

Groups urge care after mayor's suicide remarks

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The Taiwanese Society of Suicidology, Taiwanese Society of Psychiatry and Taiwan Association Against Depression yesterday urged politicians and the public to show care, rather than blame or ridicule, regarding suicide.

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), chairman of the Taiwan People's Party, said while meeting supporters on Thursday that in the past few years there had been many fires in Taipei caused by self-immolation.

"If you want to burn yourself, please go to the riverside park, alright?" he said. "Do not set yourself on fire in an apartment building."

"Caring for others is actually protecting yourself," he said, adding that society should not have so many "marginalized people," such as illicit drug users, alcoholics, people with personality disorders or people with depression.

"Even if you want to kill yourself, please take sleeping pills and do not burn yourself in an apartment building, alright?" he said.

Responding to criticism about the remarks, Ko on Friday said he found that the number of deaths from traffic accidents in Taipei dropped to their lowest in 2017, but increased last year and this year, and that many were caused by "marginal people," including those driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Reducing suicide is the goal, Ko said, adding that he was merely saying that burning oneself causes a greater disturbance.

The medical groups said in the joint statement that the Suicide Prevention Act (精神衛生法) was passed by the Legislative Yuan on May 31 to provide a clear basis for the nation's suicide prevention strategies, which have been implemented for the past 14 years.

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Suicide is a global issue, with complicated and diverse causes, negatively affecting all of society, so suicide prevention is implemented through the central and local governments, social welfare and medical civic groups, and the public, to create a tight prevention system, they said.

Reducing a person who is at risk of suicide's access to lethal tools is a globally accepted means of suicide prevention, the groups said, adding that in Taiwan, young people in urban areas often commit suicide by burning charcoal and elderly people in rural areas consume pesticide, so those methods are two prevention focal points.

While some suicide methods might clash with public safety, people should adopt a more caring attitude and not blame the person who committed suicide too much, the groups said.

"We suggest that government officials and the public show more care, rather than blame or ridicule, to create a warm and supportive atmosphere," they said.

Ko would listen to the professional groups' advice, Taipei City Government deputy spokesperson Tai Yu-wen (蔡玉文) said yesterday, adding that as Ko was a doctor he has cared for social minority groups.

The city would try to help establish support systems in local communities, Tai added.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2019/10/20](#)