



Center for Prisoners' Rights Japan
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August 29th, 2014

On Friday August 29th, two Japanese death row prisoners, Mitsuhiro Kobayashi, age 56, and Tsutomu Takamizawa, age 59, were executed at Sendai Detention Center and Tokyo Detention Center respectively. This is the second execution in 2014 and today's executions have brought the total number of executions authorized by Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki, a member of the second Abe Cabinet, to eleven.

Kobayashi was sentenced to death by Aomori District Court, which found him guilty of setting fire to a branch office of consumer creditor firm and killing five people. The death sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court on March 27th, 2007. Kobayashi argued that he had not intended to kill the people and filed retrial requests on three separate occasions. The last such request was rejected by the Supreme Court on August 6th, 2014, and his defense counsel was just about to file the fourth request.

Takamizawa, former mob boss, was convicted and sentenced to death by Maebashi District Court, which found that he had murdered three people in conspiracy with his underlings. His sentence was confirmed by the Supreme Court on October 23rd, 2012. Takamizawa claimed he was not guilty of any of the three murders, arguing that he had not conspired to murder the two of the victims and his act which had caused death of the other victim was self-defense.

On July 24th, 2014, UN Human Rights Committee issued concluding observation on the 6th review of the report submitted by the government of Japan and recommended that the government should 'give due consideration to the abolition of death penalty' and give 'reasonable advance notice of the scheduled date and time of execution to death row inmates and their families'. Doubtlessly, if the two prisoners had received advance notice of today's executions, they would have filed a request for a retrial or other legitimate motion. However, Minister Tanigaki dared to order the executions, totally ignoring the recommendations by the Human Rights Committee, just before his resign as justice minister, which is expected to take place due to reshuffling of the cabinet scheduled on September 3rd. Neither respect for human life nor the idea of procedural safeguards for those facing the death penalty is reflected in his decision of executions.

Center for Prisoners' Rights strongly condemns today's executions and will continue its struggle to achieve a moratorium on executions and ultimate abolition of the death penalty.