

# URGENT ACTION

**NEW MINISTER SAYS EXECUTIONS SHOULD RESUME**  
**OGAWA Toshio, who was appointed Minister of Justice on 13 January 2012, has said that he intends to resume executions. Last year Japan did not carry out any executions, for the first time in 19 years. The estimated 130 death row inmates are now at greater risk of execution.**

The newly appointed Minister of Justice stated publicly on 15 January that he planned to resume executions, which he viewed as a responsibility of his job. His predecessor, HIRAKA Hideo, came under heavy pressure to carry out executions in 2011, but did not do so, saying that the application of the death penalty needed to be considered more carefully before further executions were carried out.

Although all death row inmates are at imminent risk of execution, members of the Aum Shinrikyo cult, including its leader, MATSUMOTO Chizuo (aka Shoko Asahara), who have been sentenced to death are less likely to be executed at this time. This is because a member of the cult, HIRATA Makoto, handed himself in to police on 31 December 2011, and it will take some time for his case to go through the courts. Under Article 475 of the Criminal Procedure Code, executions should not take place until all co-defendants have had their cases finalized.

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

- Urge the Minister of Justice not to sign any executions warrants, and to support the work of the study group on the death penalty which was established in the Ministry of Justice in 2010 by former Justice Minister Keiko Chiba
- Urge him to introduce a moratorium on executions in Japan and to encourage more national debate on the death penalty with a view to full abolition

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 FEBRUARY 2012 TO:**

Minister of Justice  
OGAWA Toshio  
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.**

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. This is the first update of UA 342/11. Further information:  
<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA22/004/2011/en>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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 who have exhausted their appeal options must spend their entire time on death row knowing they could be executed at any time. Their families are typically notified after the execution has taken place.

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. The last execution carried out in Japan took place on 28 July 2010 when two people were hanged.

In October 2011, the previous Justice Minister, HIRAOKA Hideo, said he would look at each death row case individually after Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura reportedly encouraged him to press ahead with executions. Amnesty International and the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) called on the Minister of Justice to refrain from carrying out executions.

Name: All 130 prisoners on death row

Gender m/f:

Further information on UA: 342/11 Index: ASA 22/ 001/2012 Issue Date: 18 January 2012