



To the Chief Executive of Hong Kong,

Mrs. Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor,

Brussels, 24 June 2021

**Subject: Open letter on the arrest of five journalists under the National Security Law and press freedom in Hong Kong**

Dear Chief Executive,

We the undersigned Members of the European and national Parliaments, are writing to express our concern and condemnation of the arrest of five journalists under the National Security Law and the raiding of Apple Daily newspaper by over 500 police officers on 17 June 2021, and the shutting of Apple Daily newspaper.

These arrests mark the first time that journalists have been arrested under the National Security Law and the second time the Hong Kong Police force has raided the offices of Apple Daily. We believe that they constitute an assault on the freedom of the press and undermine Hong Kong's reputation as an open international city.

In the past, you have offered assurances to the international community that this draconian law would be used sparingly and only target a 'very small minority' of extreme lawbreakers. Yet, over 100 individuals have been arrested since the National Security Law came into force nearly a year ago under vague accusations such as 'colluding with foreign forces'.

As you are well aware, the targeting of journalists under the National Security Law runs in direct contravention of Hong Kong's Basic Law, which guarantees a free press, and the Hong Kong Government's obligation to uphold the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Apple Daily is the only remaining Chinese-language newspaper in Hong Kong, which is independently owned and supportive of the pro-democracy movement. We understand that at times, it has published stories that are critical or have caused embarrassment for your administration, but the shutting of the newspaper for the supposed "crime" of holding officials accountable is the act of a dictatorial state.



Yesterday's announcement that Apple Daily has been forced to close after being denied access to frozen assets is of great concern. We assure you that this movement to unilaterally close the last pro-democracy paper in the city by starving it of funds, will be met with international condemnation and have a long-term impact on foreign investment into the city. We urge you to unfreeze Apple Daily's assets and allow it to continue to serve its function as a widely read news publication.

The continued existence of a free press in Hong Kong remains an area of great interest to the European Union and other likeminded democracies. In the last year, the European Parliament has passed two joint resolutions on the human rights situation in Hong Kong in June 2020 and January 2021, which included support for the free press. We will continue to pay close attention to the welfare of local and foreign journalists within the city and their ability to report on the news freely and without favour.

We urge you to release the journalists arrested and drop all national security charges, including those against Jimmy Lai, the owner of Apple Daily, and Next Digital executives.

As the Chief Executive, we hope that you will live up to your obligation to uphold Hong Kong's Basic Law and protect the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong, including their right to a free press.

Yours sincerely,

Engin Eroglu (MEP)

Miriam Lexmann (MEP)

Brando Benifei (MEP)

Javier Nart (MEP)

Andrius Kubilius (MEP)

Rasa Juknevičienė (MEP)

Jan-Christoph Oetjen (MEP)

Andreas Schieder (MEP)

Carlo Fidanza (MEP)

Karin Karlsbro (MEP)

Nicolae Ștefănuță (MEP)

Barry Andrews (MEP)

Nicola Beer (MEP)

Svenja Hahn (MEP)

Anna Fotyga (MEP)

Frédérique Ries (MEP)

Hilde Vautmans (MEP)

François-Xavier Bellamy (MEP)

Stéphane Séjourné (MEP)

Mara Bizzotto (MEP)

Mailk Azmani (MEP)

Sandro Gozi (MEP)

Bernard Guetta (MEP)

Karen Melchior (MEP)

Nathalie Loiseau (MEP)

Elio Vito (MP)

Sen. Valeria Fedeli

Sen. Lucio Malan

Sen. Roberto Rampi

Paolo Formentini (MP)

Alessandro Giglio Vigna (MP)



Sen. Adolfo Urso