

Chinese bullying sparks resistance

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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Taiwanese actress Vivian Sung (孫可) on Thursday wrote on Sina Weibo that she is “a Chinese girl born in the 1990s. Taiwan is my hometown, China is my home country,” after Chinese netizens dug out a video of her from 2015 in which she said that her favorite nation was Taiwan.

Sung is not the first Taiwanese artist to be forced to make a political statement due to Chinese bullying.

Taiwanese still remember Beijing’s political witch hunt against other Taiwanese artists: K-pop star Chou Tzu-yu (周子瑜) was in January 2016 forced to apologize in public for waving a Republic of China (ROC) flag on a South Korean television show, actor Leon Dai (戴立忍) was in July 2016 dropped from Chinese film No Other Love (無愛不歡) after failing to clarify his political stance and the Chinese distributor of the Taiwanese film Missing Johnny (失蹤的Johnny) in March indefinitely suspended the film’s release following claims on Chinese social media that its male lead, actor Lawrence Ko (柯震東), supported Taiwanese independence.

A couple of days after Sung’s apology, Taiwanese-Australian model and actress Hannah Quinlivan (韓娜) was targeted by a China Unification Promotion Party member for saying in a 2013 interview that she had two nationalities — Taiwanese and Australian.

Quinlivan’s husband, Taiwanese singer Jay Chou (周杰倫), is highly popular in China, but that did not stop unification supporters from attacking her, proving that they only care about political ideology.

The Chinese Communist Party and its Taiwanese lackeys might be crowing in delight that they supposedly dampened the morale of Taiwanese independence advocates through such actions, but they only reinforce Taiwanese’s belief that democratic Taiwan and communist China are worlds apart.

China in 1998 signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in 2001 ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

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However, forcing Taiwanese artists to make public political statements constitute a clear violation of the agreements.

For example, Article 1 of the cultural rights covenant states: “All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

“Nothing in the present Covenant may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights or freedoms recognized herein, or at their limitation to a greater extent than is provided for in the present Covenant,” Article 5 says.

A survey by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy in April found that 94 percent of Taiwanese believe that living in a democratic society is “important.”

As freedom of expression is one of the fundamental values of democracy — encompassing freedom of thought and cultural expression, as well as the right to express oneself openly without state interference or the fear of state reprisal — the survey shows how important the freedom of expression is to Taiwanese.

Beijing and its supporters at home will only end up raising awareness of how different Taiwan and China are if they keep up their senseless bullying of Taiwanese artists for political reasons.

It would encourage more Taiwanese to speak up in defense of the nation’s democracy and to resist arrogant, impetuous and autocratic China.

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