

# URGENT ACTION

## HIGH RISK OF EXECUTIONS IN JAPAN

**There is a high risk of imminent executions of death row inmates in Japan, after Taki Makoto, who was appointed Minister of Justice in Japan on 4 June, stated that he supports the death penalty. Estimates suggest that there are over 130 death row inmates; all of whom are at imminent risk of execution.**

The newly appointed Minister of Justice has stated his support for maintaining the death penalty because it already exists in the judicial system. Amnesty International therefore believes there is a very high risk that more executions will soon take place.

Executions in Japan are by hanging, and are usually carried out in secret. Prisoners are typically given a few hours' notice, but some may be given no warning at all. This means that prisoners may spend every day on death row fearing they could be executed at any time. Their families are typically notified about the execution only after it has taken place.

**Please write immediately in Japanese, English or your own language:**

- Urging the Minister of Justice not to sign any executions warrants;
- Urging the Minister of Justice to introduce a moratorium on executions in Japan and to encourage more national debate on the death penalty with a view to its full abolition.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 AUGUST 2012 TO:**

Minister of Justice

Taki Makoto  
1-1-1 Kasumigaseki  
Chiyoda-ku  
Tokyo, Japan 100-8977  
Fax: +81 3 3592 7008

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**And copies to:**

Prime Minister  
Noda Yoshihiko  
1-6-1 Nagata-cho  
Chiyoda-ku  
Tokyo, Japan 100-8968  
Fax: +81 3 3581 3883  
Email: (via website)  
[https://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/forms/comment\\_ssl.html](https://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/forms/comment_ssl.html)

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

After 20 months without executions in Japan, the former Minister of Justice, OGAWA Toshio, who viewed the resumption of executions as a part of his job, authorized the hanging of three men. On 29 March 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. Yasuaki Uwabe's lawyers had raised concerns that he suffered from mental illness, but the courts ruled he was competent to stand trial.

Although all death row inmates in Japan are at risk of execution, members of the Aum Shinrikyo cult, convicted and sentenced to death for their roles in the 1995 sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system, are less likely to be executed at this time. This is because the cases of three additional members of the cult, also suspected of involvement in the sarin gas attack, namely Kikuchi Naoko, Takahashi Katsuya, and Hirata Makoto, are not yet finalized. Under Article 475 of the Criminal Procedure Code, executions should not take place until the cases of all co-defendants are finalized.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature of the crime, the characteristics of the individual on whom it is imposed and the method of execution used by the state, as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

More than two-thirds of the countries in the world have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice. In 2011, Japan did not carry out any executions; the first execution-free year in 19 years. Out of 41 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, 17 have abolished the death penalty for all crimes, 10 are abolitionist in practice and one – Fiji – uses the death penalty only for exceptional military crimes.

Several international and regional intergovernmental bodies have recommended the abolition of the death penalty for the enhancement of the right to life. While the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Japan is a State Party, allows for the imposition of the death penalty in certain circumstances, its Article 6.6 has been interpreted by the ICCPR's monitoring body, to refer "generally to abolition [of the death penalty] in terms which strongly suggest... that abolition is desirable".

In resolution 2005/59, adopted on 20 April 2005, the UN Commission on Human Rights stated that "the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and to the progressive development of human rights" and that "the abolition of the death penalty is essential for the protection of [the right to life]".

Three UN General Assembly resolutions, adopted in December 2007 (62/149), 2008 (63/168) and 2010 (65/206), have called upon States that retain the death penalty to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Name: All death row inmates in Japan

Gender m/f: Male/Female

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