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Iran hangs 24 drug traffickers 'in mass execution'

(AFP) – 1 day ago

TEHRAN — Iran hanged 24 convicted drug traffickers in a prison last week in one of the country's biggest mass executions, the Etemad newspaper reported on Wednesday.

"On Thursday, 24 international drug traffickers were hanged in a prison in Karaj," deputy Tehran prosecutor Mahmoud Salarkia was quoted as saying. "Their execution was approved by the supreme court."

The report did not identify any of those sent to the gallows in Karaj, a town west of Tehran.

The latest hangings bring to at least 219 the number of people executed in the Islamic republic so far this year, according to an AFP count based on news reports.

They were the second such executions in about a month in the same prison, where the Iranian authorities hanged 20 drug traffickers on July 4.

In July last year, Iran hanged 29 people who had been convicted of various crimes, including murder, rape and drug trafficking. It was the largest mass execution in recent years.

In January last year, 13 people were hanged, including a mother of two found guilty of murdering her husband.

In 2008, Iran executed 246 people, second only to China.

Tehran says the death penalty is a necessary tool for maintaining public security and is only applied after exhaustive judicial proceedings.

Murder, rape, armed robbery, drugs trafficking and adultery are all punishable by death in Iran.

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