

Ex-minister Kuo vows to clear name

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Former minister of transportation and communications Kuo Yao-chi waves to her supporters outside the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office yesterday as she leaves for the Taoyuan Women's Prison to begin an eight-year sentence for corruption.

Photo: Lin Chun-hung, Taipei Times

Insisting that she was unjustly declared guilty of corruption and vowing to fight to clear her name, former minister of transportation and communications Kuo Yao-chi (郭耀琪) bade a tearful farewell to her supporters yesterday morning as she headed off to Taoyuan Women's Prison.

Chanting "Stop the political persecution" and "The minister is innocent," a crowd of former colleagues and supporters greeted Kuo as she stepped out of her car to report to the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office before being sent to prison.

Kuo was accused to taking an US\$20,000 bribe from Nanrenhu Co (南仁湖公司) for a Taipei Railroad Station redevelopment project during her term as minister and sentenced to eight years in prison.

"On Jan. 8, 2014, I am going into prison. This is something I've never thought would happen during my life as a law-abiding civil servant," Kuo told reporters waiting outside of the prosecutors' office.

"I believe that a lot of people still think that I actually took US\$20,000 in bribes, but those who are so convinced must have not read the written verdict, and the evidence on which the judge based his sentence," she said.

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Kuo said she never confessed to the charges even though there were many media reports citing prosecutors as saying that she has admitted them.

“The judge sentenced me to eight years in prison based on the testimony that I accepted bribes given to me in tea canisters,” she said.

“If you watch the video recording of the witness’ testimony, you will see that the witness was not clear about the size or color of the cans, or what the cans were made of,” she said.

“The judge failed to track the cash flow of the so-called ‘bribe,’ and the numbers of the banknotes that the witness cited are different from banknotes found in my home,” Kuo said. “In addition, Nanrenhu never bid on the Taipei Railroad Station redevelopment project.”

However, Kuo said she has learned that a court could sentence an innocent person to eight years in prison without any hard evidence and the Supreme Court could overturn a not-guilty ruling without reviewing the evidence submitted by the defendant.

“I am going to jail, but my lawyer and my loved ones will continue to fight for my innocence,” she said.

After speaking to reporters, Kuo walked into the prosecutors’ office escorted by supporters and her former colleagues, including former deputy minister of transportation and communications Hochen Tan (譚侯仁) and former Overseas Compatriot Commission minister Chang Fu-mei (張富美).

Each gave her a hug before saying goodbye.

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