

Executions Resume in Japan – ADPAN Appeals for an End to the Death Penalty

On 29 March after nearly two years with no executions, Minister of Justice Toshio Ogawa gave the go ahead to execute three prisoners. The Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) condemns these executions and is concerned that further executions may follow.

Tomoyuki Furusawa, 46, was executed at Tokyo detention centre; Yasuaki Uwabe, 48, was executed at Hiroshima detention centre; and Yasutoshi Matsuda, 44, was executed in Fukuoka.

Former Minister of Justice Keiko Chiba had set up a study group in 2010 to look at the application of the death penalty and invited civil society groups to be part of this discussion but the study group was shut down by the Ministry of Justice in March this year.

In February, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on Minister of Justice Ogawa not to approve any executions and to support the work of the study group. Today the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) firmly condemned Japan's execution of Yasuaki Uwabe, Tomoyuki Furusawa and Yasutoshi Matsuda.

Executions in Japan are by hanging and are typically carried out in secret. Death row inmates are only notified on the morning of their execution and their families are informed only after the execution has taken place.

Death row prisoners live in constant fear of execution. Enduring these conditions for years or even decades has led to depression and mental illness among many death row inmates.

“Public opinion is not to be ignored but the task to inform and lead the general public is key to appreciating and understanding the case for abolition – this is reflected in many studies looking at the global trend,” said Louise Vischer, ADPAN Coordinator.

Positive signs questioning the legitimacy of the death penalty were evident throughout the Asia – Pacific region in 2011. In Mongolia, the President took a decision to introduce a moratorium on executions and this month at the United Nations, the government deposited its accession to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

More than two thirds of the countries in the world have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice. Out of 41 countries in the Asia-Pacific, only 13 retain the death penalty, other countries have either abolished the death penalty for all crimes or have abolished the death penalty in practice.

The Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) is calling for an end to executions in Japan.

ADPAN is an independent cross-regional network that campaigns for an end to the death penalty across the Asia-Pacific region. ADPAN members include lawyers, NGOs, civil society groups, human rights defenders and activists from 24 countries from across the Asia Pacific region.

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