

46 sentenced to death in 2007, most since 1980

Kyodo News

Courts handed down the death sentence to 46 people last year, the highest number since 1980, the earliest year for which comparable data are available.

According to a tally by Kyodo News, at least 106 people — also the most since 1980 — were on death row after final rulings as of the end of 2007. The year also saw a record nine people put to death.

The annual data — based on the government's annual statistics report on judicial affairs as well as a tally by Kyodo News — underscore a trend toward harsher punishment.

This is despite moves to abolish capital punishment around the world. Last month, a nonbinding resolution for a moratorium on executions was endorsed by 104 countries in a vote at the U.N. General Assembly. Fifty-four countries, including Japan, opposed it.

Last year, district courts gave 14 defendants the death penalty, high courts likewise handed down capital punishment in 14 rulings and the Supreme Court finalized the death sentences of 18 people.

The three levels of courts issued a record number of death sentences in 2007 for the second year in a row. They issued death sentences to 44 people in 2006.

"Whether the death sentence should be maintained or abolished should be decided independently by each country by taking into account the sentiments of its people and its crime situation," Justice Minister Kunio Hatoyama said last month when the

U.N. moratorium resolution was adopted.

"In our country, a majority of the public thinks that death sentences are inevitable for (people) who commit heinous crimes," he said.

When the ministry hanged three death-row inmates Dec. 7, it revealed their names for the first time, apparently to counter criticism of the government's secrecy policy regarding capital punishment.

The Japan Times: Monday, Jan. 14, 2008
(C) All rights reserved

[Go back to The Japan Times Online](#)

[Close window](#)