

## Day marred by a lack of compassion

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
Friday, 04 March 2016 07:58

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As it has been in previous years, this year's 228 Incident anniversary was commemorated with tears, apologies and defaced statues of Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石). However, there was something new this year — insensitivity and a lack of compassion.

The 228 Incident in 1947 has been, and will remain, one of the most indelible wounds in the nation's history. Tens of thousands of people were slaughtered by the then-authoritarian Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) regime.

Some hard-line KMT supporters have argued that Chiang's regime only did what it had to do to ensure national security and its legitimacy at a turbulent time.

However, nothing can justify taking a life, let alone — as many historians have estimated — more than 10,000 people, who were wiped out simply because they had different ideas or for no “proper reason” at all.

While there is debate over the exact number of people massacred, no one doubts that the families of those tortured, kidnapped, or executed by the regime are forever shadowed by the pain of losing their loved ones.

That is why the comments made by former KMT legislator Alex Tsai (蔡啟芳) about the emotional speech on Sunday by Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) — during a 520km bicycle ride from the nation's northernmost tip to its southernmost tip — are unbearable.

Ko, whose grandfather was left disabled after reportedly being tortured by KMT troops during the 228 Incident and died three years later, was overwhelmed by emotion multiple times as he spoke, marking the 69th anniversary of the Incident.

“According to the government-funded Memorial Foundation of 228, the actual number of 228 Incident victims stood at 2,253, including 681 deaths, 177 people who went missing and 1,395 people who were detained or imprisoned,” Tsai said on Facebook on Sunday.

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“It means that a vast number of the so-called ‘victims’ were simply people who had been detained [by KMT troops]... Ko claims that his grandfather had also been subjected to detention, so it made him a victim. That is why he had to fake cry,” Tsai said.

Tsai also shrugged off DPP Legislator Chen Chi-mai’s (陳其邁) proposal to criminalize derogatory remarks about the 228 Massacre, saying what really should be outlawed are comments that blow the Incident out of proportion.

While Tsai has long been ill-reputed for his loose tongue, making light of the pains or emotional wounds sustained by families of victims in one of the nation’s darkest chapters of its history should be a red line that nobody is allowed to cross.

KMT Acting Chairperson Huang Min-hui (黃敏惠) blasted president-elect Tsai Ing-wen’s (蔡英文) pledge to establish a “truth-finding and reconciliation committee” as an opportunistic attempt to aggravate ethnic divisions between Taiwanese and Chinese.

On the one hand, Huang urged Tsai Ing-wen to refrain from cashing in on the 228 Massacre, while on the other she called for a new probe of the “319 shooting incident” — which refers to an attack on then-president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) and then-vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) in Tainan on March 19, 2004, one day before the presidential election.

The reason people have repeatedly called for the declassification of official documents from the White Terror era is because truth is the only thing that can bring closure.

Without the restoration of historical fact and the identification of perpetrators, Taiwan cannot achieve transitional justice and 228 Incident victims’ families can never make peace with the past.

While it might be hard for some KMT members to relate to the 228 Incident victims, the least the party can do is show respect and compassion to the victims’ families.

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Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2016/03/04](#)