

# Taiwan: Legal Coalition For #Metoo Victims Announced

Sunday 27 August 2023, by [CHANG Darice D.](#), [JHANG Rita](#), [LIN Caritta](#) (Date first published: 6 August 2023).

**Taiwan is home to draconian libel and slander laws, which those with the resources to afford can use liberally and which have in the past been utilized against journalists, contributing to the [lowest confidence](#) in the press in a democratic country. As the #MeToo movement in Taiwan plays out, many well-known figures with high social status that have been accused choose to sue their accusers publicly and demand substantial compensation in an attempt to suppress controversy through litigation.**

To combat this, legislator Lài Pin-Yu, and Taipei city councillors Sabrina Lim, Miao Poya, Wu Pei-Yi, as well as Miaoli city councillor Tseng Wen-Hsueh, Kaohsiung city councillor Huang Jie, and New Taipei City legislative candidate Wu Cheng, established a [free legal council](#) on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, to provide aid for the #metoo accusers facing legal threats, shortly after the #MeToo movement broke out.

One month later, on July 7<sup>th</sup>, the Taiwan Women's Coalition along with the Awakening Foundation, the Taiwan Women's Knowledge Foundation, and the National Bar Association's Committee on Sexual Harassment Prevention and Complaint Handling, established a legal support team to provide assistance to sexual harassment victims facing legal threats. Over 40 lawyers joined the team and set up hotlines for complainants and employers to provide gender equality consultations needed by victims and various sectors of society.

The Complainant Support Hotline is (02) 8911-5595, and the Employer Consultation Hotline is (02) 238-83619.

In a press conference on the formation of the hotline, Peng Yen-wen, the Chairperson of the Taiwan Women's Coalition, also a professor of the Institute of Public Affairs Management of the National Sun Yet-Sen University, stated that the pressure faced by victims who come forward with complaints is unimaginable to outsiders. One survivor mentioned that some people think #MeToo is just an attention-seeking ploy, but in reality, it is 'a blood-curdling sacrificial ritual'; that is, as phrased by Peng, brave people who come forth to share their stories bare their privacy on the altar of public opinion, facing vicious criticism and offensive language.

Peng also stated that, in addition to facing scrutiny and questioning from the public, victims who come forward with sexual harassment complaints may also encounter legal threats. They might be sued for defamation or damaging someone's reputation, which can result in long and costly lawsuits that aim to silence the victims.

Wang Yueh-Hao, the Executive Director of the Garden of Hope Foundation, mentioned that since the promotion of the sexual harassment hotline on June 5<sup>th</sup> this year, the number of calls has increased tenfold. Many victims are afraid that they won't be believed when they speak up; they just want someone to listen to them without questioning their experiences. This reflects the failure of the current system and indicates the need to reconstruct the dysfunctional system and provide strong

support for the victims.

Qin Yu-Jung, the Secretary-General of the Awakening Foundation, pointed out that in a survey conducted by the Ministry of Labor in 2022, 78.79% of female victims who experienced workplace sexual harassment did not file complaints. This indicates a lack of trust in existing laws and reporting systems. Since the #MeToo movement emerged in Taiwan, the Awakening Foundation has received numerous calls from business owners and HR personnel seeking resources like workplace sexual harassment prevention educators and investigators. She believes that the government should actively invest in resources not only to achieve zero tolerance for sexual harassment but also to prevent it from happening in the first place, and restore trust in the laws and reporting systems..

Lawyer Pan Tian-Qing from the lawyer support team stated that using litigation to suppress the #MeToo movement is possible, especially when there is a power imbalance. While the accused indeed have the right to protect their reputation through lawsuits, he emphasized that the extent of using litigation as a tool should be carefully considered. It shouldn't be utilized as a means to elevate one's voice, exhaust victims by demanding high compensation, and make more victims fear the cost and pressure of legal battles, preventing them from speaking out about their harassment experiences.

