

Ma's Poor Performance Draws Yet a 5th Letter of Protest from International Scholars.

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.

Friday, 13 November 2009 07:53

The quality of justice in Taiwan continues to erode and the freedom of the press declines; people wonder why its president, Ma Ying-jeou, like a one-trick pony is stuck. Abuses abound yet all Ma can think of is to try and push his dangerous and non-transparent ECFA deal on the people. Freedom House and Reporters without Borders express disappointment and give the country lower marks on Ma's performance. As a result the international group of scholars and writers have no choice but to write another letter of protest and concern on Taiwan's failing democracy. It is their fifth letter in barely one year. The number of those signing continues to grow as does the awareness of Ma's incompetence. The letter follows:

President Ma Ying-jeou

Office of the President Taipei, Taiwan November 9th 2009

Dear President Ma,

During the past year a number of us, scholars and writers from the US, Canada, Asia, Europe and Australia, have publicly expressed to your government our concerns about a number of trends in Taiwan, as well as several specific developments. On November 6th and again on December 2nd 2008 in letters to Minister of Justice Wang Ching-feng, we focused on the issues of erosion of justice, significant flaws in the judicial system, and judicial abuses against members of the democratic opposition.

On January 21st and again on May 21st 2009, we addressed two Open Letters to you, Mr. President, expressing concern about the fairness of the judicial system, as well as erosion of press freedom and democratic checks and balances. We regret to say that the responses received from GIO Minister Su Jun-pin did not adequately address the issues raised, nor have we seen any substantive ameliorative steps taken to correct the problems.

Since then, a number of developments have taken place--some positive and some negative--which prompt us to write to you again to express our views on these issues. We wish to reiterate that we raise these points as strong international supporters of Taiwan's democracy who care deeply about the country and its future as a free and democratic nation. We also

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emphasize that we do not take sides in internal political debates, but do have Taiwan's international image and credibility as an international partner in mind.

Due to the hard work and perseverance of the Taiwanese people, Taiwan was able to make the transition to democracy two decades ago. We applaud this achievement and strongly believe that this basic fact, democracy, is the strongest card Taiwan can play in building and strengthening its relations with other countries around the world and the strongest protection against outside interference in Taiwan's internal affairs.

We are sure that you would agree with us that Taiwan's young democracy can only grow and prosper if it is nurtured through good governance, accountability and transparency based on the fundamental principles of freedom, democracy, justice and human rights. This would also adhere to both the letter and spirit of the two UN human rights covenants signed by you and ratified by the Legislative Yuan, and be enhanced by the implementation of these covenants into national law in accordance with the advice of the International Commission of Jurists.

During the past two decades, Taiwan has made major progress in each of these areas. It thus has been a disappointment for us to see an erosion of justice, a weakening of checks and balances in the democratic system and a decline in press freedom in Taiwan. These trends are reflected in the significantly downward ratings Taiwan received in the annual reports of international organizations such as Freedom House and Reporters without Borders.

They are also reflected in the expressions of concern by international scholars and friends of Taiwan related to the flaws in the judicial proceedings against former President Chen Shui-bian and the apparent lack of neutrality in the continuing "investigations" and indictments of other prominent members of the DPP government. We thus appeal to you again to ensure that measures are taken to ensure the impartiality and fairness of the judiciary.

Good governance, accountability and transparency based on the fundamental principles of freedom, democracy, justice and human rights are all the more essential now that your government is moving Taiwan on a path of closer economic ties with China. We believe that a decrease of tension across the Taiwan Strait would indeed be welcome, but emphasize that this should not be done at the expense of the hard-won democracy and the establishment of human rights in Taiwan itself.

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Thus, the process of improving relations with the large neighbor across the Strait needs to be an open, deliberative and democratic process, in full consultation with both the Legislative Yuan and the democratic opposition, and fully transparent to the general public. We are thus pleased to hear that officials of your government have stated that any agreement with China would need to have both a domestic consensus, including approval by the Legislative Yuan, and acceptance by the international community. We trust this process will be open and consultative in ways that respect the democratic traditions begun so promisingly two decades ago.

