

**THE “WAR ON DRUGS”**

*This is an extract from the “2015 Report on the death penalty worldwide” by Hands off Cain that covers year 2014 - till May 12th, 2015*

Article 6(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) grants an exception to the right to life guaranteed in Article 6(1) to countries that have not yet abolished the death penalty, but only in relation to ‘the most serious crimes’. The jurisprudence has developed to the point where UN human rights bodies have declared that drug offences are not among the ‘most serious crimes’. The ‘most serious crimes’ threshold for the lawful application of capital punishment is also supported by UN political bodies, which clarified that by ‘most serious crimes’ it is intended only those ‘with lethal or other extremely grave consequences’. Therefore, executions for drug offences violate international human rights law.

In 2011, through an internal human rights guidance note, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has required the organization to stop funding for a country if it is feared that such support may lead to people being executed. In its “Guidance Note for UNODC Staff”, relating to “Promotion and Protection of Human Rights”, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime states, “If a country actively continues to apply the death penalty for drug offences, UNODC places itself in a very vulnerable position vis-à-vis its responsibility to respect human rights if it maintains support to law enforcement units, prosecutors or courts within the criminal justice system… If, following requests for guarantees and high-level political intervention, executions for drug-related offences continue, UNODC may have no choice but to employ a temporary freeze or withdrawal of support.” Despite this guideline, the leadership of UNODC has continued to allocate funds to governments, particularly that of Iran, who use them to capture, sentence to death, and often execute alleged drug traffickers.

Another concern is the presence in many States of legislation prescribing mandatory death sentences for certain categories of drug offences. Mandatory death sentences that do not consider the individual merits of a particular case have been widely criticized by human rights authorities.

According to *Harm Reduction International* (HRI), **thirty-three** jurisdictions in all still maintain laws that prescribe the death penalty for drug-related crimes, including **twelve** countries that allow for mandatory capital punishment for certain drug offences: Brunei-Darussalam, Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, Oman, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. But in most of these countries executions are extremely rare. Fourteen, including America and Cuba, have the death penalty on the books for drug traffickers but do not apply it in practice. Only in **seven** countries – China, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Vietnam – are drug offenders known to be routinely executed. In Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, South Sudan and Syria the data are murky.

However, the prohibitionist ideology concerning drugs once again made its contribution to the practice of the death penalty in 2014 and the first four months of 2015.

In the name of the war on drugs, in 2014, there were at least **414** executions carried out in **4** countries: **China** (number unknown); **Iran** (at least 371); **Saudi Arabia** (at least 41) and **Singapore** (2).

In 2015, as of 12 May, at least **333** people were executed for drug-related crimes in **4** countries: **China** (number unknown); **Indonesia** (14); **Iran** (at least 286); and **Saudi Arabia** (at least 33).

In 2014 and the first months of 2015, hundreds of death sentences for drug offences were handed down though not carried out in **7** more countries: **Egypt**, **Malaysia**, **Qatar**, **Sri Lanka**, **Thailand**, **United Arab Emirates** and **Vietnam**.

While death sentences were handed down but not carried out in **10** States: Egypt, Laos, Pakistan, Qatar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam and Yemen.

In **Pakistan**, seventy percent of the death sentences handed down by the country’s lower judiciary on drug smuggling charges are quashed by the higher courts later, according to statistics provided by Interior Ministry in March 2014.

**China**

According to China’s Criminal Law, a drug dealer can be sentenced to death for producing, transporting or trafficking more than 50 grams of heroin or one kilogram of opium. Traffickers caught with 150 kilograms of marijuana can also face the death penalty. The most lenient sentence for such a crime is 15 years.

Between January and October 2014, more than 84,000 drug convicts were put behind bars, revealed the Supreme People's Court (SPC). About 27 percent received penalties ranging from five years in jail to the death sentence, according to the Fifth Criminal Court of the SPC, Xinhua reported. In June, on the eve of the International Day Against Drug Abuse, China's President Xi Jinping declared a crackdown on drug trafficking. On the same day, the SPC said that there had been an increase in drug trafficking in the country, noting that 39,762 had been convicted for drug crimes between December 2013 and April 2014 alone, indicating a 27.8 percent increase year-on-year. Four people were executed for different drug offenses during the same period.

The actual number of executions for drug-related crimes is unknown, although it has decreased in 2013-2014 compared to previous years. It is probable that this change is a reflection of the reform passed on 1 January 2007 that passed judicial review of death penalty cases back to China’s Supreme People’s Court, as well as the directive of the same court holding that the death penalty should be imposed on an “extremely reduced number of hardened criminals.”

Regardless, as has long been the case in China, death sentences and executions increased markedly around National holidays and dates of symbolic international importance such as the *International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking* on 26 June.

On 15 January 2014, China executed two men in the Hainan Province for trafficking over 5 kilos of drugs. Li Yongxin and Wei Jidong were executed after the Supreme People’s Court approved their death sentences. Both men were convicted of purchasing drugs in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, and transporting and selling them in Hainan between February and May of 2010. A total of 5.38 kg of drugs, mostly heroin, was recovered from the two men, China Daily reported. The court in Hainan handed down the death sentence in December 2011.

On 1 July 2014, Ugandan Foreign Ministry spokesman Fred Opolot reported that two Ugandan drug traffickers – Omar Ddamulira and Ham Andrew Ngobi – had been executed in China’s Guandong Province. Opolot added that Ddamulira was executed on 21 May while Ngobi was executed on 24 June in Guangzhou, a city populated by many Ugandan businessmen. He said the Ugandan Government had attempted to engage the Chinese authorities, to try and stay their execution without luck. According to Opolot the two men were allowed to speak to their families before they were executed.

Between 6 and 7 August 2014, China executed three Korean nationals by lethal injection for drug offenses, in the first death sentences for Korean citizens carried out in the country in a decade. Two of them, identified only by their surnames, Kim and Baek, were killed on 6 August in Jilin Province. Kim, 53, was convicted of smuggling a total of 14.8 kilograms of methamphetamines into China between 2010 and 2011, during 14 trips there from North Korea. Baek, 45, bought 12.3 kilograms of the drug from Kim and distributed it to drug rings in South Korea. On 7 August, another South Korean identified by his surname Chang, 55, was executed in Qingdao, Shandong Province. He was arrested in 2009 for smuggling 11.5 kilograms of methamphetamines from North Korea to China, where he sold them. Chang is the fifth South Korean to be executed in China since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1992.

