

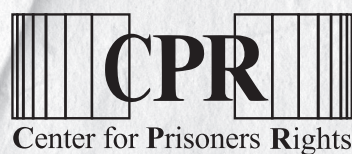
第5回死刑に関する
地域会合
東アジア大会
REGIONAL CONGRESS
ON THE DEATH PENALTY
IN EAST ASIA

2025年11月7日から9日
立正大学/品川キャンパス
東京(日本)
7-9 NOVEMBER 2025
RISSHO UNIVERSITY / SHINAGAWA
TOKYO, JAPAN

Organised by



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DEATH
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NETWORK

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FORUM90

WHAT IS THE REGIONAL CONGRESS ON THE DEATH PENALTY?

Since 2012, ECPM has organized the Regional Congress on the Death Penalty to assess progress and challenges in the abolitionist movement across targeted regions. Each edition aims to bring together a diverse range of regional stakeholders and to encourage holistic dialogue on the development of a step-by-step strategy to abolish the death penalty. Following previous editions in the MENA region in 2012 (Rabat, Morocco), Southeast Asia in 2015 (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia), Sub-Saharan Africa in 2018 (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire), and the Middle East in 2023 (Amman, Jordan), the 5th Regional Congress on the Death Penalty will be held in Tokyo, Japan, from 7 to 9 November 2025, with a focus on the East Asia region. It will be organized at Risscho University, in partnership with the Center for Prisoners' Rights (CPR), the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA), and the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN).

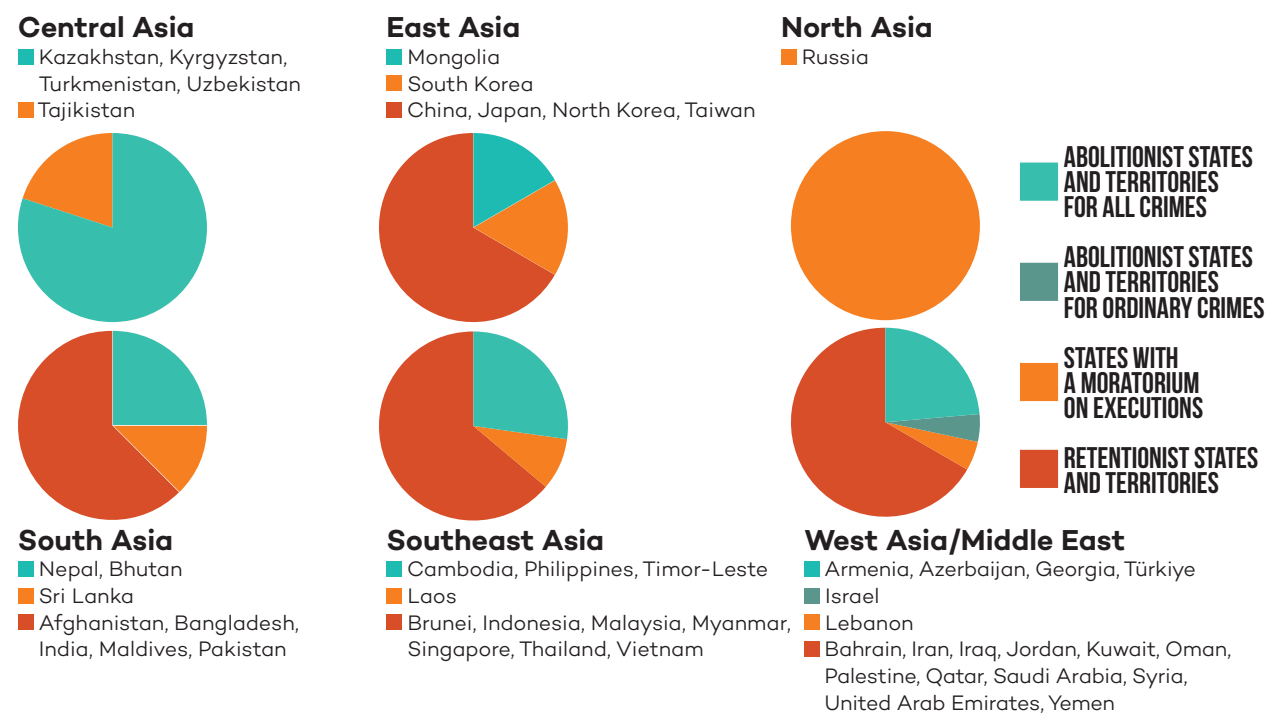
The 5th Regional Congress will also serve as a key milestone ahead of the 9th World Congress Against the Death Penalty, to be held in Paris, France, from 30 June to 3 July 2026.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

While the trend towards abolishing of the death penalty is fairly consistent in some parts of the globe – particularly in Africa, with, in average, 1 abolition per year for the past 5 years – Asia still remains the continent with the highest rate of executions worldwide.

