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Japan: Secret executions of three prisoners

Three prisoners were executed in secret in Japan yesterday, Amnesty International said today condemning the executions.

"Prisoners in Japan are executed at a moment's notice, and are not even allowed to say goodbye to their families. It is an affront to the dignity of the human being. The death penalty must be abolished," Amnesty International said.

The executions were the first since December last year and the first after Mori Yoshiro became Prime Minister. They were carried out the day before the Diet, the Japanese Parliament, session comes to an end and at a time when a cabinet reshuffle is imminent.

On 6 June and on 5 September, Amnesty International had issued statements fearing that executions were to be carried out, to which the government made no response.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty as a violation of the fundamental right to life, and considers it to be the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and calls on the government to end all executions, to commute all outstanding death sentences and to take steps towards abolishing the death penalty. A de facto moratorium on executions lasted more than three years from November 1989 to March 1993 and there was no significant opposition to the moratorium in Japan

Miyawaki Takashi who was executed at Nagoya Detention centre, aged 57, sentenced in December 1989 for the murder of three people, had been under sentence of death for nearly 11 years, and under finalized sentence since March 1994.

Fujiwara Kiyotaka (also known as Katsuta Kiyotaka) who was also executed at Nagoya Detention Centre, aged 52, was sentenced in March 1986 for the murder of eight people. He was under sentence of death for 14 years and nine months, and under finalized sentence of death since January 1994.

Oishi Kunikatsu, aged 55, was executed at Fukuoka Detention Centre. He was sentenced in May 1983 for the murder of three people, had been under sentence of death for 17 years and eight months and under finalized sentence of death since April 1995.

"Amnesty International calls on Japan to end this secretive, cynical and arbitrary use of the death penalty," the organization said.

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