On 30 December 2014, China executed a South Korean national for smuggling and trading drugs, Seoul's foreign ministry said on 5 January 2015. He was identified only by his surname Kim and was executed despite Seoul's repeated pleas for clemency, the ministry said. He was arrested in China in May 2010 on charges of smuggling some 5 kilograms of drugs into the country and trafficking them. A Chinese district court sentenced him to death in April 2012 and an appellate court upheld the ruling eight months later. China's highest court also confirmed the sentence. Kim is the fourth South Korean that China has executed for drug offenses in 2014.

On 25 April 2015, a drug trafficker was executed in south China’s Guangdong Province following approval by the Supreme People’s Court. The gang leader was sentenced to death for smuggling more than 6.5 kg of heroin from southwest China’s Yunnan Province to Guangdong. Between March to December 2011, the gang purchased drugs in Yunnan and hid them in hollowed out jade and transported them to Zhongshan through logistics company. Some suspects were caught by police when they came to claim the jade, the court said. In addition to the gang leader, other seven suspects received sentences ranging from 13 years to life, or death with a reprieve.

**Indonesia**

The 1997 Narcotics Law carries the death penalty for convicted drug dealers but the maximum sentence is rarely imposed.

Executions were relatively rare in Indonesia until 2004, when under the scope of a national campaign against drug abuse and drug dealing launched by then-President Megawati Sukarnoputri in view of elections, three foreigners were shot for trafficking heroin.

After a *de facto* moratorium dating back to 2008, Indonesia resumed executions in 2013 when five people were put to death, including two convicted of drug trafficking.

No executions were carried out in 2014. However, in 2015 (as of 12 May) Indonesia put another 14 drug convicts to death.

The new President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, who took office in October 2014, has taken a particularly hard line towards people on death row for narcotics offences, insisting they will not receive a presidential pardon as Indonesia is facing an "emergency" due to high levels of drug use.

On 18 January 2015, Indonesia executed a national woman and five foreigners, who had all been sentenced to death on drug offences, in the first executions to take place under President Joko Widodo, who refused to heed all international requests for clemency. Vietnamese woman Tran Thi Bich Hanh was executed in Boyolali district in central Java, while five others were put to death on Nusakambangan Island, home to a high-security prison. They included an Indonesian woman, Rani Andriani, along with 53-year-old Brazilian Marco Archer Cardoso Moreira and 62-year-old Dutchman Ang Kiem Soei. Two Nigerians – Daniel Enemuo and Solomon Chibuike Okafor, who was however being classified as a citizen of Malawi because he was arrested using a Malawian passport bearing Namaona Denis – were also executed. They were sentenced to death between 2000 and 2011, and all the prisoners were executed by firing squad around the same time, shortly after midnight. All those executed were caught attempting to smuggle drugs apart from the Dutchman, who was sentenced to death for operating a huge factory producing ecstasy.

Brazil's president and the Dutch foreign minister led an international outcry against the executions. Brazil recalled its ambassador in Jakarta for consultations and said the executions would affect bilateral relations. "The use of the death penalty, which the world society increasingly condemns, affects severely the relationship of our countries," President Dilma Roussef said in a statement published by Brazil's official news agency. The Netherlands, a former colonial power in Indonesia, also recalled its ambassador and condemned the execution of its citizen, Ang Kiem Soei. "It is a cruel and inhuman punishment that amounts to an unacceptable denial of human dignity and integrity," said Dutch foreign minister Bert Koenders.

On 13 February 2015, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed to Indonesia not to execute prisoners on death row for drug crimes, including citizens of Australia, Brazil, France, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria and the Philippines. U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Ban had spoken with Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi "to express his concern at the recent application of capital punishment in Indonesia." "The United Nations opposes the death penalty under all circumstances," Dujarric said in a statement. "The Secretary-General appeals to the Indonesian authorities that the executions of the remaining prisoners on death row for drug-related offenses not be carried out."

On 29 April 2015, defying intense pressure from the international community, the government executed another eight drug convicts at 12:30 a.m. on Nusakambangan prison island near Cilacap in Central Java. The eight were Indonesian Zainal Abidin, Australians Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, Brazilian Rodrigo Gularte, Nigerians Sylvester Obiekwe Nwolise, Raheem Agbaje Salami and Okwudili Oyatanze, Ghanaian Martin Anderson. Chan and Sukumaran were arrested on the holiday island of Bali in 2005 for trying to smuggle 8 kg of heroin to Australia. They were convicted for being the ringleaders of a group of Australian heroin traffickers known as the Bali Nine. The only female convict due to be shot alongside Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran was spared the firing squad after she agreed to give evidence on drug syndicates. Mary Jane Fiesta Veloso of the Philippines was spared after a woman who allegedly recruited her to act as a drug courier gave herself up to police in the Philippines on 28 April. Officials said the prisoners were to be given the choice to stand, kneel or sit before the firing squad, and to be blindfolded. Twelve marksmen were assigned to fire at the heart of each prisoner - but only three would have live ammunition. Authorities say this is so that the executioner remains unidentified. The eight death penalties were carried out after Jakarta rejected last-ditch pleas from the prisoners' families and the international community. The proposed death sentences were condemned by the United Nations, and have caused diplomatic tensions between Australia and Indonesia.

**Iran**

Iranian law provides for the death penalty in cases of possession of more than 30 grams of heroin or 5 kilos of opium.

In December 2010, a new anti-drug law came into effect extending the death penalty to possession of other types of illegal substances such as methamphetamine.

In Iran drug-related offences are tried in Revolutionary Courts, which routinely fall far short of international fair trial standards. Revolutionary Court trials are frequently held behind closed doors and judges have the discretion to restrict lawyers’ access to the defendant during pre-trial investigations in limited cases. Under Article 32, death row prisoners convicted on drug-related offences do not have the right to appeal. Only the Attorney General or the head of the Supreme Court can appeal the death sentence for such convictions.

Since the vast majority of those executed for drug-related charges are not identified by last (family) name, it is not possible to confirm the charges. Human rights observers believe that many of those executed for common crimes such as drugs are actually political dissidents.

