

Independence groups plan 228 procession

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Members of the Taiwan National Alliance and other pro-independence groups hold a press conference in Taipei yesterday to raise public awareness about the mass killings that took place in March 1947 following the 228 Incident.

Photo: Chien Jung-fong, Taipei Times

Announcing plans for a procession to be held on Thursday in Taipei, pro-independence groups yesterday said they hoped to pass on the memories of the 228 Massacre so that similar mistakes would never be repeated.

The 228 Incident refers to the violent suppression of anti-government uprisings by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) that began on Feb. 28, 1947 — 16 months after the end of Japanese colonial rule.

Between 18,000 and 30,000 people, the majority of them Taiwanese and in particular leaders and intellectuals, are estimated to have been killed.

The Taiwan National Alliance (TNA) and the Taiwan 228 Care Association have together organized a procession to commemorate the 66th anniversary of the 228 Incident. TNA convener Yao Chia-wen (姚建文) said Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairman Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) and former DPP chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) were both invited.

Yao said that Taiwanese at the time were too trusting of China and had too much faith in the government prior to the incident.

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“It is a lesson we have taken to heart,” Yao said.

Speaking about the youth of today, Yao said that many felt like the incidence should be confined to history and that people should look forward instead of constantly digging up past ghosts.

“It is my opinion that we must acknowledge both the future and the past,” Yao said, adding that the commemoration of the incident was important to demonstrate that Taiwanese would never want to be governed by another foreign government.

Meanwhile, Taiwan Association of University Professors (TAUP) deputy chairman Shiu Wen-tang (許文堂) said that the incident was an important historical event, adding that discussion of the massacre had been forbidden for more than 40 years.

If the 228 Memorial Day is just a day off for citizens, then there has been no transitional justice, Shiu said, adding that in effect the incident has not yet come to a conclusion.

According to the International Center of Transitional Justice, transitional justice is a set of judicial and non-judicial measures — including criminal prosecution, reparation, truth commissions or institutional reforms — implemented in order to redress the legacies of major human rights abuses.

The government’s current investigation into the incident is too shallow, Taiwan 228 Care Association president Chen Yi-shen (陳宜生) said, adding that currently only the victims of the incident are known, while none of the perpetrators have been named.

This is letting the perpetrators of the incident off the hook, Chen said, adding that without a list of perpetrators, there can be no transitional justice on the issue.

Independent Youth Front (IYF) representative Lan Shih-po (蘭志波) said the IYF was an important

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asset of Taiwanese society, adding that when the 228 Massacre occurred, many young intellectuals had been at the forefront of the event.

“Their courage should be recognized, and we should look to them as role models,” Lan said.

Victims of the incident will start the procession at Yongle Market at 2:28pm. They are due to march past the original scene of the crisis at the Tien Ma Tea Room, the Taiwan Tobacco and Wine Board and Taipei Railway Station, before stopping at Liberty Square, where IYF will host a concert.

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