

Domestic Debate on the Death Penalty in Contemporary Japan: Voices of the Public Reconsidered

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Introduction

According to the governmental opinion polls held in November 2020, 80.8 per cent of the public support the death penalty (80.3 per cent in 2014 and 85.6 per cent in 2009).¹⁾ One of the largest victim lobbies, *Zenkoku Hanzai Higaisha no Kai* (National Association of Crime Victims and Surviving Families, or NAVS), also shares the same sentiment and members view the death penalty as an ultimate punishment to bring justice to victims and their bereaved families. Despite the consistently high public support on the death penalty as observed in opinion polls, it is worth exploring the voices of the general public and minority victim lobbies. The first part of this article will look at how the NAVS was founded and how members perceive the purpose of punishment. The second part will then investigate the divergent public view on the death penalty. Recent murder incidents and executions have exposed mixed opinions amongst the public regarding whether or not executions can help heal the wounds of the victims' bereaved families and bring closure to the unprecedented incidents. Notable examples include: 1) Sagamihara Stabbings in 2016; 2) executions of those responsible for the Aum Sarin Nerve Gas Attack on the Tokyo Subway in 2018; and 3) Kyoto Animation Arson Attack in 2019. —This article will shed light on the applicability of the apparent mainstream support for 'punitive populism' observed in the opinion polls, specifically considering the voices of some of the victim lobbies, community groups and the general public.

1.1. Mainstream Victim Lobby's View on the Death Penalty

The NAVS was founded in 2000 by an attorney, Okamura Isao. He is a former Vice Chairman of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations and was an active anti-death-penalty advocate for the Federation. An incident occurred when Okamura was working as a legal advisor of Yamaichi Securities Co. An unemployed male, Nishida Hisashi, 'had demanded that the failed Yamaichi Securities make up for his stock trading losses through the brokerage since May 1991 [...but this] was rejected by the company through Okamura's office'.²⁾ After serving a prison term till 1996 being convicted of attempting to extort money from Yamaichi in a separate case,³⁾ Nishida (67 at the time) went to Okamura's house on 10 October 1997 intending to murder him. As Okamura (72 at the time) was out on that day Nishida stabbed his wife Manae (63 at the time) to death instead for resentment.

Nishida was sentenced to life imprisonment with a parole by the Tokyo District

Court in September 1999. However, Okamura called this decision unjust and sought capital punishment: ‘It is possible that the defendant will be released on parole after 10 years. My wife, who was killed, will never come back’.⁴⁾ In January 2000, Okamura set up the NAVS ‘to better protect crime victims’ rights, which he believes are less protected than those of offenders’.⁵⁾ Nishida’s life sentence with a parole was however confirmed on 29 May 2001 considering that there was only a single victim in this case and Nishida had been showing remorse. With his strong belief that it is only the death penalty that could bring justice to the victims and their bereaved families, Okamura has been a vocal pro-death-penalty advocate in the NAVS.

1.2. Divergent Views on the Death Penalty in Japan

The NAVS thus demonstrates a strong pro-death-penalty sentiment and the general public is often portrayed as sympathetic to the victim lobby’s claim as shown in the governmental opinion poll results. However, it has been pointed out by academics that survey questions have been strategically phrased in order to draw conclusions in favour of the governmental retention of the death penalty.⁶⁾ In seeking public opinion, the poll required participants to choose between three choices: 1) ‘it is unavoidable *in certain circumstances*’, 2) ‘it should be abolished in *all circumstances*’, and 3) ‘I don’t know’. Sato Mai analyses that the first two answers appear to have been framed strategically in order to produce results which would justify governmental policy.⁷⁾ In contrast to the second answer, the first one leaves some room for discussion regarding the level of public support for the death penalty. In other words, those who do not necessarily feel strong support for capital punishment may choose the first answer. In addition, as David T. Johnson and Franklin E. Zimring point out the secrecy surrounding the death penalty and ‘censored democracy’.⁸⁾ In other words, binary choice obscures a broader spectrum of opinions. In order to explore the extent to which pro-death-penalty opinion poll results mirror the public’s view on this system, the following section will explore divergent views by victims’ bereaved families, community groups and the general public through examining three high profile cases in contemporary Japan.