Several human rights organizations have urged the United Nation’s Office for Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) and donor countries to stop contributing indirectly to the increase in executions in Iran.

Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom have all chosen to withdraw their support from Iranian counter-narcotics operations administered by the UNODC because of concerns that this funding was enabling the execution of alleged drug traffickers. When announcing its decision to do so, Denmark and Ireland publically acknowledged that the donations are leading to executions.

However, the UNODC leadership doesn’t appear to be at all bothered by the fact that its funds are used by the Iranian authorities to execute “drug offenders” at such a devastating rate.

On 11 March 2014, the U.N. anti-drugs chief praised Iran’s fight against narcotics trafficking despite a surge in executions in the country, many of people convicted of drug-related offences. Yury Fedotov, executive director of the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), said the Vienna-based agency opposes the death penalty, “but on the other side, Iran takes a very active role to fight against illicit drugs.” In 2012, Iran seized 388 metric tons of opium, the equivalent of 72 percent of all such seizures around the world. “It is very impressive,” Fedotov told reporters before an international meeting in Vienna on March 13-14 on global efforts to combat narcotics. Fedotov made clear the UNODC was not considering halting support for Iran. “I don’t believe that the international community would welcome this because it would mean, as a possible reaction from Iran, that all these huge quantities of drugs, which are now being seized by Iranians, would flow freely to Europe,” he said.

On 18 November 2014, Iranian Justice Minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi lashed out at the so-called western advocates of human rights for their opposition to the punishment of drug trafficker in Iran. "We do not accept the statements made by the UN human rights bodies that drug-related convicts should not be executed," Pourmohammadi said. He underlined that anyone who smuggles and distributes narcotics deserves to be executed.

On 4 December 2014, Mohammad Javad Larijani, the secretary of Iran’s Human Rights Council, said that Iran is looking to end the death penalty for drug related cases, which he said account for 80% of the country’s executions. In an English-language interview with France 24’s Sanam Shantyaei, Javad Larijani said, “No one is happy to see the number of executions is high. And it’s a sad story that we have this much drug related crime... According to the existing law, they are receiving capital punishment.” Javad Larijani continued, “We are crusading to change this law. If we are successful, if the law passes the parliament, almost 80% of the executions will go away. This is big news for us, regardless of the Western criticism.” His statements were picked up and translated by Iran’s Persian-language Fars News Agency. While not speaking as explicitly as Javad Larijani, Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani, Javad Larijani’s brother and the head of Iran’s judiciary, addressed the need to change the country’s drug laws. During a 2 December meeting of judiciary officials, he said, “On the issue of drugs and trafficking, it feels necessary that we need a change in the legislation because the ultimate goal of the law should be implementing justice, while in reality, this goal is often not realized.” According to conservative *Etelaat* newspaper, Sadegh Larijani did not advocate softness on drug smuggling. He said that drug smugglers need to be “dealt with seriously” but conceded, “Unfortunately, today, with respect to drugs and drug-related laws, we see that these laws have no impact.” This is not the first time that Iran’s judiciary has proposed changing the punishment for drug-related crimes, or at least modifying how the punishment is implemented. In May 2014, current deputy head of Iran’s judiciary Gholam-Ali Mohseni-Ejei, while speaking as the country’s top prosecutor, said at a meeting of the High Council for Human Rights in Iran, “Unfortunately, the high number of executions in this country is related to drugs smuggling and the heavy penalties for this infraction. If, within the existing laws, we can review it in such a way that we help the intelligence officials to punish the leaders of these smuggling networks, and for the rest, we reconsider [their punishment], the goals of the system can be better realized.”

On 18 December 2014, six rights groups – Reprieve, Human Rights Watch, Iran Human Rights, the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Harm Reduction International and the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation – said the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) should follow its own human rights guidance and impose "a temporary freeze or withdrawal of support" if "following requests for guarantees and high-level political intervention, executions for drug related offenses continue." The UN agency's records show it has given more than $15 million to "supply control" operations by Iran's Anti-Narcotics Police, funding specialist training, intelligence, trucks, body scanners, night vision goggles, drug detection dogs, bases, and border patrol offices, the groups said. UNODC projects in Iran have come with performance indicators including "an increase in drug seizures and an improved capability of intercepting smugglers," and an "increase of drug-related sentences."

As in previous years, drug trafficking was the most frequently used charge against those who were executed in 2013 in Iran. However, there was a relative decrease in the number of executions for drug-related charges compared to previous years.

Of the **800** executions tallied by *Hands Off Cain* in 2014, at least **371** were for drug-related offenses, including **125** announced by official Iranian sources.

In 2015, as of 12 May, there were at least **286** executions carried out in Iran, including **59** announced by the regime.

***The “war on drugs” in Iran in 2014: executions announced by the regime.***

On 7 January 2014, three prisoners were hanged in the prison of Qazvin, after being convicted of drug related crimes, *IRNA* reported. They were identified as S. D., K. M. and Sh. M.

Between 12 and 15 January 2014, fourteen people were hanged for drug related crimes in six different Iranian cities. On 12 January, a 45-year-old prisoner was hanged in the prison of Yasouj, the official *IRNA* reported. The prisoner, who was not identified by name, was from Zabol, Sistan-Baluchistan Province, and convicted of trafficking 60 kilograms of *crack*, said the report. On 13 January, a prisoner, who was convicted of selling 17 kilograms of heroin, was executed in the Central Prison of Ardebil, *Tasnim* news agency reported, quoting the public relation office of the Judiciary in Ardebil. The prisoner was not identified by name. On 14 January, five prisoners were hanged in the Adelabad Prison of Shiraz, reported the news agency *FARS*. The prisoners, who were not identified by name, were convicted of possession and “armed” trafficking of 59 kilograms of opium. On the same day, another prisoner, who was not identified by name, was hanged in the prison of Hamedan for drug trafficking. On 15 January, five prisoners were executed in the prison of Shahrood, *FARS* news agency reported. They were identified as M. Y, 40, charged with possession and trafficking of 980 grams of *crack* and heroin; Gh. M., 27, for possession and trafficking of 1993 grams of *crack*; Gh. R., 42, for possession and trafficking of 1120 grams of *crack*; A. N., 21, for possession of 2 kilograms of heroin and 2 kilograms of morphine; and Gh. S., 56, for possession and trafficking of 1818 grams of *crack*. On the same day, another prisoner was hanged in the prison of Tabas, reported the Iranian state media today. He was charged with trafficking of 591.90 grams of heroin and morphine. The prisoner was identified by the *Human Rights Activists News Agency* (HRANA) as Hassan Sanij, 43, from Tabas.

