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Japan: Amnesty International condemns executions

Amnesty International strongly condemns and regrets the hanging of three men (FUKAWA Hiroki, FUJIMA Seiha, and IKEMOTO Noboru), in Japan today (7 December). These executions have taken place despite the UN General Assembly's adoption of a resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium on executions on 15 November.

This action runs counter to the universal protection of human rights and comes at a time when there is a clear international trend away from the use of the death penalty. On 15 November, the Third Committee of 62nd session of UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the resolution on global moratorium on executions with 99 countries voting in favour of the resolution. The resolution will now come before the plenary of the UNGA for final adoption in mid-December.

Executions in Japan are typically held in secret. Prisoners are only informed hours before their executions and carried out without prior notice to the prisoners or their family.

These executions are the first under the present Minister of Justice HATOYAMA Kunio, who announced publicly in September that he was considering scrapping the rule under the Criminal Procedure Code requiring the signature of the Minister of Justice for executions. As of 7 December 2007, there are at least 107 prisoners on death row; 23 cases carrying the death sentence were confirmed by the courts in 2007, which marks the highest number since 1962.

Very few countries currently carry out executions: in 2006, only 25 countries carried out executions. Among major industrialized countries, Japan now is conspicuously the only country which has a fully operational death penalty system: the US Supreme Court has blocked all planned executions in the country until it makes a ruling on conducting executions by lethal injections.

Amnesty International calls on Japanese government to cease executions and adopt an immediate moratorium on executions in accordance with the UN resolution.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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Amnesty International, International Secretariat, 1 Easton Street, WC1X 0DW, London, United Kingdom