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## **Two executed in Japan amid fears of new wave of hangings**

Fears of a new wave of executions in Japan increased after two death row inmates were hanged on Thursday, one the first woman to be executed in over 15 years.

Sachiko Eto, 65 and Yukinori Matsuda, 39, were hanged on Thursday morning in Sendai and Fukuoka Detention Centres respectively. Eto is the first woman to be executed in Japan since 1997.

“The executions of Matsuda and Eto are acts of premeditated, cold-blooded killing by the Japanese state,” said Roseann Rife, Amnesty International’s East Asia Director.

Protests against the use of the death penalty are due to take place on Thursday evening outside the Ministry of Justice in Tokyo.

The hangings bring the total number of executions in the country this year to seven people. Japan did not carry out any executions in 2011.

One hundred and thirty one people remain on death row in Japan. Amnesty International considers all individuals on death row in Japan to be at imminent risk of execution.

Makoto Taki, Japan’s Justice Minister, supports the use of the death penalty and has now authorized four executions in the four months he has been in office. The last executions took place on 3 August 2012 when two men were hanged.

This is despite the ruling Democratic Party of Japan’s election promise to hold a national debate on the use of the death penalty.

“The latest executions make a mockery of the Democratic Party of Japan’s pledge to hold a national debate on abolishing the death penalty. That debate needs to happen and the government should impose an immediate moratorium on executions,” said Roseann Rife.

Japan is among a minority of countries that continue to use the death penalty. More than two thirds of countries in the world have abolished its use in law or practice.

Matsuda was given the death sentence by the Kumamoto District Court in September 2006 for the murder of two people. No mandatory appeal of his case took place raising questions as to whether the necessary legal process recommended by international law was followed.

Eto was sentenced to death in 2002 for murder and involuntary manslaughter.

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. Their families are typically notified about the execution only after it 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 offender or the method used by the state to carry out the execution.

The death penalty violates the right to life and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.