

URGENT ACTION

TWO MEN HANGED, OTHERS IN GRAVE DANGER

Maeue Hiroshi and Yamaji Yukio were hanged on 28 July. The other three men who featured in this UA are still in danger of execution.

The two men were hanged at the same time as a third man, Chinese national Chen Detong, bringing the total number of executions this year to seven. Maeue Hiroshi (previously given as "Maegami Hiroshi") and Yamaji Yukio were executed in Osaka, while Chen Detong was executed in Tokyo.

Maeue and Yamaji had both withdrawn their appeals at the High Court.

The other three men, Shinozawa Kazuo, Zoda Hiroshi and Ogata Hideki, remain in imminent danger of execution.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Japanese, English or your own language:

- √ expressing sorrow at the Justice Minister's decision to proceed with the executions of Maeue Hiroshi and Yamaji Yukio;
- √ urging him not to execute Shinozawa Kazuo, Zoda Hiroshi and Ogata Hideki;
- √ calling on him to order an immediate moratorium on the death penalty, with a view to eventual abolition, and to commute the sentences of all those now on death row.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE DD/MONTH/YEAR TO:

Justice Minister

MORI Eisuke
Minister of Justice
1-1-1 Kasumigaseki
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-8977, Japan
Fax: +81 3 5511 7200
E-mail: webmaster@moj.go.jp
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

ASO Taro
Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
2-3-1 Nagato-cho
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-0014, Japan
Fax: +81 3 3581 3883
Email: (via website)
<http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/form/s/comment.html>
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Newspaper

Asahi Shimbun
5-3-2 Tsukiji
Chuo-ku
Tokyo 104-8011
Japan
Fax: +81 3 3545 0285

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 54/09 ASA 22/002/2009. Further information:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA22/002/2009/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Japan recently introduced a new "lay judge" system that will see serious criminal cases, including death penalty cases, **judged by a panel of three professional judges and six ordinary citizens**. These panels will determine guilt and decide on sentencing. The first trials under this new system are due to start on 3 August.

The Justice Ministry was apparently keen to carry out executions ahead of the start of the first trial under the new system.

"A longer interval (from the last executions) would make it difficult for citizens, who will serve as lay judges, to understand the necessity of capital punishment," said a senior ministry official.

A ministry official said, "A series of developments had kept executions from being conducted," apparently referring to, among other things, the release in June of a man wrongfully held for murder for more than 17 years based on faulty DNA evidence. The man has won the right to a retrial to clear his name.

Executions in Japan are by hanging and are usually carried out in secret. Prisoners are typically given a few hours notice but some may be given no warning at all. This means that prisoners who have exhausted their appeal options spend their time on death row knowing they could be executed at any time. Their families are typically notified after the execution has taken place.

Further information on UA: 54/09 Index: ASA 22/012/2009 Issue Date: 03 August 2009

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