STATUS

As of January 1, 2025, 14 countries in Asia had abolished the death penalty for all crimes, 1 for ordinary crimes, 6 were under a moratorium on executions, and 28 were retentionist.



On 17 December 2024, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 10th resolution for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty with 130 votes in favour, 32 votes against, 22 abstentions and 9 absent. Among the target countries of the Regional Congress, 3 voted in favour (Malaysia, Mongolia and South Korea) and 4 voted against (China, Japan, North Korea and Singapore).

EXECUTIONS

Asia is the continent with the highest number of executions in the world. While China remains the world's leading executioner, it continues to keep its death penalty statistics shrouded in secrecy. In East Asia, 2 countries carried out executions in 2024: China and North Korea. In January 2025, Taiwan carried out its first execution in five years, while Japan resumed executions in June, marking its first in three years.

POSITIVE STEPS IN THE TARGETED COUNTRIES

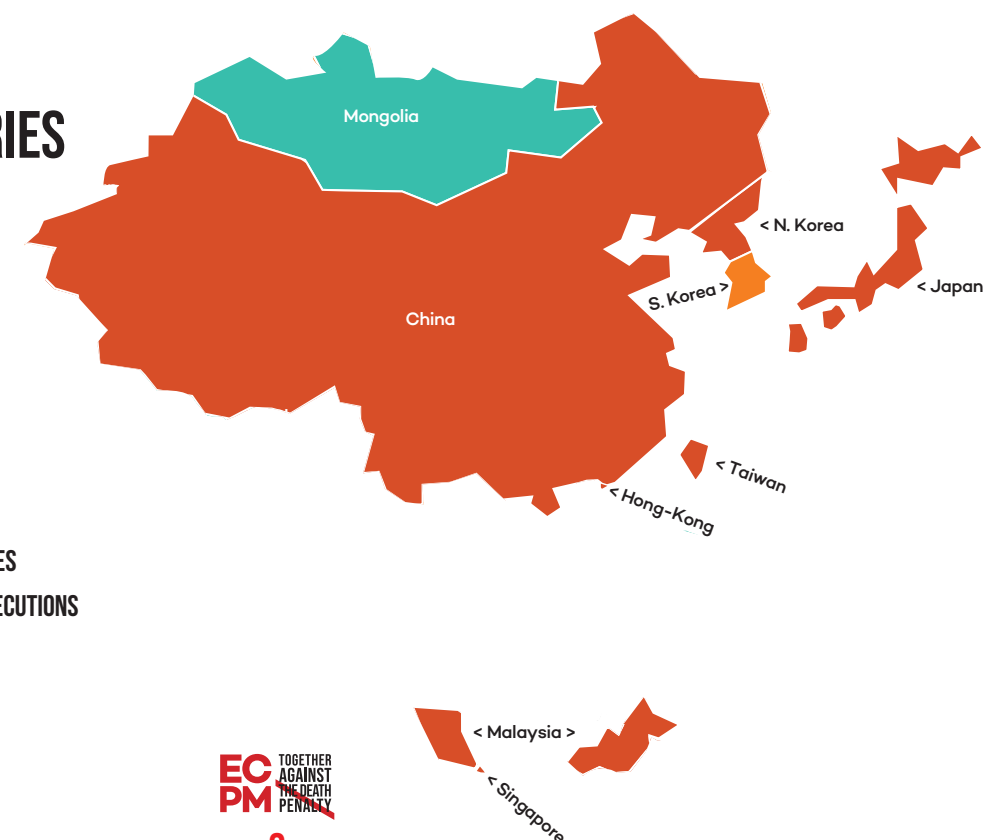
In 2015, **Mongolia** became the first East Asian country to abolish the death penalty. Three years earlier, in 2012, Mongolia had ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

In April 2023, **Malaysia** abolished the mandatory death penalty provided for 11 capital offences, including drug-trafficking, murder and terrorism, and introduced sentencing discretion for all offences for which it was applicable. Judges are now granted with alternative sentences of imprisonment between 30 and 40 years and whipping. From November 2023 to October 2024, 854 people sentenced to death had their death sentences commuted under the temporary resentencing process.

