

March 29, 2024

The Editor
The Guardian

Dear Editor,

We strongly disapprove of and condemn the extremely misleading report “Hong Kong official warns online criticism could breach new national security law” (March 25). It is necessary to set the record straight.

Offences stipulated in the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (the Ordinance) target acts and activities endangering national security with precision, and define elements of offences with clarity. Law-abiding persons will not unwittingly violate the law.

Regarding offences in connection with seditious intention in the Ordinance, there are clear and specific provisions stipulating circumstances that do not constitute seditious intention. The offences do not hinder legitimate expression of opinions, such as making reasonable and genuine criticism of government policies based on objective facts. In the relevant interviews with the media, the Secretary for Justice had made clear the distinction between incitement of hatred against the Central Authorities or the HKSAR Government (which is prohibited), and mere criticisms (which are not prohibited). The heading of your report is a gross distortion of the Secretary’s remarks by misleading readers to think that criticisms against the Government are prohibited.

All law enforcement actions taken by the law enforcement agencies of the HKSAR are based on evidence, strictly according to the law and for the acts of the persons concerned. They are not directed at any person on account of the person’s expression of genuine criticisms against the Government. The Ordinance clearly specifies that rights and freedoms enshrined in the Basic Law, as well as the provisions of relevant international human rights conventions, are to be protected in accordance with the law.

We strongly urge The Guardian to ensure that reports concerning Hong Kong are fair and just, and stop making scaremongering remarks.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Apollonia Liu
Deputy Secretary for Security
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

(ENDS)