

228 Incident book launch disrupted by violent protest

Written by Taipei Times

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Historian Chen Yi-shen (陳宜生) yesterday unveiled a new book on the 228 Incident ahead of today's 228 Peace Memorial Day, but the media conference was disrupted by a violent protest.

Chen introduced his latest book, *The Sky Is Still Dark: Truth, Commemoration and Responsibility of the 228 Incident* (228事件真相、紀念與責任), an anthology of his research on people's experiences, and the legal and political ramifications of the massacre.

Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) was primarily responsible for the massacre, Chen said, adding that declassified documents show that Chiang approved then-Taiwan governor Chen Yi's (陳儀) request for military intervention to stem nationwide protests following the Incident.

In the aftermath of the massacre, members of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) proposed removing Chen Yi from office and subjecting him to punishment, but Chiang rejected the proposal and protected Chen Yi, Chen Yi-shen said.

"Chiang should be held responsible for ordering troops to repress protests, and failing to take remedial measures following the massacre and the ensuing ethnic conflict," he said.

The book also discusses a group lawsuit filed by the author and Ill-gotten Party Assets Settlement Committee Chairman Wellington Koo (顧維鈞) and for 108 victims of the Incident and their relatives against the KMT, to seek compensation for mental and reputational damages, which was rejected by a court on technical grounds.

The chairman of the 228 Memorial Foundation, Hsueh Hua-yuan (許嘉元), said the truth about the Incident has yet to be uncovered, adding that some victims are still unaccounted for.

"Because people have not agreed on who is responsible for the massacre, the [public understanding of] the Incident is still focused on ethnic conflict rather than large-scale state violence against civilians," Hsueh said.

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“The KMT has never paid any real compensation or made an apology for the Incident. All it did was use taxpayers’ money to comfort the victims and their relatives,” Koo said.

“It has to be re-examined so people can decide if the apologies of Republic of China presidents to the families of victims are sufficient,” Koo said.

The KMT’s ill-gotten assets, if confiscated, could be used to compensate victims and their relatives or to establish a memorial, but it would have to be authorized by a transitional justice act, Koo said.

Protesters disrupted the book launch and questioned the validity of Chen Yi-shen’s research, saying that the Incident was started by “violence inflicted on Mainlanders by ethnic Taiwanese” and what academics presented was “the Democratic Progressive Party’s [version of] the 228 Incident.”

Protesters said Chen Yi-shen skewed the research and downplayed the number of Mainlanders killed, and challenged Koo and former presidential adviser Peng Ming-min (彭明敏), who was also in attendance, over their political stance.

The ceremony was canceled after the protest erupted into a scuffle.

Peng departed without making a speech.

Chen Yi-shen said the protesters’ claims are not true, but some people support them because “society does not understand the basic facts of the 228 Incident.”

“President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) should not delay her administration’s effort to further transitional justice because of radical elements,” Chen Yi-shen said.

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