1.2.1. Sagami-hara Stabbings in 2016

The stabbings in the Tsukui Yamayuri En care home for people with disabilities occurred in the early hours of 26 July 2016 in Sagami-hara, Kanagawa prefecture. Uematsu Satoshi, a 26-year-old former employee of the care home stabbed sleeping residents in the chest or slashed their throats,⁹⁾ resulting in the death of 19 people aged between 19 and 70 and injuring 26 others.¹⁰⁾ Soon after the attack, Uematsu turned himself in to the police station.

Uematsu appears to have planned this crime for at least half a year in advance and on 14 February 2016 he had ‘tried to hand-deliver a three-page letter to Lower House Speaker Oshima Tadamori at his official residence in Tokyo’¹¹⁾ declaring that he was going to murder disabled people in the care home. In the letter he expressed his discriminatory view on people with disability: ‘My goal is a world in which the severely disabled can be euthanised, with their guardians’ consent, if they are un-

able to live at home and be active in society'.¹²⁾ The letter also covered full details of his plan of killing 470 disabled people: '[I] would attack at night when fewer workers were on duty, bind them with zip ties, slaughter residents and then turn [...myself] in.'¹³⁾ Uematsu is also reported to have made similar remarks to his co-workers at the care home before quitting the following day.¹⁴⁾ The police had taken this matter seriously and:

reported the case to the Sagami-hara Municipal Government, which decided to commit Uematsu to a psychiatric hospital out of concern he could harm others. [...Although he] was diagnosed with marijuana-induced psychosis and paranoid disorder [...] he was not diagnosed as an addict and was released on March 2. [...] The care facility, meanwhile, followed police advice and installed 16 security cameras.¹⁵⁾

After the arrest, Uematsu 'apologised' to staff members for injuring them and to victims and their bereaved families for taking the victims' lives away.¹⁶⁾ However, he maintained that 'severely disabled people create misery' and described his experience as 'worthwhile' as in his opinion 'his claims have reached people who will serve as lay judges in the trial through media and other channels [and] he does "not have anything in particular" that he wants to say in the trial'.¹⁷⁾ It goes without saying that his mental competency became a major focus in the trial as he had previously tested positive for marijuana. However, Uematsu insisted that 'he will not claim that he is too mentally incompetent to take responsibility for the attack in his upcoming trial'.¹⁸⁾

The media featured this incident as the worst mass killing in decades at the time and the Prime Minister Abe Shinzo commented, "The lives of many innocent people were taken away and I am greatly shocked. We will make every effort to discover the facts and prevent a reoccurrence."¹⁹⁾ Kawana Katsuyoshi, a senior official in the Welfare Department at the Kanagawa Prefectural Government, also stated that 'discrimination, prejudice and intolerance for individuals who are deemed different from others still exist in society [...but the Department will endeavour] to deliver messages in order to eradicate discriminatory ideologies'.²⁰⁾ The death sentence for Uematsu was finalised on 31 March 2020 after he withdrew his appeal on the day before.

As previously discussed, the largest victim lobby in Japan claims that it is only the death penalty that could bring justice to the victims and their bereaved families. Given that Uematsu targeted socially vulnerable individuals and have made discriminatory remarks against them, it would be easy to assume that victims' bereaved families would share the same view. However, it deserves a particular attention that a brother (61) of a female victim (60 at the time of the crime) is reported to have shown a mixed feeling towards the sentence.²¹⁾ He had previously visited Uematsu at the detention centre and attended the trial. However, he felt a great degree of disappointment as he could not see Uematsu show sincere remorse to victims and their bereaved families at any point.²²⁾ It appears that what the victim's brother wanted to see was not necessarily the heaviest punishment sentenced to Uematsu,

but a gradual change in Uematsu's distorted view on people with disabilities.

