Beat: Politics

UN expresses concern over Iran;s rising execution rate

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USPA News - The United Nations (UN) expressed concern Friday over the rising execution rate in Iran and urged the Iranian government to halt all executions in favor of human rights reforms. Iranian authorities have acknowledged dozens of prisoners have been hanged in the first two months of this year, but the UN believes at least 80 people - and as many as 95 - have been executed. At least seven of the 80 known executions were performed in public.

"We regret that the new Government has not changed its approach to the death penalty and continues to impose capital punishment for a wide range of offenses," said Ravina Shamdasani, a spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. "We urge the Government to immediately halt executions and to institute a moratorium." Shamdasani expressed extra concern over the executions of Hadi Rashedi and Hashem Sha`bani Amouri, who were executed in January on charges of "enmity against God," "corruption on Earth," and acts against national security. The proceedings of the men "did not meet international fair trial and due process standards," Shamdasani said on Friday. Allegedly, the men were denied access to their lawyers and families for nine months and were subjected to torture in an attempt to force their confessions. According to human rights groups, including Amnesty International, trials in Iran often fail to meet international standards of fairness. Proceedings, particularly those held outside of the Iranian capital of Tehran, are often summary, lasting only a few minutes. Mass trials also take place on some occasions. Shamdasani was not the first to comment on the escalation in executions in Iran. On January 22, UN rights experts also called on the Iranian government to halt a surge in executions, with at least 40 people hanged in the first two weeks of the year. That number has, at least, doubled within the last month. It follows more than 600 executions last year.

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