

Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo (劉曉波) was arrested in December 2008 and, after a year in detention, sentenced to 11 years in prison on charges of “inciting subversion of state power.”

In 2010 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, but could not attend the award ceremony because he was in prison, so his seat at the ceremony remained empty.

This year, when he became ill, he was not allowed to go abroad for medical treatment. He died on Thursday last week.

Throughout this time, the Chinese government deprived Liu of his freedom, and eventually of his life, in order to put out the flame of the quest for freedom, democracy and other basic human rights in China.

The Charter 08 manifesto, which Liu coauthored, emphasizes basic values such as freedom, human rights, equality, republicanism, democracy and constitutionalism.

“A ‘modernization’ bereft of these universal values and this basic political framework is a disastrous process that deprives humans of their rights, corrodes human nature and destroys human dignity,” the charter reads.

The values that Liu and his coauthors were so eager to achieve are just basic rights that Taiwanese take for granted on a daily basis.

However, the Chinese government cannot tolerate even these basic demands, so it cast Liu as a criminal intent on subverting the state and made sure that he would never walk out of jail alive.

Over the past few years, China has imposed ever-tighter restrictions on those calling for

## Democracy is Taiwan's best defense from China

Written by Lau Yi-te 廖亦壯

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democracy.

On July 10, 2015, more than 100 human rights lawyers and others, along with their family members, were arrested en masse, subpoenaed, detained and even held incommunicado by the Chinese government. Only after a year in detention were many of the lawyers tried and convicted for “subversion of state power.”

A few days ago, reports emerged that the Chinese government had ordered Internet service providers to restrict virtual private network connections, which people use to get around the so-called “Great Firewall of China.” This move is aimed at further depriving Chinese of their freedom to obtain information.

Wherever and whenever it can, the government is stifling any chance for democracy and freedom to bloom in China.

With the Chinese government becoming ever more totalitarian, now is a good time for Taiwan to showcase its democratic values. It could do so by amending the Referendum Act (公投法) or proposing amendments to the Constitution, either of which would show the world that Taiwan is not afraid of its powerful neighbor, and wants to perfect its system of freedom and democracy.

This is the only way to make a clear distinction between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China — on the one hand an independent nation that is eagerly pursuing democracy and freedom, and on the other a dictatorial state that stifles those very values.

As Liu wrote in a statement that was read out in his absence at the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony: “There is no force that can put an end to the human quest for freedom.”

Hopefully, the day will come when people in Taiwan and China can talk to each other about how to run a democracy and safeguard freedom of speech.

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*Lau Yi-te is chairman of the Taiwan Solidarity Union*

Translated by Julian Clegg

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