

Hunger strike to protest A-bian's jail term started

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Jailed former president Chen Shui-bian's son, Chen Chih-chung, right, and other supporters sit with former vice president Annette Lu, center, in Taipei yesterday as she launches a hunger strike to demand medical parole for Chen Shui-bian.

Photo: Wang Min-wei, Taipei Times

Former vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) began a hunger strike yesterday afternoon in support of the release of former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), who has been in prison since 2008 and suffers from multiple mental and physical disorders.

Accompanied by Chen's son, Chen Chih-chung (陳志強), his sisters, Chen Hsiu-ching (陳秀菁) and Chen Hsiu-chin (陳秀金), as well as Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Secretary-General Joseph Wu (吳敦義) and former minister of national defense Tsai Ming-shian (蔡明善), Lu officially declared in front of the National Taiwan Museum that she would remain on a hunger strike until the government decides to release Chen Shui-bian.

Speaking at a news conference before retreating into a tent for the hunger strike, Lu accused the government of political interference in the judicial process and criticized what she called Chen Shui-bian's inhumane treatment in prison and the rejection of his medical parole, which she said has contributed to the worsening of his mental and physical health to the degree that it is threatening his life.

"It's because of these reasons that I am beginning a hunger strike," she said.

Lu said the move was not only in support of Chen Shui-bian's human rights, but also a gesture of her appreciation for Chen Shui-bian's choice to make her vice president in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections.

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“Chen Shui-bian’s imprisonment has been a major cause of political polarization and releasing him could be a first step toward reconciliation and a brighter future for Taiwan,” Lu said, in tears as she spoke.

Chen Hsiu-chin said that as Lu is already in her 60s, “it is worrisome that she insists on going on a hunger strike in such cold weather.”

“I hereby call on [President] Ma [Ying-jeou, 馬英九] to let go of the hate that he harbors and let Chen Shui-bian go home,” she said.

Tsai also voiced concerns over Chen Shui-bian’s well-being, saying that the former president has said to him that if he dies in prison, “he would like to have his coffin paraded down Ketagalan Boulevard in front of the Presidential Office Building, before being taken to his home in Greater Tainan.”

Speaking on behalf of the DPP, Wu said: “Enough is enough,” calling on the government to release Chen Shui-bian immediately.

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