

Hong Kongers need help, not pity

Written by Chin Heng-wei 陳恆偉

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Taiwan can help, and Taiwan is helping. Oh, really? How about the Hong Kongers terrorized by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)? Why are Taiwanese not helping them, when Taiwanese should be saving them? Could it be that all Taiwan can do is gift masks during a pandemic?

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) talks of the plight of the three young Hong Kong campaigners who have been imprisoned — Joshua Wong (黃之鋒), Agnes Chow (周庭) and Ivan Lam (林卓廷) — but she just repeats flaccid calls to action, such as: “We either defend democracy, or we surrender to the threat of authoritarianism.”

This is what Hong Kongers would call “having more spittle than tea” — that is, all talk and no action.

In a way, these questions were answered by Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) spokesman Chiu Chui-cheng (邱煇成) when he said that Taiwan is focusing on helping Hong Kongers in three ways: allowing outstanding Hong Kong graduates to work in Taiwan, relaxing the duration of stay limits for Hong Kong professionals and establishing a “green channel” to facilitate Hong Kong investment in Taiwan.

Heavens above! While Hong Kongers are pleading for help, Taiwan is acting as if nothing serious is happening over there.

It is also unclear what the government means by “outstanding students” or “professionals” or, for that matter, “investment.” It is offering economic incentives to people whose houses are on fire.

Something more immediate is needed at this pressing hour. It is galling to hear MAC Minister Chen Ming-tong (陳明通) say that the Taiwan-Hong Kong Services and Exchanges Office in Hong Kong was established to provide assistance, not to save anyone.

Talk about calling a spade a spade. Surely people are not expected to believe that Hong

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Kongers just need a little assistance, rather than saving? It came as little surprise when a person interviewed by the BBC said Hong Kongers feel that the Taiwanese government has stopped at only offering support, as if all that is needed is to offer moral support and remind them to keep their chins up.

Taiwanese, from Tsai all the way down to the person on the street, are standing with Hong Kong, and making an awful lot of noise about it, too. The slogan “Today Hong Kong, tomorrow Taiwan” has become popular, and is partly why Tsai won such a large majority in the presidential elections in January.

Taiwanese are of course encouraging Hong Kongers in their fight for democracy and freedom — Taiwanese are of course cheering on their “anti-extradition” movement. But now that the CCP has trodden their efforts into the mud, do Taiwanese not feel somewhat guilty and hollow about what is happening in Hong Kong? Does the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) not feel that it has to some degree failed Hong Kongers?

The Hong Kong authorities are willing to go to any lengths in banging up dissidents, be they leaders of political parties, lawmakers or media barons.

They arrested eight students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong — the youngest was 16 years old — for an unauthorized protest on campus and then arrested eight pro-democracy advocates — including Wu Chi-wai (區志偉), Eddie Chu (朱耀明), former Hong Kong legislator Leung Kwok-hung (梁國雄) and Civil Human Rights Front convener Figo Chan (陳耀宗) — as well as many lawmakers.

Will Taiwan stand and watch from the sidelines as Hong Kong is engulfed by the CCP? Do Taiwanese have the luxury of time to contemplate the best way to approach this thorny issue?

A DPP legislator said that Taiwan can support Hong Kong, but must not talk about doing so. Taiwanese need to ask themselves, do their government officials need to cower so before the CCP?

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China's People's Liberation Army warplanes make almost daily incursions into Taiwan's air defense identification zone; it has been revealed that Tsai and Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) have been placed on Beijing's list of secessionists; the CCP's plans for implementing a "one country, two systems" model in Taiwan are no longer backroom schemes, but waved in front of everyone — do Taiwanese still need to keep themselves hidden?

German Bundestag Committee on Foreign Affairs chairman Norbert Röttgen has called on Germany and all other Western nations to do more to curtail China's egregious behavior and to throw light on China's contravention of treaties, while Bundestag member Alexander Graf Lambsdorff has proposed that Germany should sanction Beijing over its crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong.

Is this not the kind of thing that Tsai should be doing?

Taiwan should be on the front line of the effort to save Hong Kong and resist the CCP. Merely amending or creating legislation or organizing large demonstrations is not enough. Taiwan needs to step up to the plate, or forever hang its head in shame.

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Translated by Paul Cooper

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