

# Taiwan Rocked by Wave of Sexual Harassment, Assault Allegations

Monday 19 June 2023, by [HIOE Brian](#) (Date first published: 14 June 2023).

**In the past two weeks, Taiwan has seen a growing number of #MeToo style allegations, especially against political figures.**

The past two weeks have seen a wave of #MeToo-style allegations in Taiwanese society. While the sexual harassment accusations first began within the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the accusations have since spread to implicate politicians in the pan-Blue camp, as well as figures in academic, cultural, and artistic circles – even if there is still a predominant focus on #MeToo accusations within the political sphere. At this point, there have been several dozen accusations against high-profile figures.

The initial accusation came in [a Facebook post](#) from a former DPP staffer alleging that she had been sexually harassed by a contractor during her time at the party. The staffer in question, Amber Chen, accused her superiors of telling her to downplay the incident and blaming her for not jumping out of the car or screaming when inappropriately touched in a car by the contractor.

Chen's Facebook post cited [Netflix drama "Wave Makers,"](#) which has become a runaway hit in the past few months. "Wave Makers" focuses on the electoral campaign of a fictionalized version of the DPP during a presidential election, zooming in on entrenched issues in Taiwanese politics regarding sexual harassment and assault.

"Wave Makers" was praised for its realism by a number of young pan-Green politicians. One of the show's two scriptwriters was formerly a DPP staffer, while another was from a DPP family. As a result, [real incidents were used](#) as source material for the plot.

Chen stated that, unlike in "Wave Makers," she did not have anyone to stand up for her in the mold of series protagonist Weng Wen-fang– depicted in the show as a progressive, openly lesbian former city councilor. Chen's #MeToo post set off a number of other allegations from DPP party workers. Many reported similarly having been blamed by superiors after cases of sexual harassment or assault, or having been told to cover up the incident.

Afterward, the DPP saw the resignation of Deputy Secretary-General [Hsu Chia-tien](#) and high-ranking aide [Tsai Mu-lin,](#) who were both accused of trying to cover up sexual harassment incidents. Other senior DPP officials were themselves accused of sexual harassment or assault. This included [Lin Nan-ku,](#) the deputy director of Organizational Affairs for the party, as well as presidential policy adviser [Yan Chih-fa.](#) Both resigned in the wake of the allegations. Executive Yuan consultant [Cheng Hung-huei](#) was also let go after charges of sexual assault.

The DPP's legislative candidate for Yonghe in New Taipei, Lee Cheng-hao, similarly [came under fire](#) for accusations that he used nude photos of an ex-girlfriend to blackmail her. Lee's nomination as a DPP candidate was already controversial, seeing as he was a former KMT member who was expelled after criticizing the KMT 2020 presidential candidate, Han Kuo-yu, during a television show. This

incident, too, resembles the plot of “Wave Makers,” in which a character from the KMT stand-in party blackmails another character using nude photos of her.

Lee’s nomination faced growing opposition within the DPP, with a petition against his nomination from party members [gaining over 800 signatures](#). Lee eventually withdrew from the race under pressure, though he sought to emphasize that he won the court case involving the nude photos.

The scandal quickly spread beyond just the DPP, however, with two prominent Chinese dissidents coming under fire shortly before the June 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre.

Poet Bei Ling was [accused by Chien Li-ying](#), one of the scriptwriters of “Wave Makers,” of having sexually assaulted her during college. Bei has denied the charges.

Likewise, former Tiananmen Square student leader Wang Dan was accused by activist Lee Yuan-chun of attempting to [sexually assault him](#) in 2014. Lee emphasized in a Facebook post that he had the support of pan-Green independents Sabrina Lim and Froggy Chiu.

[Wang strongly denied this](#), alleging that the accusations were a CCP plot aimed at discrediting him, while also stating that he expected more allegations to emerge. Since Lee’s initial Facebook post, there has been at least [one more set of accusations](#) against Wang, and Lee has now filed a lawsuit against Wang. After the accusation, it was announced that Wang Dan will no longer be teaching at [at National Tsing Hua University](#).

Accusations also spread to the pan-Blue camp. Hualien legislator Fu Kun-chi, who has long been controversial even within the KMT for his history of graft, was [accused of sexual harassment](#) by Mirror Literature CEO Tung Cheng-yu. Hualien county speaker Zhang Jun of the KMT [has called on](#) the Hualien county government to investigate charges against Fu. The Hualien county magistrate is Fu’s wife, Hsu Cheng-wei.