In April 2024, the Constitutional Court of **Taiwan** heard a challenge on the constitutionality of the death penalty in the country. The debate came after Taiwan's 37 death row prisoners, with help from a coalition of NGOs and research institutes, petitioned for a constitutional review of capital punishment. In September 2024, the Court delivered its judgment, confirming the constitutionality of the death penalty but declared the current safeguards surrounding its use to be insufficient, opening the way to restrictions of its application.

TARGETED COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

- China, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, North Korea, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan.



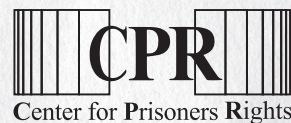
PROGRAM

Location: RISSHO UNIVERSITY / CAMPUS SHINAGAWA- 4-2-16 Osaki, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo 141-8602

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DAY 1 NOVEMBER 7, 2025

► 4.30 PM \ 6.00 PM
LOTUS HALL:
Building 13: Lift to B1/F

Opening session

Welcome remarks & keynote speeches, followed by the special testimony of Ms. Hideko Hakamata (sister of Mr Iwao Hakamata, 46 years on death row in Japan)

DAY 2 NOVEMBER 8, 2025

All sessions on 8 and 9 November

will be held in Building 9: ground floor • B1 = workshops & Level -1 • B2 = plenary, roundtables and coffee break.

► 10.00 AM \ 12.00 PM
Level -1: room 9B21

Plenary session: A call for transparency: detention conditions of people sentenced to death

The plenary session aims to examine the lack of transparency surrounding conditions on death row, including solitary confinement, prohibiting family contact, and absence of advance notice before executions.

- Moderator:** Hsin-Yi Lin, Executive Director, Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty (TAEDP)
- **Ethan Hee-Seok Shin**, Member of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), South Korea
 - **Maiko Tagusari**, Professor at the Faculty of Contemporary Law, Tokyo Keizai University, Co-founder of CrimelInfo, Japan
 - **Nicola Macbean**, Executive Director, The Rights Practice

12.00 PM \ 2.00 PM

Lunch break (meal not provided).

► 2.00 PM \ 3.30 PM
Level -1: room 9B22

Roundtable: Advocacy Pathways to Abolition: Promoting Political Dialogue

This roundtable is organized in partnership with the JFBA. It will explore strategies to open and sustain dialogue with national authorities. Speakers will share political success stories and approaches to overcoming resistance.

- Moderator:** Nobuko Otsuki, Former Secretariat Staff Member of the Roundtable for Reflecting upon the Death Penalty System of Japan, Member of the JFBA
- Keynote speaker:** Kazuhiro Nakamoto, former President of the JFBA
- **Oyungerel Tsedevdamba**, Chairperson of the Civic Unity Participation Party of Mongolia, former Minister of Culture, Tourism and Sports, former Member of Parliament
 - **Ramkarpal Singh**, Malaysian lawyer, Member of Parliament, former Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reforms)
 - To be confirmed (Japanese Parliamentarian)

► 2.00 PM \ 3.30 PM
Level 0: room 9B12

Workshop: Safety of Abolition Advocates

This workshop will address vicarious trauma, state repression, and public antipathy, faced by abolitionists. Participants will share strategies for protection and building resilience through solidarity.

Facilitator: Daisuke Sato, Senior Writer and Member of the Editorial Board, Kyodo News, Japan

3.30 PM \ 4.00 PM
Level -1: room 9B

Coffee break

► 4.00 PM \ 5.30 PM
Level -1: room 9B21

Roundtable: Beyond “the most serious crimes”

This roundtable will analyse the use of the death penalty for drug-related and other non-lethal offences, including political offences. It will also highlight the challenges of narrowing its scope, the implications of mandatory sentencing, and failures to comply with international human rights standards.

- Moderator:** Abdul Rashid Ismail, Lawyer, Messrs. Rashid Zulkifli, Malaysia
- **Elizabeth Salmón**, Professor of International Law at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru and Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
 - **Michelle Miao**, Associate Professor of law from the Faculty of Law, Chinese University of Hong Kong
 - **Derek Wong**, Lawyer, Phoenix Law Corporation, Singapore

Workshop: Profile of people sentenced to death: Inequities Behind Death Sentences

The aim of this workshop is to create a regional map of the social and economic patterns behind death sentences. The criminalization of poverty and intersectional discrimination will be a key focus.

