

Today marks the 66th anniversary of the 228 Incident, a tragic page in Taiwan's history that ushered in the White Terror era and, subsequently, steered Taiwan and its people into one of the world's longest periods of martial law, from May 19, 1949, until July 15, 1987.

The 1947 uprising against the then-Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) regime resulted in tens of thousands of people killed, missing, tortured and imprisoned without public trials. The elimination of many social elites — ethnic Taiwanese and Mainlanders alike — meant not only the tragic breakup of families and a high death toll, but also left a lasting impact on society.

"I have tried to keep the memory alive. I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget, we are guilty ... not to remember would turn us into accomplices of the killers, to remember would turn anyone into a friend of the victims," Nazi Holocaust survivor and world-renowned author Elie Wiesel said in his 1986 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.

While it is comforting to note that, in keeping with the notion that history ought not to be forgotten, a series of commemorative events are held annually to mark the anniversary of the 228 Incident, the last thing any person of conscience would hope to see is to have these commemorations become mere formality simply because the date is marked in red on the calendar.

However, more lamentable and disappointing is seeing government agencies and officials of high standing harboring a downright disregard for the anniversary and for the tragedy. Regrettably, this is exactly what was suggested in a recent report regarding the 228 National Memorial Park in Chiayi City, which is governed by the KMT.

According to local media reports, Chiayi City residents are upset over the local and central government's apparent disregard for the 228 Incident anniversary that, despite the park being the first in the country to have been designated a national park in memory of the incident, this year would mark the second year in a row that the park's administration chose not to hold a commemorative event.

As a number of local residents have bluntly pointed out, what was the point of spending

Remembrance, not burial of the truth

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NT\$950 million (US\$32 million) on a national park dedicated to victims of the 228 Incident when it is left unused and plays no role in educating the public about this tragic chapter in Taiwanese history nor helps young people understand what the day represents?

The Chiayi reports prompted many to wonder whether those higher up in the KMT government truly care about the history and the significance of the date to Taiwanese. Opposition politicians yesterday accused President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) of having demanded that academics relaunch a study of the 228 Incident as part of his de-Taiwanization effort.

As a report published by the 228 Incident Memorial Foundation in 2006 titled *The 228 incident: A Report on Responsibility* concluded that dictator Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) had been the primary culprit in the tragedy, Ma's latest directive raises eyebrows in view of the perception that some within the KMT remain unwilling to face up to the historical record regarding the 228 Massacre.

On Sunday, Ma again lauded Taiwan's democratic achievements and reiterated the nation's commitment in that area.

Hopefully the president will practice what he preaches and, in line with the spirit of democracy, neither attempt to conceal facts nor distort the truth behind the tragedy of the 228 Massacre.

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