

Plight of Taiwanese Refugees in Okinawa

Following the 228 Massacre in 1947, hundreds of refugees fled Taiwan in search of asylum in Okinawa Islands. The people turned up without any papers and struggled to survive. For years, the living condition of the refugees of 228 Massacre and their children remains questionable. To uphold humanitarian principle, the Control Yuan Member launched an own-motion investigation to look into the case (Case no. 1010800117).

The truth and responsibility of the 228 incident has always been the ultimate pursuit of the victims and family members of the incident. Human rights and social justice will only take root when the 228 incident is examined in a rational and sincere manner. To inform the public of the truth behind the incident and provide compensation as necessary, the government promulgated the “Statue for Handling and Compensation of the 228 Incident” and appointed the 228 Memorial Foundation to be in charge. As the highest executive body, the Executive Yuan is expected to initiate investigations into the incident, collect relevant historical materials, and continue to promote human rights awareness and care for the victims. Articles 15 and 151 of the Constitution stipulate that “The right to life, the right to work, and the right to property shall be guaranteed to the people”, and “With respect to Chinese citizens residing abroad, the State shall foster and protect the development of their economic enterprises.” The 228 incident forced hundreds of Taiwanese to flee the island and made their way to Okinawa, Japan. Decades later, Taiwanese refugees managed to get back on their own feet and helped expand trade between Taiwan and Japan (e.g. Importing Taiwanese pineapples to Japan and increasing buffalo’s productivity). After years of inaction, it is the government’s responsibility to establish and maintain contact with the victims and their posteriors. In addition, the government may provide assistance to festivals or events held by overseas compatriots, in appreciation of their support and cultural identity.

The CY’s investigation prompted actions made by the heads of relevant agencies. The then Minister of the Overseas Community Affairs Council engaged face-to-face with local community when he attended the World Taiwanese Chambers of Commerce held in Okinawa during August 3th and 5th in 2012. The Minister agreed to provide material support to facilitate the construction in the area where the compatriots reside. The Ministry of Culture has agreed to raise cultural awareness among local Taiwanese compatriots and facilitate exchanges between the two countries, while stepping up effort to preserve, study and display historical documents of the 228 incident. Taiwan’s representative office in Naha has vowed to maintain contact with local compatriots. The 228 Memorial Foundation will continue to build upon existing database for the 228 incident in the hope of realizing human rights protection in Taiwan.