Similarly, a community group called 'Remember 7.26 Kobe Action' had protested against the possible death sentence to Uematsu in March 2020. The group is composed of over 160 people with or without disability and had been campaigning on three grounds:

- 1) What they would like to see is the defendant showing sincere remorse and apologies to the victims and their bereaved families. The death penalty, on the other hand, deprives him of time and opportunity to do so.
- 2) 'Eliminating' (*mashō*) the defendant from the society through the death penalty, labelling him as a malicious individual who upsets social order, resembles the defendant's motive to 'eliminate' those with disability labelling them as those who create nothing but misery to the society. Telling the defendant through the death sentence that he is not worth living can end up supporting his idea of eugenics—those with disability are not worth living—and strengthen this concept which prevails in the society.
- 3) This incident posed a serious issue surrounding people with disability. In order to prevent reoccurrence, we will need to work together to de-construct and re-build the society where discrimination, prejudice and intolerance for those with disability prevails. The death sentence given to the defendant may be considered by the general public as a closure to the incident and the issue which was uncovered by this incident can be forgotten again.²³⁾

Some victims' bereaved families and community groups thus provide different views to the 'mainstream' support on the death penalty and this poses an important question of: what justice is; for who justice exists; and whether or not justice can be only achieved through giving the 'heaviest punishment'. It may appear at first sight that 'eliminating' Uematsu from the society through death can help bring justice to victims, heal the wounds of victims' bereaved families and demonstrate to the wider society that those who commit serious crimes get prosecuted and punished appropriately. However, it is questionable to what extent this can help deter similar crimes from reoccurring. In fact, we cannot ignore the social factors surrounding Uematsu including his upbringing which may have potentially helped shape his distorted view on disabled people. This may include certain perceptions on disabled people and their role in the society. Some victims' bereaved families and community groups do not want the issue surrounding disabled people to be forgotten behind the punishment Uematsu will face. They may indeed appreciate it if Uematsu could live and receive an appropriate psychiatric treatment to help him atone for the crime he committed.

Relating to this, the recent executions of the Aum cult members revealed mixed opinions amongst the public regarding whether or not the sensational media coverage of executions was appropriate; and whether or not simultaneous executions of Aum members in two stages helped bring closure for the families of the victims of the largest terrorism event.

1.2.2. Executions of Aum Shinrikyo Cult Leader and Senior Members in 2018

Asahara Shoko, whose real name was Matsumoto Chizuo, was a leader of a doomsday cult group Aum Shinrikyo based in Kamikuishiki Village at the foot of Mount Fuji. The cult successfully recruited young professionals including doctors and scientists and under the direction of Asahara the members 'built and operated a chemical plant to mass-produce sarin and another to assemble automatic rifles'.²⁴⁾ Asahara was later found guilty for his involvement in crimes including the murder of the anti-cult lawyer Sakamoto Tsutsumi and his family in November 1989, and the sarin nerve gas attack in Matsumoto, Nagano in June 1994.²⁵⁾ The most high-profile crime they committed was the sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway on 20 March 1995 where 13 people were killed and more than 6,000 were injured. Asahara was sentenced to death in 2004 and his sentence was finalised by the Supreme Court in 2006. After more than a decade since the final death sentence, Asahara and six former senior members of the cult group was executed on 6 July 2018 with a further six senior members on 26 July 2018.

