

**PRESS RELEASE
PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON
DELIBERATE ONLINE FALSEHOODS – CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND
COUNTERMEASURES**

Chronology of the Exchange with Human Rights Watch

1. This chronology of the exchange with HRW is issued following the remarks made on Human Rights Watch by the Chairman of the Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods, Mr Charles Chong, today (see [ANNEX](#)).
2. On 5 March 2018 (Monday), the Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods decided to invite Human Rights Watch (HRW) to give oral evidence at the Select Committee's public hearings. On the same day, Parliament Secretariat sent an invitation to Shayna Bauchner, the coordinator of HRW's Asia Division. The invitation asked if HRW was willing to appear before the Select Committee to give oral evidence, and if so, on which of the 8 hearing dates set aside by the Select Committee (14, 15, 16, 22, 23, 27, 28 and 29 March) was HRW's representative available.
3. On 8 March (Thursday), HRW replied, indicating that it was willing to send a representative to be present at the public hearing on 23 March. On 8 March (Thursday), Parliament Secretariat asked if HRW was able to appear at the public hearing on 27 March instead. On 10 March (Saturday), HRW replied that its representative would only be available to give evidence at a session on 23 March, and asked if that remained an option.
4. On 13 March (Tuesday), Parliament Secretariat confirmed that 23 March was available. HRW was also informed that its representative should be able to deal with questions that might arise, including HRW's report "*Kill the Chicken to Scare the Monkeys*" – *Suppression of Free Expression and Assembly in Singapore* (HRW Report) which covered some issues relating to freedom of expression.
5. On 14 March (Wednesday), HRW replied that "since our last communication the staff member best able to address these issues has made other travel plans that cannot be changed". HRW offered to submit written evidence, or to meet with

Government officials in Singapore or London. On the same day Parliament Secretariat replied to reiterate the offer of appearing on any of the 8 hearing dates.

6. On 15 March (Thursday), HRW substantially repeated its email of 14 March (see paragraph above), indicating its unavailability. On the same day, Parliament Secretariat replied, informing HRW that it can send one of its officers, on any day between 15 and 29 March, at any time. HRW was also told that if it could not send one of its officers, then video-conferencing can be arranged at any time between 15 and 29 March, so that its officers will not have to travel. It was also pointed out to HRW that the Select Committee had received a submission which was highly critical of the HRW Report and considered the Report to be full of falsehoods.

7. On 16 March, Parliament Secretariat sent another email, adding that funding was available should HRW decide to send a representative to Singapore.

8. On 19 March, HRW replied that it was unable to participate and did not take up the offer of video-conferencing.

Office of the Clerk of Parliament
Singapore, 23 March 2018

**Remarks by the Chairman of the Select Committee on Deliberate Online
Falsehoods, Mr Charles Chong, at the 23 March 2018 Hearing**

1. Before we move on to the next witness I would like to place a number of facts on the record.
2. This Committee has heard PAP Policy Forum (PPF) and NGO Monitor make serious criticisms against Human Rights Watch. In particular, PPF's written representation has criticised HRW's report "*Kill the Chicken to Scare the Monkeys*" – *Suppression of Free Expression and Assembly in Singapore*, and pointed out that the Report contains many falsehoods.
3. Before hearing this evidence, we had unanimously decided, at our meeting on 5 March, to invite Human Rights Watch (HRW) to give oral evidence.
4. HRW initially agreed to give evidence. It agreed to come on 23 March. HRW was then informed that its representative should be able to deal with questions on its Report. Once it was notified of this, HRW replied that "since our last communication the staff member best able to address these issues has made other travel plans that cannot be changed".
5. Parliament Secretariat subsequently offered to fund the costs of HRW's representative flying in, or to arrange for video-conferencing at any time between 15 and 29 March. That is over a period of 14 days. But HRW has indicated that it remains unavailable to give oral evidence, either in person, through one of its officers, or via video conference.
6. I have asked Parliament Secretariat to issue a chronology of the exchange with HRW.
7. For the record, our invitation to HRW still stands. Should HRW decide that it is willing to give oral evidence to defend its Report, whether in person or by video-conferencing, it is welcome to write to us.