Indeed, we emphasize that a country can only grow and prosper if it has diversified ties--economically and politically--to other countries. Too close an embrace with one neighbor will expose that country to the risks of volatility in the neighboring country, in particular if that neighbor remains authoritarian and openly disrespectful of Taiwan's democratic achievements.

Mr. President, we wish to emphasize again that, as international scholars and writers who have followed, supported and applauded Taiwan's impressive transition to democracy, we feel strongly that Taiwan should be more fully accepted by the international community as a full and equal partner. This can only be achieved if Taiwan ensures that its achievements of democracy are safeguarded, that its sovereignty, human rights and fundamental freedoms are protected and that the democratic fabric of society is strengthened so the country is ready to meet the challenges ahead.

Respectfully yours,

1.

Ambassador Nat Bellocchi, former Chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan

2.

Coen Blaauw, Formosan Association for Public Affairs, Washington DC

3.

Gordon G. Chang, author, "The Coming Collapse of China"

4.

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Peter Chow, Professor of Economics, City College of New York

5.

Stéphane Corcuff, Associate Professor of Political Science, China and Taiwan Studies,
University of Lyon, France

6.

Michael Danielsen, Chairman, Taiwan Corner, Copenhagen, Denmark

7.

June Teufel Dreyer, Professor of Political Science, University of Miami, Florida

8.

Edward Friedman, Professor of Political Science and East Asian Studies, University of
Wisconsin, Madison

9.

Terri Giles, Executive Director, Formosa Foundation, Los Angeles

10.

Michael Rand Hoare, Emeritus Reader at the University of London, Great Britain

11.

Christopher R. Hughes, Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics and
Political Science, Great Britain

12.

Thomas G. Hughes, Former chief of staff to the late Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI), Washington
DC

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13.

Bruce Jacobs, Professor of Asian Languages and Studies, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

14.

Richard C. Kagan, Professor Emeritus of History, Hamline University, St. Paul Minnesota. Author, "Taiwan's Statesman, Lee Teng-hui and Democracy in Asia"

15.

Jerome F. Keating, Associate Professor, National Taipei University (Ret.). Author, "Island in the Stream, a quick case study of Taiwan's complex history" and other works on Taiwan's history

16.

Hon. David Kilgour, former Member of Parliament and Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific (2002-2003), Canada

17.

André Laliberté, Associate Professor, School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa, Canada

18.

Perry Link, Professor emeritus of East Asian Studies, Princeton University

19.

Liu Shih-chung, Visiting Fellow, The Brookings Institution, Washington DC

20.

Daniel Lynch, Associate Professor, School of International Relations, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

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21.

Victor H. Mair, Professor of Chinese Language and Literature, University of Pennsylvania

22.

Donald Rodgers, Associate Professor of Political Science, Austin College, Texas

23.

Christian Schafferer, Associate Professor, Department of International Trade, Overseas Chinese Institute of Technology, Chair Austrian Association of East Asian Studies, Editor Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia, Vienna, Austria

24.

Scott Simon, Associate professor, University of Ottawa, Canada

25.

Michael Stainton, York Center for Asia Research, Toronto, Canada

26.

Peter Tague, Professor of Law, Georgetown University, Washington DC

27.

John J. Tkacik Jr., former Senior Research Fellow, The Heritage Foundation, Washington

28.

Arthur Waldron, Lauder Professor of International Relations, University of Pennsylvania

29.

Vincent Wei-cheng Wang, Professor of Political Science, University of Richmond, Virginia

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30.

Gerrit van der Wees, Editor Taiwan Communiqué, Washington DC

31.

Stephen Yates, President of DC Asia Advisory and former Deputy Assistant to the Vice President for National Security Affairs

Source: [Jerome F. Keating's writings](#)