



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

Published on *Global Nonviolent Action Database* (<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>)

---

## Taiwanese citizens demonstrate to end construction of the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant and amend the Referendum Act, 1988-2017

**Time period notes:** *In 1988, the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (TEPU) initiated a series of anti-nuclear street protests and public lectures. However, it is not known when the first of these actions took place.*

1988

to: 23 November

2017

**Country:** Taiwan

**Location City/State/Province:** Taipei

**Location Description:** *Primarily in Taipei, although actions were carried out across the country, as well as in Kongliao, where the nuclear project was located.*

### Goals:

That the government halt construction of the Fourth Power Plant, that the government decommission the other nuclear power plants on the island, and that the government amend the Referendum Act

## Methods

### Methods in 1st segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

### Methods in 2nd segment:

- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)

### Methods in 3rd segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 030. Rude gestures
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

### Methods in 4th segment:

- 011. Records, radio, and television

### Methods in 5th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications

- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 036. Performances of plays and music
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)
- 162. Sit-in
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction

**Methods in 6th segment:**

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Change

**Cluster:**

Democracy

Environment

**Group characterization:**

- Civic groups
- and political groups
- legal aid groups

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

Taiwan Environmental Protection Union, Green Citizens Action Alliance, Lin Yi-Xiong

**Partners:**

Democratic Progressive Party, No Nuke Street Band, Kongliao residents

**External allies:**

Sunflower Student Movement

**Involvement of social elites:**

Ko I-chen, Hsiao Yeh

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

- Democratic Progressive Party
- Kongliao residents

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

- Democratic Progressive Party (exit)

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

- Democratic Progressive Party
- No Nuke Street Band

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

- Sunflower Student Movement

**Segment Length:** 5 years

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

Government of Taiwan

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

not known

**Campaigner violence:**

not known

**Repressive Violence:**

not known

## Success Outcome

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

6 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**

1 point out of 1 points

**Growth:**

3 points out of 3 points

**Notes on outcomes:**

Minister of Economic Affairs Shen Jong-chin declared in a press conference on 31 January 2019 that “there would be no extension or restarts of nuclear power plants in Taiwan.”

In a statement released on 1 February 2019, Taipower declared that NPP-4’s completed was no longer possible.

The Taiwanese legislature approved amendments to the Referendum Act that slashed the thresholds for initiating, seconding, and passing referendums on 12 December 2017.

---

Nuclear power in Taiwan enjoyed a high level of support among academics throughout the 1970s and the early 1980s, when the government and the state-owned energy provider widely disseminated propaganda about its benefits. During this period, the Taiwan Power Company (Taipower) built and began to operate nuclear power plants in Shimen, Wanli, and Hengchun. After the

Chernobyl disaster in 1986 and the end of martial law in 1987, however, attitudes towards nuclear power began to shift, and the construction of a fourth nuclear power plant (NPP-4), first proposed in 1978, became a focal point for anti-nuclear activists, who were and continue to be concerned about the risks of nuclear power in a country prone to seismic activity.

In 1988, the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (TEPU), an organization whose core consisted of scholars and intellectuals at the time, initiated a series of anti-nuclear street protests and public lectures. By the end of that year, the residents of Kongliao, where the government intended to build NPP-4, had joined the effort. Fearful about the project's potential impact on their livelihood, the residents actively campaigned against NPP-4 and formed the Yanliao Anti-Nuclear Self-Help Association.

Yet despite the opposition of Kongliao residents, anti-nuclear activists throughout the country, and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), whose 1986 charter included a nuclear-free clause, construction on NPP-4 began in 1999.

In its early stages, the anti-nuclear campaign depended heavily on its partnership with the DPP, whose contacts and organizational strength were key in the activists' efforts. However, the DPP, for all its anti-nuclear commitments, turned out to be an unreliable partner.

In October 2000, after Chen Shui-bian won the presidency, the DPP announced the cancellation of NPP-4, only to retract its decision and resume construction on the plant in February 2001 under considerable pushback from the Kuomintang (KMT), the pro-nuclear opposition party.

Kongliao residents and anti-nuclear activists did not take kindly to what they viewed as a "surrender" of the Executive Yuan to the Legislative Yuan. On 14 February 2001, activists from more than 50 groups demonstrated in front of the Executive Yuan to denounce the DPP's backtracking. "We look down upon those DPP members who have betrayed the people, lied to their supporters, and turned their backs on the party's anti-nuclear platform," the Kongliao Township Chief told the Taipei Times.