1.2.2.1. Delays in Executions

As Japan Times reported in January 2018:

The Aum trials were unprecedented in Japan's judicial history in terms of their sheer number and the length of the deliberations. [...] Due to the complexity of the background of the cases and the members' relationships, the trials dragged on. Asahara's trial, in particular, took seven years and 10 months, with the courts convening 257 times in total.²⁶⁾

Asahara developed a mental illness due to his long-term detention on death row. He was no longer able to use the toilet by himself and started wearing baby nappies in 2001; he often mumbled words and/or fell asleep during his trials and hearings for former Aum senior member; and communication with his family and lawyer which had started in 2004 stopped in 2008 as he was no longer able to have a conversation with others.²⁷⁾ Six psychiatrists hired by the lawyers of Asahara therefore raised concerns about his mental and physical health and claimed that he was not fit to stand trial or face execution.²⁸⁾ Asahara's fourth daughter also filed a civil case with the Yokohama Family Court in May 2017, however, the Tokyo Detention Center maintained that 'The inmate has not shown clear signs of mental disability. If urged to leave his cell to do exercise or take a bath, he complies, but he has stubbornly refused to meet visitors'.²⁹⁾ Despite Article 479 of the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulating that executions of death row inmates with mental health must be put on hold as stipulated in, it is reported that a senior justice official had commented that 'We cannot leave someone who committed such heinous crimes to die from disease'.³⁰⁾

The reason that Asahara's and his former senior members' executions were delayed was not due to the Ministry's consideration on Asahara's mental health. Article 475 (2) stipulates that the Minister of Justice shall order the executions of the inmates within six months from the date when the court judgement becomes final and

binding. However, it also specifies that the period before the proceedings of all co-defendants are finalised are not included in this period. When all defendants' sentences were confirmed in December 2011—apart from the three who had been on the run (Hirata Makoto, Kikuchi Naoko and Takahashi Katsuya)—the media speculated that executions of Asahara and former Aum senior members may take place without waiting for the arrest of the remaining three.³¹⁾ Fearing this possibility, Hirata Makoto turned himself in on the night of 31 December 2011 after 16 years since the incident; and Kikuchi was arrested on 3 June 2012 and Takahashi on 15 June 2012. Hirata later admitted during his trial that he turned himself in to have the executions of former senior members pushed back.³²⁾

1.2.2.2. Executions and Public Response

Approximately 23 years of the Aum trials came to close on 19 January 2018, six years after the arrest of the remaining three defendants, and the governmental focus and public attention soon shifted to when the 13 members would be executed. It was speculated by various bodies that executions would take place prior to the abdication of Emperor Akihito on 30 April 2019 or the Tokyo Summer Olympics which was originally scheduled to start on 24 July 2020 at the latest:

In 2019, the country will have a new emperor for the first time in three decades, while the following year's Tokyo Olympics herald a return of the Summer Games to Japan after a gap of more than 50 years. [...] By getting these "negative stories" out of the way now, future celebrations need not be overshadowed—or so the thinking goes.³³⁾

Whilst the Gregorian calendar is widely used in Japan, the name of the era, which is introduced each time a new emperor accedes to the throne, is primarily used in governmental or other official documents in Japan. It was therefore speculated that executions of the Aum members would take place by the end of the *Heisei* era in the reign of Emperor Akihito.

On 14 and 15 March 2018, the Ministry of Justice transferred seven out of the 13 inmates to five detention centres with execution facilities across Japan, leaving Asahara and five others at the Tokyo Detention Center.³⁴⁾ On 6 July 2018 Asahara and six former Aum senior members were executed, with a further six former members on 26 July 2018. Justice Minister Kamikawa Yoko did not disclose details about the executions regarding how the seven inmates were selected for the first executions and only commented at the following press conference that the Ministry of Justice gave a great deal of careful consideration on the executions.³⁵⁾

Executions of all the 13 were finally carried out after more than two decades from the devastating incident and appeared to have finally brought 'justice' to the victims and their bereaved families. However, sensational media coverage divided the opinions of the general public including retentionists. Fuji TV, one of the leading TV stations in Japan, showed a panel of the 13 death row inmates' pictures and a TV anchor put a sticker which says 'executed' on each picture as each execution was confirmed.³⁶⁾ This however reminded the viewers of the live media coverage of the

elections when the panel of candidates' pictures is shown and a sticker with a red flower is put on each picture as they secure their seats.³⁷⁾ The excessive media coverage gave the general public an impression that the media agencies were broadcasting this news as some kind of entertainment; and Nakajima Takeshi, a professor in the History of Thought in Japan, called it 'public executions where only the actual scene of hanging was hidden'.³⁸⁾

