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PUBLIC STATEMENT
Amnesty International welcomes Japan's accession to
the Convention against Torture

Amnesty International welcomes Japan's accession to the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), which took effect on 29 July.

This constitutes a step forward for human rights in Japan, but one which will only have an impact if the government undertakes urgent and concrete measures to ensure that all of Japan's laws and practices are brought into line with the Convention.

In particular, the government should ensure that reports of widespread ill-treatment in Japanese prisons and detention centres are investigated promptly and impartially. Japan should also improve its procedures for dealing with refugees in order to prevent asylum seekers from being returned to countries where they face torture.

In order to strengthen safeguards against torture and ill-treatment in Japan, Amnesty International also urges the government to ensure that human rights education is included in all training programs for law enforcement officials and that adequate resources are allocated for implementing the CAT.

The government should also ensure that human rights organizations in Japan are fully involved in discussions surrounding the implementation of the Convention and that the rights enshrined in the Convention are widely publicised.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called for an end to ill-treatment in Japanese prisons, police custody and immigration detention centres. In its June 1998 report, *Japan: Abusive punishments in Japanese prisons*, the organisation documented cases of prison guards inflicting severe physical and mental punishments on prisoners for breaking notoriously complex and detailed prison rules. Foreign nationals have also been subjected to harsh discipline and ill-treatment in immigration detention centres, in violation of international standards.

Amnesty International continues to call on the Japanese government to fully implement the recommendations made in October 1998 by the UN Human Rights Committee, which monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Committee made several recommendations relating to torture and ill-treatment and expressed serious concern about conditions under which prisoners are held on death row, calling for conditions of detention to be "made humane". It also called on the government to work towards abolishing the death penalty and, in the meantime, to limit its application to the most serious crimes. To Amnesty International's knowledge, none of the Committee's key recommendations have yet been implemented.

The Japanese government has made a declaration under Article 21 of the CAT which will allow the Committee against Torture to consider communications from other states if they believe that Japan is failing to fulfil its obligations under the Convention.

However, Amnesty International is concerned that the Japanese government has failed to make a declaration under Article 22 of the Convention. This means that private individuals who claim to have been subjected to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment will not have the right to bring their cases before the UN Committee against Torture.

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