

Beat: Miscellaneous

Saudi Arabia executes Pakistani drug smuggler by beheading

-, 25.12.2014, 15:16 Time

USPA News - A Pakistani man convicted of smuggling a large amount of heroin has been decapitated by sword in the kingdom's east, the government reported on Thursday, just days after a child rapist suffered the same fate and raising the number of people executed there this year to 85. Ismail Khan Sayed, a Pakistani citizen, had previously been convicted of smuggling "a large quantity" of heroin into the kingdom, the interior ministry said in a statement. It said the man had been sentenced to death by a local court and both the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Judicial Council upheld the sentence.

Sayed was beheaded on Thursday morning in the country's Eastern Province, making him the twelfth person from Pakistan to be executed in Saudi Arabia this year. Thursday's beheading adds to a surge in executions that began in August and which has angered human rights organizations because many of those killed were convicted of non-lethal crimes. "Any execution is appalling, but executions for crimes such as drug smuggling or sorcery that result in no loss of life are particularly egregious," Sarah Leah Whitson, of Human Rights Watch, said earlier this year. Amnesty International also expressed its concern in August after four family members were all beheaded on the same day for merely possessing hashish. "The recent increase in executions in Saudi Arabia is a deeply disturbing deterioration. The authorities must act immediately to halt this cruel practice," Said Boumedouha, of Amnesty International, said at the time. At least 85 people have been executed in Saudi Arabia so far this year, following 79 executions last year. The kingdom applies the death penalty for a large number of crimes, including drug offenses, apostasy, sorcery and witchcraft. Both witchcraft and sorcery are not defined as crimes in Saudi Arabia, but human rights organizations say such charges have been used to prosecute people for exercising their right to freedom of speech or religion.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-3150/saudi-arabia-executes-pakistani-drug-smuggler-by-beheading.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619