



Center for Prisoners' Rights Japan
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On Thursday September 12th, Japan's Justice Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki executed Tokuhiisa Kumagai, age 73, at Tokyo Detention Center.

This is the third execution under the government led by Liberal Democratic Party which came back to the power in last December, and today's execution has brought this year's total number of executions to six, all of which were authorized by Minister Tanigaki.

In Kumagai's case, the number of killed victim was one, and Kumagai was sentenced to life imprisonment at the first instance court. However, the prosecutor appealed to the High Court seeking the death penalty, and subsequently the original sentence was replaced by the death penalty, which was confirmed by the Supreme Court. It must be said that today's execution goes against the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendations that 'the death penalty should be strictly limited to the most serious crimes' and 'consideration should be given by the State party to adopting a more humane approach with regard to the execution of persons at an advanced age' (CCPR/C/JPN/CO/5, 30 October 2008).

As a universal trend toward abolition is overwhelming, Japan, which retains the death penalty and continues to carry out executions regularly, is now a peculiar country and becoming more and more isolated from the international community. In March 2013, at the 22nd session of the UN Human Rights Council, the government of Japan rejected all of the recommendations calling for abolition of the death penalty or introduction of moratorium on executions, stating that whether to retain or abolish the death penalty is an issue which should be decided by each country and Japan does not intend to have a national discussion on it. Moreover, in May 2013, the UN Committee against Torture reviewed the second periodic report submitted by the government of Japan and the Committee urged the government 'to ensure that the death row inmates are afforded all the legal safeguards and protections' provided by the ICCPR as well as to consider 'the possibility of abolishing the death penalty' (CAT/C.JPN/CO/2, 28 June 2013).

However, the government, especially the Ministry of Justice, has totally ignored such recommendations. Instead, it carried out the execution of the death penalty right after the IOC selected Tokyo as the host city of 2020 Summer Olympic Games. The Charter of Olympics says, in its fundamental principles of Olympism, that 'the goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity'. The government of Japan should recognize that to retain the system of capital punishment with continuous execution of death sentence is incompatible with a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

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