

Groups protest shelving of transitional justice bill

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Former political prisoners yesterday protest in front of the Democratic Progressive Party headquarters in Taipei to call for the swift passage of a transitional justice bill.

Photo: Chu Pei -hsiung, Taipei Times

Victims of political persecution yesterday urged the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to expedite passage of a transitional justice bill and give justice to aging survivors of the White Terror era, instead of delaying it in favor of budget bills.

A draft bill on the promotion of transitional justice that was proposed on April 1 last year calls for the establishment of an agency to tackle the issue, declassify political archives, seek to uncover the truth, restore the reputation of political victims, remove authoritarian symbols and settle ill-gotten party asset issues.

However, the draft bill was shelved after being approved by a legislative committee, as the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) proposed extending the bill's application beyond the Martial Law era to the Japanese colonial period, while Aboriginal lawmakers called for the inclusion of Aboriginal transitional justice in the bill.

The Taiwan Association for the Care of the Victims of Political Persecution and other human rights groups held a news conference in front of the DPP's headquarters in Taipei to call for swift passage of the bill.

"Since the DPP administration took office last year, more than 30 victims of political persecution have passed away and more than 16,000 victims are still waiting for the day when the truth is revealed and injustice redressed," association secretary-general Shih You-si (石有士) said.

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“The biggest enemy of transitional justice is time,” Shih added.

The DPP administration has passed the Act Governing the Handling of Ill-gotten Properties by Political Parties and Their Affiliate Organizations (黨產條例), but delayed passage of the transitional justice bill, raising questions whether the party’s advocacy of transitional justice is politically motivated, Taiwan Association of University Professors member Chen Li-fu (陳力夫) said.

DPP Deputy Secretary-General Hsu Chia-ching (許家正) told the petitioners that the party supports the passage of the bill, but it has been hampered by a lack of consensus among political parties, despite three rounds of cross-caucus negotiations.

The association said that Hsu later met with the petitioners at the DPP’s headquarters and told them that while the party is prepared to put the bill to a vote despite the disagreement with the KMT, the priorities of this legislative session are the budget bills.

Review of the transitional justice bill would have to be delayed until the next session, Hsu said.

Taiwan Association for the Care of the Victims of Political Persecution honorary director Tsai Kuan-yu (蔡寬瑜) was dissatisfied with the DPP’s response, saying the group would continue to campaign for its cause despite the setbacks.

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