Nonetheless, what deserves attention is that whilst some thus showed skepticism towards the media coverage of executions of former Aum members, this did not appear to have created a momentum to join the initiative of putting the death penalty on hold or abolishing it. They may not agree from moral perspectives with the way executions of former Aum members were featured by the media. However, they may fundamentally support the view that the death penalty should be retained for serious crimes, which may be helping maintain the pro-death-penalty sentiment observed in the governmental opinion polls.

Whilst the Japanese government aimed to leave the negative legacy of the Aum incident behind by executing the members during Heisei era,:

Aum renamed itself Aleph in 2000 and two splinter groups have since been formed. The followers of the three groups total about 1,650 in Japan and 460 in Russia, according to the Public Security Intelligence Agency.³⁹⁾

Japan has only eradicated the founder of the cult group and a very small portion of former members therefore there is no guarantee that remnants of the cult would not plan terrorism in a similar or larger scale in the future. This closely relates to the future execution of Uematsu who committed Sagamihara Stabbings in 2016. 'Elimination' of convicts may appear to serve as justice to those affected by the crime and lawful citizens in the wider society; and a lesson to be learnt by those who are prone to smaller crimes. However, it is fundamentally more crucial to investigate the root causes of the crimes and try to address underlying factors in the society such as social attitude towards people with disabilities and perceptions in the society.

Whilst the Aum case remains one of the largest terrorism incidents in Japan considering that 13 people were killed and more than 6,000 were injured, Japan has recently experienced the worst mass casualty incident in its post-war history: Kyoto Animation arson attack.

1.2.3. Kyoto Animation Arson Attack in 2019

In the morning of 18 July 2019, Aoba Shinji (41 at the time) walked into the 1st Studio building of Kyoto Animation—centre of the company's anime production—and poured petrol in multiple areas of the building before igniting it.⁴⁰⁾ About 30 fire engines and ambulances went to the three-storey building after an explosion but it took four hours for firefighters to bring the blaze under control as every storey had been damaged by the fire.⁴¹⁾ There were 74 employees in the building. However, many did not have time to escape as the fire spread so rapidly.⁴²⁾ As a result, 36 were killed and 34 were heavily injured. Founded in 1981, Kyoto Animation, often referred to as KyoAni by fans at home and abroad, was a major force in the industry

and had a reputation for putting its employees first:⁴³⁾

KyoAni has produced popular anime TV series and feature films, as well as publishing illustrated novels and manga. [...] Many anime artists are paid on a per-frame basis and tight deadlines make the work gruelling and long hours inevitable. Kyoto Animation bucks the trend by making its animators full-time employees. This allows them to spend more time on each image and create high-quality anime.⁴⁴⁾

When Aoba tried to run away from the crime scene after igniting the petrol, he did not get far as he was in critical condition himself with burns covering 90 percent of his body.⁴⁵⁾ He was first taken to a hospital in Kyoto but was airlifted to the Osaka hospital two days later by request of the Kyoto police.⁴⁶⁾ Whilst the Osaka hospital prioritised the use of donor skin for the victims, Aoba underwent ‘surgeries using prosthetic skin and his own skin only’.⁴⁷⁾ According to the experts, ‘The survival rate drops dramatically when about 30 percent of the body has third-degree burns [and] The probability of dying rises to almost 99 percent when such burns cover around 90 percent of the body, making the treatment an unusual case’.⁴⁸⁾ However, Aoba ‘became the first person with such extensive critical burns to undergo surgery without using donor skin’.⁴⁹⁾ His condition was no longer life-threatening by early August and improved to the point where he could talk and eat.⁵⁰⁾ He was therefore moved back to the hospital in Kyoto on 14 November 2019 and was arrested on murder and arson charges on 27 May 2020, approximately 10 months after the incident.

