



# WE CAN DO WITHOUT THE DEATH PENALTY

## Citizens' Appeal for an Abolition of the Death Penalty in East Asia

December 2009

To:

**People's Republic of China, Japan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, State of Mongolia, Taiwan (CC: Republic of Korea, Republic of the Philippines, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China)**

In 2008, most of the executions in the world were carried out in Asia. 11 countries in Asia as a whole, and five countries in East Asia, namely, China, Japan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam, continue to have the death penalty.

China alone accounts for about three quarters of the executions in the world and at least 1,718 death sentences were carried out. In China, statistics on the death penalty and executions are a state secret, so the actual number is considered to be significantly higher than that.

In Vietnam, the death penalty is stipulated as the maximum sentence for a total of 29 offences defined in the criminal code, including illicit drug trafficking. Executions are by firing squad.

In Japan, there are currently more than 100 death-row inmates awaiting their executions. Executions by hanging in Japan are carried out secretly and the death-row inmates are notified of their execution only immediately before they take place.

In the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, executions are either by firing squad or by hanging. Executions are conducted secretly but there is an indication that public executions are conducted for the purpose of making an example to the people.

In Mongolia, executions are a state secret and official statistics, such as the numbers of death sentences, executions, and death-row inmates, are not disclosed. Executions are conducted secretly. The family members of the death-row inmate are not notified of the execution beforehand. After the execution, the body is not returned to the family.

On the other hand, as of 2009, 139 states in the world have abolished the death penalty. In Asia as a whole, 27 states, such as the Philippines and Cambodia, have abolished the death penalty either de jure or de facto.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many lives were taken in East Asia by the state or because of ideology. The death penalty has been used to impose the will of the state and as a tool of political repression. The state is still taking away the lives of the citizens by way of the death penalty. To put an end to this situation, East Asian states should renounce the state-sponsored violence known as the death penalty.

There are no empirical data verifying that the death penalty has a deterrent effect on heinous crimes. On the contrary, it is pointed out that the death penalty promotes violence.

In any country, those that are sentenced to death are skewed to vulnerable groups in the society, such as those in poverty and minorities. What gives rise to crimes in many cases is often poverty and social discrimination. Removing offenders from society by the death penalty does not solve the problem.

Having recognized the issues inherent in the death penalty system, we the signers below are petitioning for the realization of an East Asia without the death penalty.

We hereby request that:

- the taking of lives not be used as a means of punishment;
- the innocent not be killed;
- information be disclosed so that we can think for ourselves whether the death penalty is necessary;
- those that have erred not be cast away; and
- a society with few crimes be created without relying on the death penalty.

We the citizens hope for a truly peaceful society.

We the citizens hope for a society without the death penalty.

We the citizens hope for a tolerant society.

Please heed our voices, the voices of the citizens.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty. Taking note of the significance of the 20th anniversary, we call on the East Asian states that retain capital punishment to abolish the death penalty system.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Message:**

The petition organized and collected by:

**The "We Can Do Without the Death Penalty" Campaign**

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\* The "We Can Do Without the Death Penalty" campaign was launched in 2008 in Japan, aiming to raise a voice and to think together about what is wrong with the death penalty, setting aside various differences. The Center for Prisoners' Rights Japan and Amnesty International Japan serve as the joint secretariat and various other organizations, individuals, and networks participate in this campaign.