

Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Human rights implications of recent violence in Iran 2022-2023

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

001 – Human rights implications of recent violence in Iran

Hearing Date: 21 December 2022

Topic: Sanctions imposed by the US, Canada and UK

Senator Claire Chandler

Question

"CHAIR: Okay. How many Iranian individuals and entities have been sanctioned by the US, Canada and the United Kingdom respectively in response to the violence in Iran since September this year?

Mr Innes-Brown: We'll have to come back to you on that. We don't have the aggregate number with us at the moment.

CHAIR: I would also be interested to know how many of those individuals and entities that have been sanctioned by those countries haven't been sanctioned by Australia, and if you don't have that aggregate number to hand you can take it on notice. I assume there is going to be a discrepancy between those numbers, because we know that Australia has only sanctioned a small number of individuals."

Answer

As at 4 January 2023, in response to the violence in Iran since the protests began on 16 September 2022:

- the US has imposed sanctions on at least 45 Iranian individuals and 5 Iranian entities;
- Canada has sanctioned at least 84 Iranian individuals and 19 Iranian entities; and
- the United Kingdom has sanctioned at least 41 Iranian individuals and 1 Iranian entity.

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004 – Human rights implications of recent violence in Iran

Hearing Date: 21 December 2022

Topic: Economic and Social Council

Senator Raff Ciccone

Question

"Senator CICCONE: I'm assuming we have been a member of ECOSOC before?

Ms Smith: Yes.

Senator CICCONE: When was that?

Ms Smith: I'd have to check the exact timing on that. I think we were a member of ECOSOC last year, but we're not on it currently.

Senator CICCONE: But membership of the Commission on the Status of Women is controlled by ECOSOC; is that right?

Ms Smith: That's right.

Senator CICCONE: It seems astonishing to me that Iran was appointed to the Commission on the Status of Women in the first place. I'm hoping you might be able to explain when and how this happened.

Ms Smith: Iran was elected to the commission in April 2021. It was uncontested and endorsed by the Asia Pacific group—ECOSOC is, as much of the UN system is, broken into regional groups. They nominated, and it wasn't contested. There weren't more Asia-Pacific states nominating than there were spots. That's how they came to be a member of CSW Senator CICCONE: Okay. So that I'm clear, who were the members that were responsible for the UN committee when that decision was made?

Ms Smith: The membership of ECOSOC shifts around. I'd have to take it on notice to get you exactly which countries were ECOSOC members at that time."

Answer

Australia was most recently a member of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021.

When Iran was elected to the Commission on the Status of Women in April 2021, ECOSOC members were Angola, Armenia, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Colombia, Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mali, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Solomon Islands, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Zimbabwe.

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005 – Human rights implications of recent violence in Iran

Hearing Date: 21 December 2022

Topic: Briefings related to the listing of IRGC

Senator David Fawcett

Question

"Senator FAWCETT: Sure. I'm not asking for what you have discussed. I'm just asking a question of fact: has DFAT provided a brief to the Attorney-General's Department regarding the listing of the IRGC?

Ms Buckingham: No. On a brief, as you describe it, I think the answer is no.

Senator FAWCETT: Have you had interdepartmental briefings with other departments to talk about issues? Has DFAT made a contribution to such a meeting on that topic?

Ms Buckingham: It may be more appropriate if I could take that one on notice. "

Answer

It is the Australian Government's longstanding practice not to comment on the possible listings of terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code, including whether or not a particular entity is under consideration for listing.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

006 – Human rights implications of recent violence in Iran

Hearing Date: 21 December 2022

Topic: Communications or requests related to the listing of IRGC

Senator David Fawcett

Question

"Senator FAWCETT: This is my last question on this area: have you received communications or requests from like-minded nations such as the US and the UK or from groupings such as the EU regarding the listing of the IRGC as a terrorist organisation?

Ms Buckingham: Again, if I may take that one on notice, I think that's one where the Attorney-General's Department would have useful input that could inform the committee.

Senator FAWCETT: I'm sure they will, but I'm also aware, from previous inquiries where the PJCS has looked at listing bodies, that DFAT has a key role both in engaging with international partners and as a key stakeholder within our own process as a government. So my question here is: has DFAT been approached by international partners?

Ms Buckingham: I'm not aware of any outreach of that kind.

Mr Innes-Brown: Not specifically on that. But again, for complete accuracy for you, I think we'd better take it on notice. It doesn't ring a bell.

Senator FAWCETT: Thank you. I am happy to receive that on notice."

Answer

It is standard practice to not disclose matters communicated in confidence by foreign governments.

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008 – Human rights implications of recent violence in Iran

Hearing Date: 21 December 2022

Topic: DFAT formal meetings (on Iran) with the Foreign Minister/Senior Executive meeting agenda items

Senator Jordon Steele-John

Question

"Senator STEELE-JOHN: Let's start with formal meetings, then. Since September, how many formal meetings have the department participated in with the minister in relation to this?

Mr Innes-Brown: I'd have to take that on notice.

Senator STEELE-JOHN: I'm not asking about the minister's office, so we can leave that aside. I'm talking about DFAT speaking to the foreign minister of Australia and, in particular, meetings with the minister about the issues in Iran. I'll try again. Could you provide us with information—I'm guessing it's going to have to be on notice—on how many times since September a member of DFAT has met with the minister in person to discuss the issues in Iran?

Mr Innes-Brown: I can't give you that number now, because, as I said, there is a structure called the senior executive meeting, which involves the secretary and deputy secretaries of DFAT meeting with the minister, and they happen periodically. I'm sure this issue's come up. I can't give it to you right now, but we can see what we can come up with on notice.

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Senator STEELE-JOHN: Okay. Could you provide to us, on notice as well, the number of times that the issue of Iran has been on the agenda in those senior executive meetings as well.

Mr Innes-Brown: Yes."

Answer

Since the protests in Iran began on 16 September 2022, there have been numerous engagements between senior DFAT officials and the Foreign Minister, as well as between DFAT officials and members of the Foreign Minister's Office.

This has included the Foreign Minister being briefed and engaged on the situation in Iran in the context of 16 public statements by the Minister (including a video message and Ministerial releases), in addition to 11 statements by DFAT officials.

This issue has had a high priority since the beginning of the crisis. DFAT does not keep a record of the day-to-day interactions between the Department and the Foreign Minister or her office.