When the police first surrounded Aoba at the crime scene, he told the police that he did this because the company had plagiarised his work.⁵¹⁾ According to the company president, they had received a number of death threats through their webpage in the past two years but Aoba’s name did not appear in any of the threatening emails.⁵²⁾ Aoba had in fact submitted manuscripts to the company for the Kyoto Animation Award.⁵³⁾ However his applications had not been considered as it had not passed the first selection stage for failing to meet the submission criteria. The company president therefore denied Aoba’s accusation of plagiarising his work.⁵⁴⁾

It appears that Aoba had suffered from mental illness over decades which triggered this crime. Previously, Aoba had served more than three years for robbing a convenience store in Ibaraki prefecture in 2012 and was being treated for an unspecified mental illness.⁵⁵⁾ After the robbery, he turned himself in to the police claiming to be a member of the Aum cult and that he would not be able to evade law enforcement.⁵⁶⁾ After being released in 2016, he lived ‘in a subsidized dormitory for former prisoners, where he could live rent free and receive meals [...and] eventually moved to his own apartment [...] in Saitama’.⁵⁷⁾ However Aoba soon developed a dispute with his neighbour for grabbing his chest and shouting “I will kill you. I have nothing to lose.”⁵⁸⁾

The media featured this crime as Japan’s worst mass casualty incident in its post-war history given that the death toll from this incident was greater than the Aum Sarin Gas Attack in 1995, which killed 13.⁵⁹⁾ As Colin P.A. Jones, a professor at Doshi-

sha Law School in Kyoto, states, whilst Japan enjoys its very low crime rate, ‘there are periodic spasms of random and extreme violence [...and] the general physical safety that is so noteworthy about Japan heightens the contrast when those things do occur.’”⁶⁰⁾

Following Aoba’s arrest, KyoAni released a statement expecting Aoba to be prosecuted ‘to the maximum extent’ under the law: “We have no further words for the suspect... Our fallen colleagues will never return, and our wounds will never heal.”⁶¹⁾ On 18 July 2020, marking the first anniversary of the incident, representatives of the victims’ bereaved families also released a statement via their attorneys.⁶²⁾ The statement included special thanks to all who got involved in trying to save lives of the victims—residents near the crime scene, fire fighters, police officers, doctors and nurses—and their thanks also extended to KyoAni fans at home and abroad for their emotional support.⁶³⁾ The statement also showed that victims’ bereaved families are still in deep sorrow for their loss and strongly wished that appropriate sentence will be given to Aoba in the court.⁶⁴⁾

KyoAni representatives’ wish for the death penalty to be imposed on Aoba and victim’s bereaved families’ wish for the ‘appropriate sentence’, which implies the death sentence, are not difficult to understand given the tremendous loss. Having said that, the same questions still remain: whether or not punishing Aoba through the death penalty would help bring closure to the incident. Aoba received world class skin surgery despite that there was almost a 99 percent chance of dying. If saving Aoba’s life had been wished by the police and prosecutors only as a means to help him recover to the level he can stand trial, this appears to be the same logic as the one of the senior justice official regarding the execution of Aum cult leader: ‘We cannot leave someone who committed such heinous crimes to die from disease’.⁶⁵⁾ Eliminating’ Aoba from the society alone cannot help build a safer society and it is important to focus on examining the root causes of the crime. Given that Aoba has suffered from unspecified mental illness for many years, provision of an appropriate psychiatric treatment may support prevention of similar cases in future and should be given as due prominence as ensuring the provision of victim support following incidents.