Other than legal aid from lawmakers, city councilors, and women's groups, grassroots organizations such as Women's March Taiwan have long advocated for community-based bystander intervention training, such as that provided by Caritta Lim, the only Green Dot certified trainer in Taiwan. Founded in 2006 by Dr. Dorothy Edwards, the Green Dot program offers training in sexual assault and domestic violence prevention., which has since been adopted by college campuses, workplaces, primary and secondary educational facilities, and communities. The goal of Green Dot is to use bystander intervention to prevent power-based violence, such as sexual violence, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, child abuse, elder abuse, and bullying. Considering that the majority of #MeToo incidents that have been publically shared in Taiwan are instances of power-based violence, where the perpetrator occupies a much more senior, fiscally empowered or otherwise higher socio-economic strata than the victim, this kind of training is particularly applicable to Taiwanese society.

The current wave of #MeToo cases experienced by Taiwan in the past months has led civil society groups and political figures to organize and develop new resources for addressing entrenched issues of power-based violence, such as sexual harassment and assault. The government has also expedited the amendment of the "Three Gender Equality Laws" on July 13<sup>th</sup>, which includes the Sexual Harassment Prevention Act, Gender Equality Education Act, and Gender Equality in Employment Act (formerly known as the Gender Equality in Employment Law). The amendment aims to strengthen penalties for harassment involving abuse of power, with the most severe punishment being a fine of up to one million NT dollars and a maximum of three years imprisonment, along with punitive damages ranging from 1 to 5 times the amount. The amendment is scheduled to pass its third reading by the end of the month.

While this is a step in the right direction, experts caution against mistaking stricter laws as an ultimate solution. Society itself needs to acknowledge the misogynistic patriarchy and other problematic power imbalances that currently permeate the Taiwanese psyche and take steps to educate, reform, and prevent the sort of social environment that has allowed sexual violence to run unchecked for so many years.

If you or someone you know has experienced gender-based violence there are many resources available to you:

- Modern Women's Foundation (現代婦女基金會) <https://www.38.org.tw>

- Awakening Foundation (覺醒基金會) <https://www.awakening.org.tw>
- Garden of Hope (希望花園) <https://www.goh.org.tw>
- Taipei Women's Rescue (台北婦女救援基金會) <https://www.twrf.org.tw>

Specific resources for workplace sexual harassment:

- Ministry of Health and Welfare: 113 Protection Hotline
- Awakening Foundation Consultation Hotline (覺醒基金會諮詢熱線): 02-8911-5595
- Sexual Harassment Service Hotline (性騷擾服務熱線): 04-22239595
- Modern Women's Foundation Sexual Harassment Prevention/Gender-Friendly Workplace Consultation Hotline (現代婦女基金會性騷擾預防/性別友善工作場所諮詢熱線): 02-23512811
- Taipei Women's Rescue Service Hotline (台北婦女救援服務熱線): 02-2555-8595
- Legal Aid Foundation Legal Consultation Hotline (法律扶助基金會法律諮詢熱線): 02-412-8518, press 2, then 5
- Taiwan Anti-Bullying Alliance Supervision and Complaint Hotline (台灣反霸凌聯盟監督及申訴熱線): 0800-434-434

Resources for children and young adults:

- Children's Helpline (兒童求助專線): 0800-003-123, Service Hours: Monday to Friday, 16:30-19:30
- Youth Helpline (青少年求助專線): 0800-001-769, Service Hours: Monday to Friday, 16:30-19:30
- Parenting Education Helpline (親職教育求助專線): 0800-532-880, Service Hours: Monday to Friday, 14:00-17:00

Resources for Employers

- Bystander Intervention Training in Taiwan | <https://www.facebook.com/BystanderTrainingTaiwan>

Free Legal Counsel for Victims

☐ Contact Information

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- Kaohsiung City Councilor 黃捷 (Huang Jie)

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- Legal Support for #MeToo Complainants Support Hotline is (02) 89115595

- Employer Consultation Hotline is (02) 23883619.

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**P.S.**

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