

2018 ELECTIONS: Campaigners say CTOC represents China's interests

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Team Taiwan Campaign members protest outside the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee's office at the Sports Administration building in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Peter Lo, Taipei Times

Advocates of changing the national sports team's name yesterday accused the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee (CTOC) of working for China instead of upholding the rights of Taiwanese, and called on the public to vote "yes" on referendum No. 13 so athletes can compete under the name "Taiwan" at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The Team Taiwan Campaign coalition of groups rallied outside the the Sports Administration building in Taipei to demand a meeting with CTOC president Lin Hong-dow (林鴻道), who they said provided misleading information to pressure more than 50 athletes and coaches to publicly oppose the name change on Wednesday.

"Taiwanese have the right to express their opinion in the referendum on Saturday. It is a core value of democracy, so the name change to 'Taiwan' should be decided by the public, not by a few committee officials," former Sports Administration minister Yang Jong-her (楊 Jong-her) said.

Yang called on the CTOC and Lin to clarify whether they had interfered in the referendum process by writing to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to express opposition to the name change, as the IOC has over the past few weeks sent letters that have been perceived as warnings, which has raised concerns that the referendum could leave athletes unable to compete at the Games.

"We can see that Lin is not speaking for Taiwanese, but rather working for China," Yang said. "There is only one country preventing us from using the name 'Taiwan' and that country is China."

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“Lin and the CTOC are representing China's interests and they are afraid of people telling the world that we want ‘Taiwan’ for international competitions,” he added.

Lin and the CTOC have resorted to blackmail, threatening Taiwanese athletes with the possibility of stripping their right to participate in the Olympics and even of the IOC suspending the CTOC's membership, Team Taiwan Campaign spokesman Yoshi Liu (劉世豪) said.

“People have expressed a desire to change the team's name to ‘Taiwan’ for the Olympics. This is a domestic affair and the people have a democratic right to a referendum,” Liu said. “This is for people to declare to the international community that we are ‘Taiwan,’ not ‘Chinese Taipei,’ but the CTOC is obstructing this process.”

Many athletes support the name change, including Italy-based top volleyball player Huang Pei-hung (黃培宏) and Taiwanese-American tennis star Jason Jung (蔣經國), as do Yang, other sports officials, international law experts and civic organizations, he said.

“Our campaign will help protect the rights of athletes, who will not lose their right to compete in international events,” Liu said. “We are fighting for our athletes to represent Taiwan, not the phony ‘ROC’ [Republic of China] and ‘Chinese Taipei’ names.”

“Athletes have told us that they want to compete as ‘Taiwan,’ which is close to their heart and their true roots. We are restoring their dignity and respect,” he said.

Most top CTOC officials are businesspeople who are profiting from the endeavors of athletes through deals and government contracts, and are focused on protecting their own benefits and not working in the interests of athletes and the public, Liu said.

The use of “Chinese Taipei” was forced on the nation by the authoritarian Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) regime during the Martial Law era, he said.

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“Taiwanese did not have a say at the time, but now we are in the democracy era and it is our right to have a referendum to decide on the national team's name,” he added.

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