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Amnesty: Iran hangs 40 people in two weeks amid surge in executions

January 18, 2014



The Amnesty International has recently announced that Iran has executed 40 people since the beginning of 2014, with at least 33 carried out in the past week.

Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa quoted in a statement published on Amnesty International's website, said, "The spike in the number of executions carried out so far this month in Iran is alarming. The Iranian authorities' attempts to change their international image are meaningless if at the same time executions continue to increase."

Sahraoui further added, "The Iranian authorities must urgently take steps to abolish the death penalty, which has been shown again and again not to have any special deterrent effect on crime."

The statement also added, death penalty is a violation of every human being's right to life and is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

According to Amnesty International, the Iranian authorities have officially acknowledged 21 executions, which were recorded by the organization since the beginning of 2014.

Amnesty International in its statement also added that 19 additional executions were reported through reliable sources in the week since 9 January 2014.

This comes as the Iranian president Hassan Rouhani had promised to follow a "path of moderation" in international affairs and to ease restrictions on civil liberties, after he won the national election in June 2013.

But the Iranian Human Rights Documentation Centre (IHRDC) said more than 300 people have been executed since the time of Rouhani's inauguration in August to the end of 2013.

According to IHRDC, the majority of those who were executed since January 5, were convicted of drug trafficking.

However, the Amnesty International said under the international standards, non-lethal crimes such as drugs offences do not meet the threshold of "most serious crimes" to which the death penalty must be restricted.

"In Iran drug-related offences are tried in Revolutionary Courts which routinely fall far short of international fair trial standards. The reality in Iran is that people are being ruthlessly sentenced to death after unfair trials, and this is unacceptable," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

But the Iranian authorities in the past have insisted that death penalty is essential to maintain law and order, and that it is applied only after exhaustive judicial proceedings.