
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 159/93

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - JAPAN

PLEASE NOTE: EFAI has a new address from 22 November. Following are their new details: 17, rue du Pont-aux-Choux, 75003 PARIS. Tel: +331 44 59 29 89, Fax: + 331 44 59 29 80, Mac 44 59 29 86, PC 44 59 29 87. Katie Rickards, in the Secretary General's Office at the IS has the full list of individuals' direct numbers, so please contact her if you need it.

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Pakistan - 7 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137

****India - 15 December** - PLEASE NOTE ** The document is on "disappearances" in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, and is our first document specifically on Jammu and Kashmir for some time. Obviously, this report is an important part of the campaign on political killings and campaigns, and one of the 23 "Lives" is featured in the report, and it is important that we get good worldwide publicity on the news release. Please bear in mind that this document is embargoed for 15 December and do what you can to ensure that your campaign work does not put this embargo at risk. Thank you.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

South Africa - 8 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 151

Human Rights Day Speech - 9 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 138

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES 1994

Tunisia - 12 January

USA death penalty - 26 January Open letter to Bill Clinton, around anniversary of his inauguration as President. News item planned.

South Africa - 16 February ** PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE, WHICH IS STILL TO BE CONFIRMED **

Colombia - 16 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 123 + UAs AMR 23/56-57/93

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JAPAN: HIGHEST NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS IN 17 YEARS - AI CRITICIZES JAPANESE GOVERNMENT OVER FURTHER SECRET EXECUTIONS

Amnesty International has criticized the Japanese Government for secretly executing four people, including a 70-year-old man, on 26 November. This brings the total number of executions carried out by Japan in 1993 to seven, the highest number in any one year since 1976. The human rights organisation fears these new executions could herald an increase in the use of the death penalty.

The executions were carried out at three different detention centres in Japan on 26 November. Deguchi Hideo, aged 70, and Sakaguchi Toru, aged 57 were both executed at the Osaka Detention Centre. Both men had exhausted all appeals against their sentences and have been facing execution since 1984. Kojima Tadao, aged about 56, was executed at Sapporo Detention Centre; he had been facing execution since 1981. Seki Yukio, aged 48, was executed at Tokyo Detention Centre. They had both been on death row since 1979.

The execution of three men in March 1993, including Kawanaka Tetsuo, who was suffering from mental illness and whose lawyer was preparing an application for a retrial, ended almost 40 months of a *de facto* moratorium on executions. No death sentence had been carried out since November 1989, the Minister of Justice in office during that time is believed to have opposed capital punishment.

Fifty-five prisoners are currently under finalized sentence of death in Japan. Executions are carried out in secret on the decision of the Minister of Justice and neither the family or lawyer of the prisoners concerned are informed. The family of Sakaguchi Toru discovered he had been executed only when they received a telephone from the Osaka Detention Centre the day after his execution.

No law or regulation obliges the authorities to notify relatives or lawyers of an impending execution, a senior Ministry of Justice official informed Amnesty International earlier this year. Prisoners themselves may not be informed of their impending execution until just a few hours before it takes place, making it almost impossible to see relatives or lawyers beforehand. Many prisoners on death row are held in solitary confinement indefinitely and in several cases known to Amnesty International such prisoners have been denied medical and psychiatric treatment.

This large increase in executions goes against the worldwide trend towards the abolition of the death penalty and the growing abolitionist movement in Japan. Members of the Japanese judiciary have recently voiced concern about the continued use of the death penalty. In September a Supreme Court judge, Ohno Masao, when passing a death sentence, said there was room to reinterpret the constitutionality of the death penalty in the light of important changes that had unfolded over the past 45 years, including the abolition of the death penalty by a growing number of nations, as well as retrials in Japan that have found former convicts not guilty.

These latest executions appear to indicate that the Japanese Government has chosen to ignore recommendations for the introduction of measures towards the abolition of the death penalty made by the United Nations Human Rights Committee at the end of October 1993.

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