

## Iran Focus

### Editorial



The humanitarian crisis in Iran has taken a turn for the worse, beginning a dark chapter in the country's bleak history of violating human rights. Iran has the world's highest execution rate per capita, and is the only country in the world which continues to execute minors. In the face of international isolation and domestic unrest, the Iranian regime has begun a bloody crackdown targeting dissidents with the aim of terrorizing the population into submission.

This campaign of terror includes public hangings designed as a warning to any who dare defy the regime, with as many as five individuals hanged in the streets in truly horrific spectacle. Since January, at least 386 people have been executed in Iran, second only to China in total executions. Yet many acknowledge that these numbers are only a portion of the true death toll, as the regime actively censors information and does not report many of its crimes.

One shocking example of barbarity involved Iranian blogger and activist Sattar Beheshti, who was arrested for his online activism and outspoken criticism of the regime. Beheshti died while under severe torture during his interrogation proceedings. His death highlights the regimes fear of criticism and dissent, and their crackdown on freedom of information. Iran has a history of targeting journalists and bloggers, and has been known to enact severe forms of torture and cruelty in prisons.

Presently, Iran's campaign of terror has reached a fever pitch. From November 7th to the 8th, Iran executed 23 individuals in just two days. Since October 22nd the regime has undertaken 6 mass hangings with nearly 40 individuals executed. The increased rate of execution is reportedly motivated in part by a desire to expedite the cases of over 1000 prisoners on death row in Gohardasht prison alone.

Will the international community standby and remain silent in the wake of such crimes? As the regime faces increased isolation will the West extend a hand to its leaders, or its citizens who withstand death and torture in their struggle for freedom? In view of the worsening human rights situation in Iran, as underlined in the latest report by the United Nations and Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, the United Nations Security Council must address this matter and take binding measures with teeth to make clear to Tehran's rulers that such behavior will not be tolerated. At a time where the regime will stop at nothing to maintain its iron grip on power, the international community must stand with the people of Iran.