

崎浜空音さんの英語スピーチの原稿（2026年11月9日）

「My Way to Abolish the Death Penalty in Japan — Under 30's Speech Competition（くわたしなら、こうして日本の死刑を廃止する）アンダー 30 英語スピーチ大会）」

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“Death penalty? That is horrible.”

These are the words my French host family said when I told them that Japan still has the death penalty. I was shocked and ashamed of myself because I was one of the many Japanese people who were in favor of it. I didn't know that many countries in the world, including France, had abolished it years ago.

Since then, I have realized there are many reasons why we should abolish it. For example, consider its cruelty. The death penalty arguably goes against Article 36 of our constitution, which bans cruel punishment. Also, the state must be certain when taking a person's life, but as Mr. Hakamada's case shows, there is no 100% certainty. While many people focus on the feelings of the victim's family, we must recognize that "an eye for an eye" creates a double standard by justifying an otherwise illegal action—a murder—by the state. For these and many other reasons, the death penalty itself is a human rights violation and should be abolished.

Today in my speech, I would like to argue that abolishing the death penalty can help address other human rights violations.

As an example, Japan has only concluded extradition treaties with two countries. It is said that a major reason for this is Japan's retention of the death penalty. According to the White Paper on Crime, while the total number of suspects who fled abroad as of the end of 2023 was 784, zero criminals were extradited back to Japan in 2023 and in ten years only 6 suspects were extradited. People say the death penalty provides justice for victims, but its existence can actually prevent justice from being served. Abolishing the death penalty could be a key factor in changing this situation.

Here, let me share my personal reason. I am from Okinawa, which hosts 70% of all US military bases in Japan, and crimes by the military often become an issue. The problem is based on the agreement that Japan and the US concluded called the Status of Forces Agreement, which is said to be unequal to Japan and guarantees extraterritorial rights for jurisdiction. Although some US states also have the death penalty, many experts indicate Japan's own judicial system—with criticized practices like the death penalty and "hostage justice"—is a burden when trying to modify the agreement. As an Okinawan, since I want to solve the human rights violations on my island, I feel I must also work on the abolition of the death penalty. Even though it seems like a small change, I believe in the butterfly effect that can make a big difference.

So, my way to abolish the death penalty is to unite people. Abolition of the death penalty is not an isolated problem. Resolving one human rights issue can help resolve other human rights violations. There are thousands of people in Japan and Asia who are working for other human rights. We say, “Climate justice,” “My body, my choice,” “Free Palestine,” and so on. We should add “Abolish the death penalty” to those stances because every issue shares a fundamental principle of human rights.

I am proof that people involved in different human rights issues can work together to abolish the death penalty. I am sure that sharing a connection based on the principle of human rights will lead to the abolition of the death penalty and make a better society where every human right is respected.