



New Power Party Legislator Hsu Yung-ming talks to reporters in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Fang Pin-chao, Taipei Times

A statement issued by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) late on Saturday has further fueled conflict between lawmakers and Minister of Justice Luo Ying-shay (呂英祥), with netizens accusing Luo of treating the ministry's Web site as her personal Facebook page.

The nearly 500-word statement, titled: "Blaming others when you are wrong," galvanized an outpouring of criticism on the Internet almost immediately after it was published on the ministry's official Web site on Saturday evening.

Singling out New Power Party (NPP) Legislator Hsu Yung-ming (許毓仁), the statement said lawmakers and political commentators were indiscriminately demanding that the government rescue Taiwanese who have been forcibly deported or face possible deportation to China from other nations, without having some basic knowledge of how cross-strait negotiations are conducted.

"As you all know, cross-strait ties are complicated. It is not like the other side [of the Taiwan Strait] will agree to whatever we say. Just like in Taiwan, not all students listen to their professors," the statement said.

Under the 2009 Cross-Strait Joint Crime-Fighting and Judicial Mutual Assistance Agreement (海峽交流兩岸犯罪防治及司法互助協議), everything ranging from exchanging criminal intelligence resources and launching joint investigations to handing over evidence can only be carried out following cross-strait negotiations, the statement said.

"The ministry is not entitled to make any unilateral decisions," it added.

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The statement went on to blast lawmakers, saying they were shifting blame onto the ministry over the release of 20 Taiwanese fraud suspects deported to Taiwan from Malaysia on Friday last week due to a lack of evidence, which is still in China's hands and has yet to be referred to Taiwanese authorities.

"These lawmakers act as if China is at the ministry's beck and call, and have no regard for the time needed for bilateral negotiations. They denounce China, on one hand for the sake of sowing hatred and social divisions, and on the other hand, they ask the ministry to obtain relevant evidence from China," the statement said.

"Such manipulation of populism is likely to have a disastrous effect on Taiwan. Please, lawmakers, if you truly love Taiwan, stop now before going too far. Give Taiwan a break," it said.

Hsu was quick to respond to the statement, criticizing Luo on Facebook on Saturday for what he called her continued reluctance to reflect on her mistakes after her "sophistry and absurd stance" on China's recent forced deportation of 45 Taiwanese from Kenya turned her into a "nationwide laughingstock."

Luo faced a barrage of criticism and questions from lawmakers at a legislative session on Thursday last week, primarily because of her justification of China's controversial handling of the group's deportation, which contradicted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' categorization of the incident as an "illegal abduction."

"China's Taiwan Affairs Office adopted a commanding tone after the return of the 20 Taiwanese fraud suspects, criticizing Taiwan for setting free criminals and demanding that we 'immediately correct the mistake,'" Hsu said on Facebook.

"Instead of taking a tougher stance [against Beijing], the justice ministry chose to take issue with lawmakers. It is beyond comprehension," Hsu said.

The NPP caucus issued a statement expressing regret over the ministry's remarks.

“All government agencies are endeavoring to devise counter-strategies and send a negotiating delegation to China. However, the justice ministry has not only sabotaged such efforts, but has apparently attempted to use emotional rhetoric to detract public attention from its preposterous handling of the incident,” the caucus said.

Hung Chi-kune (洪錫麟), a former adviser to Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), said it was clear that Luo was seeking to pick a fight with lawmakers and to turn a cross-strait issue into an internal conflict.

The ministry’s statement also triggered heated discussions on the Professional Technology Temple (PTT), the nation’s largest online academic bulletin board.

A netizen with the username “umenosola” said it was a “wonder of the world” that a ministry head would use an official government Web site like their own Facebook page, while another netizen, who went by the pseudonym “Leon419,” said that the statement revealed the ministry’s incompetence.

In a telephone interview with TVBS that was aired yesterday, Luo acknowledged that she wrote the statement, but added that she made some revisions after consulting with her colleagues.

“Of course we want to see [the deported Taiwanese returned] as soon as possible. Who does not? But you [lawmakers] cannot just pay lip service,” Luo said.

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