

Tibetan refugees urge legislative action

Written by Taipei Times

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The Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission should grant residency to stateless Tibetan refugees, the Taiwan Association for Human Rights said yesterday, also calling for the passage of a refugee act.

“There should be a system in place to determine whether people are stateless or refugees rather than dealing with them on a case-by-case basis. If their identity can be determined, they should be afforded protection,” association secretary-general Chiu E-ling (邱毅) said, adding that the current law affords no guarantees to the two groups.

Tibetan rights advocates and association members rallied outside the commission building in Taipei, demanding that residency be granted to 12 stateless Tibetans.

Chiu said the government had treated the 12 as illegal immigrants rather than as refugees or Tibetans in exile, when at least some of them had become trapped in the nation after their Nepalese passports were lost or expired.

There were also cases in which Tibetan’s Taiwanese spouses had divorced them, leaving them without identity papers, she said.

Tsultrim Thahchin — one of the 12 stateless Tibetans — said that some of them were forced to sleep on the streets and were unable to access medical treatment because of their status.

Nepal’s warming relations with China have led to Kathmandu implementing a more rigorous review of passport applications, including a recent declaration that it would not provide travel documents to Tibetan exiles, she said.

Lack of legal status also made them reluctant to report mistreatment in the workplace, he said.

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Association office director Yen Szu-yu (顏世瑜) said that while an amnesty had previously been granted to Tibetans who overstayed visas without residency rights, a sunset clause prevented those who arrived after 2008 from applying.

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