

Church asks Obama to prevent China takeover

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The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan yesterday issued an open letter to US President Barack Obama, reminding him not to sacrifice Taiwan's national interest as the US develops closer ties with China.

"We urge the US government to review its policies concerning Taiwan and China, recognize the fact that Taiwan and China are two separate countries, and take a leading role in calling together all peace-and-justice-loving countries in the world to prevent China from taking over Taiwan through military or any other means for any reason," the Church's statement said.

"The Taiwanese are a people who enjoy democracy and freedom, and we cherish our achievements [in freedom and democracy]," the statement said. "At the moment, more than 80 percent of the people are opposed to unification with China, thus we insist on defending our right to self-determination under peaceful means and wish to participate in international affairs as an independent country."

The statement said that if China were to take Taiwan by force, it would not only destroy the hard-earned democracy in Taiwan, but could also jeopardize peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

The statement was issued following a decision made during the church's 54th General Assembly meeting that began on Thursday and ended yesterday, said Leonard Lin, a pastor of the Church who presided over the meeting.

"According to a report by the Taipei Times, US President Barack Obama may meet with -Chinese President Hu Jintao at the G20 meeting to take place in Washington in September," Lin told the Taipei Times.

"We're worried that Taiwan's national interests may be sacrificed as the US' new cross-strait policy forms after the meeting and thus wanted to make sure that Taiwan's voice is heard beforehand," he said.

In 1977, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan also issued a statement calling on former US president Jimmy Carter not to overlook the interests of Taiwanese as Washington established formal diplomatic ties with Beijing.

The Church had not yet completed an official English translation of the letter, but it plans to deliver the letter to Obama by the end of this month, Lin said.

"Besides handing the letter to the American Institute in Taiwan, we will also ask Christian organizations friendly to Taiwan to help deliver the message to other political leaders and peoples of the world," Lin said.

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