

Chinese dissidents urge Taiwan not to compromise

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Chinese dissident Yang Jianli (楊建力) yesterday urged Taiwan not to forget about democracy, freedom or its sovereignty when pursuing closer relations with China.

“I would like to call on President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) to use the language of democracy and freedom when developing closer ties with China. Taiwanese should pay more attention to their sovereignty so that it won’t be damaged when interacting with China,” Yang told a press conference coorganized by domestic civic groups to voice their support for democracy and human rights activists in China.

“Taiwanese should defend Taiwan’s sovereignty and make Taiwan’s democracy more mature so that it can become a role model for China to follow,” he said.

Yang also took the opportunity to express his gratitude toward individuals and civic groups in Taiwan who joined a globally coordinated campaign for his release when he was imprisoned in China from 2002 to 2007.

He discussed the movement for human rights in China.

“The movement is not only about human rights, it’s also about democracy and fundamental political reform in China,” Yang said, adding that the fact that more than 10,000 people inside China used their real names to sign a petition supporting Charter 08 showed that the movement is gaining momentum.

Kao Yung-cheng (高永成), an attorney and a member of the Taipei Bar Association’s (TBA) Human Rights Protection Committee, agreed with Yang that human rights issues should not be left out of cross-strait exchanges.

“During the past year, the TBA received many visitors — individual lawyers and bar associations — from China,” Kao said. “Each time they came, we mentioned human rights in China and the discussions weren’t an obstacle to our exchanges.”

“If a civic group can do so, why can’t the government?” Kao asked.

He said that it was because of pressure from human rights groups and governments around the world that Chinese dissident Feng Zhenghu (鄭正華) was finally allowed to go home after living in Tokyo’s Narita Airport for more than 90 days.

Exiled Chinese writer Bei Ling (貝凌) said earlier efforts were paying off.

“Twenty years ago, liberals in China voiced support for [former Czech president] Vaclav Havel, and now he’s voicing support for Liu Xiaobo (劉曉波),” Bei said. “Seven years ago, my friends and I campaigned for Yang’s release, and today it’s his turn to campaign for other imprisoned dissidents’ release.”

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