

## Media is wrong to be silent on democracy

Written by Hsu Yu-fang 許育方

Saturday, 08 June 2013 11:58

---

In a speech marking the 24th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre, President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) said that the incident in China on June 4, 1989, was just as tragic as the 228 Massacre, and that both were “tragedies that occurred as a result of inappropriate government handling of public protests.”

This is quite the non-statement.

In addition, neither of the country’s two pro-government daily newspapers mentioned the June 4 incident in as much as a single word.

In Ma’s words, two incidents that were both instances of a government slaughtering unarmed citizens and following up with a regime of persecution of innocent people, including arbitrary death sentences, was diluted into a mere matter of “inappropriate government handling of public protests.”

If this statement was not due to fear of criticizing China, then it was probably an expression of Ma’s fundamental inability to grasp the essence of democracy and freedom.

When the Chinese authorities cracked down hard on pro-democracy activists in Tiananmen Square in 1989, it did not only trample all over basic human rights, it embodied the overbearing attitudes of an authoritarian government seeking to enslave its own people.

Future political talks between Taiwan and China may seem inevitable, but if Taiwan’s top political leader is incapable of understanding and insisting on the value of democracy and freedom, and is afraid of criticizing the brutality of authoritarian governments, there is much cause for concern over the direction in which he will lead Taiwan.

As to the media outlets that keep praising a democracy that allows them to say whatever they want, without fear of censure, it is a matter for speculation as to what made them choose this particular moment to stay quiet.

## Media is wrong to be silent on democracy

Written by Hsu Yu-fang 許瑋  
Saturday, 08 June 2013 11:58

---

Do they not think that June 4 has anything to do with them, or are they afraid of offending the Chinese Communist Party? Their reasons may only be guessed at, but nevertheless, such silence is a great shame.

To live in a democracy and enjoy the protection of freedom of expression while remaining quiet on such a symbolic day is a violation of the media's responsibility to pursue fairness and justice, and is deeply regrettable.

In his prison memoirs, Chinese democracy activist Wang Dan (王丹) expressed his firm belief in two things.

He said: "What I did was right. I stood on the side of justice, and even if I have to suffer temporarily, history will prove me right... China will move toward democracy, and even if the road toward democracy is strewn with setbacks, the accumulation of these setbacks will only speed up change in China and make it mature even faster."

This is true courage and faith. If China is to move toward democracy, it will be impossible to rely on what Ma calls "the deep self-reflection of a leader."

What China needs is the encouragement and direct instruction of those with deep emotional attachments to, and understanding of, democracy.

This is the responsibility of ethnic Chinese around the world.

However, the return of Hong Kong and Macau to China leaves Taiwan to play a leading role in such a process.

Yet, if Taiwanese leaders and media lack the courage to monitor and criticize the authoritarian

## Media is wrong to be silent on democracy

Written by Hsu Yu-fang 許雪姬

Saturday, 08 June 2013 11:58

---

system in China, how can there ever be any hope of it becoming democratic?

*Hsu Yu-fang is an associate professor and chairman of Sinophone literature at National Dong Hwa University.*

Translated by Perry Svensson

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2013/06/08](#)