

Hong Kong: Authorities trying to intimidate people

according to chairman of the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA)

Thursday 17 June 2021, by [NG Priscilla](#), [YEUNG Chris](#) (Date first published: 17 June 2021).

The chairman of the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA), Chris Yeung, has described the police's raid of Apple Daily on Thursday as "*shocking*" and "*scary*", accusing the authorities of trying to intimidate the newspaper's supporters by warning them not to "*stand with the suspects*". Five of the media group's top executives were also arrested under the national security law, with the police accusing them of being linked to Apple Daily articles "*calling for foreign sanctions*". HK\$18 million worth of assets from Apple Daily Limited, Apple Daily Printing Limited and AD Internet Limited were also frozen as part of the investigation.

Yeung told RTHK that it was "*quite scary*" that the force was building a case around a number of newspaper articles, some of which date back to 2019 – before the national security law was even implemented.

"Officials had repeatedly assured people that there would not be a retrospective effect of the law, but in practice, or in the enforcement of the law, it seems that's just empty words," he said.

Yeung added that the latest developments will undoubtedly send a chill across the whole of society and will exacerbate self-censorship within the news industry.

"The fact that police seized and searched journalists' materials ... there had been no protection to journalistic materials. That would create a chilling effect on not just the media, but for the public who will feel unsafe and uneasy talking to the media."

The Journalists Association chief also suggested that Secretary for Security John Lee was trying to intimidate the newspaper's readers and subscribers by warning people to cut ties with the city's latest national security suspects. Lee said those who didn't do so "*would regret it*".

"That's an intimidating statement made by the secretary for security – ill-defined and which serves only to deepen fear among not just Apple Daily, but other media and the public as a whole. That's not legal language as well ... What did he mean? Will buying a copy of the newspaper or making a donation to the paper as a show of support be seen as colluding with someone who had violated the law? That's intimidation," Yeung said.

Yeung said he was very concerned about the fate of other media outlets, which might have published stories or articles of a similar nature in the past. *"In theory they might also face similar treatment. It's just a matter of when the police or the national security department will find another target,"* he said.

The veteran journalist said his association would seek to clarify with the force over what exactly constitutes a breach of the law, but conceded there's little his group can do.

"In reality, the national security law itself and the other relevant rules have just given too much, almost unchecked, powers to the law enforcement people. Without checks and balances, that will only lead to abuses and endanger people's freedoms".

P.S.

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