Facilitator: Ngeow ChowYing, Deputy Convenor, ADPAN

DAY 3 NOVEMBER 9, 2025

► 10.00 AM \ 11.30 AM
Level -1: room 9B21

Roundtable: Deconstructing Public Support for the Death Penalty

This roundtable will unpack the drivers of public opinion on capital punishment. Are polls neutral? How does knowledge of the administration of justice as well as cultural and socio-demographic variables influence support for or resistance to abolition? The roundtable will also explore strategies for reframing the public narrative.

- Moderator:** Kar-Yen Leong, Associate professor in Cognitive Sciences, National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan
- **Wing Cheong Chan**, Professor of Law, Yong Pung How School of Law, Singapore Management University
 - **ThaatchaaYini Kananatu**, Senior Lecturer in Global Studies at the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University Malaysia
 - **Mai Sato**, Professor and Director, Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Birkbeck, University of London

► 10.00 AM \ 11.30 AM
Level 0: room 9B11

Workshop: Legal Representation in Capital Cases

This workshop aims to develop recommendations for effective legal representation at all stages — from police investigation and arrest to execution. It will focus on systemic barriers, the role of the judiciary and of community-based support networks.

Facilitator: Khaizan Sharizad (Sherrie) Binti Ab Razak, Lawyer, Malaysia

► 10.00 AM \ 11.30 AM
Level 0: room 9B12

Side event Passing the Torch: Empowering the New Wave of Abolitionists

TBC

► 11.30 AM \ 1.00 PM
Level -1: room 9B22

Roundtable: Judges and Prosecutors on the Frontlines of Death Penalty Cases

This roundtable aims to understand the legal and ethical dilemmas faced by judges and prosecutors in capital cases. It will discuss possible approaches to discretion, and their potential role as allies in the abolitionist movement.

- Moderator:** Michael Hor, Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong
- **Chien-Jung Chien**, Lawyer, former Supreme Court judge, Taiwan
 - **Kiyoung Kim**, former Justice at the Constitutional Court, South Korea

► 11.30 AM \ 1.00 PM
Level 0: room 9B11

Workshop: Documenting the Death Penalty

The aim of this workshop is to identify best practices to collect, protect, and share reliable data on the death penalty. Participants will explore methods to overcome barriers to transparency, including the role of civil society and NHRIs.

Facilitator: Heo Yu-jeong, Journalist, Hankook Ilbo, South Korea

► 11.30 AM \ 1.00 PM
Level 0: room 9B13

Workshop: Inside death row: The Psychological Toll of Death Row

This workshop will explore the emotional and psychological impact of death row on detainees, prison staff, and others in proximity to executions (families of detainees, of victims). An emphasis will be made on mental health consequences and institutional responsibilities.

Facilitator: Toshi Kazama, Photographer, Member of ADPAN Executive Committee

1.00 PM \ 3.00 PM

Lunch break (meal not provided).

2.15 PM \ 3.00 PM

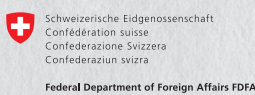
Coffee

► 3.00 PM \ 5.00 PM
Level -1: room 9B21

Closing session

Simultaneous or consecutive interpretation in English-Japanese-English will be available at most sessions

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ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

The program was defined by the Academic Committee of the 5th Regional Congress on the Death Penalty. This committee, coordinated by Carole Berrih (researcher at University of Grenoble), is composed of experts in human rights and the abolition of the death penalty in Asia:

- **Carolyn Hoyle**, Professor of Criminology and Director of the Death Penalty Research Unit at Oxford University;
- **Sara Kowal**, Deputy convenor of the Executive Committee, ADPAN;
- **Hsin-Yi Lin**, Executive Director, TAEDP;
- **Yasuhiro Maruyama**, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Ritssho University;
- **Karyn Nishimura-Poupée**, Journalist;
- **Teppei Ono**, Secretary General of CPR;
- **Nobuko Otsuki**, Defense lawyer, Member of the JFBA;
- **Marie-Lina Perez**, Head of Africa-Asia Desk, ECPM.

DEATH PENALTY IN JAPAN

Capital punishment exists as a sentence in the Japanese criminal justice system for 19 offences, although it is almost exclusively imposed in cases of murder.

