

Taipei rally endorses the death penalty

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A boy holds a white flower during a rally held to support the death penalty in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: EPA

A rally was held in Taipei yesterday in support of capital punishment, following the decapitation of a four-year-old child last month.

The White Rose Social Care Association, which organized the rally on Ketagalan Boulevard in front of the Presidential Office Building, said the main goal of the rally was to urge the government to abide by the law and carry out the death penalty, adding that it is not the right time for the nation to abolish capital punishment.

About 5,000 people were at the rally when it began at 2pm, said the organizers — who had hoped to attract 10,000.

Protesters observed a moment of silence for the four-year old girl, nicknamed “Little Lightbulb” (小小燈), who died following a random attack last month in Taipei’s Neihu District (內湖).

Debate over the death penalty was rekindled following the March 28 killing by a man allegedly wielding a cleaver. The suspect, who was subdued and arrested after the attack, had a conviction for drug possession in 2006.

One of the rally participants, a man surnamed Lee (李) who was there with his wife and two daughters, said he was worried about the safety of his children in the wake of the killing.

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Another participant, surnamed Lin (林), said she was saddened by the child's murder and that abolition of the death penalty might encourage criminals.

Association chairwoman Eva Liang (梁) said people had chosen to take part in the rally to protest against calls to scrap the death penalty because they wanted to protect the next generation.

Judges should not hesitate to hand down the death penalty "to people who deserve it," and the government should proceed with planned executions, the association said.

"Murder cases with cruel and gruesome killing methods have been frequently seen in recent years, but political parties only know how to engage in political wrangles," the association said. "Therefore, people should stand up to activate a 'civic protection safety net' and to voice our anger toward the government."

More than 10,000 people are serving life sentences in the nation's prisons because of the government's reduced use of capital punishment, the association said, adding that the nation does not have the budget or the manpower to educate and reform convicts, the association said.

Liang said she would bring a white banner signed by supporters at the rally to the Judicial Yuan, urging lawmakers to respect public opinion, rather than allowing the judges' personal views to affect the fairness of the judicial system.

The association would also call for an amendment to the Judges Act (法官法), stipulating that the views of the public should be included in the training and withdrawal mechanism of judges, so that people could have the right to decide whether unsuitable judges can be removed from their positions, she said.

The association would ask the Ministry of Health and Welfare to enact regulations that would

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ensure that the evaluation and treatment of psychiatric patients would only be carried out by professional psychiatrists, giving them the right to assess “compulsory treatment” and “precautionary treatment,” she said.

Not all people with mental illnesses become murderers and not all murderers kill because they are mentally ill, she said.

The association also called on the government to address problems associated with alcohol and drug abuse.

The death penalty should be imposed on large-scale drug dealers, while drug abusers who commit violent crimes should be sentenced to life without parole, it said.

Taiwan executed death row inmates in June last year, and before that in April 2014.

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