

Academics call for Dalai Lama visit

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Academics yesterday called on the government to invite the Dalai Lama, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo's (劉曉波) widow, Liu Xia (劉霞), and World Uyghur Congress president Rebiya Kadeer to Taiwan, as pressure from Beijing is bound to continue regardless.

China has over the past year snatched away diplomatic allies, contrived to terminate Taichung's right to host the East Asian Youth Games, and demanded that foreign airlines and businesses change how they refer to Taiwan.

Most recently, bakery chain 85°C (85度C) was pressured to show its support for Beijing after President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) visited a Los Angeles branch on Sunday last week.

The government should not worry about what Beijing thinks, because even if it backs off or swallows its anger, China's suppressive actions have come one after another and it appears that they will not be stopping, said Lin Wen-cheng (林文成), a professor at National Sun Yat-sen University's Institute of China and Asia-Pacific Studies.

Taipei should not continue to care when it will be blamed no matter what it does, and will not be able to accomplish anything, Lin said.

The Dalai Lama is a religious leader who is respected around the world, Lin said, adding that Liu Xiaobo made a significant contribution to democracy, even sacrificing his life at the hand of Chinese persecution.

Inviting the Dalai Lama and Liu Xia to Taiwan would make sense, and the international community would approve and understand, Lin said, adding that doing so would not be interpreted as a challenge to Beijing, or an act of resistance.

Since Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) took office, his control over speech and activities defending human rights has been stricter than during the regimes of former Chinese presidents Jiang Zemin (江澤民) and Hu Jintao (胡錦濤), Chung Hua University professor of public

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administration Tseng Chien-yuan (曾健元) said.

Inviting people who have been oppressed by China to visit Taiwan would highlight how much the nation values freedom and human rights, Tseng said.

The government should take the initiative and welcome these people, easing their entry into Taiwan and making a statement to China, he said.

“Subtle methods” over the past two years have prevented the Dalai Lama and Kadeer from entering Taiwan, demonstrating that the nation has been intimidated by Beijing, Taiwan Association for Human Rights secretary-general Chiu Ee-ling (邱逸凌) said.

Asked whether the Dalai Lama would stop in Taiwan on his trip to Japan in November, Dawa Tsering, chairman of the Tibet Religious Foundation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, said that it is not that the Dalai Lama does not want to come to Taiwan, but that he cannot come.

Many organizations have invited the Dalai Lama to visit Taiwan, but it depends on what would be “a convenient time for the Taiwanese government,” Dawa Tsering said.

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