

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Executions / Fear of further executions

29 November 1993

JAPAN

DEGUCHI Hideo, aged 70

SAKAGUCHI Toru, aged 57

KOJIMA Tadao, aged about 56

Unidentified person

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Amnesty International is gravely concerned that four people, including a 70-year-old man, were executed at Tokyo, Osaka and Sapporo Detention centres on 26 November. These bring the total of executions so far this year to seven, which is the highest number of executions in any one year since 1976. The executions came just three weeks after the UN Human Rights Committee recommended that Japan take steps to abolish the death penalty.

Amnesty International fears that further executions may be imminent. There are 55 prisoners under sentence of death in Japan whose appeals have been exhausted.

Deguchi Hideo and Sakaguchi Toru were executed on 26 November at Osaka Detention Centre. They had exhausted their appeals in 1984 and had faced execution since then. Kojima Tadao was reportedly executed on the same day at Sapporo Detention Centre. He had exhausted his appeals in 1981. A fourth, as yet unidentified man, is believed to have been executed at Tokyo Detention Centre.

In Japan executions are carried out in secret and are not announced to families and lawyers until after the event. The Ministry of Justice always refuses to confirm that executions have taken place. The family of Sakaguchi Toru only found out that he had been executed when they received a telephone call from Osaka Detention Centre the day after his execution.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Executions were resumed in Japan in March 1993 when three prisoners were executed after a de facto moratorium of three years and four months (see UA 90/93, ASA 22/05/93, 29 March). The huge increase in executions since then goes against the worldwide trend towards abolition of the death penalty and appears to contradict the advice of the UN Human Rights Committee, made after it had examined Japan's third period report under the ICCPR.

There is an active and growing abolitionist movement in Japan. Those in favour of abolition include more than 230 members of the Diet (Japanese Parliament), lawyers, academics, a former minister of Justice and a former Supreme Court judge. Concern about continued use of the death penalty has been voiced recently by members of the judiciary.

These are the first executions to have been carried out since the new government

of Prime Minister Hosokawa took office in August of this year. Nine members of the new cabinet are reported to be in favour of abolition.

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

- expressing concern about the execution of four prisoners in Japan on 26 November;
- expressing concern that seven people have been executed this year, the highest number since 1976;
- expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate form of torture and inhuman punishment.
- urging the Japanese Government to suspend all executions and to take steps towards the abolition of the death penalty in law.

**APPEALS TO**

1) Mr Akira MIKAZUKI  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
1-1 Kasumigaseki  
Chiyoda-ku  
Tokyo 100, Japan

**Telegrams: Minister Mikazuki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100, Japan**

**Faxes: +81 3 3592 7011**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

2) Mr Morihiro HOSOKAWA  
Prime Minister  
Office of the Prime Minister's Official Residence  
2-3-1 Nagata-cho  
Chiyoda-ku  
Tokyo 100, Japan

**Telegrams: Minister Hosokawa, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100, Japan**

**Faxes: +81 3 3592 1223**

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

1) Japan Times  
4-5-4 Shibaura  
Minato-ku  
Tokyo 108

**Faxes: +81 3 3453 5456**

2) Asahi Shimbun  
3-2 Tsukiji 5-chome  
Chuo-ku  
Tokyo 104-11, Japan

**Faxes: +81 3 545 0358**

3) Japanese media correspondents in your country.

and to diplomatic representatives of Japan accredited to your country

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**