On 23 January 2014, the Iranian regime executed five prisoners in the Central Prison of Kermanshah, state-run news network reported. The prosecutor general of the Kermanshah Province said the five were sentenced to death for having 102 kilogram drugs. The report gave no further information on the name, gender or age of the prisoners.

Between 17 and 19 February 2014, eleven people were executed in five different Iranian cities for drug trafficking. On 17 February, two prisoners were hanged in the prison of Zanjan, *Mehr* news agency reported. They were identified as S. B., charged with participation in buying and trafficking of 2,190 grams of heroin, and M. R., charged with trafficking of 1,905 grams of heroin. The prisoners were sentenced to death by branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court of Zanjan. On 18 February, four prisoners were hanged in the prison of Kerman, reported the *FARS*. Participation in trafficking of 703 kilograms and 250 grams of opium was the charge of two of the prisoners who were executed. The third and fourth prisoners were charged with possession and trafficking of 22 kilograms and 300 grams of heroin, and possession and trafficking of 1,300 grams of heroin respectively. All the four had been sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Court of Kerman. *FARS* news agency also reported about the execution of three more prisoners in the prison of Qazvin early in the morning. According to this report, Aliakbar Mehdizadeh, Jalal Telim Khani and Mahmoud Husseini were sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Court, after being convicted of drug trafficking. On 19 February, two more prisoners were hanged in the prisons of Roodbar and Somesara, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in the Province of Gilan. They were identified as F. A. and M. S. and charged with participation in trafficking of 2 kilograms of heroin and 2,880 grams of crack.

Between 25 and 27 February 2014, three people were hanged in two different cities for drug trafficking. On 25 February, two people were hanged in the prison of Semnan, said the Iranian regime’s judiciary. They were identified by their first initials as M. Sh. and M. F. On 26 February 2014, another people, identified as M. B., was executed in Rasht Central Prison, reported the Judiciary of Gilan Province. On 27 February, another prisoner was hanged in Salmas prison, the Iranian State Broadcasting (IRIB) reported. He was not identified by name and was convicted of trafficking 5 kilograms of opium and 600 grams of heroin.

Between 1 and 2 March 2014, seven people were hanged for drug trafficking in two different cities. On 1 March, three prisoners, identified as A. Sh., H. M. and M. S., were executed in the Central Prison of Rasht, reported the Judiciary of Gilan Province. On 2 March, four prisoners were hanged in Bandar Abbas, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in the Province of Hormozgan. They were convicted of armed drug trafficking of 966 kilograms of opium. The prisoners were identified as Mohsen Raisi, Hossein Anjirak, Abdollah Pabandan and Yaser Abdi, and were sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Court of Roudan.

On 7 April 2014, one prisoner who was not identified by name was hanged in the prison of Ardebil early in the morning, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in Ardebil. He was convicted of possession of 964 grams of heroin.

On 8 May 2014, two prisoners were hanged in the prison of Qom early in the morning for drug-related charges, reported the news agency *IRNA*. One of them was identified as M. D. And charged with possession and trafficking of about 1,000 grams of the synthetic drug *Crystal*. The other prisoner, a Baluchi, was identified as M. K. and charged with possession of narcotic drugs.

On 12 May 2014, nine prisoners were hanged in a prison of Ahwaz, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in the Khuzestan Province. All the prisoners were convicted of possession and trafficking of drugs. They were identified as L. B., M. T., A. A., H. R. K., A. Kh, M. J., A. Gh., M. Gh., and M. Gh.

Between 17 and 18 May 2014, thirteen prisoners were hanged in the prisons of Qazvin and Kerman for drug-related crimes, reported the news agency *FARS*. On 17 May, three prisoners were executed in the prison of Qazvin. They were identified as: Mohsen, 39, from Tabriz, convicted of possession and trafficking of one kilo of the narcotic drug *Crystal*; Yousef, 32, from Tabriz, and Saeed, 22, from Tabriz, both convicted of participation in possession and trafficking of three kilograms of *Crystal*. On 18 May, another ten prisoners were hanged in the prison of Kerman for drug-related crimes. Nine of them were identified as: H.A., charged with selling 400 grams of heroin, 900 grams of *crack*, and participation in trafficking of 300 grams of heroin; K. Sh. for participation in trafficking of 48.7 kilograms of *crack* and 300 kilograms of heroin; Y. A., M. S. and M. K. for participation in trafficking of 300 kilograms of heroin; A. M. for possession of 3.6 kilograms of heroin and 35.1 kilograms of heroin and *crack*; B. S. for participation in trafficking and possession of 54 kilograms of heroin; A. J. for selling 45 kilograms of heroin; K. H. for buying and selling 80 kilograms of opium and trafficking of 6 kilograms of heroin.

On 1 June 2014, another prisoner, identified only as J. L., 39, was executed in the prison of Semnan for drug trafficking, reported the Iranian Judiciary in Semnan Province.

On 10 June 2014, according to the news agency *Mehr*, a prisoner identified as Abbas M., 33, was hanged in the prison of Qazvin. He was convicted of possession of narcotic drugs and alcohol.

On 23 June 2014, seven prisoners convicted of drug-related charges were hanged in the prison of Rasht, reported the official website of the Iranian judiciary in Gilan Province. They were identified as M. H., charged with participation in buying 2 kg of *crystal*, S. G. for trafficking of 2,851 kg of heroin, A. D. for manufacturing and trafficking of 3 kg of concentrated heroin, J. Kh. for buying and selling 100 kg of opium and possession of 1,481 kg of *crack*, A. A. for participation in buying 147 kg of cannabis and 8 kg of opium, A. S. for possession of 6 kg and 12 g. of heroin and B. B. for possession and trafficking of 2,368 kg of *crack*.

On 7 August 2014, three prisoners were hanged in the prison of Rasht for drug-related charges, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary. They were identified as R. A., 44, M. A., 45, and A. G., 40.

