

North Norfolk Group

The death penalty in Japan

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Amnesty opposes the death penalty at all times – regardless of who is accused, the crime, and their guilt or innocence. In Japan, as in other countries, there are also other elements of the punishment that cause concern.

- Capital punishment is the legal penalty for murder in Japan. Executions are carried out by hanging.
- Many judgements are the result of confessions that Amnesty points out may be unreliable. Detainees can be held for up to 23 days after arrest, with no state-funded legal representation. They are typically interrogated for 12 hours a day; no lawyers can be present, no recordings are made, and they are put under constant pressure to confess.
- Once convicted, death row prisoners are kept in solitary confinement and allowed only two hours exercise per week – with no exercise permitted within their cell. They can have three books. Family and legal visits are only rarely allowed. Individual prison governors can relax these rules.
- A death row prisoner will only know the date of his execution on the morning it is to be carried out. The family will not be informed until after the killing. Every day may be the prisoner's last.
- There are about 120 prisoners awaiting execution. The last two executions were carried out on July 13th, this year (2017).
- All sentences have to be signed off by the Justice Minister. There have been periods when ministers have stalled or refused to sign warrants and one minister publicly stated he would not authorise any killings. In general, however, there appears to be continuing public and governmental support for the death penalty.

In general campaigning aimed at Japanese institutions and individuals Amnesty wants to continue with its unwavering commitment to abolishing the death penalty but also to point out that Japan is increasingly 'on the wrong side of history'. It was in July this year (2017) that Mongolia became the 105th country to abolish the death penalty for all crimes.