

Ref: TG ASA 22/2012.005  
ASA 22/019/2012

Sadakazu Tanigaki  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
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Japan

27 December 2012

Dear Minister

### **OPEN LETTER: ESTABLISHING A MORATORIUM ON EXECUTIONS IN JAPAN**

On the occasion of your appointment as Japan's new Minister of Justice, Amnesty International takes this opportunity to urge you to introduce a moratorium on executions and to take positive steps to initiate a national public debate on the death penalty in Japan, with a view to its abolition.

Japan is among the minority of countries which still carries out executions. Only 21 out of 198 countries carried out executions in 2011. Japan refrained from using the death penalty in 2011 but has carried out seven executions in 2012. The only other G8 country to carry out executions is the USA.

The fourth UN General Assembly (UNGA) draft resolution<sup>1</sup> calling for a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty, which was adopted in November at the Third Committee of the UNGA, received 110 votes in favour, 39 votes against and 36 abstentions, the highest support for such resolutions to date. The plenary session of the UNGA adopted the draft resolution in December. Closer to home, Mongolia ratified the Second Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in January, committing the country to ending use of the death penalty.

Your predecessors have noted the need for Japan to consider the worldwide trend toward abolition of the death penalty. In November 2012, former Minister of Justice Makoto Taki stated that "...countries in Europe have abolished death penalty ... and the UN also stated we need to stop executions wherever possible ... we need to take into account these international trends". Japan's continued use of the death penalty puts it at odds with this unmistakable international trend.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the

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<sup>1</sup> Draft resolution A/C.3/67/L.44/Rev.1.

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method used by the state to carry out the execution. Our organization calls on you and the Ministry of Justice in Japan to immediately introduce a moratorium on executions and initiate a national public debate aimed at promoting full abolition of the death penalty in Japan.

Yours sincerely

Salil Shetty  
Secretary General

Hideki Wakabayashi  
Secretary General – Amnesty International Japan