



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

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Geneva, 12 September 2013

Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Execution in Japan

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) condemns today's execution in Japan.

Justice Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki announced that Tokuhisa Kumagai, aged 73, was hanged at Tokyo Detention Center on 12 September 2013.

Tokuhisa Kumagai was initially sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder and robbery of a restaurant owner in May 2004. On appeal against this decision in May 2005 by the prosecutors, the Tokyo High Court overturned the lower court's decision and sentenced him to death in April 2007. The Supreme Court confirmed his death sentence in March 2011.

This execution brings the number of persons executed this year in Japan to six and, according to the Ministry of Justice, there are now 132 prisoners on death row.

Japan's use of the death penalty is shrouded in secrecy. The UN, international governmental and civil society organisations have consistently expressed concerns about Japan's use of the death penalty including the secrecy surrounding executions, the absence of mandatory appeal and the non use of pardons.

Today's execution by Japanese authorities goes against the global trend where a majority of states have stopped using the death penalty. According to the United Nations, some 150 countries from all regions and cultures in the world have abolished capital punishment or no longer execute. These nations have accepted that state killing is wrong and fails to deter crime.

ICDP again calls on the government of Japan to stop any further executions, commute all death sentences to terms of imprisonment and implement UN recommendations concerning its use of the death penalty without delay. As a first step the Government should declare an official moratorium on executions in line with the UN General Assembly Resolutions adopted in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2012. Furthermore, ICDP calls on the government of Japan to initiate an independent and informed public debate on its use on the death penalty.

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Background

ICDP was founded in Madrid in October 2010. ICDP is composed of 15 personalities 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. ICDP 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.

ICDP 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 17 states from all regions of the world that are committed to abolition of the death penalty. Its secretariat is based in Geneva.