



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

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Louise Arbour

Robert Badinter

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Madrid, 31 March 2016

Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Two executions carried out by Japan authorities

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) strongly condemns the executions by Japanese authorities on 25 March 2016 of two persons: 75 year old man Yasutoshi Kamata and 56 year old woman Junko Yoshida. Executions in Japan are carried out by hanging.

Mr. Kamata, who was reportedly found guilty of murdering five people between 1985 and 1994 in Osaka, was sentenced to death in 1999. His death sentence was finalized in 2005. Yasutoshi Kamata was executed at the Osaka Detention Center.

Ms. Yoshida was reportedly found guilty for the murder of two people in 1998 and 1999. She was sentenced to death in 2004 by the Fukuoka District Court, and her death sentence was finalized by the Supreme Court in 2010. Junko Yoshida, whose execution was carried out at the Fukuoka Detention Center, is the fifth woman to be executed in Japan since 1950.

With these two executions, the first to be carried out in 2016, the number of executions carried out by the current Liberal Democratic Party government, under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has gone up to 16 since they assumed power in December 2012. Four executions have been carried out under Minister of Justice Mitsuhide Iwaki who assumed office in October 2015.

These executions were carried out weeks before Japan will host the G7 Leaders Summit in May. Japan is one of two G7 nations along with the USA that retain the death penalty. 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. Relatives and lawyers are usually informed only after it has taken place. According to Japan's Ministry of Justice, there are 124 persons facing the death penalty.

"I urge the Government of Japan to stop carrying out any further executions, to commute all death sentences to terms of imprisonment and not to pass sentences of death. The death penalty is a cruel and inhuman punishment that amounts to a denial of human dignity



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and integrity. ICDP believes that the death penalty violates the right to life as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment," said ICDP President Federico Mayor.

ICDP calls on the Government of Japan to join the 160 countries who, according to the United Nations, 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.

Federico Mayor
President of the International Commission
against the Death Penalty

Background

The International Commission against the Death Penalty is composed of 17 persons of high international standing from all regions of the world who act with total independence and neutrality and work under its President Mr. Federico Mayor. ICDP opposes the death penalty under any circumstances believing that it violates the right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 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 carry out the death penalty. The Commission works with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, governments and nongovernmental organizations to further the abolition of capital punishment worldwide. The work of the ICDP is supported by a diverse group of 18 States from all regions of the world that are committed to abolition of the death penalty. Its secretariat is based in Madrid.