

It might seem impossible that Premier Jiang Yi-huah (江宜華) could do even more harm to his credibility and the public's faith in government than by blatantly lying about the heavy-handed actions of the police when evicting protesters from the Executive Yuan compound early on Monday morning.

Over the past week, an increasing number of pictures of protesters soaked in blood have come to light, as have video clips of police beating up protesters and reporters with batons and shields, the narratives of victims and witnesses of police brutality, and medical reports that some protesters have suffered severe injuries and bone fractures.

This evidence testifies to what has been termed a "bloody crackdown" that has drawn comparisons with the Tiananmen Square Massacre in Beijing in 1989.

Government officials, from President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) down to Jiang and National Police Agency Director-General Wang Cho-chiun (王卓雄), have repeatedly rejected the characterization. They have made no attempts to conceal their contempt for the calls for the government to apologize for the crackdown and disregard the fallout from the repression of unarmed protesters, mostly students, in a peaceful sit-in protest.

Jiang ordered Wang at midnight last Sunday to forcibly remove by dawn the protesters who had occupied the Executive Yuan compound earlier that night to demand that a mechanism to monitor cross-strait talks be established before a review of the cross-strait service trade agreement begins in the legislature.

The eviction was expected, but after nearly three decades of democratization in Taiwan, the government allowed riot police armed to the teeth and SWAT team officers to expel the students with an iron fist, in an action the likes of which has not been seen since the lifting of martial law in 1987.

It is hard to believe that the government has tried to deny the apparently excessive use of police force and continued to vilify the protesters in order to justify their actions by saying that the number of police officers injured is higher than the number of injured protesters, who it

Premier takes Goebbels' advice

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describes as “rioters.”

The government has called at least five press conferences in the past six days, sometimes two a day, to reject any claims of wrongdoing by police, and to show pictures — such as a person throwing a plastic bottle, or a police officer whose head was covered with quilts while protesters scaled the barricades and razor wire installed around the Executive Yuan complex — to accuse the protesters of attacking the police, and to cast doubt on the motives behind allegations by “certain media outlets” and political parties.

There was one exception: Police admitted “negligence” in the case of Taiwan Solidarity Union Legislator Chou Ni-an (周倪安), the only lawmaker injured.

It is as if the officials are disciples of Hitler’s propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, who is often credited with creating the maxim that if you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.

Several physicians and lawmakers, and the different hospitals where police underwent medical examinations, have disputed the extent of injuries suffered by the police in terms of both the number and the severity of the injuries. Leaving the controversy aside for a moment, the government’s claim that more police were injured than protesters does not justify that the government has not complied with guidelines on the use of force by the police and crowd control.

The government must admit mistakes made by law enforcement so that Taiwan might be spared the kind of dark future that Goebbels might have liked.

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