

Calls for Martial Law era articles to be declassified

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Taiwan Association for the Care of the Victims of Political Persecution During the Martial Law Period secretary-general Tsai Kuan-yu (蔡寬裕) has called on the government to declassify important articles and reveal the methods that the military police used to extract confessions.

Tsai's remarks came in the wake of a recent controversy caused by a military police visit to a civilian's home over an alleged online sale of classified government documents.

The Ministry of National Defense later apologized for the controversy stirred up by the military police's handling of the case, saying it would cooperate with a Taipei District Prosecutors' Office investigation into what happened.

In an interview with the *Liberty Times* (the *Taipei Times*' sister newspaper) on Thursday, Tsai said that the military police headquarters' actions were reminiscent of the Martial Law period.

The then-Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) regime declared martial law in Taiwan on May 19, 1949, which was not lifted until July 15, 1987.

During the 38 years of martial law, numerous people were imprisoned, tortured and executed for alleged sedition and espionage for China.

The military police's actions are unbecoming and overreaching, Tsai said, adding that the military is still sitting on many important files, including judgements passed on political victims of the era.

It refuses to turn over these materials to academics, victims or the victims' families so that the truth can be known, Tsai said, adding that it was only due to a concerted effort from multiple victims and their families that the National Archives Administration had consented to return family letters written by victims.

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Tsai called on the government to consider amending the Archives Act (檔案法) to allow victims or their families to read through documents, such as the records of interrogations and alleged confessions, so the public could understand the absurdity of the military's trials.

Tsai also called on the government to change the name of the Compensation Act for Wrongful Trials on Charges of Sedition and Espionage During the Martial Law Period (戒嚴時期無辜被控叛亂及間諜罪之賠償法) to "Reparation Act for Wrongful Trials on Charges of Sedition and Espionage during the Martial Law Period" (戒嚴時期無辜被控叛亂及間諜罪之補償法).

"Only through such a change will victims and their families feel that the government is serious in its intent to redress past wrongs," Tsai said.

The government should also amend the Act Governing the Recovery of Damage of Individual Rights during the Period of Marital Law (戒嚴時期個人權利受損之回復法) and the National Security Act (國家安全法) so that victims or their families would be able to request the government return property or assets seized during the Martial Law period.

Tsai, born in 1933, is a teacher who briefly studied in Japan after his college years. He was allegedly in touch with Thomas Liao's (廖正興) Provisional Republic of Taiwan Government, which issued a declaration of independence in Tokyo on Feb. 28, 1956.

He was further implicated as his friend, Lee Sen-jung (李全德), wrote the phrase: "Devoting myself to the independence movement for the liberation of the Taiwanese people" on paper and was imprisoned in 1962 for 10 years.

Transferred to Taiyuan Prison's clinic in Taitung, Tsai supposedly opened the doors of the prison in the Taiyuan Prison Incident (太監事件), but was only given three more years for his participation.

The Taiyuan Prison Incident — considered an uprising by the KMT government, but an attempt for armed revolution by pro-Taiwan independence activists — involved prison guards, inmates and local Aboriginal youths who sought to take over the prison, a nearby radio station and Republic of China Navy ships stationed in Taitung, in the hope of sparking a nationwide revolution.

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