

12 February 2026

The Editor
The Telegraph

Dear Editor,

Your opinion piece in Telegraph View (February 9) titled “China has insulted Britain” claims that “a British journalist has effectively been sentenced to death”. While this is a sensational and eye-catching claim to make, it is, of course, false and misleading ... an insult to the intelligence of your readers no less.

First, Lai Chee-ying is Chinese. China does not recognise dual nationality. According to the law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the law of the People’s Republic of China, Lai is a Chinese national by birth. Being a Chinese who committed an offence in the HKSAR, he serves his sentence in the HKSAR, which is a very logical stance.

Second, despite the alarmist tone of your opinion piece, I wish to assure readers that death sentence does not exist in Hong Kong. Fact: Lai was not on trial for his political beliefs and the case has nothing to do with freedom of the press. The court clearly identified Lai as the mastermind of the case, and he was sentenced to 20 years in prison after 156 days of fair and impartial public hearings attended by the public, media and observers from around the world. The court considered evidence of up to 2 220 exhibits, over 80 000 pages of documents and statements from 14 prosecution witnesses. Lai himself testified in court for 52 days.

These are the facts. The court’s reasons for verdict and reasons for sentence are fully open for public inspection, providing a detailed account of its considerations in every respect. The court's judgment illustrates that the rule of law in Hong Kong is robust. No one is above the law.

Any suggestion that certain individuals should be immune from legal consequences for their illegal acts is no different from advocating a special privilege to break the law, and this totally runs contrary to the spirit of the rule of law.

Tang Ping-keung
Secretary for Security
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

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