

## A-bian has mental breakdown: doctor

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Hospitalized former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) has suffered a nervous breakdown and should be removed from his current environment, which lacks the support mechanisms that patients with mental illnesses need to recover, a psychiatrist on Chen's medical team said yesterday.

"The most ideal environment for Chen to make a full recovery would be his home, not the Taipei Veterans General Hospital (TVGH), where he is currently staying to receive treatment ... and definitely not Taipei Prison," Mackay Memorial Hospital psychiatrist Chen Chiao-chi (陳昭奇) told the Taipei Times.

It would be "quite difficult" for the former president, who is serving an 18-and-a-half-year sentence for corruption and being treated for various complications in the TVGH, to recover fully from his mental breakdown, the psychiatrist said.

"We can only hope to improve his condition by transferring him to his home to convalesce with his family. Sending him back to prison would worsen his mental illness and eventually kill him," he said.

In an interview published by the Chinese-language *China Times* yesterday, Chen Chiao-chi recommended granting the former president medical parole, saying Chen Shui-bian had tried to kill himself at least three times and could keep trying if his health did not improve.

Chen Shui-bian is suffering from sleep apnea, brain damage, severe depression and paranoid delusions of persecution, among other things, the psychiatrist said.

Chen Chiao-chi said he suspected that the former president had also suffered a nervous breakdown in 2008 when he was handcuffed and detained not long after leaving office, and that his mental health had worsened as he underwent a series of trials.

"Chen [Shui-bian] told me that being handcuffed was the most humiliating experience of his life,"

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the *China Times* quoted Chen Chiao-Chi as saying.

Chen Chiao-chi has been visiting Chen Shui-bian weekly since September last year and said he was having a nervous breakdown when they first met in May last year.

Judging from his long-term observation, the former president was not capable of making political assessments, organizing a political party or escaping if he were to be granted parole, Chen Chiao-chi said.

“It seems to me that Taipei Prison officials did not realize the dire mental condition Chen Shui-bian was in when they talked about putting him back in his cell before the Lunar New Year holiday next month,” Chen Chiao-chi said.

President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) has repeatedly ruled out releasing Chen Shui-bian on medical parole, but several pan-blue politicians, such as Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌), and many pan-green politicians have called for a parole.

The TVGH yesterday said the claim that Chen Shui-bian had suffered a nervous breakdown was one person’s opinion, adding that the former president’s physical and mental condition was being monitored by doctors who had not reported any unusual emotional displays.

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