

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence And Trade

Inquiry into certain aspects of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Annual Report 2019-20 – Human rights of Australian citizens and some Diaspora communities

13 September 2021

QoN Number: 03

Subject: Exploring Issues with Diaspora communities

Asked by: Julian Hill

Question:

Mr HILL: It has been put to me separately that concerns have been raised with the Burmese Myanmarese authorities in relation to diaspora communities. Can anyone confirm that?

Ms Corcoran: That sits within the division that I work within, but I would have to take that on notice.

Mr HILL: Thanks. Does Home Affairs have any insight into this question? If members of parliament were to say they were interested in further exploring these issues, say, with another five communities, which would be the five, apart from China, Vietnam and Cambodia, we could perhaps beneficially go and have a bit of a look at and whose diaspora communities we could talk to?

Mr Coles: I will defer to Mr Hallinan or Ms Ling on that question.

Mr Hallinan: Mr Hill, apologies—I'm having connection problems, so I've had to rejoin. [inaudible] has not publicly attributed [inaudible] who are engaged in foreign interference in Australia. It would not be appropriate for me to express an opinion in this forum on which other sections of Australian society [inaudible]—

Mr HILL: I can't really hear you.

CHAIR: Mr Hallinan, I'm afraid we are having technical communication problems between you and us so I don't think we heard much of that answer. Maybe if you could take it on notice and provide us with an answer because we couldn't really pick up what you were saying.

Mr Hallinan: Happy to do so, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr HILL: If you need to take it on notice, could you advise if similar concerns have been raised with the department or conveyed to foreign governments in relation to Myanmar, Saudi Arabia or Ethiopia?

Mr Hallinan: I'm happy to take that on notice. The response I was trying to provide earlier is that the government has not attributed foreign interference to any particular [inaudible] we will take the questions on notice and see what we can come back to the committee with.

Answer:

Australia is the target of sophisticated and persistent foreign interference activities from a range of nations. It is not the practice of Government to publicly list individual countries who are targeting Australia through foreign interference.