

Push to tighten NSW race hate laws

ANTHONY KLAN THE AUSTRALIAN 12:00AM September 3, 2015

The NSW government is considering tightening race hate laws after police were unable to act against the local leader of extremist Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir over a public speech that called for Muslims to “rid” the world of “Jewish hidden evil”.

NSW Attorney-General Gabriel Upton said communities “and governments” needed to be vigilant to prevent vilification and the government was “considering” recommended changes to discrimination laws.

“People, communities and governments need to be vigilant to, and guard against, the spread of religious or racial vilification,” Ms Upton said.

She said the government was “considering” changes recommended by a Legislative Council law and justice committee report on racial vilification laws.

“The report made a number of recommendations including changes to the operation of section 20D of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 regarding the criminal offence of serious racial vilification,” Ms Upton said.

The government’s desire to take action in relation to the legislation has been questioned, given the report was completed in late 2013.

The NSW Police Force confirmed it had been unable to act against Ismail al-Wahwah but had “treated this matter seriously and investigated it thoroughly”.

Despite the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board finding a “serious breach” of race hate laws had occurred, it was the 31st consecutive time authorities have failed to act under the laws since they were introduced in 1989.

Police are understood to be frustrated by the laws, including requirements that action must be taken within six months of the alleged hate speech.

A video of a public sermon given by Mr Wahwah in which he makes several anti-Semitic statements was uploaded to the internet earlier this year, but the comments had been made last year, more than six months before a complaint was made.

The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies lodged the complaint over the alleged hate speech.

In the speech, Mr Wahwah says: “The ember of jihad against Jews will continue to burn ... tomorrow you Jews will see what will become of you — an eye for an eye, blood for blood, destruction for destruction.”

In a social media post, Hizb ut- Tahrir Australia said the comments had been made “in 2004 when the army of Israel was launching a brutal war against the people of Gaza”.

It accused the Jewish Board of Deputies of using excerpts of Mr Wahwah’s speeches to “provide a meaning that served their objectives”.

Board chief Vic Alhadeff said Mr Wahwah’s comments were a “racially motivated incitement to violence” and were directed at Jews, and not Israel alone, as was claimed.

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