

Xi has shown his true colors with Jimmy Lai - NoticiasFinancieras - English

12 Feb 2026 07:12:36 PM

With the closure of Apple Daily in 2021, the death knell sounded for press freedom in Hong Kong. The sentencing of its editor, Jimmy Lai, on Monday has put the final nail in the coffin of free journalism in the Autonomous City. China's National Security Law, passed by Hong Kong in 2020, has turned the former British colony into a cage. China is now the world's largest prison for journalists. Since the law came into force, 900 reporters have lost their jobs. Those who have been able to leave have gone to Taiwan or the United Kingdom. Those who have not have chosen self-censorship. Wearing a protest shirt in Hong Kong today is a criminal offense. Preventive detention without bail is applied without hesitation in cases classified as "national security" (almost all of them). Organizing crowdfunding to finance, for example, a journalistic investigation can be considered "illegal assistance to foreign forces." The penalties, then, skyrocket and range from two to ten years in prison.

The reading of the 20-year sentence handed down to pro-democracy publisher Jimmy Lai, 78, for conspiring and inciting sedition from the pages of his newspaper took barely ten minutes. "He used Apple Daily to poison citizens, incite hatred, distort facts, deliberately create social division, and glorify violence," Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee said in court. Chinese President Xi Jinping will be pleased with the sentence, but for the rest of the world, it should be seen as a warning sign. Donald Trump's hostility towards Europe and NATO has led some countries to believe that China can be a reliable strategic partner. The arbitrary imprisonment of the Apple Daily editor should remind us how far Beijing is from respecting fundamental freedoms and human rights. The sentence, as the Taiwanese government has stated, shows us that "the freedoms and rights promised to the people of Hong Kong under the one country, two systems model of government are little more than empty words." Taiwan has always refused to adopt this principle in its relationship with China. They prefer to abide by the idea of one China, without clarifying which one is the real one. For the Taiwanese, the worst-case scenario has become a reality in Hong Kong. China has not democratized but has instead assimilated Hong Kong into authoritarianism. We Europeans and British have a responsibility for this drift. In 1984, Margaret Thatcher and Zhao Zhiyang signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration, in which China committed to respecting the framework of freedoms until 2047. Xi Jinping has not waited until that date to dismantle the democratic system in the autonomous territory. The United Kingdom was naive. That is why Europe cannot make the same mistake now. The United States' tariff policies cannot be countered by closer trade ties with an undemocratic China. Europe's dependence on a single-party state could prove very costly. Nor can we forget the subsidiary role Beijing is playing in the war in Ukraine with its financial and military assistance to Russia. Europe must demand that Xi Jinping immediately release Jimmy Lai as a gesture of goodwill before strengthening any alliance.

Copyright (c) 2026 ContentEngine, USA.

urn:newsml:newsroom.refinitiv.com:20260213:nNRAzh6Ing:0

Copyright © 2026 London Stock Exchange Group plc and its group of companies (LSEG) and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. The LSEG content received through this service is the intellectual property of LSEG or its third party suppliers. Republication or redistribution of content provided by LSEG is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of LSEG, except where permitted by the terms of the relevant LSEG service agreement. Neither LSEG nor its third party suppliers shall be liable for any errors, omissions or delays in content, or for any actions taken in reliance thereon. LSEG and its logo are trademarks of LSEG.