

Groups join call for full pardon for Chen Shui-bian

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Taiwan Society chairman Chang Yeh-sen speaks at a news conference in Taipei yesterday for a petition signed by 65 groups calling for former president Chen Shui-bian to be pardoned.

Photo: Peter Lo, Taipei Times

Sixty-five groups yesterday joined a petition calling for former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) to be pardoned, providing a boost to a campaign that has been brewing ever since the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) regained power last year.

A coalition of Taiwanese independence activists, a lawmaker and academics have called for President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) to amend the Amnesty Act (大赦法) to clear the way for Chen to be pardoned, as amnesty cannot be granted to those who have trails still pending in court.

The former president served more than six years of a 20-year sentence for corruption before being released on medical parole in 2015, but he still faces other criminal charges.

The petition is the latest of a series launched by DPP city and county councilors nationwide to lodge a formal proposal to be voted on in the DPP national congress in September.

Taiwan Society chairman Chang Yeh-sen (張毅) said there were perceived judicial flaws in Chen's trial on corruption, including what he said was false testimony from former Chinatrust Financial Holding Co vice chairman Jeffrey Koo Jr (辜仲諒) and Chen being convicted for having political influence instead of a proven criminal action.

"It will go down in history that Chen's case is proof of the Chinese Nationalist Party [KMT] and the Chinese Communist Party's oppression of Taiwan," Chang said.

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“[An amnesty] is what can end the judicial mess. It is also the first step in the transitional justice and judicial reform that Tsai promotes,” Chang said.

New Power Party Legislator Freddy Lim (林錫山) said a growing number of people support a pardon, even KMT members, as the unfair treatment Chen was subject to has eroded the public’s faith in the judiciary.

Amnesty International criticized the former KMT government for its treatment of Chen during his trials and incarceration, and Chen has not been treated fairly after he was paroled, Lim said.

Lim said he supported a legislative proposal to amend the Amnesty Act to pave the way for Chen’s unconditional release.

DPP Legislator Tsai Yi-yu (蔡宜瑀) has proposed amending the act to allow the president to pardon people for crimes they have not been convicted of.

Academia Sinica historian Chen Yi-shen (陳宜生), who conducted a series of oral history interviews with the former president, said Chen Shui-bian’s contributions outweighed his misdeeds, and Tsai should exercise her power to redress the judicial flaws in his cases.

Taiwan Jury Association director Chang Ching (張景) said the amnesty drive is not just a “green and blue” issue, but a question of a “black and white” moral judgement.

“If a former president cannot receive a fair trial, how can average citizens?” Chang Ching said.

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