

## **Joint statement from civil society and human rights organisations on UK Foreign Secretary's visit to China**

We, the undersigned, representing civil society and human rights organisations across the UK, urge British Foreign Secretary David Lammy to use his official visit to Beijing and Shanghai to raise concerns about the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO) in Hong Kong: in particular, its extraterritoriality clauses, which allows the law to be wielded as a threat against Hong Kongers in the UK under the British National (Overseas) (BNO) visa scheme, an act which can credibly be described as transnational repression.

Given the UK's historical commitments to Hong Kong, which underpinned the establishment of the BNO visa scheme in January 2021, the Foreign Secretary has a responsibility to speak up for the more than 150,000 Hong Kongers now living in the UK. These Hong Kongers are increasingly concerned about transnational repression, following the passing of the SNSO and a number of incidents of transnational repression in the UK. These include the Hong Kong National Security Police issuing arrest warrants and bounties for six Hong Kongers in the UK in July and December 2023, Chinese activists violently attacking peaceful Hong Kong demonstrators in Southampton in June 2023, and the Chinese Consul General along with a number of embassy staff assaulting Bob Chan and other peaceful Hong Kong protestors at the Chinese Consulate in Manchester in October 2022. The UK must fulfil its duty to protect those who now call the UK home.

The Foreign Secretary should raise China's and Hong Kong's non-recognition of the BNO passport. This has caused an estimated 126,500 Hong Kongers to be blocked from accessing their Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) retirement savings, which they are ordinarily entitled to release in full after declaring that they have permanently departed from Hong Kong. The Foreign Secretary should emphasise that BNO passports are both valid travel documents and forms of identification as they are issued by the UK government.

The Foreign Secretary should also communicate the UK government's concerns around the case of 76-year-old British citizen Jimmy Lai. Mr Lai has been behind bars in Hong Kong for nearly 1,400 days, and remains on trial on trumped-up charges under the Hong Kong National Security Law which carries a maximum punishment of life in prison. While in China, the Foreign Secretary should publicly call for Mr Lai's immediate and unconditional release.

Finally, the Foreign Secretary should question the SNSO's compatibility with international human rights standards and international human rights treaties which Hong Kong is party to and which it has incorporated into the Basic Law of Hong Kong, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The Foreign Secretary should send a clear and strong message to the Government of the People's Republic of China that human rights violations have a cost. He should also introduce measures to protect the rights and freedoms of Hong Kong people in exile from Beijing's long-arm of transnational repression, including by ensuring that the UK-issued Hong Kong passport is recognised around the world.

Signatories (in alphabetical order)

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Scottish Hongkongers  
Southampton HongKongers  
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