

Chen Chu gives support to film, human rights

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 22 September 2009 07:50 -

Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu (陳菊) yesterday reaffirmed the city's commitment to screening a documentary on Uighur independence activist Rebiya Kadeer to highlight the city's support for human rights despite opposition from Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) councilors.

The move came as two directors pulled their films from the city's upcoming film festival in protest and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) announced plans to screen the film nationwide.

Fielding questions from KMT City Councilor May Zai-hsin (馬宰欣) at the city council, Chen said the city's image as a supporter of freedom and human rights would suffer a serious blow if the city government canceled the screenings.

May compared Kadeer to Osama bin Laden and Adolf Hitler, urging the mayor to halt the screenings.

Chen told the councilor that the city government would not change its plan to screen the documentary because of protests by Beijing.

"Taiwan is a free and democratic society. We respect the choice of the organizers of the Kaohsiung Film Festival," Chen said.

"The best way to deal with Kadeer's documentary is to allow the public to see for themselves what the film is about," she said.

The festival has attracted controversy since its organizers announced early this month it would include The 10 Conditions of Love featuring Kadeer.

Representatives from the city's tourism sector have complained about cancellations by Chinese tour groups, saying the groups are avoiding Kaohsiung because of the planned screenings.

The city government said on Saturday it would not cancel the screenings, but brought the date forward to today and tomorrow. It also said that tomorrow's screening will move to a bigger venue, FE21 Mall's Vieshow Cinema, because of increased demand.

Chen said the decision was made to prevent the controversy from escalating.

Chen said yesterday that she understood the concerns of the tourism sector, but "it would be too dangerous to allow Kaohsiung City's tourism development to fully depend on China's goodwill."

But DPP City Councilor Huang Chao-hsing (黃朝興) said the city government should also screen

Chen Chu gives support to film, human rights

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 22 September 2009 07:50 -

the film at every park in the city.

“Are we going to sacrifice our democracy, freedom and dignity for money? Kaohsiung City is not a prostitute who will give up her dignity for money,” Huang said.

Two film directors — Chen Li-kuei (陳麗貴) and Chen Yu-ching (陳玉成) — said yesterday they were withdrawing their films in protest against the city government's decision to bring forward the documentary's screening.

“Following such disgraceful action, we wouldn't know how to face the audience if we were to show our documentaries on Taiwan's struggle for freedom and democracy as planned in the section of the festival called 'The Power of the People,’” Chen Yu-ching said by telephone.

Chen Yu-ching is the director of My Human Rights Journey (我的人權旅程), a documentary on the prison on Green Island (綠島), where political dissidents were jailed during the White Terror era.

Director Chen Li-kuei also announced the withdrawal of her film The Burning Mission: Rescue of Political Prisoners in Taiwan.

On the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights last year, the city government announced it would create a special section titled “the power of the people” dedicated to films about human rights and freedom in this year's festival.

Both films were scheduled to be shown in this section.

“We regret that Mayor Chen Chu failed to defend the professionalism and independence of the festival and dishonored the 'city of human rights' title that Kaohsiung has given itself,” the two said in a joint statement.

“Bowling to political pressure and showing the film in a 'special screening' before the festival is not only a humiliation to the filmmaker, but also a rejection of the dream that Rebiya Kadeer pursues,” they said.

“Since the Kaohsiung City Government did not carefully consider all factors and does not respect the professionalism and independence of the festival, we would like to express our deepest regrets and withdraw our films,” the statement said.

DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) yesterday urged the central government to intervene, instead of letting the city government shoulder all the pressure from China.

“Cross-strait relations are the responsibility of the central government,” Tsai said. “It should share some of the burden.”

DPP spokesman Chao Tien-lin (趙天麟) said the party would “respect Kaohsiung's decision as an independent government body.”

Chen Chu gives support to film, human rights

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 22 September 2009 07:50 -

However, the party would try to hold screenings of the film around the country, Chao said.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/09/22](#)