On 16 August 2014, two prisoners, identified only as M. M., 41, and K. R., 40, were hanged in the prison of Rasht for drug-related charges, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary.

On 25 August 2014, three prisoners who were not identified by name were hanged for drug trafficking in the prison of Hamedan, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in Hamedan.

On 28 August 2014, seven drug smugglers were executed in the Central Prison of Bandar Abbas, reported State-run news agencies, including *ISNA*. According to these reports, Y. D. was executed for possessing 3 kilograms of heroin, M. A. on charges of possessing 8 kilograms of heroin, A. H. for possessing 30 kilograms of *crack*, M. B. on charges of possessing 3.75 kilograms of heroin, S. A. for possessing 2.1 kilograms of heroin, and M. M. for the armed possession of 487.5 kilograms of drugs. *Kurdpa* news agency identified the seventh smuggler as Edris Hassanzadeh, 36.

On 11 September 2014, a 60-year-old woman and a 31-year-old man were hanged in the prison of Rasht for drug trafficking, reported the Iranian State Broadcasting IRIB. The man was charged with possession and trafficking of 4,100 grams of *crystal*, and the woman with participation in buying, possession, trafficking and distribution of 3,198 grams of heroin.

On 16 September 2014, a prisoner was hanged in the main prison of Qom, state-run news agency *IRNA* reported. He was identified as Gh. S. and had been arrested on drug related charges.

On 18 September 2014, four prisoners were hanged at the Central Prison of Bandar Abbas for drug trafficking, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in Hormozgan Province. They were identified as Amrollah Rezaei and Afshin Sadeghi, charged with participation in possession and trafficking of 970 grams of heroin, Hamid Risi for participation in trafficking of 582 kilograms and 350 grams of opium and Ali Nouri for possession and trafficking of 1,460 grams of heroin.

On 24 September 2014, two prisoners convicted of drug-related charges were executed in the prison of Qazvin, *FARS* reported. They were identified as Sadegh Mohammad Khanloo, 33, charged with trafficking of 995 grams of *crystal*, and Asghar Mahtabi, 35, charged with possession and trafficking of one kilogram of *crack* and 200 grams of *crystal*, said the report.

On 28 September 2014, an unidentified prisoner was executed for drug trafficking in the prison of Torbat-e Heydarieh, reported the semi-official *Young Journalists Club*.

On 18 October 2014, four men were executed for drug-related charges in the main prison of Rasht, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in Gilan Province. One of the prisoners, identified as A. M., 32, was an Afghan citizen and was sentenced to death for possession of 1,995 grams of heroin. The other prisoners were identified as M. H., 46, charged for participation in buying, possession and trafficking of 27 kilograms of opium, M. A., 44, son of Ismaeil, for one kilogram of *crystal* and 330 grams of heroin, and M. A., 34, son of Tavakol, for buying 2,200 grams of crystal.

On 25 October 2014, five men were hanged in the prison of Rasht, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in Gilan Province. They were identified as: M. P., 40, charged with possession and trafficking of 31 kilograms of opium; S. A., 43, for possession and trafficking of 14 kilograms and buying 17 kilograms of opium; R. T., 42, for possession of 3310 grams of heroin; M. S., 27, for possession of 3984 grams of heroin; and A. R., 50, for participation in trafficking of 3 kilograms of heroin, said the report.

On 26 November 2014, M. Sh., charged with possession and trafficking of 9,300 grams of heroin, was executed in the prison of Qazvin, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in the city.

On 29 November 2014, a prisoner, who was not identified by name, was hanged in the prison of Ardebil, reported the Iranian Judiciary in the Province. The news website *Mizan* said he was convicted of participation in possession of 5,940 grams of heroin.

On 3 December 2014, a 28-year-old prisoner, identified as Majid R., was executed for drug trafficking in the prison of Ghazvin, announced the provincial judiciary.

On 10 December 2014, a woman identified as F. Gh. was hanged in Ghazvin Central Prison, reported the state run news agency *ISCA*. She was arrested for trafficking 2 kilograms of heroin and 6 kilograms of opium. The report said that “she was smuggling the drugs on behalf of others”.

***The “war on drugs” in Iran continued in 2015: executions announced by the regime.***

On 1 January 2015, a 38-year-old man, who was identified as Alaeddin Azizi, was hanged in the prison of Qazvin reported the Iranian news agency *FARS*. He was arrested together with his wife and 18-year-old daughter while carrying 2,967 grams of heroin. The man was sentenced to death while his wife was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

On 13 January 2015, five prisoners were hanged in the prison of Arak, reported the official website of the Judiciary in Markazi Province. All the prisoners were sentenced to death by Arak Revolution Court for drug related charges. They were identified as Mohammadreza S., charged with possession and trafficking of 10 kilograms of heroin, Mohammad A. for possession and trafficking of about 3 kilograms of heroin, Davoud A. for possession of 3.33 kilograms of heroin and 3 grams of concentrated heroin, Javad M. and Mostafa F. for participation in buying and possession of 4.3 kilograms of heroin.

On 25 January 2015, two prisoners were hanged in the prison of Arak, reported the official website of Iranian Judiciary in Markazi Province. They were identified as Milad Z. and Alireza A., and were charged with possession and trafficking of 2,950 grams of heroin.

On 31 January 2015, four prisoners convicted of drug-related charges were hanged in the prison of Rasht, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in Gilan Province. They were identified as A. M., 42, charged with trafficking of 5,750 grams of crystal, Y. Gh., 41, for buying 5,750 grams of crystal, H. T., 37, for participation in buying 3,300 grams of crystal and S. Gh., 29, for possession and trafficking of 5,750 grams of crystal.

On 14 February 2015, a 43-year-old prisoner was hanged in the main prison of Rasht (Lakan), announced the Gilan province’s judiciary. He was identified only as M. B., and had been arrested and sentenced to death on drug related charges.

