 days.

On Monday, the courthouse was ringed by a heavy police presence which included a bomb disposal van, armored vehicles, sniffer dogs and scores of officers. Some members of the public had been queuing overnight to attend the court hearing.

Ahead of the trial, U.K. Foreign Secretary David Cameron called for the release of Lai, saying that the activist publisher has been targeted in a clear attempt to stop the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association. U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller also condemned the prosecution of Lai and urged authorities to respect press freedom in Hong Kong.

<figure>

<figcaption>

Police stand guard outside the courthouse for the opening day of the trial of Jimmy Lai in Hong Kong on December 18, 2023.

AFP via Getty Images

</figcaption></figure>

Lai is one of the most prominent targets of Hong Kong s continuing crackdown on dissent that has seen scores of pro-democracy politicians and activists either jailed or forced to flee into exile. Lai, who has been imprisoned since December 2020, is already serving a sentence of almost six years for fraud over a lease violation of**Apple Daily** s headquarters in Hong Kong.

Born in the city of Guangzhou, Lai was smuggled into Hong Kong at the age of 12, and worked his way up from toiling in garment factories to becoming the co-owner of the Giordano apparel chain, which hada network of shops across Asia.Lai joined the ranks of Hong Kong s wealthiest people in 2008, but dropped off the list two years later.

Lai s interest in ***politics*** came as a result of Beijing s clampdown on pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989. He founded**Apple Daily** in 1995, and it quickly became a vocal critic of both Hong Kong s colonial government and China s ruling Communist Party. The liberal newspapershut downin 2021 after Lai and several staff were arrested and its assets were frozen by authorities.

Lai s landmark trial comes as authorities continue to stifle political dissent. Last week, Hong Kong police offered rewards of HK$1 million ($130,000) for information that leads to the arrest of five more overseas-based activists. The move, which brought the tally of wanted activists in exile to 13, triggered condemnation from the U.K. and the U.S. government.

Beijing imposed the sweeping national security law on Hong Kong in June 2020 after massive protests rocked the Asian financial hub. The law punishes acts of secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces. Officials claim the law brought stability to the city, but its broadly worded offenses and punishments of up to life in prison have drawn condemnation from Western governments and international human rights groups.

**MORE FRMO FORBES**

**Load-Date:** December 18, 2023

**End of Document**