

Thousands of Tibet supporters gather at concert

Written by Taipei Times

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Tibetans living in Taiwan and Taiwanese gather to shout “Free Tibet” in Taipei yesterday.

PHOTO: AP

Thousands of Tibet supporters gathered in Taipei yesterday for a marathon concert organized by civic groups as part of a series of activities to commemorate the 1959 uprising in Tibet. Chanting “Free Tibet” and “Long live the Dalai Lama,” the crowd waved banners and Tibetan flags.

In unison, the crowd signed the letter “T” for Tibet with their arms after watching a short video clip of a speech by Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, who invoked a blessing on the performers and the future of Taiwan.

Hosted by Guts United, Taiwan, the Taiwan Indie Music Association and Taiwan Friends of Tibet, the “50th Spring: Free Tibet” concert featured 10 independent bands and singers who entertained the audience from the early afternoon through the late evening. Organizers estimated more than 4,000 people attended the event yesterday.

Retired teacher Chen Hsiao-cheng, 67, said the concert was important because not enough young people understand the plight of Tibetans and how Taiwan’s apathy toward Tibet could adversely affect their freedom in the long run.

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— Su Tseng-chang, former premier

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A visitor from the US, Jennifer Donnell, said the public's power and anger were palpable and that Beijing should listen to what people have to say, not just in Taiwan, but everywhere in the world, about its actions in Tibet.

Amnesty International Taiwan vice chairman Lee Ming-tsung said civic groups have to shoulder the responsibility of safeguarding freedom and human rights at a time when the mainstream media and the government are not doing enough.

"Freedom does not just fall from the sky, but is rather something that we need to fight for and protect, as it might slip away bit by bit if we let down our guard and take it for granted," Lee said.

People in Taiwan should tell the government to pay more attention to human rights issues in China, Lee said.

Former premier Su Tseng-chang also took part in the event yesterday, saying that President Ma Ying-jeou's policy toward Tibet was the antithesis of public opinion and that people should voice their support for freedom in Tibet.

"Despite the Chinese Nationalist Party's [KMT] brutal oppression of the Taiwanese people during the White Terror, Taiwan still emerged as a democratic country that values freedom and human rights. This government's unsupportive attitude toward Tibet and the Uighurs does not at all represent the people of Taiwan," Su said.

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