

AI Index: PRE 01/187/2008  
14 July 2008

## **Japan: Environmental activists must be treated in accordance with international law**

Amnesty International has expressed its deep concern to the prime minister of Japan about the detention of two Greenpeace activists, Junichi Sato and Toru Suzuki, who have been charged with theft and trespass.

Amnesty International said: “These two must be allowed to challenge their detention before an independent and impartial court in proceedings which meet international standards of fairness.

“It is imperative that their rights to freedom from arbitrary deprivation of their liberty are fully respected, in accordance with international human rights treaties to which Japan is a state party.

“We also ask that an independent, impartial and thorough investigation is begun into their arrests and that the findings of the investigation be made public.”

Junichi Sato and Toru Suzuki were arrested on 20 June; they were initially detained by Japanese prosecutors for 13 days on suspicion of trespass and theft. Their detention without charge or trial was extended by ten days. On 11 July, as the maximum period for their continued pre-charge detention was due to expire, they were charged with theft and trespass.

Junichi Sato and Toru Suzuki are cooperating fully with the police and prosecution. They have provided written depositions to the public prosecutor, and voluntarily and proactively submitted relevant evidence. They acted with a view to raising public awareness around the Japanese government-sponsored Southern Ocean whaling programme, rather than for illegitimate personal gain, while working for a well-respected international organization.

“We are also concerned that their detention, the charges against them, and the police raids on Greenpeace’s office and the homes of five of its staff are aimed at intimidating both activists and non-governmental organizations.

“We ask the Japanese prime minister to make a clear statement assuring human rights defenders, including environmental activists such as Junichi Sato and Toru Suzuki and organizations such as Greenpeace, that their right to engage in peaceful activities without intimidation or harassment will be respected by the state, including the justice system.”