

## Protest Regarding Executions

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Center for Prisoner Rights Japan

Today, two prisoners, Koichi Shoji and Hironori Suzuki, were executed by order of Justice Minister Takashi Yamashita. The Center for Prisoner Rights strongly protest this action.

Ahead of the enthronement ceremony this October, the Tokyo Olympic/Paralympics Games, and the UN Crime Congress (Kyoto Congress) in 2020, the Japanese criminal justice has recently been gaining the attention of the global community. The executions carried out in such circumstances gives a true account of the government's stance that does not acknowledge capital punishment as a human rights issue. The international community including some EU member states condemned the Japanese capital punishment, when the government executed 13 former members of Aum Shinrikyo cult group last year. Despite such strong protests from the international community, the government has refused dialogues and continued to execute inmates following the last executions in December 2018. According to the news reports, both of the inmates claimed their insufficient mental capacity at the trial. There is a serious concern whether their mental capacity has been thoroughly reviewed before today's executions. Moreover, Mr Shoji was seeking retrial. Executing those seeing retrial is a violation of prisoner's rights, as well as a denial of justice by those holding the reign of power. The United Nation's Human Rights Committee has advised the Japanese government, a signee to present treaties, to not repeat executions of those seeking retrial.

Speaking before the press shortly after today's executions, Justice Minister Yamashita repeatedly emphasized that the executions was based on careful considerations, but at the same time, he stated "We must execute inmates impartially, unless there are some peculiar reasons." This shows that the government has a strong intention to continue to support the death penalty. The Japanese government continues to disregard voices from the international community and declines dialogue. It wrongly believes that executions are a "realization of justice." This conviction must be abandoned. Taking advantage of the UN Crime Congress, which is to be held in Kyoto,

Japan next year, we strongly request the Japanese government and the Ministry of Justice to join with the international community for an immediate discussion to create a concrete plan aimed at suspending executions and abandoning the death penalty.