

EXTERNAL

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Three executions/Fear of Further Executions

21 December 1995

JAPANKIMURA Shuji (m), aged 44

HIRATA Naoto (m) aged 63

SHINOHARA Tokujiro (m), aged 68

Three prisoners were executed in Japan on 21 December 1995, after spending over a decade under sentence of death. The executions were carried out at detention centres in Nagoya, Fukuoka and Tokyo. In line with its usual policy, the Japanese Government has refused to confirm these latest executions which were carried out in secret. Amnesty International fears that further executions may take place at any time.

The three men had been convicted of murder and had spent many years under sentence of death. Kimura Shuji had spent 13 years awaiting execution, Hirata Naoto 14 years and Shinohara Tokujiro 11 years.

The families of the three men have received no official notification of their execution, in line with usual policy. However, the family of Kimura Shiji went to visit him on the day of his execution and discovered what had happened to him. They were then permitted to see his body.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The last executions in Japan were in May 1995 when three prisoners, including a 70-year-old man were executed. There were two executions in 1994 and seven in 1993.

Before these latest executions 58 prisoners were awaiting execution after their appeals had been exhausted. Some have been under sentence of death for several decades. There appears to be no reason why the authorities chose to execute the three above men at this particular time. Evidence suggests, however, that the Japanese Government is determined to ensure that executions continue on a regular basis in order to counter the strength of the growing movement in Japan for abolition of the death penalty.

Executions in Japan are carried out on the orders of the Minister of Justice. The current Minister, Miyazawa Hiroshi, was appointed in October and may have ordered these executions to show his own support for the death penalty. Amnesty International's deputy secretary general has written to the Minister of Justice to express concern about the executions.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment. It is also concerned about the secrecy surrounding executions in Japan and has expressed concern that some prisoners under sentence of death are held in conditions which amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

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

-expressing concern about the executions of Kimura Shuji, Hirata Naoto and Shinohara Tokujiro on 21 December;

-stating Amnesty International's opposition to the death penalty in all cases, as the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment;

- urging the government to commute all death sentences and to abolish the death penalty;

- expressing concern about the secrecy surrounding the death penalty in Japan and urging the government to give official confirmation of these latest executions.

APPEALS TO:

Mr Miyazawa Hiroshi, Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
1-1-1 Kasumigaseki
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100, Japan
Telegrams: Minister Miyazawa, Tokyo 100, Japan
Fax: +81 3 3592 7011
Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Murayama Tomiichi, Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
1-6 Nagata-cho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100, Japan
Telegrams: Prime Minister Tomiichi, Tokyo 100, Japan
Fax: +81 3 3592 6446
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

COPIES TO:

Asahi Daily
5-3-2 Tsukiji 5-chome
Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-11, Japan
Fax: +81 3 3545 0285

Yomiuri Daily
1-7-1 Ohtemachi, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-55, Japan
Fax: +81 3 3246 0455

Japan Times
4-5-4 Shibaura
Minato-ku
Tokyo 108
Japan
Fax: +81 3 3453 5456

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 1 February 1996.