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## 2. The Green Island Human Rights Cultural Park

Situated in the Pacific Ocean some 33 kilometers to the east of Taitung City, the 16-square-kilometer Green Island is Taiwan's fourth largest offshore island. It was originally known as the Isle of Fire (other monikers include Chicken Heart Island or Samasana Island), and most residents on the island are of Min-nan roots.

Between 1911 and 1919 when Taiwan was occupied by Japan, the Office of Governor-General of Taiwan established the Isle of Fire Homeless Shelter. The Office of Governor-General of Taiwan designated the island as part of the Taitung County in 1937. Under the jurisdiction of the Taitung County, the island was officially renamed Green Island in 1948.

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The 32-hectare Green Island Human Rights Cultural Park is located in the northeast corner of the island. It was formerly used as the Taiwan Provincial Security Command Re-education Department (1951~1965) and became the Ministry of National Defense's Prison of Probation Training (1972 ~ 1987). Both were major facilities for the imprisonment of political victims during Taiwan's martial law period known as "White Terror."

### 1) 1951~1965:

#### The Taiwan Provincial Security Command's Re-education Department

The establishment of the Taiwan Provincial Security Command's Re-education Department on Green Island was aimed at carrying out the imprisonment and ideological transformation of political prisoners. Beginning in 1951, most political prisoners were sent to the Re-education Department on Green Island for centralized management, while the remaining few were sent to a branch of the Ankeng military prison in Xindian.

The number of political prisoners imprisoned on Green Island once exceeded 2,000. They were divided into three brigades, and each brigade was divided into four squadrons, with 120 to 160 prisoners per squadron. Between 1951 and 1954, there had been a female detachment (known as the Eighth Squadron) with close to 100 female prisoners, and a special unit comprised of captured Communist Chinese soldiers from Nanjih Island in Fujian Province. Political prisoners and military management personnel numbered over 3,000, which was almost the same as the indigenous population of Green Island at that time.

At the initial stage, political prisoners on Green Island were sent to cut timber on mountains and collect coral limestone from the beach to build simple and crude houses. Such construction work was the major initiative of the Re-education Department at that time.

The stone wall that visitors can still see today was commonly known as the "Great Wall of Green Island,"

which had a total length of some 1,300 meters when it was completed. The wall was built over several years by political prisoners with limestone they had collected from the beach at the initial stage of the Re-education Department.

At that time the political prisoners deprecated themselves with a saying: "We are so talented that we willingly labor to collect coral limestone from the beach just to build a wall to imprison ourselves."

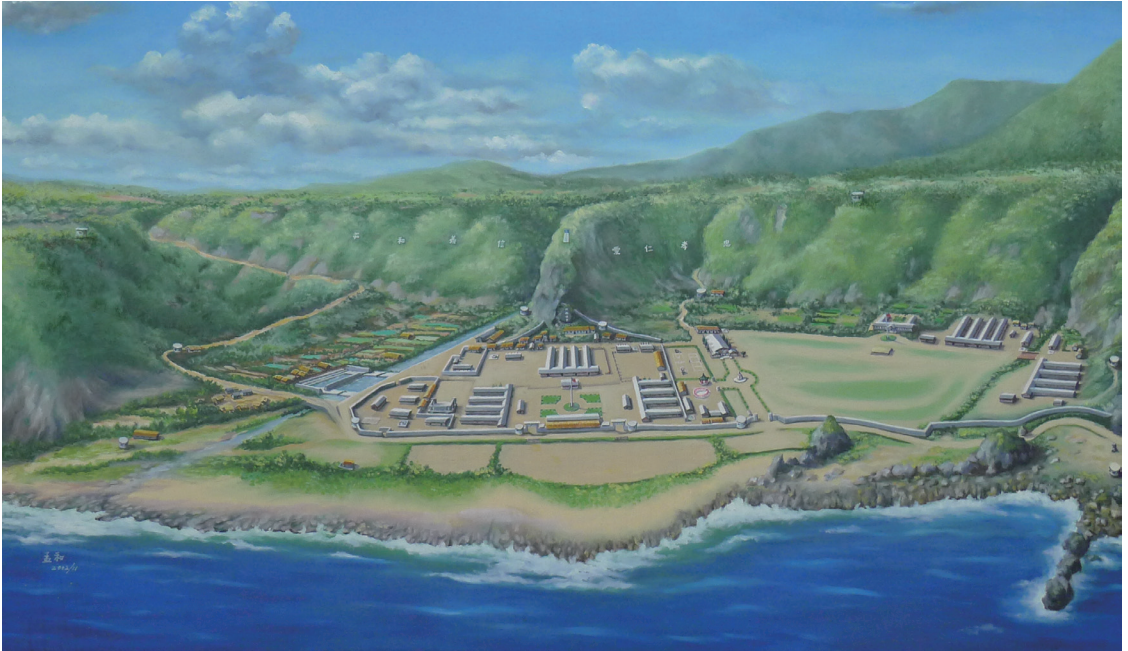
Presently, only 60 meters of the wall with a height of some 2.5 meters remain in the park.

