

Beat: Miscellaneous

Kuwait hangs 3 men in first executions since 2007

-, 02.04.2013, 00:03 Time

USPA News - Authorities in Kuwait on Monday hanged three men convicted of murder, marking the first executions in the Gulf state in nearly six years, officials said. Human rights activists described the executions as a `deplorable setback` for human rights in the country.

The three men were hanged at around 8 a.m. local time at the Central Prison, located west of the capital Kuwait City, in front of judicial officials and journalists. The executions were fully photographed by journalists as a deterrence for criminals, but earlier media reports that the hangings would be broadcast on live television proved to be inaccurate. One of those hanged was identified as a stateless Arab who had been convicted of shooting to death his wife, his son and daughter and attempting to kill another daughter. The others were a Saudi citizen who had been convicted of stabbing to death a friend and a Pakistani citizen who had been convicted of killing a couple by hanging them with a rope. The executions were previously ordered by the Court of Cassation and approved last week by Emir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Justice Mohammad Al-Duaij, the chief of the execution prosecution, said the executions were carried out in accordance with a Koranic verse that stipulates that the death penalty creates a deterrence for criminals. The executions on Monday mark the end of a nearly six-year period during which no death sentences were carried out. Ann Harrison, Deputy Program Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International, described the executions as a "deplorable setback" for human rights in the country. "In a region where executions are sadly all too commonplace, Kuwait marked a beacon of hope by declining to execute people for almost six years," Harrison said in a statement. "That hope has been extinguished today. We deplore this resumption of executions, regardless of the crime." Al-Duaij said 48 people are still on death row and said their death sentences have been submitted to the emir for approval, indicating that the Gulf state plans to execute more convicts in the near future. "Kuwait should halt any further executions and should commute all death sentences and revise the law to exclude this most final of penalties," Harrison said. The last execution took place in May 2007 when a Pakistani national was hanged after being convicted of drug trafficking. Judicial officials said the man, identified as Khan Anwar Islam, was arrested at Kuwait International Airport in 2002 while trying to smuggle 813 grams of heroin by swallowing it. Kuwait, which uses a judicial system that is based on a mixture of Islamic Sharia law, English common law, and the Ottoman civil code, has executed 75 people, including three women, since it introduced the death penalty in April 1965. Only 15 of those executed held the Kuwaiti nationality, with the others being either foreigners or stateless Arabs. Human rights activists have previously expressed concerns about the large number of offences for which the death penalty can be imposed, including vague offenses relating to internal and external security and drug-related crimes. In 2012, Kuwait's parliament voted in favor of applying the death penalty for those who insult Islam's Prophet Muhammad or his wives, but the emir rejected the amendment.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-737/kuwait-hangs-3-men-in-first-executions-since-2007.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619