A little over a week later, on 24 February 2001, more than 10,000 people rallied in the capital to demand a referendum on NPP-4. Led by the Nuclear Free Country Action Alliance, a coalition that included TEPU, the protesters first gathered at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, where they exchanged their Chen Shui-bian election campaign caps for t-shirts with slogans related to the sought-after referendum. In another symbolic act of protest, demonstrators stamped on political party flags as they marched past the headquarters of the KMT and People First Party, a show of disgust toward the two opposition parties. At the end of the day, the protesters came together outside the Presidential Office, where they projected the Chinese characters for "referendum" onto the building.

The DPP's backtracking concerning NPP-4 was not the only cause for disappointment among anti-nuclear activists. After the party gained the presidency, its stance toward social activists and environmental regulations gradually shifted. Not only did the DPP begin to regard social activists as a "liability," the president himself referred to the Environmental Impact Assessment Act as a roadblock to economic development.

These developments led to a schism within the anti-nuclear community. While some groups, such as TEPU, preferred not to sever ties with the DPP, other groups, such as the Green Citizens Action Alliance (GCAA, founded by former TEPU members), wished to distance themselves from the party. Unlike its predecessors, the GCAA employed new methods, such as online campaigns, rock concerts, and films, including a critically acclaimed documentary on the lives of Kongliao fisherman, produced by the secretary general of the GCAA in 2004. "Deprived of 'official channels,'" the sinologist Simona Grano writes, "GCAA's activists were compelled to conceive of new ways to rebuild a wide anti-nuclear consensus among the general public."

The anti-nuclear campaign failed to have much impact in the period after the DPP withdrew its decision to cancel construction on NPP-4. It was not until the KMT regained the presidency in 2008 and terminated the Nuclear-Free Homeland Communication Committee (which the DPP had introduced as a gesture of goodwill towards anti-nuclear activists) that the campaign started to experience a resurgence. "Fearing that their role in society was gradually being eroded," Grano writes, "social movements shifted back to more 'impact-oriented' and attention-seeking techniques, such as mass protests."

Beginning in August 2009, the GCAA increased its anti-nuclear efforts, organizing a string of concerts in Kongliao and Fulong in collaboration with the No Nuke Street Band. Targeted toward young people, the concerts served to communicate the dangers of nuclear energy, focusing particularly on the construction of NPP-4. Ho Ming-sho writes that events such as these distanced anti-nuclear opposition from politics and gave it a more easy-going image, which facilitated the garnering of support from people of different political parties later in the campaign.

Other actions carried out by anti-nuclear activists in the period before the nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan included forming a human chain on 29 August 2010 to block the entrance to NPP-4, all the while chanting slogans to demand that the government halt plans to fill the reactors with uranium fuel, and hijacking the website for the Ho Hai Yan Rock Festival, packing it with information about NPP-4.

The Fukushima disaster on 11 March 2011 sparked a significant escalation of anti-nuclear events and rallies. On 20 March 2011, around 2,000 anti-nuclear protesters demonstrated all over the country to demand that the government stop work on NPP-4 and not extend the lifespans of the three already existing nuclear power plants. A month later, on 30 April 2011, more than 5,000 people repeating the demands of previous protesters participated in the “430 Sunflower No Nuke Action” protest, a two-and-a-half-hour parade in Taipei during which people held yellow banners and sunflowers and shouted slogans such as “cherish life, end nuclear power” and “I want a nuclear-free homeland.” At one point, activists sounded a nuclear leakage siren, and the crowd fell to the ground, simulating death.

On 4 June 2011, the eve of World Environment Day, anti-nuclear activists demonstrated once again. Alongside 13 civic environmental groups and legislators, TEPU assembled on Ketagalan Boulevard in Taipei with yellow banners reading, “I love Taiwan, not nuclear disasters.”

Throughout 2012 and 2013, people continued to demonstrate against the construction of NPP-4, with total participation in the campaign during this period numbering in the hundreds of thousands. On 9 March 2013 alone, 200,000 took to the streets of Taipei and three other major cities in the largest anti-nuclear demonstration in the country’s history. This two-year period also included a series of parades and speeches led by the cultural community and involving cultural figures, such as film director Ko I-chen and writer Hsiao Yeh. These took place every Friday on Liberty Square, beginning on 15 March 2013. Other actions that took place between 2012 and 2013 included a 24-hour hunger strike followed by a relay sit-in conducted by members of TEPU at the Legislative Yuan starting on 19 May 2013.

The heightened opposition to nuclear power did not go unnoticed by politicians. “Political parties, realizing the growing significance of anti-nuclear issues for their electoral platforms, tried to jump on the anti-nuclear wagon themselves, the DPP by reverting to its early anti-nuclear stance and the KMT by supporting a gradual phaseout of nuclear energy,” Grano writes. In the lead-up to the 2012 presidential elections, the DPP candidate, Tsai Ing-wen vowed to retire the country’s six nuclear reactors and mothball NPP-4 with her “2025 Nuclear-Free Homeland Initiative.”

