

Honorable Taro Aso
Prime Minister of Japan
Government of Japan

Via Embassy of Japan in France : +33 1 44 09 20 77

Paris, 29 July 2009

Dear Prime Minister,

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Center for Prisoner's Rights (CPR) are writing to you to express their deepest concern regarding the executions by hanging of three death row inmates, Messrs. Chen Detong, Yukio Yamaji and Hiroshi Maeue, carried out on July 28th 2009.

Mr. Chen Detong, originally from China, whose sentence to death was confirmed by the Supreme Court on June 27, 2006 was executed in Tokyo. Mr Yukio Yamaji was condemned on December 13, 2006 despite his lawyer's argument that he was in the state of weak-mindedness at the time of crime. On May 31, 2007, Mr Yamaji withdrew an appeal filed before the Osaka High Court. His sentence became final without review by the upper courts. Hiroshi Maeue was sentenced to death by Osaka District Court on March 28, 2007. He also withdrew an appeal to the High Court, and his sentence became final on July 5, 2007. They were both executed in Osaka.

These executions took place just after the dissolution of the Diet (National Parliament) on July 21, 2009, despite the criticism of Diet members opposing the capital punishment.

FIDH and CPR are seriously worried about the number of executions carried out in Japan, which has definitely increased in recent years, despite the momentum at the international level towards the abolition of this cruel punishment. The two resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly calling for a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty confirmed this tendency worldwide. As of December 2008, more than two thirds of the countries in the world have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. However, despite its place among modern democracies, Japan has executed last year 15 death-row inmates, the highest number since 1975, when 17 people were executed.

FIDH and CPR wish to draw your attention to the iniquity of this punishment, and the problems documented in the FIDH report published in October 2008 following an investigation mission conducted in Japan. The report entitled "The Death Penalty in Japan: The law of silence, against the current international trend" highlighted the gravity of the situation. UN experts also noted that « *the number of executions has steadily increased in recent years. It is also concerned that death row inmates are kept in solitary confinement, often for protracted periods, and are executed without prior notice before the day of execution and, in some cases, at an advanced age or despite the fact that they have mental disabilities* ».

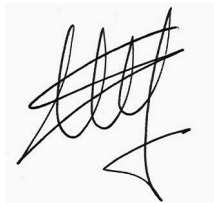
In this respect, FIDH and CPR urge you to adopt as a first step a moratorium on all executions and to engage the necessary judicial reforms in the domain of justice administration, with the final aim of the total abolition of the capital punishment in Japan.

Furthermore, FIDH and CPR urge your government to implement the recommendations issued by the United Nations Council on Human Rights in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review and the recommendations of the United Nations Committee Against Torture and Human Rights Committee which have dealt *in extenso* with the issue of death penalty and the administration of justice in Japan.

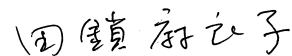
Moreover, we call you to sign and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Japan playing an important role in the region, should be among the key actors of promoting universal human rights standards and principles in Asia.

We thank you in advance for taking the present concerns into consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Souhayr Belhassen
FIDH President



Maiko Tagusari
CPR Secretary General