

Activists, politicians strategize in Dapu

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Human rights activists and students yesterday hold signs as farmers speak out against the threatened demolition of houses belonging to four families in Dapu Village in Miaoli County's Jhunan Township. □

Photo: CNA

Worried that a demolition squad may appear any time to flatten the homes of four families in Dapu (□□), Miaoli County, rights activists and students organized patrols and discussed defense strategies on Sunday night, while politicians worked to mobilize support for the forced demolition.

Tensions were high at the normally tranquil farming village yesterday, the first working day after the deadline set by the county government for the four families to demolish their own houses on Friday last week.

"We are worried that the demolition squad may come any time to tear down the homes of the four families, since the deadline for self-demolition has passed, and [Miaoli] County Commissioner Liu Cheng-hung (□□□) has refused to compromise," Taiwan Rural Front spokeswoman Frida Tsai (□□□) said.

"We have people in cars patrolling the area, checking out possible assembly points for police, such as school campuses. There are also people stationed at each of the houses facing demolition," she said.

Young activists and students walked around the village, discussing defense strategies and exchanging views on the issue.

“Should we leave the door open or closed?” one asked.

“Looks like they are not going to move tonight. Let’s hope they do not because we’re not fully ready yet,” another said.

To help the four families protecting their homes, dozens of people began arriving in Dapu on Sunday evening, and stayed throughout the night.

At daybreak, most of the activists had to leave Dapu as they have other engagements — work, or class — but promised that they would come back again in the evening.

While residents and their supporters from outside remain opposed to the demolition and prepared for resistance, Miaoli politicians are mobilizing support for the demolition.

At 10am, nearly 1,000 people — including county officials, councilors and township mayors — voiced their support for the county government’s forced demolition at a rally.

“The county government has suffered a lot in handling the Dapu development project,” Miaoli County Council Speaker Yu Chung-tien (許添榮) told the rally.

“The majority of the people who support the development project have chosen to remain silent, but it makes no sense if the county government decides not to demolish the houses of the four families just because they protested,” Yu said.

“It is therefore the county council’s job to take the lead in mobilizing the people who are for the project, to show our support for the county government,” Yu said, adding that the county council is planning send 50 busloads of people to Taipei to take part in a demonstration for the demolition.

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Liu said that the county government would continue to seek to convince the four families to compromise.

“We will not demolish the houses by force. We will try to talk to the people,” Liu said. “No forced demolition will take place in the near future.”

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