

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 22/002/2009

27 February 2009

UA 54/09

Fear of Imminent Execution

JAPAN

YAMAJI Yukio (m), born 1983
SHINOZAWA Kazuo (m), born 1952
ZODA Hiroshi (m), born 1976
MAEUE Hiroshi (m), born 1971
OGATA Hideki (m), born 1980

The five men named above, who were convicted of murder between 2002 and 2007, are now believed to be at imminent risk of execution. Justice minister Mori Eisuke, appointed in September 2008, wants to accelerate the country's death penalty system, and is seeking to avoid public objections by singling out for execution those who, like these five, have recently abandoned their appeals or were convicted of crimes that have led to 'public revulsion'.

Three of the five have abandoned their appeals; neither Shinozawa Kazuo nor Zoda Hiroshi has lodged an appeal.

Japan executed 15 people in 2008, the highest annual total in 33 years, and hanged four more on 29 January of this year. Executions are being carried out approximately every two to three months.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Executions 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, as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. There are currently approximately 100 people on death row in Japan. The rate of executions in Japan has been increasing since the 2007 appointment of Justice Minister Hatoyama Kunio, who publicly supported increased executions. Subsequent Ministers of Justice, including Mori Eisuke, have continued this trend.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- calling on the Minister of Justice not to order the executions of Yamaji Yukio, Shinozawa Kazuo, Zoda Hiroshi, Maeue Hiroshi or Ogata Hideki;
- calling on him to end secrecy surrounding the use of the death penalty in Japan, by giving advance notice of executions to death row prisoners and their families;
- calling on him to order an immediate moratorium on the death penalty, with a view to eventual abolition, and to commute the sentences of all those now on death row.

APPEALS TO:

MORI Eisuke
Minister of Justice
1-1-1 Kasumigaseki
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-8977
Japan

Fax: +81 3 5511 7200
E-mail: webmaster@moj.go.jp
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

ASO Taro
Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
2-3-1 Nagato-cho
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-0014
Japan

Fax: +81 3 3581 3883
Email: (via website) <http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/forms/comment.html>
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Newspapers

Asahi Shimbun
5-3-2 Tsukiji
Chuo-ku
Tokyo 104-8011
Japan

Fax: +81 3 3545 0285

Japan Times
5-4 Shibaura 4-chome
Minato-ku
Tokyo 108-0023
Japan

Email: opinion@japantimes.co.jp

Yomiuri Shimbun
1-7-1 Ohtemachi
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-0004
Japan

Fax: +81 3 3245 1277

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 10 April 2009.