

UA 177/96

Death Penalty - fear of further executions 12 July 1996

JAPANISHIDA Mikio
SUGIMOTO Yoshiaki
YOKOYAMA Kazumi

It was reported yesterday, 11 July, that three prisoners have been executed in secret in Japan. Ishida Mikio was executed in Tokyo and the two others in the southern city of Fukuoka. In line with its usual policy, the Japanese Government has not confirmed the executions. Amnesty International fears that further executions may take place at any time and it urges the Japanese Government to stop executions immediately.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ishida Mikio, aged 48, was sentenced to death in 1982 for robbery and murder committed in 1981. His sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1988. He has been awaiting execution since then in Tokyo detention centre. He had no access to a lawyer in the early stages of his detention.

Yoshiaki Sugimoto, aged 49, and Yokoyama Kazumi, aged 43, were both accused of killing a hospital manager in 1979. They were sentenced to death in 1982 and the sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1988. They both denied the accusation. Access to a lawyer was strictly limited for both of them. There were reports that a confidential meeting between Sugimoto and his lawyer had been illegally monitored by police.

Executions in Japan are carried out on the orders of the Minister of Justice. These are the first executions ordered by the current Minister, Ms Nagao Ritsuko, since her appointment in January 1996. The last three executions had been ordered by the previous minister, Miyazawa Hiroshi, in December 1995.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, as a violation of the right to life and as the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. The organization is particularly concerned about the secrecy surrounding executions, and about conditions of detention for prisoners on death row in Japanese prisons, all of which may amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Japanese or your own language:

- condemning the executions of Ishida Mikio, Yoshiaki Sugimoto, and Yokoyama Kazumi;
- stating unconditional opposition to the death penalty and urging the commutation of all death sentences and the abolition of the death penalty;
- urging the Japanese authorities to, at the very least, end the secrecy surrounding executions, by giving detainees, their relatives and lawyers advance notice of impending executions.

APPEALS TO:

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Telegrams: Minister Nagao, Tokyo, Japan
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Dear Minister

Mr Hashimoto Ryutaro, Prime Minister

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- OK to use)**

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and to diplomatic representatives of Japan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 August 1996.