

The Financial Times

August 18, 2020

Dear Sirs,

I refer to your editorial “Gagging the press will suffocate Hong Kong” (August 11), which incorrectly links the arrest of Mr Jimmy Lai for alleged offences under the National Security Law (the Law) 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 Law – and conspiracy to defraud.

To suggest that the arrest of Mr Lai somehow represents an “assault on Hong Kong’s indigenous press” 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. The Law also ensures the resolute, full and faithful implementation of “one country, two systems” – it will not change Hong Kong’s high degree of autonomy or undermine the legitimate rights and freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong people under the Basic Law.

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.

While the past year has been a challenging period for Hong Kong – as has been widely and freely reported by your publication and others – we will remain a staunch defender of press freedom and a welcoming, hospitable and dynamic city for law-abiding people from around the world.

Yours sincerely,

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