

'OVERSEAS TAIWANESE SOLIDARITY AGAINST LEGISLATIVE POWER ABUSE': MOBILISING A TRANSNATIONAL ALLY TO SUPPORT TAIWAN'S DEMOCRACY

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Mustering Voices Abroad

On the night of May 17, when thousands of Taiwanese protesters' calls against the problematic legislative amendment fell on deaf ears, many overseas Taiwanese closely following the events felt deep frustration. Among them, Yi-Ting Chung, a history PhD student at Stanford, felt the need to garner overseas support for the protestors. After discussions with friends, Yi-Ting soon discovered that the possibility of initiating a transnational solidarity campaign seemed promising given the pervasive sense of anxiety among overseas Taiwanese. On May 21, when over 15,000 people joined the protest, she leveraged the connections and camaraderie accumulated in past movements, gathering like-minded Taiwanese spanning the US, Japan, and Europe. Together, we initiated the 'Overseas Taiwanese Solidarity Against Legislative Power Abuse'.

In a day or two, the initiative expanded into a robust team of around 60 core members, with ten sub-groups, each tackling different facets of our mission. Our initial plan was two-pronged: first, we aimed to coordinate a [social media photo campaign](#), and second, we sought to draft a statement from our initiative that would form the basis for a [petition](#). As our members increased, so did our ideas. New members brought insightful perspectives and inventive strategies. We established English and Japanese teams to handle translations and articulate the significance of the protests to international audiences. This included translations to explain the complexity of the political situation in Taiwan, particularly to offer a contextualised understanding of the cross-party dynamics—where the KMT and TPP coalition holds a majority in the Legislative Yuan. At the same time, the presidency and executive branch remain under the control of the DPP. Our goal was to clarify that our protest was not against the ruling party but the actions of the parliamentary majority. It was a task that required cautious and deliberate communication with the public. Through the collective effort of the core members, our deep concern for the local movement in Taiwan was able to transform into a global campaign, demonstrating the power of the solidarity of overseas Taiwanese in the face of political challenges.

Our concerns about the new legislation encompass the opaque legislative process, subversion of the Constitution, and its detrimental impact on Taiwan's stability and sovereignty.

Arbitrary and Disorderly Legislative Process

The current proposals are not reforms in any meaningful sense; instead, they are regressive. One of

the most controversial issues in the current legislative process is the hijacking of the process of clause-by-clause consideration by the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Taiwan People's Party (TPP). Clause-by-clause considerations in each committee provide an opportunity to compare different versions of a bill and reach a preliminary consensus. This process, along with live broadcast channels, allows the public to better understand the legislative process and the details of a bill. It is an important form of communication not only between legislators but also between legislators and society. However, the [KMT and TPP rushed to send the draft out of committee for a floor vote](#) without these important discussions.

Consequently, the public is unable to know the reasons why KMT and TPP members supported or opposed the various clauses in different versions of the bill. The lack of any record of public debate further undermines accountability. Apart from a few explanatory notes in each legislative proposal, there is no way to understand or supervise the process. On May 17, the KMT abused the amendment motion, [released the finalised version of the bill only in the morning of voting](#), and tried to push the bill through the legislature on the same day. Only when controversies over the bill reached a tipping point did legislators begin to communicate with the public. But at this time, the KMT and TPP remained intent on passing the bill as quickly as possible. On May 23, KMT legislator Wu Tsung-Hsien stated at an international press conference that [explanations to the public would take place after the passage of the bill into law](#). Eventually, the bill still passed the third reading on May 28 and such a move completely disregards public opinion.

If clause-by-clause discussions had taken place, there would have been effective debate in the committee, which regrettably did not happen. In addition to flaws in legislative procedure and the utter lack of willingness by legislators to communicate their actions to the public, the most important question regarding the bill remains unanswered: should legislators in Taiwan even be granted powers that surpass the executive and supervisory branches of government, or even the Constitution?

The Bill Subverts the Constitution

We support legislative reforms that enhance the quality of legislative oversight and make legislative procedures more transparent and accountable. We oppose any move that violates the constitutional principle of separation of powers by allowing the legislative power to override other constitutionally established branches of government. The KMT and TPP are now trying to railroad their bill, claiming that it is modelled after the "contempt of Congress" law in the United States that seeks to balance presidential and executive powers. But this representation is misleading. While the [US's contempt of Congress law serves to prevent witnesses from committing perjury in testimony after oath](#), the KMT-TPP's version of the law expands the "investigative power" of the Legislative Yuan, which essentially [increases legislative authority](#). These are two fundamentally different concepts.

