

Ma pushed me to quit: ex-TFD chief

Written by Taipei Times

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Lin Wen-cheng (林文成) said he resigned as executive director of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) under pressure from President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九).

The foundation, founded in 2003 under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) administration, was established with government funds with the aim of promoting human rights and democracy worldwide.

Lin resigned on Thursday night during the foundation's board meeting. The board then appointed former Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) lawmaker Huang Teh-fu (黃德富) to succeed him.

DPP Legislator Tsai Huang-liang (蔡煌良), a board member, left the meeting to protest the change.

In Lin's resignation letter, which Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) — the foundation's chairman — read out loud to the board, Lin said he resigned because Ma had wanted to remove him since June 2008.

In an interview with the Chinese-language Liberty Times (the Taipei Times' sister newspaper) on Thursday, Lin said the board spent a considerable amount of time discussing his case and that board members across party lines said he had done a good job.

While some board members had asked Wang what was behind Lin's departure, Lin said Wang later acknowledged the pressure came from the president, though he stopped short of mentioning Ma's name.

Saying the foundation should be an organization devoted to democracy and without partisan bias, board supervisor Tsai Ming-hwa (蔡明華) questioned how the foundation could remove ranking officials simply because of differences in political ideology.

Tsai Huang-liang said he felt Wang was helpless in the matter, adding that Wang, in an attempt to maintain harmony, told the board that Lin had not been removed, but had resigned.

"Everyone knows the real reason. Politics, after all, involves a lot of acting," Tsai Huang-liang said.

Tsai Huang-liang accused Ma of investigating Lin's political beliefs and shaming Taiwan's democracy.

Lin told the Liberty Times that he admired the head of the US' National Endowment for Democracy (NED), who thanked everyone in the US for their support when the NED presented Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama with an award for democracy on Feb. 29.

The NED is sponsored by the US government, but Americans believe it belongs to all the

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people of the US and not to any party or any government, Lin said.

By contrast, Lin said, Ma pressuring him to resign shows freedom and democracy have still not matured in Taiwan, and this upsets him greatly.

According to Lin, last June, then-National Security Council (NSC) secretary-general Su Chi (蘇起) met Wang and told him that Lin should step down because he once served as a NSC adviser under the DPP administration, and that Lin had expressed support for Taiwan's independence during a closed-door meeting at the Brookings Institution in the US in 2004.

Lin said he couldn't remember whether he had made such comments.

However, even if he had, he was at that time an NSC adviser and the setting was a closed-door meeting, he said.

Lin said he was scared by Su's claim that he had a recording of his comments because it reminded him of the White Terror era, and he had no idea how Su could have gotten such a recording.

Lin also quoted Su as telling him last October that although he was doing a good job, his position was a symbolic one and that he had to leave because the ruling party had changed.

Noting that a consensus on supporting democracy and human rights in China was reached among the ruling and opposing parties when the foundation was founded, Lin said he hoped those ideals would still be upheld despite the transfer of power in Taiwan.

The Presidential Office was unavailable for comment at press time.

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