



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

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Founding Members

Rodolfo Mattarollo,
(1939-2014)

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Madrid, 9 July 2018

ICDP 07/2018

**Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty:
Seven executions carried out by authorities in Japan**

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) strongly condemns the executions of seven persons, all men, carried out by Japanese authorities on Friday, 6 July 2018. They were all members of the Aum Supreme Truth Cult (Aum) and are the first of the 13 people convicted and sentenced to death for their roles for several crimes. These crimes include the deadly March 1995 sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway which killed 13 people and left thousands more suffering the effects of the nerve gas. The executions were carried out by hanging at detention centres across Japan.

The seven men who were executed were: Chizuo Matsumoto, 63, the founder of Aum, was convicted for the 1989 murder of an anti-Aum lawyer and his family and six other murder cases; a sarin attack in Matsumoto, Japan in 1994 and the Tokyo subway attack the following year. During his eight years on trial, Asahara reportedly rarely spoke. He was blind and reports suggest that he suffered from incarceration syndrome. Tomomasa Nakagawa, 55, a doctor who helped Aum produce sarin and VX nerve agents, was convicted in 11 crimes in which more than 20 people were killed. Masami Tsuchiya, 53, a chemist who headed Aum's sarin development and production and was convicted for producing sarin, VX and other chemical weapons. Tomomitsu Niimi, 54, was reportedly the leader of an Aum unit responsible for capturing members who tried to escape. He was sentenced to death for that attack and other crimes. Moreover, reports suggest that he helped one of the cult members flee after releasing gas in the subway. Yoshihiro Inoue, 48, reportedly headed Aum's intelligence unit and was the coordinator of the subway attacks. His testimony that Matsumoto ordered the subway gas attack was critical. Reports suggest that he had filed for retrial in March 2018. Seiichi Endo, 58, a graduate from a veterinary school who had also studied virus and genetic engineering, helped in the production of sarin and was convicted in two sarin attacks and an attempted VX attack. Kiyohide Hayakawa, 68, was the only one executed on charges involving the subway attack; he was convicted in the 1989 murders of the anti-Aum lawyer and his family.

According to news reports reaching ICDP, six out of the seven of the persons who were executed were seeking retrial. Of further concern, the three persons, whose executions were carried out in 2017, were seeking retrial as well. Moreover, there are serious concerns that executions are imminent for the six remaining persons of Aum who are under sentence of death.

Executions in Japan are shrouded in secrecy with prisoners notified of their execution only a few hours before the capital punishment takes place. This lack of transparency presents difficulties for defence lawyers in pursuing timely appeals and also denies the public information necessary for Japanese society to have an informed debate about the use of capital punishment.



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Relatives and lawyers are usually informed only after it has taken place. As of 31 December 2017, there were reportedly 123 persons facing the death penalty.

“The crimes for which the seven men, who were executed by Japanese authorities on 6 July, were charged caused great pain and suffering to thousands, and ICDP believes that those found guilty deserve severe punishment, but the death penalty is not the answer. In ICDP’s experience, the capital punishment does not lessen the pain of the victims and does not deter crime. Moreover, it goes against Japan’s tradition of the respect and protection of human dignity, rule of law and tolerance. The death penalty is a cruel and inhuman punishment that amounts to a denial of human dignity and integrity,” said ICDP President Judge Navi Pillay.

ICDP calls on the Japanese government to stop carrying out any further executions, to observe a moratorium while carrying out steps to move away from the death penalty. It is time Japan were to take its rightful place among the 107 countries around the world that have already abolished this anachronistic punishment and 142 States who have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. These States have recognized that modern justice systems can protect the public from crime without the irrevocable and cruel nature of the death penalty and the constant risk of executing an innocent person. These nations have recognized that state killing is wrong and fails to deter crime more effectively than other punishments.

Judge Navi Pillay
President
International Commission
against Death Penalty

Background

Composed of 21 Commissioners, who are persons of high international standing and who represent all regions of the world, ICDP acts with total independence and neutrality and works under its President Judge Navi Pillay.

ICDP opposes the death penalty under any circumstances. The death penalty violates the right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose 70th anniversary is being observed this year. The Commission promotes the abolition of capital punishment in law in those States that observe *a de facto* moratorium on the use of the death penalty and promotes moratoriums on executions in States that rarely use the death penalty.

ICDP works with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, governments and nongovernmental organizations to further the abolition of capital punishments worldwide.

The work of ICDP is supported by a diverse group of 19 Member-States and 3 Observer States from all parts of the world that are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Its Secretariat is based in Madrid.