

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## NEWS FLASH

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### Hangings in Japan significant step backwards

Japan's decision to hang three prisoners after nearly two years without executions is a retrograde step, Amnesty International said.

Justice Minister Toshio Ogawa authorized the executions of three men, hanged in jails in Tokyo, Hiroshima and Fukuoka, explaining that this was his 'duty' as Minister. Executions in Japan are by hanging and are usually carried out in secret. Prisoners are typically given little or no warning before they are executed.

"Today's hangings are a hugely retrograde step – they bring Japan back into the minority of countries which are still executing," said Catherine Baber, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Deputy Director.

"Justifying acts which violate human rights as a 'Minister's duty' is unacceptable. Rather it is the responsibility of leaders to address crime without resorting to the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment."

Tomoyuki Furusawa, 46, was executed at Tokyo detention centre; Yasuaki Uwabe, 48, was executed at Hiroshima detention centre; and Yasutoshi Matsuda, 44, was executed in Fukuoka. Uwabe's lawyers raised concerns that Uwabe suffered from mental illness but the courts ruled he was competent to stand trial.

Two days ago, Amnesty International published its report on the state of the death penalty worldwide, noting the positive development that Japan had not executed in nearly two years.

Amnesty International called on Japan to join the more than two-thirds of countries worldwide who have abolished the death penalty in law or practice and declare a moratorium on executions as a first step toward abolition.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

#### Notes to Editors

Amnesty International's report *Death Sentences and Executions 2011* with facts and analysis on the death penalty worldwide, published on 27<sup>th</sup> March is available on: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/death-penalty-2011-alarming-levels-executions-few-countries-kill-2012-03-27>

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