Between 22 and 23 February 2015, twelve prisoners were hanged for drug trafficking in three different cities. On 22 February, seven prisoners were executed in the prison of Bandar Abbas, reported the *Iranian State Broadcasting* (IRIB). They were identified by the *Human Rights Activists News Agency in Iran* (HRANA) as: Sajad Ghochany, 27, from Tehran, Mohammad Gholami, 33, from Tabriz, Mohammad Kazem Yazdani Doboron, 55, from Mashhad, Alireza Gholami, 45, from Bushehr, Mehdi Shahdadi, 31, from Iranshahr, Mosa Nekoei Zadeh, 22, from Bandar Abbas, Ghasem Moradi Zadeh, 35, from Yazd. The Young Journalists Club, run by the authorities, quoted Hormozgan prosecutor as saying that these prisoners were convicted of trafficking one ton of opium, heroin and hashish. On the same day, four prisoners were hanged in the prison of Arak, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in the Markazi Province. Three of them – identified as Mohammad M., Ehsan J. and Amir Hossein G. – were charged with participation in production of 59 kilograms and 68 grams of *crystal*. Mohammad M. and Ehsan J. were in addition charged with selling 2 and 13 kilograms of *crystal* that they had produced, respectively. The fourth prisoner, identified as Reza Z., was charged with participation in possession and trafficking of 972 grams of heroin. On 23 February, one prisoner, identified as Mohammadreza Ranjbar Kermani, was hanged in the prison of Rasht, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in Gilan Province. He was charged with trafficking of 195 kilograms of opium, selling 13.7 kilograms of *crystal*, and possession of 325 grams of heroin.

On 26 February 2015, three prisoners were hanged in the prison of Ardebil, reported the official website of the Iranian Judiciary in Ardebil Province. They were convicted of drug trafficking and were arrested while transferring 27 kilograms of heroin out of the country.

On 28 February 2015, another prisoner, identified as D. F., 35, was hanged in Rasht Central Prison for drug-related crimes, State-run *Jam-e Jam* daily reported.

Between 4 and 5 March 2015, two unidentified men were executed for drug trafficking in two different cities, reported the *Iranian State Broadcasting* (IRIB). One of them was hanged on 4 March in Meshgin Shahr, in the province of Ardebil, the other on 5 March in the Province of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

On 7 March 2015, three people were executed in Ardebil Central Prison on drug smuggling charges, reported the head of the judiciary.

On 12 April 2015, four men were executed in the prison of Arak for drug-related crimes, reported the Iranian Judiciary in the Province of Markazi. They were identified as Nematollah N., convicted of possession and trafficking of 6,950 grams of heroin, Mohammad L., for possession of 667 grams of heroin, Mahmoud S., for trafficking of 20 grams and possession of 880 grams of heroin, and Hamed N., for possession of 536 grams of crystal.

On 13 April 2015, eight men were executed in the Central Prison of Karaj for drug-related crimes, reported the *Iranian State Broadcasting* (IRIB). They were identified by unofficial sources as: Shahab Karimi, Hamid Farajloo, Hassan Abolhassani, Ahmad Malekizadeh, Taleb Nabizadeh, Shahram Gholipour, Saeed Pourmohammad, and Asghar Amiri, 28.

On 16 April 2015, four drug smugglers were hanged in the Central Prison of Arak, state-run Tasnim news agency reported. They were identified by the Arak public prosecutor as Keivan S., convicted of possessing 500 grams of heroin, Hossein B., on charges of carrying 60 kilograms of opium and 30 kilograms of *hashish*, Massoud M., for possession of 2 grams of heroin and 653 grams of *crack*, and Mohammadj J., on charges of possessing 19 kilos and 400 grams of heroin.

On 23 April 2015, six people were hanged for drug-related charges in the Central Prison of Bandar Abbas, reported State-run IRIB news agency.

**Saudi Arabia**

In 2005, Saudi Arabia redefined the law on drug-trafficking, giving discretionary powers to judges in deciding between imprisonment and the death penalty. The 1987 law calls for the mandatory sentence of death for those who traffic or manufacture illicit drugs while the death penalty is discretionary for those who use illegal drugs. Now judges can decide, at their own discretion, to reduce the sentence to a maximum of fifteen years, 50 lashes or a minimum fine of 100,000 Saudi riyals (over 31,600 USD).

In February 2015, the legal charity *Reprieve* accused the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) of contributing to Saudi Arabia’s unprecedented rate of state executions by helping the kingdom arrest offenders. The charity, which represents the interests of people on death row all over the world, said documents from September 2013 showed the UNODC had “agreed to cooperation with the [Saudi] General Directorate of Narcotics Control on drug control- related matters, including support to law enforcement efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking”. Responding to *Reprieve*, the UNODC’s deputy executive director Aldo Lale-Demoz denied that the agency had “a programme of assistance on counter-narcotics law enforcement” with the Saudi government. “Cooperation with Saudi Arabia is focused on technical assistance and capacity building in the many different thematic areas that fall under UNODC’s mandate,” Lale-Demoz said.

Of the 88 executions in Saudi Arabia in 2014, at least 41 were carried out for drug-related crimes.

Another 33 convicted of drug trafficking were beheaded in 2015 (as of 12 May).

In 2012, there were at least 37 executions, a significant increase compared to 3 in 2011, and only one in 2010 and 2009.

On 14 January 2014, Saudi authorities beheaded two Pakistanis for drug smuggling. Abrar Hussain Nizar Hussain was executed in the city of Jeddah after being convicted of trying to smuggle in heroin hidden in his stomach, the Ministry said in a statement carried by *SPA* state news agency. Zahid Khan Barakat was beheaded in Qatif over a similar charge, a separate statement said.

On 5 February 2014, Mohammed Asharaf Ramadan, a Pakistani national, was beheaded in Riyadh over alleged charges of drug trafficking. He was caught attempting to smuggle into the kingdom an amount of heroin that he swallowed.

On 8 August 2014, Saudi Arabia beheaded a national in the city of Tabuk for drug trafficking. Eid Al Umairi was found guilty of having dealt with “large quantities of amphetamines.”

On 12 August 2014, Saudi authorities beheaded a Syrian national in the region of Al-Jawf for drug-trafficking. Safwan Hindawi was arrested as he was smuggling a “large amount of narcotic pills into the kingdom,” the Interior Ministry said.

On 14 August 2014, the interior ministry said that it executed Pakistani Sultan Hussein Khadim in the Eastern province for smuggling huge quantities of heroin and drugs into Saudi Arabia.