Though Tsai did not win the election, the resolution of the nuclear issue remained on the political agenda. In January 2013, the DPP unveiled its plan to hold a referendum on NPP-4 simultaneously with the national municipal election in November 2014. Because the party had neglected to consult activists before taking action, the move alienated many in the anti-nuclear community, raising concerns that the DPP merely wanted to exploit the nuclear issue for political gain. Faced with strong criticism, the chairman of the DPP, Su Tseng-chang, withdrew the proposal.

Less than a month later, the KMT put forth its own plan to hold a referendum on NPP-4 in the summer. This, too, elicited backlash. At a march organized by TEPU on 19 May 2013, in addition to making their usual demand to end nuclear power generation in Taiwan, protesters called on the government to revise the language of its proposed referendum and amend the Referendum Act, which required at least 50 percent of voters to submit a ballot for referendum results to be valid. After a months-long debate on the referendum issue, the KMT eventually decided in September 2013 to postpone the plan indefinitely, and the issue was largely forgotten until April 2014.

In 2014, shortly after the Sunflower Student Movement occupied the Legislative and Executive Yuan, former DPP chairman Lin Yi-hsiung announced on 15 April 2014 that he would begin an indefinite hunger strike on Earth Day to protest against the construction of NPP-4. The next day, in response to Lin's announcement, Su pledged to propose a special statute that would allow a referendum on NPP-4 to bypass the Referendum Act. He also said that the DPP would organize mass anti-nuclear rallies across the country and ask all of its candidates in the seven-in-one elections to include the anti-nuclear campaign in their platform.

Su and KMT Premier Jiang Yi-huah met to talk over the statute on 21 April 2014, but Jiang turned down the proposal to lower the national referendum threshold. Later that day, he announced that the administration would not halt construction on NPP-4 nor change referendum rules.

As promised, Lin launched a hunger strike on 22 April 2014 at Gikong Presbyterian Church in Taipei, inspiring a wave of anti-nuclear rallies across the island. In his opening statement, Lin recalled his fast in 1994, undertaken for the same reasons, and expressed his regret his efforts over the past two decades had failed to persuade those in power to abandon nuclear power, which he saw as harmful to future generations.

On 23 April 2014, KMT President Ma Ying-jeou visited the church, where he swore to hold a national referendum to decide the fate of NPP-4. However, his words failed to sway Lin, who, the very next day, released an article in which he criticized Ma's vow. "A referendum on the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant would not be meaningful until the Referendum Act is amended," he wrote.

Also on 24 April 2014, in a demonstration organized by the DPP, thousands of people linked hands and flashed their cell phones in a 2.4-kilometer human chain from Gikong Presbyterian Church to the Presidential Office Building to show their solidarity with Lin. The route was decorated with yellow ribbons, symbolizing opposition to nuclear energy.

On 27 April 2014, several thousand citizens occupied the streets of Taipei with two demands: that the government halt construction of NPP-4 as it decommissioned the other nuclear power plants as soon as possible, and that it amend the Referendum Act. The Sunflower Student Movement, the protest movement behind the 24-day occupation of Taiwan's legislature from 18 March to 10 April 2014 to oppose the KMT's attempt to pass a service trade agreement with China without clause-by-clause review, acted as an ally at this stage of the campaign, evident in the open declarations by students leaders, such as Chen Wei-ting, who defended the actions of anti-nuclear activists. That afternoon, the president, premier, other senior government officials, and KMT mayors and magistrates met for two hours, after which the Ma administration announced that it would stop construction on NPP-4.

Even though Lin, who ended his hunger strike on 30 April 2014, and other anti-nuclear advocates said they were not satisfied with the government's response and highlighted how the proposed shutdown left room to resume the project, they acknowledged that they had achieved their preliminary goal of a halt on construction.

In January 2016, the DPP won the general election, and making good on their promise of a nuclear-free homeland by 2025, the government passed an amendment to the Electricity Industry Act that mandated a phaseout of nuclear energy production. Despite the later abolishment of the amendment on 2 December 2018 after a pro-nuclear referendum on 24 November 2018, Minister of Economic Affairs Shen Jong-chin declared in a press conference on 31 January 2019 that "there would be no extension or restarts of nuclear power plants in Taiwan." Moreover, in a statement released on 1 February 2019, Taipower declared that NPP-4's completed was no longer possible.

The legislature approved amendments to the Referendum Act that slashed the thresholds for initiating, seconding, and passing referendums on 12 December 2017. That year, the People Rule Foundation, led by Lin, staged two hunger strikes, from 26 April 2017 to 11 May 2017 and 8 November 2017 to 23 November 2017, in which participants took turns fasting to call on the DPP to push the amendments through the legislature.

