

Penghu residents say authorities threatened them

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 24 November 2009 07:51 -

The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and several Penghu residents yesterday accused the government and judicial authorities of threatening the island's voters to deter them from casting ballots in the Dec. 5 local elections.

At a press conference at the Legislative Yuan, several registered Penghu voters living in Taiwan proper showed a letter issued jointly by the Penghu Prosecutors' Office, the Penghu County Police Department and the Investigation Bureau's Penghu office advising them not to vote in the local elections if they have a household registration in Penghu but do not live in the county normally.

Officially, Penghu has a population of more than 90,000, but only just more than 50,000 people permanently live in the county. The letter was sent to around 400 Penghu residents who do not live there permanently but had recently moved their household registration back to Penghu County.

The letter states that moving one's household registration to Penghu only to vote for a certain candidate is in violation of the Election and Recall Act of Public Servants (公職人員選舉罷免法) and is punishable by a jail term of up to five years.

"If you are involved in the situation mentioned above, please move your household registration away from Penghu or do not vote in the election, and you should be fine," the letter said.

"What kind of country is this? What kind of government is this?" A registered Penghu voter who lives and works in Taipei asked at the press conference. "Who dares to go home after something like this?"

DPP spokesman Tsai Chi-chang (蔡啟芳) said he suspected the letter was targeted against the DPP's call for all Penghu residents to go home to vote on Dec. 5.

"The DPP supports prosecution of 'phantom voters,' but does not agree with the decision to send out such a letter, because it blocks people's right to vote," Tsai said. "We strongly condemn the move."

Another Penghu resident, Yen Chiang-lung (顏昌龍), who did not receive the letter, also condemned the letter.

"The judiciary should never send such a letter to voters unless they have solid evidence that these people are phantom voters — and I believe the majority of the 400 people who received the letter did not move their household registration back to Penghu with illegal intentions," Yen said. "But this letter may scare them into not voting."

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In response, Penghu Chief Prosecutor Chu Kun-mao (許昆豪) said the letter was only a “friendly reminder” with no intention to threaten anyone or target any particular political party or candidate.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/11/24](#)