

Republic of China's dead letter file reveals horror of Taiwan's White Terror era

Written by Michael Richardson
Saturday, 19 February 2011 09:24

The National Archives Administration of the Republic of China in-exile holds thousands of letters from condemned prisoners that were never delivered. The tragic letters were written from political prisoners before execution, their last words to loved ones.

In an apparent attempt to hide the crimes committed by the ROC during the White Terror era, when a brutal martial law was imposed on Taiwan, the last letters were kept from family members.

The Taiwan Association for Truth and Reconciliation called for ROC President Ma Ying-jeou to deliver the mail and turn over the confiscated death letters to loved ones to whom the letters were written or their survivors.

Chen Chun-hung, head of the Association, told a news conference attended by the [Taipei Times](#) which reported Chen said, "We hereby ask President Ma Ying-jeou to hand these private letters "detained" by the state for decades to relatives and apologize to them on behalf of the state."

Chen continued, "We would also like to ask the National Archives Administration to create a set of standard operations procedures to handle the delivery of such letters and take the initiative to find all such letters in its collection of documents."

Suspected communists were many of the victims of the Kuomintang executioners but advocacy of independence for Taiwan was also forbidden and netted harsh penalties.

There were so many political prisoners serving long sentences during four decades of martial law there wasn't enough prison space so a large prison complex was built on Green Island.

The call to release the death letters comes less than two weeks before Taiwan's most somber holiday, the anniversary of the [228 Massacre](#). On [February 28, 1947](#), an uprising of the Taiwanese people against the occupying Chinese regime of

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[Chiang Kai-shek](#)

triggered a massive and
[deadly program of ethnic cleansing](#)

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[Uncounted thousands of people were killed](#)
or simply disappeared.

The [United States had landed the Chinese Nationalists](#) on Taiwan in October 1945 to process Japanese prisoners. Because the Cold War was already underway President Harry Truman let Chiang Kai-shek's regime stay on the island and operate in exile when it was driven from China in 1949.

The Chinese occupation of Taiwan was imposed by force and the ensuing years of terror following the 228 Massacre came to be called the White Terror period.

Despite pleas to the United States from people on the island to intervene and stop the bloodshed the [American response was to look the other way](#) and ignore the killings.

Under terms of the San Francisco Peace Treaty the United States is the official "[principal occupying Power](#)" over Taiwan making the ROC an American proxy authority.

Source: [Michael Richardson - Boston Progressive Examiner](#)