

Wife 'won't give up' on MH370 passenger

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By Kow Gah Chie

It has been almost a year since the ill-fated Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 disappeared from the skies, but Kelly Wen believes her husband is still alive.

In Kuala Lumpur with 17 others to demand answers from Malaysian officials, Wen cannot bear the thought of him knowing that she turned her back and moved on.

"I want him to know I have not given up. I am still fighting for him," she said.

For the families of the 152 Chinese passengers on board, Malaysia's announcement that the 239 passengers and crew who disappeared on Mar 8, 2014 are presumed dead is unacceptable.

Malaysia's Department of Civil Aviation had cited two clauses in the Chicago Convention to make the difficult announcement.

But Wen (right) said the DCA conveniently ignore that the convention said such pronouncements can only be made after investigations are over

Australian searchers said only 30 percent have been covered, she said.

Tears flowing down her cheeks, the young woman said family members will only accept the bad news once the entire search and investigation is over.

The struggle for truth has not been easy, less so in Kuala Lumpur where they tried everything from gate-crashing an MCA festive open house to camping out in front of Malaysia Airlines and the Transport Ministry.

Run down and run out

The group made up mostly of parents of those on board are elderly and speak little English.

They know no one who can help put them in touch with the authorities to get the answers they seek.

In the 20 days in Malaysia's capital, one elderly member of the group was hit by a motorcycle when flagging down a taxi, while another collapsed due to the heat and an empty stomach.

Police blocked and chased the family members away on several occasions, threatening arrest if they show up again at the Transport Ministry.

Li, a 59-year-old businessman who suffered a stroke and contemplated suicide since he was told his daughter was on board the Boeing 777 feels like a football, kicked around between agencies.

He says they have left verbal and text messages and sent letters to the relevant agencies, but with five days left on their tourist visa, they still cannot get a meeting with Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai or other agencies.

"We only contact Liow through his secretary. He told us that Liow was busy," he said.

The group has also gone to the police seeking an investigation into what is now one of the greatest aviation mysteries in history, but were told no criminal investigation can be carried out without the plane.

"They seem to want us to get compensation and move on, so they can be freed (from the burdens). We can't accept our family members declared dead when they only disappeared."

'We are sorry for our behaviour'

Since March 8, 2014 the families in China has taken to the streets in Beijing to gain media attention and in one instance pelted mineral water bottles to Malaysian officials who were there to meet them.

This contrasts sharply to the more diplomatic approach of families from Malaysia and 11 other countries involved.

Wen said the Chinese families have "different opinions" to the families in Malaysia who seem to have accepted the worst.

Perhaps, she said, the families are forced to do so even though Wen thinks deep down, they may not really believe their loved ones are gone.

"We are sorry for our inappropriate behaviour, which led to the misunderstanding of the people here. We don't want the people to harbour any ill feelings against us.

"We have no intention to hurt anyone, we just want our family members back," the young woman said, choked up.

Wen blamed the Malaysian government for ignoring the family members' petition, forcing them to resort to other ways of getting attention.

"They knew that we are here, they didn't come to us and guide us in resolving problems. They refused to see us and answer to our questions."

Punish them

The last time the families in China had a dialogue with the Malaysian authorities was in April, but the information conveyed left them with little comfort.

Wen says their demands are valid and have gone through advice from legal and aviation experts.

They want to know why there was no alert when MH370 turned back and want the data which led to the deduction that the plane “ended in the Indian Ocean”, as announced by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Whatever the Malaysian government’s decision, the families will initiate legal action against Putrajaya, MAS, Boeing to punish them and seek the highest compensation, she said.

But without any physical evidence of the plane, legal experts told them, the legal suit cannot move forward.

Like for everything else in their lives, the clock stopped ticking on March 8, 2014.

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