

Groups call for action on Hong Kong

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A demonstrator yesterday waves a flag at a rally at Liberty Square in front of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei commemorating the first anniversary of the anti-extradition bill protests in Hong Kong.

Photo: Chien Jung-fong, Taipei Times

Civic groups yesterday urged the government to set up a humanitarian assistance program for Hong Kongers in need and a mechanism for those seeking political asylum.

At a rally at Liberty Square in Taipei marking the one-year anniversary of the start of a Hong Kong protest movement against a now-withdrawn extradition bill in the former British colony, representatives from the groups displayed banners that read: "Taiwan and Hong Kong are partners together, the struggle remains unfinished."

Other banners said that the fight was "against the expansion of Chinese imperialism," and that "Taiwan should have programs to assist Hong Kongers after China approves new national security legislation."

They highlighted "police brutality against Hong Kong protesters."

Another banner urged "help for Hong Kongers who want to immigrate to Taiwan and for those seeking political asylum."

The secretary-general of the Hong Kong Outlanders, who gave her name as Justine, said that the situation in Hong Kong has worsened in the past year, as police are using increasingly violent tactics against protesters, while the authorities are increasing restrictions on the media and using the COVID-19 pandemic to suppress movement.

"China has pushed through legislation regarding the national anthem and other harsh

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measures,” Justine said. “Hong Kongers are facing China’s passage of new national security legislation for Hong Kong, which will target protesters, human right lawyers, social workers and civic groups,” she said.

“We ask that President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) and the Taiwanese government support us by implementing policies to help Hong Kongers seeking to immigrate to Taiwan,” she said, adding that she thanked her Taiwanese friends for standing up for Hong Kong in this dire situation.

Taiwan Citizen Front spokesman Chiang Min-yen (簡民衍) said that he and fellow advocates were happy to hear from Tsai, who on May 27 spoke of a “humanitarian assistance action plan” for Hong Kongers.

Tsai said at the time that she had directed ministries to come up with specific legislation and funds, in collaboration with public and private entities.

Economic Democracy Union convener Lai Chung-chiang (賴中強) urged lawmakers to amend the Enforcement Rules of the Act Governing Relations With Hong Kong and Macau (香港、澳門關係條例施行細則) to provide humanitarian assistance and political asylum for Hong Kongers to settle in Taiwan.

“By amending the law to clearly elucidate the regulations, those in need would know the conditions and scope for assistance and asylum in Taiwan, so they can decide whether to apply here or elsewhere,” Lai said. “This would minimize the risks involved in transborder movement.”

“The amendments would delineate legal parameters and get rid of gray areas regarding people from Hong Kong and Macau entering and exiting Taiwan,” he said. “There are bureaucrats abusing the ambiguities in the law to evade their responsibility, and even illegally obstruct or deny assistance and asylum requests.”

There has been inaction and delays regarding a response to the situation in Hong Kong, Lai said.

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“It could spur criminal activities, encouraging gangsters and organized crime groups, including human traffickers who prey on people seeking help from the government, who are exploited, intimidated and exposed to violence and fraud, while government officials engage in corruption and bribe-taking,” he said.

Separately yesterday, the Mainland Affairs Council said that the government is finalizing a Hong Kong assistance action plan.

Additional reporting by Chung Li-hua

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