

Press Statement

Society of European Journalists & Communication Professionals in Asia (JOCPA)

28 May 2025

JOCPA Urges Macau Authorities to Uphold Press Freedom After Controversial Remarks

The Society of Journalists and Communication Professionals in Asia (JOCPA) continues to monitor with deep concern the situation involving the detention of two journalists in Macau.

We respectfully remind the authorities of the **Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR)** that under the terms of the **1999 Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration**, the region is committed to preserving press freedom and other fundamental liberties that were guaranteed under Portuguese administration —commitments that remain in effect until at least 2049.

While we fully acknowledge that **no individual is above the law**, we emphasize that a **truly open society must ensure that the law protects —rather than silences— journalists**. Public interest reporting is not a crime, and holding a press pass should never become a liability. The ability of journalists to carry out their work without fear of harassment, intimidation, or detention is essential for any society that values transparency and accountability.

In this context, we take note with particular concern of recent remarks by **Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak**, who stated that *“journalists are not an exception to the law.”* We respectfully submit that **press freedom is not an exemption, but a foundational principle** in any rule-of-law-based system. **The law must shield the press, not be weaponized against it.**

JOCPA President Josep Solano respectfully remind the Secretary and the authorities of the Macau Special Administrative Region that **the fundamental duty of journalists is not to ‘tell a good story,’ but to seek the truth, hold power to account, and report facts—even when they are uncomfortable.** *“Journalism that merely echoes official narratives ceases to be journalism,”* he stated.

“We are particularly concerned by references to the obligation to ‘tell the story of Macau, Hong Kong and China well,’ echoing statements made by Xia Baolong, director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office. These directives, if interpreted as normative expectations for all communicators and media professionals, blur the lines between journalism and state propaganda.”

The organization also **encourage the Government of Portugal** —as a co-signatory of the original handover agreement and a long-standing advocate for democratic norms— **to consider expressing its concern on this matter, even if the individuals involved are not Portuguese nationals.** Such a gesture would **reaffirm its commitment to the universality of human rights and freedom of expression.**

Also we urge international press freedom organizations, democratic governments, and journalists worldwide **to monitor the situation closely and raise their voices in defence of the fundamental values** that underpin open societies.

Freedom of the press is not a privilege — it is a right.

For further information or media inquiries, please contact:

✉ secretariat@jocpa.eu

🌐 www.jocpa.eu