



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

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Federico Mayor

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Louise Arbour

Robert Badinter

Mohammed Bedjaoui

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Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Japan carries out first execution in 2014

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) strongly condemns the execution of Masanori Kawasaki, 68, on 26 June 2014 at Osaka Detention Center.

Mr. Kawasaki was found guilty and sentenced to death for the murder of his sister-in-law and her two young grandchildren in November 2007. His 2008 sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court in July 2012 and his execution was carried out early Thursday morning. Executions in Japan are carried out by hanging.

This execution, the first in 2014, follows eight executions carried out in 2013. Masanori Kawasaki's execution was also the first since the order of the retrial and immediate release of 78 year old Hakamada Iwao on 27 March 2014 by the Shizuoka district court following an unusually strongly worded judgment that pointed out the possibility that the evidence used against him in his initial trial in 1968 was fabricated and which raises serious flaws in the death penalty system in Japan. Mr Iwao, who was sentenced to death in September 1968, was, until his release, the world's longest-serving prisoner facing the death penalty.

Japan's use of the death penalty is shrouded in secrecy. Death row prisoners in Japan have very little contact with the outside world and are only notified of their execution 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. According to report reaching ICDP, there are at least 128 persons facing the death penalty.

Masanori Kawasaki was believed to have had limited mental capacities and impaired intellectual abilities. A number of international human rights bodies and resolutions passed by the United Nations have recommended that mentally disabled individuals should not be subjected to the death penalty. "ICDP and I express our deep concern at the continued executions in Japan. Japan is one of only two countries in the G8 that executes. ICDP calls on the authorities in Japan to stop carrying out any further executions, to commute all death sentences to terms of imprisonment and declare an official moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition of capital punishment in line with United Nations General Assembly Resolutions adopted in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2012. We also urge the Japanese authorities not to pass sentences of death," said ICDP President Federico Mayor.



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ICDP further calls on the Government of Japan to join some 160 countries from all regions of the world that have, according to the United Nations, abolished the death penalty or do not execute – having 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

ICDP was founded in Madrid in October 2010. The Commission is composed of 15 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 rarely use the death penalty. In states that continue to carry out executions, ICDP urges strict adherence to international standards. 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 Geneva.