

Taiwanese show solidarity via Taipei sit-in

Written by Taipei Times

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Several hundred Taiwanese demonstrators joined student organizers from Hong Kong and Macau at a sit-in at Taipei's Liberty Square last night, showing their support for ongoing pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong's Central District.

The rally, originally scheduled for next Wednesday, was abruptly moved to yesterday, following the surprise launch of Hong Kong's Occupy Central protest.

"On Sunday afternoon, we decided to follow suit and take action," said Clementine Ho (何曉琪), a member of organizer the Democratic Alliance of Hong Kong and Macau Students in Taiwan (台灣民主同盟).

"We deeply value Taiwanese support for Hong Kong's democracy," Hong Kong activist Lau Ka-yee (劉煥基) said.

"However, there is one person who has not spoken out," Lau added. "President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) enjoys a great amount of popularity in Hong Kong. As president of the Republic of China, shouldn't he stand firmly behind democratic values?"

Tensions in Hong Kong have escalated over the past week, as student protesters launched a week-long strike in response to Beijing's announcement of its regulations for Hong Kong's 2017 chief executive election, which critics say fall short of promised universal suffrage.

Tear gas and rubber bullets were fired on protesters yesterday evening in a show of force not seen since WTO protests in 2005.

Exiled Chinese dissidents Wang Dan (王丹) and Wu'er Kaixi, both veteran student leaders of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing, spoke at Liberty Square in support of Hong Kong's movement.

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“We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our friends in Hong Kong,” Wuer Kaixi said, adding: “Although we might come from different backgrounds, what unites us is our support for freedom and democracy.”

Sunflower movement leaders Lin Fei-fan (林飛帆), Chen Wei-ting (陳偉霆) and Huang Kuo-chang (黃國昌) also expressed their solidarity with the protesters in Hong Kong.

Lin and Chen emphasized how much they valued the support they had received from Hong Kong students during the Sunflower movement, in which student-led protesters took over the Legislative Yuan’s main chamber in Taipei to protest the government’s handling of the cross-strait service trade pact.

Huang called on Taiwanese to send a clear message to the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing.

“If bloodshed of any kind occurs in Hong Kong as a result of police crackdowns, we will not stand idly by. We will take to the streets and stand up against the Chinese Communist Party,” Huang said.

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