A page set up by Taiwanese students in Norway on a crowdfunding Web site is pictured yesterday.
Photo: Lu Yi-hsuan, Taipei Times

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday said that the government is keeping close contact with Taiwanese students in Norway who are raising funds to sue the Norwegian government after it labeled them as being from China.

According to a Facebook page created by the students, the Norwegian government changed their residency cards to read "Kina/Taiwan." Kina is the Norwegian word for China.

Despite protesting to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and lawmakers, the students did not receive a positive response.

In March last year, they filed a petition with immigration authorities, saying that the government's disrespect of the Taiwanese people's identity has contravened its own constitution, the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

"However, the Norwegian government repeatedly delayed the process and then dismissed our petition on the grounds that 'such designation does not affect the interested party's rights and obligations in Norway,'" they said.

The group on Wednesday last week launched an online crowdfunding campaign to raise money to take the case to court in Norway, which they said would be costly and could take three to four years.

As of press time last night, the group had raised about NT$1.36 million (US$44,407), more than their first-phase target of NT$1.22 million. Their ultimate goal is NT$4.88 million.

“In the face of China’s overwhelming pressure, this is the first giant step toward Taiwanese people’s awakening. If you care about Taiwan’s national subjectivity and are willing to fight for Taiwan against the many injustices it suffers in the international arena, you are welcome to join us,” the group said on the crowdfunding site.

Ministry spokesman Andrew Lee (□□□) told local media that the ministry has been talking with the Norwegian government over the issue via its representative office in Sweden and is urging it to amend the name as soon as possible.

Taiwan’s representative office in Norway was closed in September last year as part of the ministry’s ongoing plan to streamline its structure. The office in Sweden is responsible for affairs in Norway.

The ministry has also continued to keep close contact with the students and would offer all necessary assistance, Lee said.

The group leader said they are aware of Taipei’s stance.

Lee also expressed the ministry’s appreciation for the group’s efforts to file a lawsuit.

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