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Japan: Amnesty International condemns latest round of executions

Amnesty International strongly condemns the hanging of three men (Miyazaki Tsutomu, 45, Mutsuda Shinji, 45, and Yamazaki Yoshio, 73) in Japan today, 17 June. This brings to 13 the number of executions carried out since Minister of Justice Hatoyama Kunio took office in August 2007.

Since December 2007 executions in Japan have been carried out every two months.

“Despite a global trend toward abolition of the death penalty, Japan has gone against the tide by increasing the rate of executions. It has so far executed 10 people this year, which is more than the total number of executions carried out in 2007,” said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International’s Asia Pacific Program Director.

When the UN Human Rights Council reviewed the human rights situation in Japan in May 2008, they expressed particular concern about the death penalty. A number of states urged Japan to adopt a moratorium on executions in accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution (62/149) which calls for on a global moratorium on the use of the death penalty

Prison authorities carry out executions by hanging in Japan, usually in secret. Officials notify death row inmates just hours before the execution, and inform family members only after the execution has taken place. Once the appeals process is complete, a death row prisoner in Japan may wait for years or even decades before execution. This practice means that these prisoners live in constant fear of execution.

In 2007 only 24 countries are known to have carried out executions. Japan executed nine people in 2007. Among G8 members, Japan and the USA are the only countries to carry out executions.

Amnesty International calls on Japan to urgently adopt a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolishing the death penalty and to end secrecy surrounding the death penalty.

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