



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

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Navanethem (Navi) Pillay

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

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) strongly condemns the executions of six persons, all men, carried out by Japanese authorities on Thursday, 26 July 2018. The executions were carried out by hanging at detention centres across Japan. Reports suggest that the executions of Kazuaki Okazaki, 57, (who adopted the name of Kazuaki Miyamae), and Masato Yokoyama, 54, were carried out at Nagoya Detention House, while the execution of Yasuo Hayashi, 60, (who changed his name to Yasuo Koike), was carried out at Sendai Detention House. The executions of Satoru Hashimoto, 51, Toru Toyoda, 50, and Kenichi Hirose, 54, were carried out at Tokyo Detention House. They were all members of the Aum Supreme Truth Cult (Aum).

These executions follow less than three weeks after that of seven men who were executed on Friday, 6 July 2018, including the founder-leader of Aum Chizuo Matsumoto, also known as Shoko Asahara. All 13 persons executed were convicted and sentenced to death for their roles in several crimes including 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 earlier sarin attack in the central Japan city of Matsumoto in Nagano Prefecture.

According to news reports reaching ICDP, at least six out of the thirteen 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.

Executions in Japan are shrouded in secrecy with prisoners notified of their execution only a few hours before the capital punishment takes place. Relatives and lawyers are usually informed only after it has taken 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. As of 31 December 2017, there were reportedly 123 persons facing the death penalty.

“The six men, who were executed by Japanese authorities on 26 July, were charged for crimes that caused great pain and suffering to thousands. ICDP Commissioners believe that those found guilty of these heinous crimes should receive severe punishment but clearly the capital punishment is not that punishment. In ICDP’s experience, the capital punishment does not lessen the pain of the victims and does not deter crime. Moreover, these mass executions do not reflect 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.



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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.

ICDP had issued a statement on 9 July 2018 expressing our serious concerns on the carrying out of the seven executions on 6 July. Please see the following link: <http://www.icomdp.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICDP-PressStatement-Seven-Executions-carried-out-by-authorities-in-Japan.pdf>.

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.