## Research Notes

### Sources:

- Anon. 2011. "Over 2,000 Rally against Nuclear Plants in Taiwan." Asia One, March 20. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424121045/https://www.asiaone.com/News/Latest+News/Asia/Story/A1Story20110320-269104.html>).
- Anon. 2012. "About 2,000 Taiwanese Stage Anti-Nuclear Protest." The Sunday Times, March 11. Retrieved April 24, 2019. ([https://web.archive.org/web/20120318165911/http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/Asia/Story/STISStory\\_776471.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20120318165911/http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/Asia/Story/STISStory_776471.html)).
- Anon. 2014. "Thousands Link Hands from Church to Presidential Office." Taiwan News, April 24. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424115313/https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/2467196>).
- Chang, Maubo. 2014. "Ex-DPP Chief Begins Fast to Stop Work on Nuclear Plant (Update)." Focus Taiwan, April 22. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424120101/http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201404220017.aspx>).
- Chen, Wei-han. 2017. "Lin I-Hsiung to Lead Hunger Strike for Referendum Reform." Taipei Times, April 18. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424115753/http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2017/04/18/2003668928>).
- Chiu, Yu-tzu. 2001a. "Angry Anti-Nuclear Activists Promise to Continue the Battle." Taipei Times, February 15. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190516202846/http://www.taipetimes.com/News/local/archives/2001/02/15/0000073756>).
- Chiu, Yu-tzu. 2001b. "Protest March Fails to Draw Big Crowds." Taipei Times, February 25. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424121727/http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/print/2001/02/25/0000075091>).
- Gerber, Abraham. 2017. "Hunger Strike Launched to Back Referendum Changes." Taipei Times, April 27. Retrieved April 25, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190425120216/http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2017/04/27/2003669498>).
- Grano, Simona. 2014. "Perception of Risk towards Nuclear Energy in Taiwan and Hong Kong." *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* 5:60–78. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/researchAndExpertise/units/TaiwanProgramme/Journal/JournalContents/TCP5Grano.pdf>
- Grano, Simona. 2017. "The Evolution of the Anti-Nuclear Movement in Taiwan since 2008." Pp. 154–76 in *Taiwan's Social Movements under Ma Ying-Jeou*, edited by F. Dafydd. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ho, Ming-sho. 2014. "The Fukushima Effect: Explaining the Resurgence of the Anti-Nuclear Movement in Taiwan." *Environmental Politics*. doi: 10.1080/09644016.2014.918303.
- Huang, Kelvin, Sunrise Huang, and Christie Chen. 2014. "Government Halts Fourth Nuclear Plant Construction (Update 2)." Focus Taiwan, April 27. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424115854/http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201404270023.aspx>).
- Lee, I-chia. 2011. "Anti-Nuclear Rally Draws Legions." Taipei Times, May 1. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424121002/http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2011/05/01/2003502115>).
- Lee, I-chia. 2011. "Conservationists Protest against Nuclear Policies." Taipei Times, June 5. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424120704/http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2011/06/05/2003505021>).

- Lee, I-chia. 2013. "Thousands Rally against Nuclear Power." Taipei Times, May 20. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424120607/http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2013/05/20/2003562699>).
- Lin, Sean. 2017. "Referendum Act Amendments Approved." Taipei Times, December 13. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424115638/http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2017/12/13/2003683881>).
- Lin, Sean. 2017. "Referendum Hunger Strike Begins." Taipei Times, November 9. Retrieved April 25, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190425120308/http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2017/11/09/2003681937>).
- Loa, Lok-sin. 2010. "Protestors Throng Nuclear Plant." Taipei Times, August 30. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424121354/http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2010/08/30/2003481669>).
- Wang, Chris. 2014. "DPP Plans New Law to Resolve Nuclear Dispute." Taipei Times, April 17. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424120402/http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2014/04/17/2003588237>).
- Wang, Chris. 2014. "Lin Starts Anti-Nuclear Hunger Strike." Taipei Times, April 23. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424120226/http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2014/04/23/2003588668>).
- Wang, Chris and I-chia Lee. 2014. "Lin Ends Anti-Nuclear Hunger Strike." Taipei Times, May 1. Retrieved April 24, 2019. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190424120307/http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2014/05/01/2003589291>).

**Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:**

Sacha Lin, 29/05/2019

**A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.**

Copyright Swarthmore College.



Global Nonviolent Action Database is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

Original website design and artwork created by [Daniel Hunter](#).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>.

Registered users can [login](#) to the website.

---

**Source URL (retrieved on 08/12/2020 - 00:11):** <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/taiwanese-citizens-demonstrate-end-construction-fourth-nuclear-power-plant-and-amend-referen>