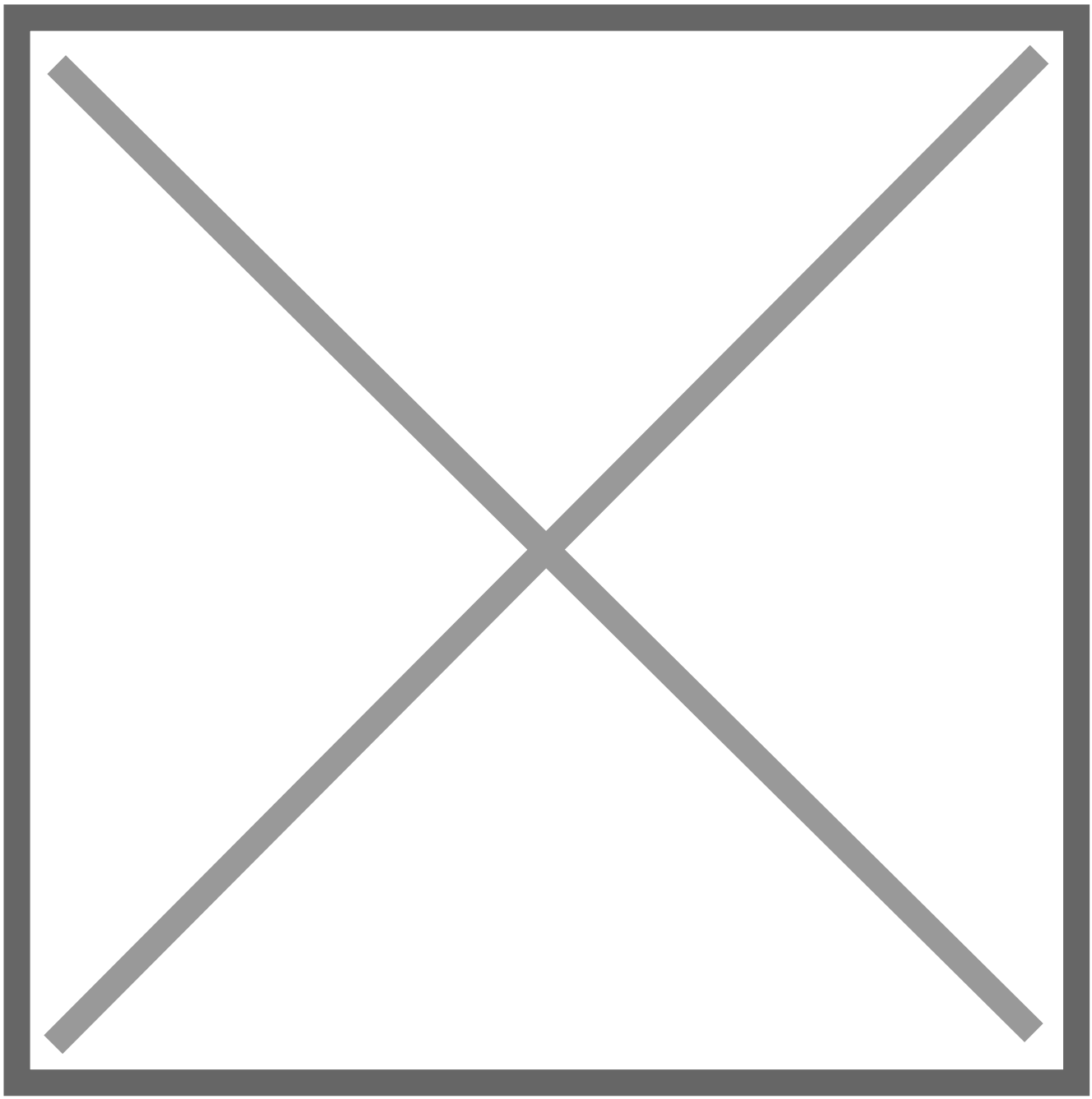
News



U.S. President Donald Trump meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the start of their bilateral meeting at the G20 leaders summit in Osaka, Japan, June 29, 2019. Trump said May 11, 2026, he plans to discuss the imprisonment of Jimmy Lai during his upcoming visit to China; however, he suggested the prominent Catholic and pro-democracy campaigner "caused a lot of bedlam." (OSV News/Reuters/Kevin Lamarque)

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President Donald Trump said May 11 he plans to discuss the imprisonment of Jimmy Lai during his upcoming visit to China; however, he suggested the prominent Catholic and pro-democracy campaigner "caused a lot of bedlam."

Lai, Hong Kong’s prominent Catholic media tycoon was convicted of national security offenses under the city’s controversial national security law. U.S. officials, including Trump, have cast the charges leading to Lai's conviction as fabricated, arguing that they were evidence that the Chinese Communist Party is seeking to silence dissent.

In remarks to reporters in the Oval Office, Trump was asked if he planned to raise Lai's case during his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"I'll bring them both up," Trump told reporters, also in reference to the arrest of Ezra Jin Mingri, founder and pastor of Zion Church, another political prisoner whose case has provoked grave religious freedom concerns from U.S. officials.

Trump said they were seeking the release of "people that are really innocent people, and they're being held captive."

But then Trump seemed to suggest Lai had been a nuisance to the Chinese regime and that he "caused a lot of bedlam."

"It's like saying to me, if (former FBI director James) Comey ever went to jail, would you let him out? It might be a hard one. Does that make sense? It might be hard because he's a dirty cop, but Jimmy Lai isn't that way," Trump said.

The Trump administration has sought to prosecute Comey, with criminal charges filed for a social media post Trump argued was a threat, a claim Comey has denied.

"But Jimmy Lai, it caused lots of turmoil for China," Trump continued. "He tried to do the right thing. He wasn't successful. Went to jail, and people would like him out. And I'd like to see him get out, too. So I'll bring him up again. I have brought him up."

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Lai, who founded the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, protested in favor of democratic freedoms — such as freedom of the press and expression — in Hong Kong, which was designated a Special Administrative Region of China in 1997, with the end of the region's British rule. Following pro-democracy protests in 2019, China implemented a purported national security law the next year, which critics have said has been used to silence the Chinese Communist Party’s critics.

Under that law, Lai was arrested in August 2020 and has been imprisoned since that December. He pleaded not guilty to the charges before his Dec. 15 conviction. On Feb. 9, the 78-year-old was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Trump also again referred to Jin, saying, "and there's another gentleman, a pastor, as you know, with a beautiful daughter and son-in-law that would like to see him get out. I'm going to bring his name up."

Trump previously said in an interview that aired May 5 with Hugh Hewitt, a conservative talk radio host, that he would advocate for Lai during his visit to China. In that same interview, Trump renewed his criticism of Pope Leo XIV over the pontiff's opposition to the Iran war.

Trump is scheduled to arrive in Beijing May 13.