

Lee calls for active measures to secure detainee's release

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Lee Ching-yu, center, wife of human rights advocate Lee Ming-che, talks to reporters yesterday after meeting with former president Lee Teng-hui at his residence in Taipei.

Photo: CNA

Former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) yesterday urged the government to take a more pro-active role in rescuing human rights advocate Lee Ming-che (李明哲), who has been detained by Chinese authorities and charged with subversion of state power.

Lee's wife, Lee Ching-yu (李靜瑜), and members of a human rights group visited Lee Teng-hui's residence in Taipei to seek his assistance in securing her husband's release.

The former president said the government has to take more active measures to rescue Lee Ming-che, adding that it is useless if the government "can only express its concern" about the case, Taiwan Association for China Human Rights chairman Yang Hsien-hung (楊憲宏) quoted him as saying.

The National Security Council should form an interministerial task force to use all the leverage it has to bargain with China, Yang quoted Lee Teng-hui as saying.

Lee Ching-yu last month testified before a US House of Representative subcommittee about the arrest of her husband.

Lee Teng-hui described her testimony as "a correct and meaningful move."

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The former president thanked the US government for its help, while asking the Taiwanese government to be more involved in rescuing Lee Ming-che, Yang said.

Yang quoted Lee Teng-hui as saying that it was unimaginable that China has not revealed any information regarding Lee Ming-che's whereabouts 87 days after his detention.

China is still like the "bandit" Lee Teng-hui dealt with during the Qiandao Lake Incident in 1994, in which Chinese robbers murdered Taiwanese tourists — an incident that Chinese authorities attempted to cover up, Yang quoted the former president as saying.

The former president praised Lee Ming-che's sharing of Taiwanese ideas about democracy with Chinese, which was justifiable as China is also experiencing its own democratization, a major factor in the issue of Taiwanese independence, Yang said.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office yesterday said it has hired a lawyer for Lee Ming-che per his request, adding that the case was of a criminal nature, not a human rights case as described by Taipei and Washington.

Lee Ching-yu, who in March announced that she would not hire a lawyer to defend Lee Ming-che, as it would amount to "putting up a show with China," denounced the statement, saying it is ridiculous for Beijing to claim it is respecting the opinion of a person it has held incommunicado for 87 days.

"What Lee Ming-che did in China involved education, humanitarian aid and freedom of expression — all of which are acceptable in Taiwanese society," she said. "However, China has accused him of involvement in criminal activities, which is the most important reason why China and Taiwan cannot communicate."

"With his suffering, Lee Ming-che is making the world see how Chinese civilization has deteriorated and is warning the world against entering such a dangerous place," she said.

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