

Wall Street Journal

August 18, 2020

Dear Sirs,

I refer to your editorial “Jimmy Lai is Arrested in Hong Kong” (August 10), which incorrectly links the arrest of Mr Lai with a completely unrelated issue of press freedom in Hong Kong. In carrying out the operation on August 10, the Police clearly stated that the individuals concerned were arrested for suspected collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security – a contravention of Article 29 of the National Security Law – and conspiracy to defraud.

To suggest that the arrests represented a “warning to local and international media in Hong Kong to shut up about freedom” is simply wrong.

Let me stress that freedom of the press is an important cornerstone of Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government always respects the freedoms of the press, speech and publication.

Indeed, freedom of speech, of the press and of publication are among the rights and freedoms explicitly highlighted in Article 4 of the National Security Law as being protected in accordance with the law in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong has always remained committed to ensuring press freedom, which is part and parcel of the city’s reputation as a vibrant international media hub and global business and financial centre. More than 80 daily newspapers and over 500 periodicals, both local and international, are published in Hong Kong. The Wall Street Journal is one of a number of global media organisations operating here.

Hong Kong is fully committed to upholding judicial independence and the rule of law. The authority to designate judges to handle national security cases rests with the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. This is clearly provided for in Article 44 of the Law. There can be no question of “only judges approved by the Communist Party can decide national-security cases”. Besides, the listing and handling of cases, as well as the assignment of which judge or judges are to handle cases or appeals will be determined by the court leader of the relevant level of court.

While the past year has been a challenging period for us – as has been widely and freely reported by your publication and others – Hong Kong will remain a staunch defender of press freedom and a welcoming and hospitable place for law-abiding people from around the world. Hong Kong will continue to forge ahead with confidence and vigour.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Cheung Kin-chung
Chief Secretary for Administration
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government