

Control Yuan censures Jiasian Township head

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The Control Yuan censured Liu Chien-fang (劉建豐), the mayor of Kaohsiung County's Jiasian Township (旗山), for not properly carrying out his disaster prevention duties during landslides caused by Typhoon Morakot that led to the deaths of more than 400 people in Siaolin Village (沙林).

The Control Yuan censured Liu by a six to five vote on Thursday.

Siaolin Village was almost completely wiped out when the typhoon triggered massive landslides in August that left more than 400 residents buried alive.

Control Yuan members Huang Huang-hsiung (黃煌雄) and Chao Chang-ping (趙昌平), who proposed action against Liu, said he should be held responsible for the tragedy because he ignored several warnings that called for evacuating the village and thus failed in his duty to protect the public.

Chao said that he tried to call the township's emergency operation center via telephone several times on Aug. 7 and Aug. 8 when the situation was most critical in Jiasian, but no one answered the phone.

Huang said Liu was not aware that Siaolin was buried by landslides early on the morning of Aug. 8 until two days later.

"[Liu] failed to fulfill his duty to protect storm victims," he said.

Liu said that the accusations are not fair.

"There are only six township mayors across the country who were honored in public by President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) for efforts in rescuing Typhoon Morakot victims, and I was one of them," he said. "If I should be censured, was the presidential honor just a joke?"

"You can check the telephone record; I called Siaolin Village chief Liu Jen-ho (劉仁合) six times on Aug. 8. The village was buried because of landslides, and you should find out why the landslides occurred before holding anybody responsible," he said.

Liu Chien-fang also said that if no action was taken against Kaohsiung County Commissioner Yang Chiu-hsing (楊秋興), who was abroad at the time, it was not fair to censure only him. A motion to censure Yang was also proposed during the meeting, but was voted down six to five.

After the Control Yuan announced its decision, Liu Chien-fang's case was to be transferred to the Commission on the Disciplinary Sanctions of Functionaries, which will decide what other penalties he might receive.

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Typhoon Morakot claimed at least 700 lives and caused the nation's worst flooding in 50 years. Ma was forced to reshuffle the Cabinet in September over criticism of the government's response to the Morakot aftermath.

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