The Liuma Ditch, a creek with a length of some 3 kilometers, was the main source of fresh water for the Re-education Department. It is alleged that the creek was originally called the Luman (Marbled Eel) Ditch because it was rich in marbled eels but it became mispronounced as the Liuman Ditch. Prior to the completion of the Chouchin Reservoir in 1997, water was gathered through improvised hydraulic engineering works such as a rain catchment system and water tanks designed by political prisoners. In addition to providing a steady water supply for irrigation, drinking, and cleaning needs in the area, this water supply system had even provided water to a common bathing pool, which served as a makeshift pool for swimming competitions at the re-education athletic meets.

The Re-education Department was in operation for a total of 15 years, during which it opted for the "ideological transformation" of its political prisoners. After the Korean War ended in July 1953, the Ministry of National Defense initiated the "one action per person, national salvation by conscientious action" program at the Re-education Department, forcing political victims to "voluntarily" tattoo anti-Communist and anti-Russian political slogans on their body. The program failed due to lack of support from the political prisoners.

A rebellion led by Chen Hua, Yang Mu-rong, Wu Sheng-da, and several other political prisoners — known as the Second Re-education Department Rebellion — took place on Green Island in July 1953; it ended with the execution of 14 prisoners. After quelling the rebellion, the Ministry of National Defense began to

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*Full view of New Life Correction Center*

transfer “ideologically incorrect” political prisoners who failed their tests upon completing their sentences to the Vocational Training Corps on Liuqiu Island for further penal servitude.

There was a clinic (which was reconstructed in 1986 at the original site) attached to the Re-education Department, where political prisoners with medical school training served as doctors. The clinic had offered outpatient services, including ENT, internal medicine, surgery, obstetrics, and gynecology, to provide servicemen, political prisoners, and Green Island residents with medical treatment.

The Re-education Department’s Zhongzheng Hall was once an assembly venue for Taiwan Garrison Command soldiers on Green Island, and sometimes local residents came here to attend township celebration activities by watching or performing entertainment programs.

Houses built of coral limestone remain standing on the site of the former Re-education Department canteen. There are three classical-style stone columns at the entrance to the canteen and its wall has a semicircular opening, with the red-colored words “doves of esteemed guests” and “a full house of customers” painted on white canvas hanging on both sides of the entrance. In addition to selling daily necessities, the canteen also had laundry and photography departments to serve the daily needs of political prisoners on Green Island.



*Current view of the gateway of NLCC 's canteen*



*New Lifer's costume*

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## 2) 1972~1987:

### **The Ministry of National Defense's Green Island Probation Training Prison**

The construction of the Taiyuan Prison in Taitung County's Donghe Township began in 1961 and ended in 1965. Soon after, the Re-education Department's political prisoners on Green Island were transferred to Taiyuan Prison in orderly groups to serve out their sentences.

After an attempted prison revolt spurred by Taiwanese independence sentiments known as the Taiyuan Incident took place in February 1970, the Ministry of National Defense built a prison with high walls at the Re-education Department next to the landmark General Rock. After its completion in 1972, the defense ministry transferred all political prisoners from Taiyuan Prison and other military prisons throughout Taiwan to the Ministry of National Defense's Probation Training Prison, which became better known as the Green Island Oasis Villa. The four Chinese characters that spell out "Oasis Villa" can still be seen clearly carved on a rock beside the General Rock along the Green Island round-island route.

