

S for S speaks on specification of absconders in respect of offences endangering national security and specification of measures applicable against relevant absconders under Safeguarding National Security Ordinance

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, at a media session on the specification of absconders in respect of offences endangering national security and specification of measures applicable against relevant absconders under Safeguarding National Security Ordinance this morning (June 12):

Reporter: First, why is the Government deciding to cancel the passports of the six now? Why today? And why months after Article 23 took effect? And the second question, because one of the six is operating an account on the platform Patreon, so will his subscribers also face legal consequences as people will be blocked from providing funds and resources to the six? Thank you.

Secretary for Security: First of all, the reason why we have to declare them as specified absconders, it is because according to the law, and actually we have to address and we have to combat, to deter and to prevent those people who have committed offences relating to endangering national security to abscond, so this is a necessary action that we have to take. And regarding the use of the tool that may be used to provide funds to those specified absconders, here I would like to reiterate that it is an offence to provide funds or to handle funds for those specified absconders, no matter what platform it is.

Reporter: Will the Hong Kong Government demand other countries not to recognise the Hong Kong passports of these six people, and how would you make sure other countries would agree? My second question is that the international human rights treaty, the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), guarantees freedom of movement. Are the passport cancellations of these six people a violation of their rights?

Secretary for Security: First of all, the Immigration Department will, according to our law, cancel their passports. There is a well established mechanism among different countries regarding how to notify the cancellation of passport. There is absolutely no contravention to the covenant you have quoted. It is because according to all those covenants, there are exceptions

because of national security grounds. This is not just applicable to Hong Kong, but applies to all civilised societies.

Reporter: What are the actual intended effects of these new restrictions given to these people under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, given some of them only have BNO passports, and are currently residing in the UK, which could give them citizenship or permanent residency, which could eventually render a lot of these restrictions useless? Also, how many of these people actually held HKSAR passports for the Government to cancel?

The second question, as mentioned earlier, the Government will also not allow the transfer of money or other resources to these individuals as well. In the case of YouTube and Patreon, will the Government also proactively reach out to these companies and try to demand that they take them down, or will they also restrict them on any way in regards of this particular action or measure ? Thank you.

Secretary for Security: First of all, we are not just (taking) one measure , like cancelling their passports. We have a range of measures, for example, like any provision of funds or handling of funds for them, will be subject to these restrictions, so it is not just one. To answer the other question, all those people (who) are entitled to have HKSAR passports, under our suspension requirement, even if they want to apply for a new passport, it won't be allowed. As I said, it will be illegal to provide funds or handle their funds, it doesn't matter which platform it is, as long as they are providing funding or assisting them to handle the funding, (they) will be subject to criminal sanction. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)