

Taiwan Friends of Tibet calls on all nations to join rally

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Tibetans in Taiwan and supporters of Tibetan independence yesterday condemned the Chinese government's repression of freedom of expression and religion, while calling on people of all nationalities to join a march on Sunday to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising.

"This year is the 11th year that Taiwanese will march with Tibetans in the streets of Taipei to commemorate March 10," Yiong Cong-ziin (雍容子因), a founding member of Taiwan Friends of Tibet, told a news conference in Taipei yesterday.

"However, our goal is not to stage the march forever. Our goal is to put an end to the event on that day we celebrate Tibet's independence with our Tibetan friends — and peace-loving people from around the world — in the streets of Lhasa," Yiong said.

"If the Chinese feel deeply upset about Japanese troops massacring Chinese during World War II, they should be equally upset about Chinese troops massacring Tibetans, because regardless of nationality, one group slaughtering another should always be condemned," Yiong added.

Yiong said that the march on Sunday was not only for Taiwanese and Tibetans, and "we sincerely invite people of all nationalities, including Chinese, to join the march for freedom and human rights."

Taiwan Tibetan Welfare Association vice president Kalsang Lhundup said that while worldwide demonstrations on March 10 are to commemorate the Tibetan uprising in 1959, which was later violently suppressed by China, it is also to show support for Tibetans in Tibet who are suffering and resisting Chinese occupation.

"Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet in the 1950s, more than 1 million Tibetans have been killed and more than 6,000 Buddhist monasteries destroyed," Kalsang said. "Since 2009, 126 Tibetans have self-immolated to protect our language, culture and religion."

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Students for a Free Tibet Taiwan chairman Fong Jyun-shan (方均山) said that while there are about 2,000 Tibetan political prisoners in Chinese jails, all Tibetans should be considered to be political prisoners.

“This is because Tibetans living in Tibet have no freedom of speech and those living in exile have no freedom to go home,” he said. “Tibet may not become independent suddenly because of Sunday’s march, but I am sure that nothing will ever happen if we do not take the first steps.”

The rally is scheduled for 1:30pm at the Zhongxiao Fuxing MRT station, from where the march is to depart at 2pm.

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