On 18 August 2014, Saudi Arabia beheaded four nationals from the same family in the city of Najran for drug trafficking. The four executed men – brothers Hadi bin Saleh Abdullah al-Mutlaq and Awad bin Saleh Abdullah al-Mutlaq along with brothers Mufrih bin Jaber Zayd al-Yami and Ali bin Jaber Zayd al-Yami – were found to have smuggled “a large quantity of hashish” into the kingdom, the Ministry of Interior said, adding that King Abdullah is “keen on combating narcotics due to their great harm to individuals and the society.” The four were arrested and detained by members of the Ministry of Interior’s General Directorate of Investigations (known as al-Mabahith) on several occasions after their alleged offence in 2007, Amnesty International reported. They were reportedly tortured during interrogation, including with beatings and sleep-deprivation, in order to extract false confessions. They were referred to trial and sentenced to death largely on the basis of these ‘confessions’.

On 2 September 2014, four drug traffickers from Syria and Iran were executed by beheading. Three executions took place in the northern Al-Jawf Region, while the fourth took place at an unspecified location in the kingdom's eastern region, according to four separate statements issued by the Saudi Interior Ministry. The men executed in the Al-Jawf Region were all Syrian nationals, identified as Hamoud Fayez Hassoun, Hassan Taha Musalamani, and Youssef Abdullah al-Halqi. They were convicted of smuggling "a large quantity of banned amphetamine pills" and had confessed to their crimes before the courts sentenced them to death, the interior ministry said. The fourth execution took place in Saudi Arabia's eastern region, where Iranian national Raza Abbas Fadhil Aderisawi was beheaded by sword after being convicted of smuggling "a large quantity of hashish" into the kingdom by sea. "The Interior Ministry reminds the public that the Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud) continues the fight against drugs of all kinds as it inflicts serious harm on the individual and society," the ministry said in its statement. "The most severe penalties on the perpetrators are derived from the righteous approach of Sharia law."

On 4 September 2014, a Pakistani national, Izzat Khan Tor Qul, was beheaded in Jeddah Governorate for smuggling large quantity of heroin into the country, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

On 9 September 2014, Pakistani Kamran Ghulam Abbas was executed in Khubar, in Eastern Province, after being convicted of smuggling a “large quantity of heroin,” the interior ministry said in a statement carried by *SPA* state news agency.

On 12 September 2014, a Saudi convicted of drugs trafficking was beheaded in Riyadh. Saad al-Oteibi, a repeat offender, was executed for bringing "a large quantity of amphetamines" and hashish into the kingdom, the interior ministry said.

On 16 September 2014, Syrian national Mohammed Ismail al-Jammus was beheaded for drug trafficking. He had been charged with smuggling a large quantity of amphetamines into the country, the interior ministry said.

On 18 September 2014, Pakistani national Sanaullah Mohammed Amir was executed in Qatif governorate. He had attempted to smuggle “a large quantity of heroin” into the country, said the interior ministry.

Between 14 and 15 October 2014, Saudi Arabia beheaded two people for drug smuggling. On 14 October, a Saudi, Hamad bin Awadh bin Hawi Al-Anzi, was executed in northern Jawf region “because he smuggled a large quantity of amphetamine pills into the kingdom,” the official *Saudi Press Agency* said. On 15 October, a Pakistani man, Mohammad Yunus Mohammed Shoaib, was beheaded in Qatif, after being “caught smuggling a large quantity of heroin into the kingdom inside his gut,” the Interior Ministry said.

On 21 October 2014, another Pakistani convicted of drug smuggling was beheaded in the city of Khobar. Baz Mohammed Ghul Mohammed was found guilty of attempting to smuggle a “large amount of heroin” by hiding it in his stomach, the Interior Ministry said.

On 24 October 2014, Butha Mushtaq, a Pakistani man convicted of smuggling heroin into the Kingdom, was executed in the capital Riyadh. He was found guilty of smuggling heroin concealed in capsules which he had swallowed, the Interior Ministry said.

On 27 October 2014, Saudi Arabia beheaded two prisoners convicted of drug smuggling. Mohammed Gul Rahma of Pakistan was executed for heroin smuggling in Qatif. Mohammed bin Noun bin Nasser Al Dhufairi of Saudi Arabia was executed in northern Jawf region for smuggling amphetamine pills.

Between 5 and 6 November, Saudi Arabia beheaded two Pakistanis for drug smuggling. On 5 November, Mohammed Sadiq Hanif was executed in the town of Khubar for his attempt to smuggle "a large amount" of heroin hidden in his stomach into the kingdom, the Interior Ministry said. On 6 November, Amin Allah Zar Gul was beheaded in Riyadh after he was "found guilty of trying to smuggle heroin in his gut," the official Saudi Press Agency said.

On 12 November 2014, Saudi Arabia beheaded a convicted drug trafficker in the northern region of Jawf. Mohammed bin Abd al-Ghani bin Hassan al-Khatir, a Saudi, "was caught smuggling a large quantity of drugs in the form of pills into the kingdom, inside his luggage," Saudi Press Agency said, citing the interior ministry.

On 13 November 2014, a Pakistani man, Niaz Mohammad Ghulam Mohammad, was beheaded in Kharj Governorate for drug trafficking. He tried to smuggle “a large quantity of heroin inside his intestines into the Kingdom,” the Ministry of Interior stated.

On 18 November 2014, Talal Ali Qassem, a Syrian convicted of drug trafficking, was executed in the region of Jawf. "He was captured smuggling a large quantity of methamphetamine. Investigations led to his confession," the interior ministry said.

On 20 November 2014, Ali Agridas, a Turkish man convicted of drug trafficking, was beheaded in Riyadh. He had been convicted of receiving a “large amount of drugs”, the interior ministry said.

On 25 November 2014, Pakistani Seyfour al Rahman Golajan was beheaded in the city of Dammam for drug trafficking. He “was caught trying to smuggle a large quantity of heroin hidden in his gut into the kingdom”, an interior ministry statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency said.

On 27 November 2014, Saudi Arabia beheaded a Pakistani for heroin smuggling. Mohammed Rahman Mohammed Asghar was executed in the city of Khobar, after being found guilty of smuggling “a large quantity of heroin into the kingdom,” the *Saudi Press Agency* said.

On 3 December 2014, Ridwan Awad Mohammed Awad, a Syrian convicted of drug smuggling, was executed in the city of Qurayyat. He was caught trying to smuggle "a large amount" of amphetamine pills into the kingdom, the interior ministry said.