The Oasis Villa was a typical closed prison surrounded by high walls and decorated with various patriotic slogans such as "staunchly anti-Communist," "accept the hardships," "never forget the lesson learned at Jyu," "repent now," and "destroy the Communists and recover the mainland."

The main building of the Oasis Villa was a prison with an internal hexagonal structure and four extended prisoner dormitories. The prison is divided into eight sections with a total of 52 large and small cells along the gallery in each prisoner dormitory, and outside were meadows for the prisoners to enjoy some fresh air. Local residents used to call the prison "the eight trigrams building" because it looked like the eight trigrams when viewed from the Green Island's ancient mountain trail. The Oasis Villa underwent major renovations after the lifting of martial law in 1987.

The Oasis Villa was also equipped with "isolation cells" located in a remote area on the west side of the prison, which the political victims referred to as "prisons within a prison."

The administrative building of the Oasis Villa housed both offices and the reception area. The reception area offered a singular round table in the parlor for political victims to meet visiting family members, who at that time had to cross the "Good Virtues Bridge" to meet their

imprisoned relatives in the reception area.

Finally, the Oasis Villa entrance and the exit of the reception area is the last wall every prisoner saw upon their release from prison.

Historical documents related to the White Terror era are now on display at the Oasis Villa. The narrow and small prison remains shrouded in a dark and heavy atmosphere, and mottled traces on the wall record every scar and name of the political victims, symbolizing the separation between loved ones in life and death.

## 3) 1987~present:

### **The Green Island Oasis Villa**

After the lifting of martial law in July 1987, the Oasis Villa under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Defense could no longer imprison "non-servicemen." By then, less than 40 political prisoners remained in the Oasis Villa and they were all transferred to the Green Island (Lyudao) Prison under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice. Among the last group of Oasis Villa political prisoners were Wang Sing-nan, Da Fei, and Chang Huamin.

When the last group of political prisoners was transferred out of the Re-education Department, the site was used to accommodate gangsters and mobsters who were sentenced to discipline training. The Taiwan Garrison Command expropriated the land on the east side of the Liuma Ditch to solve the problem of insufficient premises, and established the Third Vocational Training Corps to supervise the new group of detainees on Green Island.

Afterwards, the military's Moral Incentive Training Class was moved to the Oasis Villa for a short period, and the site was soon handed over to the Ministry of Justice to be managed by the Green Island Prison. The Ministry of Justice began renovating the Oasis Villa in 1997 with the intent of using it as a branch of the Green Island Prison.

In 1998, Legislator Shih Ming-teh led 15 other legislators in lobbying for the preservation the Oasis Villa and the establishment of a historical museum; renovations were stopped when the Legislative Yuan made a formal proposal to retain the villa in its original form and establish a prison museum.

The Green Island "Human Rights Monument" was completed on December 10, 1999 and President Lee Teng-hui apologized on behalf of the government to former political victims when attending the monument's

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*Maneuver of Political Prisoners*

inaugural ceremony. On November 24, 2000, the Executive Yuan instructed the Ministry of Transportation and Communications to take charge of planning the establishment of either a historical or a memorial museum at the Oasis Villa.

The Tourism Bureau under the transportation ministry carried out the planning of the “Green Island Human Rights Memorial Park” between 2001 and 2002 by establishing two core objectives. The first objective was to conduct the overall planning of the human rights memorial park, including exploring the themes and meaning of a human rights memorial park, surveying the basic data of existing buildings and completing the initial planning and design of its preservation for reuse, and completing the initial planning and design of memorial park’s space allocation, landscape, natural ecology, and all necessary new construction work.

The second core objective was the planning of the Oasis Villa historical or memorial museum, which was to

include the data collection on domestic and foreign cases of historical and memorial museums, the collection and compilation of documents and information related to the Oasis Villa’s history, as well as human rights cases at home and abroad, and the museum’s management plan.

Soon afterwards, the Oasis Villa was handed over to the East Coast National Scenic Area Administration of the Tourism Bureau, which became responsible for implementing its restoration for the establishment of a prison museum. The villa was officially registered as a historic building by the Taitung County Government in 2005.

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