

recent conviction of prominent Chinese human rights lawyer Li Heping

The prominent Chinese human rights lawyer Li Heping was convicted of charges of 'subversion of state power' last week, almost two years after his arrest.

Mr Li's rights under China's Criminal Procedure Code and international law obligations, to a fair trial, proper defence and access to a lawyer of his own choice, were not respected. He is also being deprived of his right to appeal the conviction in the timeframe allowed under Chinese law. The European Union calls for him to be set free.

The Chinese authorities are expected to abide by China's international law obligations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and respect the rights of all citizens as recognised by China's Constitution, as well as to drop all pending charges against the human rights lawyers and defenders detained in connection with the 9 July 2015 crackdown, including Jiang Tianyong, Wang Quanzhang, Xie Yang and Wu Gan, and ensure their release.

Jeremy Corbyn statement on the local election results

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party,
commenting on the local election results, said:

"The results were mixed. We lost seats but we are closing the gap on the Conservatives. I am disappointed at every Labour defeat in the local elections.

Too many fantastic councillors, who work tirelessly for their communities, lost their seats.

"We have five weeks to win the General Election so we can fundamentally transform Britain for the many not the few.

"We know this is no small task – it is a challenge on an historic scale. But we, the whole Labour movement and the British people, can't afford not to seize our moment.

“The

British people have been held back for too long. Labour will put more money in people’s pockets with a £10 real living wage, look after our pensioners by protecting the triple lock on state pensions and give everybody the care and dignity they deserve by properly funding our NHS and social care system.

“I urge

everyone to vote Labour because things can, and will, change.

[SNP win the Scottish council elections](#)

The SNP has won Scotland’s council elections, winning more councillors, more votes and more councils than any other party.

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Today’s council election results prove the Scottish Conservatives are leading the country’s fightback against the SNP, Ruth Davidson has said.

The Scottish Conservative leader hailed the party’s best ever result under the current local government system, returning 276 councillors.

Gains were made in every single mainland local authority, and the Scottish Conservatives also elected their first ever councillor in the Western Isles.

It comes after the party published the most detailed council manifesto, and remain the only ones to stand up to the SNP on its threat of a second independence referendum.

Among today’s achievements were...

- Gains in every mainland seat, more than doubling the vote from 2012
- The party's best local government result under the current system, beating Labour – the first time this has happened since local government boundaries were redrawn in 1974.
- Stopped the SNP gaining overall control in various local authorities including Glasgow
- Outpolling Labour in East Renfrewshire by two to one
- Returning groups of councillors in Highlands, North Lanarkshire and Midlothian where previously there was no Scottish Conservative representation at all.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"I'd like to congratulate every councillor, no matter their party allegiance, who has been elected today. Being asked to serve your local community is both a real achievement and a great responsibility.

"I'd also like to thank everybody who voted Scottish Conservative yesterday – especially those who did so for the first time. Every Scottish Conservative councillor elected today will repay your trust by delivering better local services, not more constitutional division.

"Today's result makes one thing crystal clear: all across Scotland, only the Scottish Conservatives have the strength to fight back against the SNP.

"We denied the SNP a majority at Holyrood last year.

"We have gained seats in councils all over Scotland today. We are now in a position to lead Scotland's fight back on June 8 in the general election too.

"We will speak up for the millions of Scots who have had enough of the uncertainty and division of the last few years. We will stand up for everyone who doesn't want a second referendum on independence.

"We will demand that politicians of all parties focus instead on the things that matter: restoring excellence to Scotland's schools, and getting our economy back to health.

"As we turn to the election on June 8, we know Nicola Sturgeon is still refusing to listen – only last week she said independence would be at the 'heart' of the General Election campaign.

"If you want to send the SNP a message, then today's result shows that, no matter where you live in Scotland, a vote for the Scottish Conservatives will ensure your voice is heard loud and clear."□

Lib Dems on course to make scores of gains at general election

Liberal Democrats are on course to make scores of gains at the general election and establish themselves as the real opposition to the Conservatives, based on the local election results in so far.

Seats as diverse as Bath, Cambridge, Cardiff Central, Cheltenham, Eastleigh, Eastbourne, Edinburgh West, St Albans and Watford would fall to the Liberal Democrats on the basis of the results so far. This would more than double the size of the Liberal Democrat parliamentary party.

The Liberal Democrats topped the polls in Eastbourne despite Theresa May's visit, and early signs are they are surging ahead in Scottish seats such as East Dunbartonshire and NE Fife.

Tim Farron, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, said:

"These results tell a clear and stark message. Labour has collapsed. They cannot win the General Election.

"If you want a strong opposition to this government, we are the party for you.

"A strong opposition can change Britain's future. A strong opposition to stand up to Theresa May's divisive Brexit plans that will cost jobs and put up prices. A strong opposition to keep us in the Single Market. A strong opposition to rescue the NHS from Conservative neglect. A strong opposition to stop Theresa May cutting schools to the bone. A strong opposition to fight for you and your community.

"Labour has failed as an opposition and handed Theresa May a blank cheque to do as she pleases. The voters have delivered their verdict on Jeremy Corbyn.

"The Liberal Democrats are the only party that can challenge Theresa May. We will be the strong opposition that will stand up for you."