Conclusion

This article examined the divergent domestic debate on the death penalty in Japan through looking at high-profile murder cases. Whilst governmental opinion polls demonstrate that a majority of the public appear to support the death penalty and the mainstream victim lobby also appears to share the same view, some victims’ bereaved families and community groups question the purpose of punishment. Some victim lobbies including disabled people, their families and care workers, and activists express concerns about the rights of disabled people not to be discriminated against. Others also raise a question of whether or not executions of offenders can bring closure to the incident. The death penalty is often seen as an ultimate punishment to bring justice to the victims and their bereaved families. However, some victim lobby would like the convict to live and show remorse for the crimes committed, and the society to discover the root causes of the crime and to bring

about change to prevent similar crimes from reoccurring.

However, it also merits some attention that although the Aum case, for example, made the general public feel skeptical about the way executions were broadcasted, this did not appear to have led them to join the initiative to abolish the death penalty or put executions on hold. Whilst wide public support on the death penalty appears to be partly due to the strategic phrases used in the opinion polls and the secrecy surrounding the policy, emerging discussions appear to be taking place with a presumption that the death penalty remains in place in Japan. Unpacking the voices of vocal retentionists, anti-death-penalty victim lobbies and the general public, who are not necessarily against the retention of the death penalty but skeptical about the way executions are featured, could be a first step towards understanding the complexity behind the vast majority support of the death penalty.

Notes

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- 5) *Ibid.*
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- 12) "Japan Knife Attack: 19 Killed at Care Centre in Sagamihara."
- 13) "Sitting on Reform of the Criminal Justice System Only Exacerbates the Problem."
- 14) *Ibid.*
- 15) *Ibid.*
- 16) "*Uematsu Shikeishū, Sagamihara Sashō Hanketsu Kakutei ni 'Shakai no Yaku ni Tatta, Izoku 'Munashii Saiban'* (Uematsu Recalls the Sagamihara Knife Rampage as Helpful for the Society after the Death Sentence is Finalised. Victims' Bereaved Families are Disappointed by the Trial)," *Yomiuri*, 31 March 2020. Available at: <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/national/20200331-OYTT50229/> [Accessed 29 July 2020]
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- 19) "Japan Knife Attack: 19 Killed at Care Centre in Sagamihara."
- 20) "Alleged Sagamihara Killer Won't Claim Lack of Criminal Responsibility in Forthcoming Trial."
- 21) "*Uematsu Shikeishū, Sagamihara Sashō Hanketsu Kakutei ni 'Shakai no Yaku ni Tatta, Izoku 'Munashii Saiban.'*"

- 22) *Ibid.*
- 23) “Sagamihara Sashō: Shikei Hanketsu Kaihi wo Shimin Dantai Yōsei” (Sagamihara Massacre: Community Group Call for the Avoidance of the Death Sentence to the Defendant), *Kanagawa Newspaper*, 13 March 2020. Available at: <https://www.kanaloco.jp/article/entry-297517.html> [Accessed 29 July 2020]
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- 29) “As AUM Cult Trials End, Justice Ministry Turns Attention to Death Sentences,” 2.
- 30) “After More than 20 Years of Trials, Japan’s Supreme Court Removes Final Obstacle to Aum Executions,” 2.
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- 32) “Timing of AUM Mass Executions Questioned; Possible Link to End of Heisei Era,” *Mainichi*, 7 July 2018. Available at: <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180707/p2a/00m/0na/008000c> [Accessed 29 July 2020]
- 33) “Is the Japanese Government Executing Members of the Aum Cult for Convenience?,” 1.
- 34) *Ibid.*
- 35) “Timing of AUM Mass Executions Questioned; Possible Link to End of Heisei Era,” 1.
- 36) “Shikeishū Shashin ni Tsugitsugi Shikkō Shiiru, TV Enshutsu ni Gomon no Koe mo (‘Executed’ stickers put on each picture as each execution got confirmed, TV coverage got questioned by the public),” *Asahi*, 6 July 2018, 1. Available at: <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASL7656K2L76UCVL01H.html> [Accessed 29 July 2020]
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