



11 December 2023

The Rt Hon Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton  
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs  
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

Dear Foreign Secretary,

I am writing firstly to offer my congratulations on your appointment to Foreign Secretary. I look forward to engaging with you, your advisors and officials on matters concerning Hong Kong and China during your time in office.

I would also like to thank you for agreeing to meet Sebastien Lai, the son of Jimmy Lai, a British citizen who has already been in prison in Hong Kong for three years and whose trial under the National Security Law is expected to begin this month. Your willingness to meet Sebastien this week is much appreciated, and we hope you will call for the release of Mr Lai.

As co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Hong Kong Watch, I would like to offer an update on the situation in Hong Kong and that of British National (Overseas) Hong Kongers who now reside in Britain, as you begin your new role.

As you will be very aware, on 1 July 2020, Beijing imposed the National Security Law in Hong Kong, which arbitrarily and broadly criminalises any behaviour the Hong Kong government deems to be subversion, secession, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces. The National Security Law continues to destroy civil liberties, the independence of the judiciary, and the once-thriving international financial centre. More than 1,000 individuals are now political prisoners in the city, including British citizen Jimmy Lai who founded the pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily*, which the authorities forced to close in June 2021.

Hong Kong Watch applauds the British government for announcing the British National (Overseas) scheme in immediate response to the imposition of the National Security Law on 1

July 2020, and for implementing an extension to the scheme to allow young Hong Kongers with one BNO parent to be eligible to apply for the scheme independently of their parents. This has provided a vital lifeline to Hong Kongers who were otherwise in real danger and to many thousands more who see no future for themselves in Hong Kong. We have worked closely with the British government to ensure the successful implementation of the BNO scheme since January 2021. The visa allows BNO status holders and their dependents to live, work, and study in the UK for five years, after which point they can apply for settlement, and then will be eligible for British citizenship one year after. 191,000 Hong Kongers have applied for the BNO visa in the two-and-a-half years since its introduction. The Home Office Impact Assessment on the BNO visa policy published in October 2020 estimated 258,000 to 322,400 people from Hong Kong will arrive over the first five years of the scheme.

Hong Kongers have already made a significant contribution to society in Britain, but not without facing their own unique challenges. In April this year, Hong Kong Watch published research revealing that British trustees of Hong Kong's Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) scheme, including UK-headquartered HSBC, were withholding over £2 billion worth of pensions savings from BNO Hong Kongers. In July, Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee placed HK\$1 million (£100,827) bounties on eight exiled Hong Kongers including three in the UK, vowing to "exhaust all means" to pursue the "street rats" for the rest of their lives. BNO Hong Kongers also struggle with security issues around the renewal of HKSAR passports and the ineligibility of BNOs to pay home fees at UK universities.

Given that 140,000 Hong Kongers will be eligible voters in the next UK general election, I hope the British government will seriously consider the concerns of Hong Kongers and take swift action to improve their situation as they start anew in Britain. I also ask that you pay close attention to the evolving situation in Hong Kong and call for the release of all political prisoners, including Jimmy Lai.

I look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Benedict Rogers", with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Benedict Rogers  
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Hong Kong Watch