



THE SENATE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Hansard questions on notice from public hearing 19 August 2021 Hong Kong Watch and Mr Ted Hui

Mr Ted Hui and Mr Goodman

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CHAIR: Unfortunately, we are running out of time. Mr Goodman and Mr Hui, could I ask you take some questions on notice and, if you don't mind, respond back to the committee by Thursday 2 September? My questions are regarding the ongoing crackdown in Hong Kong and the increasingly brutal application of the national security laws. How can regional governments help to ensure Hong Kong's autonomous status is respected, if that's possible? Do you see any of the existing regional architectures as being able to effectively address this? Specifically for Mr Hui but perhaps to Mr Goodman as well, can you talk to the disillusion of the Civil Human Rights Front, the group that organised many of the rallies that we saw last year in Hong Kong? What do you think will be the effect of this for the democracy movement in Hong Kong and its ability to organise and coordinate, if that's still possible? I'll leave those on notice. If you're able to reply to the committee, that would be very helpful.

ANSWER

Mr Goodman

Thank you chair. Hong Kong Watch believes it is important that regional governments continue to spotlight and raise the cases of political prisoners in Hong Kong, particularly those who currently are in jail without bail facing national security charges. It is important that these individuals are not forgotten, that their cases continue to be raised in private with the Hong Kong Government and in public, and that human rights continues to maintain the central focus of Australia's relationship with China. Even if Australian officials feel that China does not take these concerns on board, it is important that human rights and the situation in Hong Kong continues to be raised. Regional actors, like Australia, should also consider what legitimacy they are offering to the Government in Hong Kong. In Australia's case, a review of the participation of Australian judges on the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal is warranted given the way that the rule of law continues to be undermined.

In terms of regional architecture, as mentioned in my opening statement a lot of the existing regional architecture has failed to respond to the human rights crisis in Hong Kong or to forge adequate policy responses. As regional countries have tended to place their economic and trade relationship with China, ahead of their wider concerns about the dismantling of Hong Kong's autonomy. It is why we fully support the creation and formalisation of the QUAD and the deepening

of the Five Eyes. We hope both organisations will consider focusing their attention on the crisis in Hong Kong.

The disbanding of the Civil Human Rights Front is an example of the shrinking space for civil society groups within Hong Kong. In the last few weeks, Beijing has targeted teachers union, civil society groups, including the organisers of the annual Tiananmen Square Vigil, and threatened the Law Society as well. The pattern has become familiar in Hong Kong, first pro-Beijing media outlets who serve as a mouthpiece for the Chinese Communist Party criticise a civil society group, the Hong Kong Government then announces that it will sever its links or investigate the group, then finally they are forced to disband. This process has been replicated in the last few weeks in Hong Kong, and exemplifies the way that the Hong Kong Government has been reduced to little more than a puppet undertaking the orders of Beijing.

Following the disbanding of these civil society groups, the pro-democracy movement will struggle to organise the kind of large-scale peaceful protests we saw back in the Summer of 2019. In fact, last week the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund which was created to pay the legal fees and assist pro-democracy activists arrested, has announced it will disband after the Hong Kong Police said they would investigate the fund for “profiteering”. It is increasingly clear that the Chinese Communist Party and its acolytes within the Hong Kong Government are happy to undermine the rule of law to come up with political charges which will forcibly silence civil society voices within the city. While most of Hong Kong’s pro-democracy leaders are either in jail, awaiting trial, or in exile abroad. The Government in Hong Kong seems completely unmoved by the impact this will have on Hong Kong’s role as a global financial centre, previous commitments they made to uphold the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, or Hong Kong’s reputation within the region.