Media personality [Albert Tzeng](#) was accused of several dozen cases of sexual harassment. Tzeng was formerly part of Intiium Media before joining the KMT’s National Policy Foundation. The KMT has said that it has no ties to Tzeng at present.

KMT Taipei city councilor Chung Pei-chun has accused fantasy translator and cultural commentator Lucifer Chu, usually seen as aligned with the pan-Blue camp, [of sexually harassing her](#). Chu’s response was to [report himself](#) to the police for sexual harassment, a move many interpreted as either mocking Chung or trying to push her to file charges.

Separately, DPP legislator Fan Yun won a lawsuit against KMT legislator Chen Xue-sheng for [sexual harassment during a scuffle in the legislature](#). The case was filed before the current wave of #MeToo allegations.

Members of the pan-Blue-controlled Taipei and New Taipei city governments have been accused of cases of sexual harassment. In Taipei, the most widely discussed case involves [a security guard](#) that harassed female workers at the city government, including actions such as locking them in their offices. In New Taipei, [the director in the water resources department](#) has been accused of sexual harassment. Further reports suggest that a former employee of the New Taipei city government [killed herself](#) after being sexually assaulted.

The Taipei and New Taipei cases are likely to be capitalized on by the DPP for political ammunition, seeing as the cases took place during the tenures of current New Taipei Mayor Hou You-yi and former Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je. Both Hou and Ko are running for president, as the candidates of the KMT and Taiwan People’s Party (TPP), respectively.

Namely, as the KMT sought to attack the DPP for its issues with sexual harassment, the DPP has sought to suggest the KMT has similar issues – but has done even less to make amends. DPP legislative candidate Lin Fei-fan, formerly a deputy secretary-general of the DPP best known as a student leader of the 2014 Sunflower Movement, [announced his withdrawal](#) from the election in spite of not being accused of wrongdoing himself, a move likely aimed at displaying contrition to the general public on behalf of the party.

That most #MeToo allegations to date have centered around the political sphere perhaps points to the preeminence of politics in Taiwanese society. The 2021 arrest of YouTuber “Xiao Yu” over [a Telegram group](#) that he and collaborators used to distribute pornographic deepfakes of female public figures also mostly involved deepfakes of female politicians. But there have also been allegations involving academic and cultural figures such as literary historian [Chen Fang-ming](#), political scientist [Wu Nai-teh](#), film critic [Li You-xin](#), and writer [Zhang Tie-zhi](#).

Accusations of a past incident of sexual harassment against Zhang have become particularly contested, [as the victim in question](#) stated that she had moved on. Despite this, others continued to raise the incident, leading the victim to post online that she rejected others using her past experiences as “cultural capital.”

Taiwan compares favorably to neighboring countries in terms of female political representation; current President Tsai Ing-wen is Taiwan’s first female president. However, the presence of a number of female politicians in elected positions does not preclude the existence of deeply rooted structural issues regarding sexual harassment and discrimination in politics.

More generally, however, the wave of #MeToo allegations points to the significant problem of victims being blamed over sexual harassment or assault incidents – including by the court system. For example, a recent sexual assault allegation against former Polish Office in Taipei acting head Bartosz Rys involving former Sunflower Movement spokesperson Lai Yu-fen, later an NGO worker, has provoked outrage in part [due to the court ruling](#). Prosecutors decided not to pursue charges against Rys, claiming that because Lai froze up during the assault, this did not convey resistance, and [asserting that her](#) “reaction afterward was very different from that of a person who has been sexually assaulted.”

Court rulings by judges in Taiwan on cases involving sexual harassment or assault have long been criticized for reflecting outmoded and highly conservative social values. Moreover, as with Lai or the initial allegations by Amber Chen, victims are accused of not doing enough to prevent their own assault, and this is used as a pretext to drop cases.

It is to be seen whether the present wave of incidents will lead to genuine changes in Taiwanese society. For now, both the DPP and KMT are likely to try to leverage accusations to make political attacks on each other, while also seeking to distract from allegations against their own camp. If both political parties in Taiwan see the issue solely as one to be seized for political ammunition, it is not likely that talk of reform or changing entrenched social attitudes will go anywhere.

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