The KMT-TPP bill does not introduce corresponding balances for executive and judicial powers. Instead, they subvert Taiwan's Constitution. The amendment grants excessive power to the Legislative Yuan and the Investigative Committee established by legislators, enabling them to ["request information" from governmental institutions, the military, and the private sectors.](#) Non-compliance is subject to penalties as determined by the Legislative Yuan. However, the bill [lacks regulations and checks on key issues](#) such as the impartiality of the Investigative Committees, preventing interference with judicial independence, protecting confidential information, and avoiding conflicts of interest within the committees. Consequently, this bill undermines the professional judgment of the executive branch, which would lead governmental officials to fear legal repercussions and thus avoid substantive and in-depth responses during testimony, risking transforming the Legislative Yuan into a tool for opposition parties to sabotage the ruling party without justification, potentially leading to legislative paralysis and government dysfunction.

Meanwhile, according to the current amendments to the Legislative Yuan Functioning Act proposed by the KMT and TPP, those being interpellated are prohibited from [“counter-interpellating,” refusing to respond, withholding information, concealing information, or providing false responses](#). The issue with these proposals, however, is that there are no clear standards for determining these offences. For instance, regarding the discussion of confidential information that should otherwise not be disclosed, the bill only requires the “chairperson’s consent,” potentially forcing the disclosure of highly sensitive information during testimony.

This amendment bill also expands the Legislative Yuan’s investigative power toward individuals, and individuals are potentially subject to the regulations and penalties regarding interpellation stated previously. Individuals’ [right to retain an attorney must be consented by the chairperson](#), and this regulation isn’t consistent with the Code of Criminal Procedure and is potentially unconstitutional as the Constitution grants all citizens rights to a fair trial.

Amendment Endangers Taiwan’s Stability and Sovereignty

Despite procedural and substantive disputes, the controversial articles of this amendment to the Legislative Yuan Functioning Act have passed the third reading. Upcoming regulations, such as the Hualien-Taitung Three Bills, that affect major infrastructure projects will likely be approved following a similar path without thorough examination, given the opposition parties’ numerical advantage, setting one of the worst examples in the history of Taiwan’s democracy.

Additionally, the risk of confidential information leaks and national security threats associated with these regulations pose critical dangers that can potentially be exploited by external entities, especially the Chinese Communist Party, to undermine Taiwan’s democracy. This endangers Taiwan’s diplomatic relations with Europe, the United States, and other countries, ultimately affecting regional security dynamics.

These changes may also damage trust in Taiwan’s investment climate and jeopardise the country’s recent advancements in technology and economic successes, alienating Taiwan from the democratic allies in the international community. As the Chinese Communist Party is putting pressure on Taiwan diplomatically, the implementation of such legislation will further create constitutional crises, dysfunction of the government and domestic instability, further raising Taiwan’s vulnerability to Beijing’s annexation threat.

A Marathon, Not a Sprint: Toward a Sustained Mobilisation

This protest is not a sprint but a marathon. It is just the beginning of the new president’s term, with four years until the next parliamentary election. We wanted more people to understand why and how this bill threatens Taiwan’s democratic system, sovereignty, and political stability. While we strive to prevent such outcomes, ongoing mobilisation over the next four years will likely be necessary. Therefore, solidarity-building among participants is crucial, as these experiences and networking will be invaluable for future initiatives. With tremendous protests both in Taiwan and overseas in so many countries, unfortunately, the amendment bill passed the third reading on May 28, which meant the flight would continue. This is not the end of the protest. Instead, it is the beginning of a long-term campaign to protect Taiwan’s democracy.

Our primary aim of this initiative is to gather the collective voices of overseas Taiwanese, creating constant pressure on the Legislative Yuan and, most importantly, standing in solidarity with all the protesters in Taiwan. This solidarity-building not only brings relief to overseas Taiwanese to cope with our anxiety of being away from home but also demonstrates our unwavering support for those in Taiwan. Additionally, we aim to introduce the international community to these events and

increase Taiwan's international visibility by demonstrating the ongoing protest and its demands.

We dedicated energy and passion to this ally, and the responses from people supporting our initiative have been remarkable. Within a day, we launched a [Facebook page](#) and started promoting the overseas photo campaign with designed slogans. By the next day, we had written bilingual statements for the petition. Furthermore, we posted information and called for petitions on [Instagram](#) and [Thread](#) to attract users from various social media platforms. In four days (from May 24 to 28th), we collected [over 551 petition signatures](#) and received 143 photos. This initiative not only demonstrates the resilience of Taiwan's civil society but also boosts our confidence in mobilising and organising even faster and more extensively for future movements.

This article was published as part of a special issue on ['Bluebird Movement: Legislative Reform Protests in Taiwan'](#).

Overseas Taiwanese Solidarity Against Legislative Power Abuse

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