

Kadeer 'very disappointed' by Taipei

Written by Taipei Times

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Exiled Uighur leader Rebiya Kadeer speaks at a press conference at her office in Washington.
PHOTO: NADIA TSAO, TAIPEI TIMES

Exiled Uighur leader Rebiya Kadeer on Friday accused Taipei of bowing to Beijing's pressure in refusing to allow her to visit Taiwan and demanded an apology from the President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) administration for linking her and the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) to "terrorists."

"I am filled with regret, I am very disappointed," she said during an emotional press conference in her Washington office.

On Wednesday, Kadeer accepted an invitation from black metal band Chthonic (克蘇) frontman and Guts United Taiwan president Freddy Lim (林德福) to visit Taiwan in December.

On Friday, however, Premier Wu Den-yih (吳登毅) supported Minister of the Interior Jiang Yi-huah's (江宜華) recommendation that the government not permit Kadeer to visit as the WUC, of which Kadeer is president, "is closely associated with an East Turkestan terrorist organization ... and it would be in the best interests of Taiwan and its people to prohibit her from visiting the country."

Jiang said that WUC secretary-general Dolkun Isa is also among the names of "important international terrorist organizations/individuals promulgated by the Interpol."

Kadeer said it was the first time a country refused to grant her a visa, adding that over the last few years she had visited 28 countries.

"They all treated me with the greatest respect," she said.

Beijing accuses Kadeer of inciting ethnic violence and of encouraging China's Uighur population to stage illegal protests.

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Guts United Taiwan and the Taiwan Youth Anti-Communist Corps invited Kadeer to visit Taiwan after The 10 Conditions of Love, a documentary about her, became the center of controversy at the Kaohsiung Film Festival and China warned against the film being shown.

"I am very surprised at how quickly Taipei made its decision. I have not yet even lodged my application for a visa. They have turned me down before I had a chance to apply," Kadeer said at the press conference.

"I have no links to any kind of terrorism," she said. "My organization is against all violence."

Her voice rising as she gesticulated for emphasis, Kadeer said: "The Taiwanese government is making false accusations. It is repeating exactly the same words China used against me. They are saying what the Chinese have told them to say."

"Sure, I have fought for the freedom of my people. For this, the Chinese have called me a separatist and a terrorist. But all that I do is to defend the human rights of my people. I undertake my protests peacefully," she said.

Kadeer said that despite the announcement, she would still make a formal application for a visa.

"The people of Taiwan want me to visit and I want to make that visit. I want to tell the people of Taiwan how my people have been treated by China," she said.

"The world knows I am not a terrorist," she said. "Taiwan is a democratic country. It is so sad that Taiwan has accepted China's authority. It is sad for the Taiwanese people and it is sad for the world. I request that Taiwan should retract their false accusation of terrorism and apologize."

Kadeer said she was confident that one day she would be able to visit Taiwan.

"The accusations that Taiwan have made come from the Chinese authorities. Whatever China says, Taiwan says the same thing," she said.

Concerning the secretary-general of the WUC, Kadeer said he lived openly in Germany and had taken German citizenship. She said he traveled freely around the world and that Interpol had no interest in arresting him.

"We are not terrorists. But the Uighur people are the victims of terrorism — Chinese terrorism," Kadeer said. "The Chinese government thinks it is enormously powerful now because it has so much money. It thinks it can do anything and no one dares say anything about it. The only thing the Chinese government fears is the truth."

"They have put pressure on Taiwan to keep me out because they fear that I will tell the Taiwanese people the truth about China. But I am more sad than I am angry," she said.

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At a separate setting at a -Washington symposium on Taiwan on Friday, New York University law professor Jerome Cohen — who taught Ma at Harvard University — asked: “Why shouldn’t the people of Kaohsiung be free to see whatever film they want?”

“Why shouldn’t they be free to invite any visitor they want so long as that visitor is not a terrorist? Rebiya Kadeer lives in Washington ... She doesn’t seem to affect the security of the city. This is nonsense. Anyone who disagrees with them [Beijing] is [branded] a terrorist,” he said.

In a separate interview, Cohen said: “I hope Mrs Kadeer will be given the chance to visit Taiwan. I don’t want to provoke the mainland, but Taiwan is a free society. I don’t like it when any free society refuses to allow someone who is an honest person and not a terrorist to come and talk.”

In Taipei yesterday, Wu said the government did not need to apologize as it has done nothing wrong.

“For the national interest and security as well as public interest, I do not welcome a person who would harm my country’s security and interest by entering the country. There is nothing wrong with this, so there is no need to apologize,” Wu said.

Wu said that as Kadeer is a -politician, she would engage in political activity if she came to Taiwan, adding that the WUC is related to the Eastern Turkistan organization, which has terrorism connections.

“Xinjiang independence is not permitted by the [Republic of China] Constitution,” Wu said.

Earlier yesterday, Wu said: “The national security agencies rejected the entry of [people of] Eastern Turkistan in July when the World Games were held [in Kaohsiung] and during the Deaflympics in Taipei [earlier this month]. On the grounds of national security, the national interest and public safety, the Ministry of the Interior [MOI] will not issue a visa [to Kadeer]. I respect and support the decision.”

Asked if the government considered Kadeer a terrorist, Wu said: “Not to that extent, but she has ties to [terrorist organizations] to some degree.”

Asked if he believed that Kadeer, a nominee for the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, would launch terrorist attacks, Wu said: “Neither you nor I can fully understand all the details, but the MOI, the National Immigration Agency and other [government] units understand what the situation is in the international community.”

On Japan issuing Kadeer a visa, Wu said: “There are great differences between the situation of Japan and that of our country. [The decision was made] on the grounds of comprehensive consideration.”

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Wu did not specify what the differences were.

At a separate setting yesterday, Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu (陳菊) called on the central government to cautiously handle its decision to deny Kadeer entry to Taiwan, saying that "the denial of entry is a human rights issue."

"Generally speaking, it's a travesty of human rights to reject entry [to specific people]. In a democratic country, [the government] should adopt a more tolerant and open attitude in dealing with such problems," Chen said.

DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) yesterday said the government should be honest about why it rejected Kadeer's visit if the decision was made under pressure from China.

"Otherwise it is disrespectful to the Uighur people as well as to Taiwanese people's judgement by branding Kadeer a terrorist," Tsai said yesterday.

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