

Hundreds join NYC march for Taiwan

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Taiwanese expatriates and others march in New York City on Saturday during the annual UN For Taiwan/Keep Taiwan Free rally.

Photo: CNA

Hundreds of Taiwanese expatriates and others marched in the Manhattan borough of New York City on Saturday to call attention to Taiwan's exclusion from the UN and Beijing's efforts to further shrink the nation's space in the international community.

"From the systematic repression against the Uighur Muslims and the stifling of freedoms in Tibet, to the backsliding of human rights in Hong Kong and the blatant lies of 'one country, two systems,' we are here to say — enough," Keep Taiwan Free director and event co-organizer Jenny Wang (王珍妮) told the crowd.

This year's UN For Taiwan/Keep Taiwan Free rally, an annual New York City event that has been held for more than two decades, emphasized solidarity among groups targeted by the Chinese government and comes amid Hong Kong's worst political crisis in decades.

Members of NY4HK — New Yorkers Supporting Hong Kong — and other Hong Kongers were among those taking part in Saturday's march.

"It's just sad to see that so many people from Hong Kong are coming out to say that this is not the way to go and the government's not listening," said Ann Shum, who was born and raised in the US, but whose family is from Hong Kong.

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With the 74th session of the UN General Assembly to convene later this month, the rally also echoed the three appeals made by Taiwan's government to participate in the world body.

"Taiwan has been campaigning to be part of the United Nations for such a long time," Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in New York Director-General Lily Hsu (呂芳雄) said. "We know this is an uphill battle; this is a challenging journey."

Escorted by officers on scooters from the New York Police Department (NYPD), participants marched uptown from East Eighth Street and Fourth Avenue, where some left notes in support of Taiwan and Hong Kong on a portable "Lennon Wall."

Chanting "Keep Taiwan Free" and "UN for Taiwan," rallygoers waved flags, including green-and-white ones featuring a green image of Taiwan in the center.

They also held aloft signs and banners, some of which read "Honk 4 HK" and "UN: Don't Leave Taiwan Behind."

The march attracted a diverse mix of young and old, including Taiwanese Americans and Canadians, along with supporters of Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang, home to the Uighurs.

A delegation from the Taiwan United Nations Alliance made the trek from Taipei, led by former minister of national defense Michael Tsai (蔡正元), while Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Yeh Yi-jin (葉宜津) also took part.

The NYPD typically does not provide crowd estimates, but organizers said about 500 people took part in the march, which ended off the West Side Highway, next to the Hudson River, and across the street from the Chinese Consulate on 42nd Street, where demonstrators continued the rally from behind NYPD barricades.

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Pro-Beijing demonstrators did not show up, unlike during President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) New York City stopover in July during her trip to four Caribbean diplomatic allies.

At least two vehicles with diplomatic plates idled outside the consulate, while two private guards stood in front of the building.

Tony Sze (謝志), 24, a first-time participant who was born and raised in Hong Kong, said it was important for all groups "trying to free themselves from China and the [Chinese] Communist Party" to unite.

"It doesn't matter where you're from, whether you cared about each other before," he said. "Now we have a strong single enemy that we are all fighting against."

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