



Press Release
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Freedom House Condemns U.S. Support of China on Taiwan UN Bid

Washington, D.C.

September 10, 2007

U.S. pressure on Taiwan to call off plans for a national referendum on applying for a seat at the United Nations is inconsistent with its commitment to the promotion of democracy and freedom, Freedom House said today.

The U.S. joined the People's Republic of China in appealing to Taiwanese president Chen Shui-bian not to hold a proposed referendum on whether Taiwan should continue to seek membership at the United Nations. Taiwan's most recent application for a seat alongside China at the U.N. was rejected in July.

"The U.S., as one of Taiwan's few strong allies, has made it clear that it wants to maintain the status quo and prevent a provocation of Chinese military action against Taiwan," said Jennifer Windsor, executive director of Freedom House. "However, it has no business in joining with China to bully the Taiwanese people--who have demonstrated their commitment to democracy--away from peacefully expressing their desire to occupy a seat at the United Nations."

"The message being sent by President Bush, first in accepting the invitation of Chinese President Hu Jintao to attend the Beijing Olympics, and now in joining China to suppress Taiwan's democratic aspirations, is that the spread of democracy and freedom is not a priority when it offends a large powerful country," she added.

Taiwan, which broke away from China in 1949, now boasts both strong democratic credentials and a vibrant economy. An electoral democracy, with a free press and strong civil liberties, Taiwan currently maintains the world's 18th largest economy and is the 10th largest trading partner to the European Union. However, as a result of pressure by China, which considers Taiwan to be a part of its territory, only 24 nations currently recognize Taiwan as an independent country. The U.S. dropped its diplomatic recognition of Taiwan in 1979, when it established diplomatic relations with China, although it has remained a strong ally and has pledged to defend Taiwan from Chinese military intervention.

Taiwan has sent applications to join the United Nations for the past 15 years and has been denied each time. The proposed referendum on UN membership is slated for March 2008 to coincide with upcoming presidential elections.

Taiwan is rated Free in the 2007 edition of the organization's annual survey, *Freedom in the World*, with a rating of 2 (on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being best) for political rights and a 1 for civil liberties.

[Freedom in the World 2007: Taiwan](#)

[Freedom in the World 2007: China](#)

Freedom House is an independent nongovernmental organization that supports the expansion of freedom around the world.

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Original URL: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=550>

Printed: September 10, 2007

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