The death penalty system in Japan remains very opaque. Executions are carried out without any date being set in advance. Prisoners are only notified a few hours before the execution, and families are generally informed after it has been carried out.

As a result, people sentenced to death live in permanent fear and uncertainty, often for many years, given that many executions are carried out years after the conviction. The main remedy for capital punishment is a retrial, which can be a very uncertain and lengthy process.

According to Japan's Ministry of Justice, the last execution was carried out on June 27, 2025. Takahiro Shiraishi was executed for the murder of nine people in 2017. It was the first execution since July 2022, when Tomohiro Katō was hanged at the Tokyo Detention House. The NGO CrimelInfo reports that there are currently 105 prisoners on death row awaiting execution in Japan.

Capital punishment is deemed very popular in Japanese society, although information on the reality of the death penalty is very scarce.

However, recent mediatization of cases like that of Iwao Hakamata (see box below) are opening new avenues for debate within Japanese society. For instance, a reflection panel on the death penalty linked to the Japan Federation of Bar Associations issued recommendations to the Japanese government in November 2024, questioning the deterrent effect of capital punishment and its utility to the victims' families. Such initiatives reflect a growing momentum for a nation wide public debate on the death penalty in Japan

IWAO HAKAMATA, 46 YEARS ON DEATH ROW

The public debate in Japan was shaken up in 2024 when Iwao Hakamata, the longest-serving death row prisoner in the world, under sentence of death since 1968, was declared innocent 56 years after his conviction.

Arrested in 1966 over the murder of a family of four in Shizuoka, Hakamata was convicted and sentenced to death in 1968, on the basis of a confession made to the police during an interrogation, which he later retracted.

After decades of fighting to maintain his innocence and demand a retrial, Hakamata and his supporters were finally heard in 2014 when the Shizuoka District Court released him after they found there was reason to believe evidence against him had been falsified. After 46 years on death row, and another decade of litigation, Iwao Hakamata was formally acquitted in 2024.

Four decades on death row weighed heavily on Hakamata, who became mentally ill. During this period, he wrote a large number of letters to his family, sharing his fears and anxiety: "My heart sometimes grows cold beyond description out of unending fear of the unknown-execution."

In the wake of the media coverage of Hakamata's case, some actors are advocating to seize the opportunity to deepen the debate with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Furthermore, similar cases like those of Michitoshi Kuma (executed on the basis of a doubtful conviction) or Nobuo Oda (now the longest-serving death row prisoner) can also spark a discussion on the place of the death penalty in the Japanese legal system.

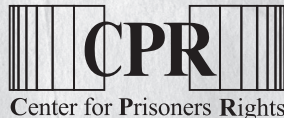


Photographs courtesy of Hideko Hakamata, Machiko Ino, and Karyn Nishimura.

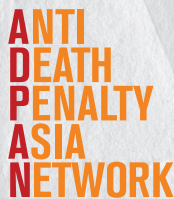


Founded in 2000, ECPM is a leading global association fighting for universal abolition of the death penalty. With a presence in a dozen countries across the world, ECPM has been conducting intense advocacy work with national and international bodies for the past twenty years, in particular by supporting local actors and by organising, every three years, the biggest abolitionist event in the world: the World Congress Against the Death Penalty. ECPM also founded the World Coalition against the Death Penalty.

For more information: www.ecpm.org



The Center for Prisoners' Rights (CPR) was established in March 1995 as the first Japanese NGO specializing in prison reform. CPR's goal is to reform Japanese prison conditions in accordance with international human rights standards and to abolish the death penalty. The organisation researches human rights violations in Japanese prisons and makes its finding known to the public both inside and outside Japan. CPR gives legal advice to prisoners and provides legal assistance through attorneys if necessary. It studies international human rights standards in the prison reform area, introduces them to Japan and promote ratifications of international human rights treaties. CPR publishes a newsletter four to five times a year, which features prison litigations, reports on visits to foreign prisons and digests of the seminars held by the organisation several times a year. The newsletter is sent to about 5,000 people including prisoners and their families, lawyers and researchers.



ADPAN is a regional network of organizations and individuals committed to working towards abolition of the death penalty in the Asia-Pacific. ADPAN's role is to create wider societal support for abolition of the death penalty in the Asia-Pacific region through advocacy, education, and network building.

CONTACT

5th Regional Congress on the Death Penalty:
tokyo2025@ecpm.org

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