

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 203/07 (ASA 22/010/2007, 8 August 2007) Death penalty/imminent execution

JAPAN **TAKEZAWA Hifumi (m), born in 1937**
 SEGA WA Kouzou (m), born in 1947
 IWAMOTO Yoshio (m), born in 1945

The three men named above were hanged on the morning of 23 August.

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson announced the executions, but declined to name the men, demonstrating the extreme secrecy surrounding the implementation of the death penalty in Japan. Families and lawyers are usually not informed until after the executions and prisoners are often hanged at very short notice.

Takezawa Hifumi had been diagnosed as suffering from mental illness: according to reports of his trial at the time, doctors from both the prosecution and defence found that he was mentally ill. At his appeal, his lawyer argued that Takezawa had apparently suffered a significant personality change as a result of a stroke, which made him paranoid and aggressive, but the judge rejected the appeal. It is not known whether Takezawa had received any medical treatment for his mental illness during his nine years on death row.

Japan has a record of executing prisoners with mental disabilities. The harsh condition of death row – isolation cell, lack of human interaction, and mostly the stress from being under perpetual threat of execution, means that many prisoners develop mental illness while they are on death row.

Ten people have now been executed on the orders of Justice Minister Nagase in his 10 months in office. These three executions came just days before the scheduled cabinet reshuffle reportedly scheduled for 27 August. Similar to previous executions, the hangings took place while the Japanese Diet was in recess.

104 people remain on death row in Japan.

Japan is going against the world trend towards abolition of the death penalty. In October 2007 a resolution calling for a global moratorium on executions is to be introduced to the UN General Assembly 62nd session.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.*****