



19 March 2018

Agenda Item 6: UPR Outcomes: Japan
The Advocates for Human Rights
Delivered by Judy Corradi
Please check against delivery

Mr. / Madam (Vice) President:

During the interactive dialogue, the Japanese government stated that “domestic public opinion” made it inappropriate to abolish the death penalty. In its addendum, it elaborated that “The majority of the Japanese people consider the death penalty to be unavoidable . . . and therefore Japan currently does not have any plans to establish a forum to discuss the death penalty system.” In so doing, Japan noted recommendations from Austria, Canada, Mexico, and the United Kingdom to conduct an informed national debate on the death penalty.

Yet the government’s lack of transparency with respect to the death penalty means that whatever public opinion exists is ill-informed. The Advocates for Human Rights therefore calls on the Japanese government to undertake a comprehensive public education campaign, in collaboration with civil society organizations such as the Center for Prisoners’ Rights, to educate the public about human rights and alternatives to the death penalty, so that Japanese society may engage in meaningful and informed discussion of the issue.

Next, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations recently called for the abolition of the death penalty by 2020, citing both international trends and justice system defects that make “wrongful execution . . . unavoidable.” The Advocates for Human Rights is therefore disappointed that Japan noted Switzerland’s recommendation to introduce a system of mandatory appeal in death penalty cases. A mandatory appeal process is necessary to reduce the likelihood of wrongful executions, and to ensure the opportunity to correct mistakes in the criminal justice system.

Finally, during the interactive dialogue, the Japanese government represented that inmates sentenced to death are treated in appropriate conditions. Yet people sentenced to death are held in indefinite solitary confinement, in violation of the Nelson Mandela Rules and other international human rights standards for detention. The Advocates for Human Rights urges the Japanese government to end inhumane conditions of detention for people sentenced to death, and to align those conditions with international standards.

Thank you.