



Protest regarding Execution Ordered by Justice Minister Masako Mori

Today, a death row inmate Wei Wei, detained at Fukuoka Detention House, was executed by order of Justice Minister Masako Mori. The Center for Prisoners' Rights Japan strongly protests this action.

Ahead of the Tokyo Olympic/Paralympics Games, and the UN Crime Congress (Kyoto Congress) in 2020, the Japanese criminal justice system has recently been gaining the attention of the global community. The execution 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.

Despite strong protests from the international community including EU member states, the government has refused dialogues. The number of death row inmates executed has reached 39 since the inauguration of the second Abe Cabinet. The execution is the first time since Justice Minister Takashi Yamashita executed on 2 August of this year. The Justice Ministry has been executing inmates every December, as if it is a custom.

Speaking before the press after the execution, the Justice Minister ended up reading a statement prepared by the Justice Ministry without expressing her own opinion, saying, "the death penalty is the severest punishment which takes inmates' lives. Careful consideration is required for executions." "Under the rule of law, judgments need to be executed once they have been fixed."

The Minister stated that abolition or retention of the death penalty depends on each government's decision, while she consistently refused to answer whether the inmates were seeking retrial. Executing those seeking retrial was a violation of prisoners' rights, as well as a denial of justice by those holding the reign of power. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has advised the Japanese government, a signee to present treaties, not to repeat executions of those seeking retrial. It will be obvious that the Minister refused to reveal whether he was under retrial or not, so that she could avoid international criticisms. Her attitude against mass media clearly shows that any governments cannot execute inmates based on their own decisions only.

Taking advantage of the UN Crime Congress (Kyoto Congress), 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.

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