

## Officials draw fire over 228 remarks

Written by Taipei Times  
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Controversial remarks made by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) administration and pro-unification academics about the 228 Massacre reverberated after the nation observed the 67th anniversary of the tragedy on Friday, drawing strong criticism from a broad spectrum of society.

In addition to remarks by President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and National Taiwan University professor Wang Hsiao-po (王曉波), the public was also angered by a comment from Premier Jiang Yi-huah (江宜華).

On Friday, when accompanying Ma at a state ceremony in Hualien County to mark the event, Jiang urged the public to “be tolerant about the differences between ethnic groups and to learn to forgive an unintentional mistake.”

By “unintentional mistake,” Jiang appeared to be referring to the bloody crackdown, carried out by Nationalist Army troops after an anti-government uprising broke out on Feb. 28, 1947, that wiped out almost an entire generation of Taiwanese elite, killing tens of thousands of people.

Jiang, a political scientist known for his belief in liberalism prior to his political career, has been “blinded by what could be his loyalty to the KMT administration” to give a senseless comment like that, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Kuan Bi-ling (關立偉) said.

Netizens and several academics, including National Taiwan University history professor Chen Tsui-lien (陳水木), responded by saying that if Jiang believed what he said, the Nanjing Massacre committed by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II could be interpreted as Japan’s unintentional mistake.

Chen and Chen Yi-shen (陳宜生), an associate research fellow at Academia Sinica, both accused Jiang of trying to avoid the KMT’s responsibility for the massacre and for ignoring that the massacre was state violence.

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Former premier Frank Hsieh (洪秀柱) of the DPP challenged Ma over the longstanding dispute over the nature of payment made to the 228 victims and their families on Ma's Facebook page.

Ma wrote in the message that it has been more than 20 years since the government apologized and began compensating the victims and uncovering the truth, adding that the effort would continue.

Hsieh challenged Ma over his use of the word "compensation," which has been one of the central disputes regarding the transitional justice effort for the tragedy, as the DPP and most victims have insisted on the wording of "indemnity."

"Compensation means that the government does not commit any mistake — for example, the government compensates those whose land is expropriated — while indemnity means that the government acknowledges its mistakes," Hsieh said.

While the current law on the indemnity is still called the February 28 Incident Disposition and Compensation Act in English, the Chinese-language title of the act is "indemnity (賠償)" rather than "compensation (補償)," he said.

"With Ma's opposition to using 'indemnity' both at the time the act was proposed and at present, it was clear that his mentality toward the massacre remains unchanged after 20 years," Hsieh said.

The KMT said in a press release that Ma opposed using "indemnity" because the Civic Code requires victims to submit evidence of damage before receiving indemnity from the government, while less of a legal threshold is required to receive compensation.

Separately, the Taiwan Association of University Professors also lambasted Wang's comment that the killing of 20,000 people by Chiang Kai-shek's (蔣介石) Nationalist Army in the 228 Massacre was "a small case" compared with the 400,000 killed during Chiang's campaigns against the Chinese Communist Party in China.

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The 20,000 deaths in the 228 Massacre, when Taiwan's population was about 6 million, means that, on average, 33 of 10,000 — or 0.33 percent — of Taiwanese were killed, while the 400,000 killed represented less than 0.1 percent of the total Chinese population of 500 million at the time.

“So why was the 228 Massacre a small case?” the association asked.

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