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****NEWS FLASH****

More secret executions in Japan -- continuing a bloody year-end ritual

Two prisoners were executed today. Kazuo Sagawa was executed at Tokyo Detention Centre and Teruo Ono was executed Fukuoka Detention Centre.

On 16 December Amnesty International issued a press release fearing that executions were about to be carried out. The executions today reveal a worrying trend of secret, arbitrary executions at a time when the Diet, the Japanese parliament, has ended its session and during the year-end festivities. Amnesty International calls on Japan to cease this cynical and arbitrary use of the death penalty.

Kazuo Sagawa, aged 48, was sentenced to death in March 1982 for the robbery and murder of two people in 1981 -- the sentence was upheld by the High Court in June 1987, and by the Supreme Court in November 1991. Kazuo Sagawa had been held under sentence of death for 17 years and nine months. It was reported that at the time of his execution Kazuo Sagawa's lawyer had filed a "request for protection" to the court.

- **Teruo Ono**, aged 62, was sentenced to death in September 1978 for rape, murder and robbery of a woman in September 1977 -- the sentence was upheld by the High Court in September 1979, and by the Supreme Court in June 1981. Teruo Ono had been under sentence of death for 21 years. His two appeals against sentence were dismissed and he filed for a retrial in October 1981.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on + 44 171 413 5566. <http://www.amnesty.org>