

NTNU students petition to boycott 'fake news'

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A Facebook post by National Taiwan Normal University's Nylon's Canteen student group calls on people to change TV stations to avoid fake news and protect freedom.

Screen grab from Nylon's Canteen's Facebook page

National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU) students have joined those from National Taiwan University (NTU) and National Chengchi University (NCCU) in calling for a boycott of CtiTV News over what they call its "fake news coverage."

The call was made by NTNU's Nylon's Canteen, a student group that has about 2,000 followers on Facebook, after NTU and NCCU students earlier this week launched similar campaigns calling for a ban on CtiTV broadcasts on campus.

"There has been incident after incident in which disinformation and fake news were produced by Chinese-funded entities. They have not only violated the basic principles of honesty and genuineness in human communications, but also undermined the principle of trust, which has served as a foundation for democracy," the group said in an online petition.

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The group also criticized communication platforms, such as the Line messaging app, social media sites and news channels, for having “reduced themselves to manufacturers of false information designed to aggravate social division.”

The purpose of the petition, which aims to safeguard “real freedom” by steering away from fake news, is to forge a consensus among NTNU students and faculty before they can issue a collective demand to restaurants on campus and around the school, the group said.

“We encourage the petition participants to take action by switching TV channels,” the group said, adding that it would communicate with restaurants after collecting enough signatures to explain why they refuse to watch news channels that produce “fake news.”

CtiTV News was on Wednesday fined NT\$1 million (US\$32,441) for failing to adhere to a fact-checking mechanism stipulated in the Satellite Broadcasting Act (衛星廣播電視法).

In January, it was fined NT\$200,000 by the National Communications Commission for failing to fact-check its reports about then-Democratic Progressive Party Kaohsiung mayoral candidate Chen Chi-mai's (陳其邁) rally in Cishan District (旗山) in November last year.

Separately, Shih Hsin University journalism student Tu Kuan-lin (涂貫麟) on Friday launched a similar online petition calling for a boycott of Want Want China Times Media Group (旺旺中時媒體集團), which owns CtiTV.

Tu accused CtiTV of tarnishing the reputation of journalists.

CtiTV's failure to practice ethical journalism has made it a negative example for journalism students, Tu said, adding that the channel has hidden behind the banner of “freedom of the press” and paints itself as a victim to avoid making corrections to its news content.

“Does it know no shame?” Tu asked.

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