On 5 December 2014, a Saudi national, Awda bin Selama bin Suleiman al-Huwaiti, was executed after being convicted of amphetamine smuggling.

On 9 December 2014, Saudi national Nasser bin Amiq Ali al-Inzi was beheaded in the Jawf region after being convicted of trying to smuggle "a large amount" of amphetamines into the country, the interior ministry said in a statement.

On 11 December 2014, Mohammad Fayad Mohammad Azam, a Pakistani convicted of heroin smuggling, was executed in the capital Riyadh.

On 16 December 2014, a Saudi national, Abdulrahman bin Bakheit al-Lugmani, was executed in the city of Mecca, after being convicted of smuggling “a large quantity of amphetamines,” said the interior ministry.

On 17 December 2014, Pakistani Mohammad Gafour Hashim Khan was beheaded in Eastern Province for smuggling “a large amount” of heroin into the country, the Ministry of Interior said.

On 25 December 2014, a Pakistani man, Ismail Khan Sayed, was beheaded in Eastern Province after his conviction for smuggling "a large amount" of heroin, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

On 31 December 2014, a Pakistani national, Sadruddin Saeedullah Khan, was beheaded in the Mecca province for smuggling a “huge amount” of heroin, the Interior Ministry said.

On 1 January 2015, Saudi national Malik bin Said al-Sayaari was put to death in the Al-Hasa district of Eastern Province after a repeat conviction for hashish smuggling, the interior ministry said.

On 6 January 2015, Mohammed al-Mahameed, a Syrian convicted of smuggling “a significant amount of amphetamines,” was beheaded in the Jawf region, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

On 8 January 2015, Mohammad Shahbal, a Pakistani man convicted of smuggling heroin into the country, was beheaded in Riyadh, the interior ministry said. The drugs were found in capsules he had swallowed.

On 14 January 2015, Pakistani Mahmoud Massih Iqbal Massih was beheaded in Qatif for heroin trafficking, the interior ministry said in a statement.

On 19 January 2015, a convicted Pakistani heroin smuggler, Yassir Arafat Munir Ahmed, was executed in the Muslim holy city of Mecca, the interior ministry said.

On 27 January 2015, Saudi Arabia carried out two executions for drug trafficking. Latif Khan Nurzada, a Pakistani, was executed in the Muslim holy city of Mecca for smuggling heroin into the kingdom, while a Saudi man, Yassir bin Hussein al-Hamza, was executed in the Jawf region after he allegedly confessed to smuggling amphetamine pills.

On 3 February 2015, a convicted Jordanian drug smuggler, Mohammed Salamah Fareeh al-Azazma, was executed in the Jawf region after he was found guilty of "smuggling a large amount of amphetamines," the interior ministry said in a statement.

On 5 February 2015, Abdelghani Mohammed Akbar, from Pakistan, was beheaded in the Riyadh region after being convicted of trying to smuggle heroin into Saudi Arabia, the interior ministry said in a statement.

Between 10 and 12 February 2015, Saudi Arabia beheaded three foreign drug traffickers. On 10 February, Abdullah Mohammed al-Ahmad al-Anzi, a Syrian man convicted of smuggling a large quantity of amphetamine pills, was executed in the northwestern al-Jawf province. On 11 February, a Yemeni drug trafficker was executed in the city of Jizan. Nayef al-Briki was found guilty of "receiving a large amount" of hashish and attempting to sell it. On 12 February 2015, a Pakistani drug smuggler, Babir Hussein Mohammed Ishaq, was beheaded after being found guilty of transporting heroin which he had ingested.

Between 25 and 26 February 2015, Saudi Arabia beheaded two more foreign drug traffickers. On 25 February, a Jordanian national, identified as Omar Mohammed Abdul Muti al-Rubai, was beheaded in the al-Jawf region, after being convicted of trying to smuggle a large amount of amphetamines across the northern Jordan-Saudi border. On 26 February, a Pakistani heroin trafficker, identified as Hafiz Wifaq Rasoul Shah, was executed in the city of Medina.

On 11 March 2015, three people were beheaded in Saudi Arabia for drug trafficking. Hammud Hajuri from Yemen and Mohammed al-Qahtani, a Saudi national, were executed in the province of Jizan after being convicted of smuggling amphetamines and *hashish* into the kingdom. In a separate case, Fadi Abdulrazzaq, a Syrian national, was executed in the province of Jawf for smuggling amphetamines.

On 12 March 2015, Mansour bin Habeeb bin Mahdi Khalfan, a Saudi, was put to death in the kingdom's eastern region after being convicted of "leading a gang" dealing in hashish, money laundering and forged documents, the interior ministry said.

On 17 March 2015, Pakistani national Mumtaz Hussein Deen Ahmed was executed in Medina after his conviction for smuggling heroin.

On 18 March 2015, a Syrian, Firas Mohammed al-Kor, was put to death in the region of Jawf after being convicted of smuggling amphetamines.

On 19 March 2015, Pakistani national Mohammed Shafiq Abu Al Islam was beheaded in Qatif Governorate for smuggling a large quantity of heroin, SPA reported.

On 24 March 2015, a Pakistani national, Benyameen Ali Ahmed, was beheaded in the city of Jeddah, after being found guilty of smuggling an undisclosed amount of heroin into the country. The drugs were allegedly found in capsules he had swallowed.

On 25 March 2015, Faisal bin Rafaa al-Ashjaie, a Saudi man convicted of smuggling "a large amount of amphetamine pills" into the kingdom, was beheaded in the region of Jawf, the interior ministry said.

On 1 April 2015, Majed Ahmed Shraheli, a Yemeni convicted of "receiving and promoting a large amount of hashish" in the kingdom, was beheaded in the city of Jizan, the interior ministry said.

On 2 April 2015, Saudi Arabia beheaded Ghazwan al-Nasser, a Syrian man convicted of smuggling a "large quantity of amphetamines" into the country, the interior ministry said.

On 6 April 2015, a Saudi man, Saleh al-Yami, was beheaded in the province of Najran, after being found guilty of smuggling an undisclosed amount of hashish and banned narcotic pills into the kingdom. Yami was also convicted of wounding several policemen during a confrontation.

On 15 April 2015, a Saudi man was beheaded for drug trafficking in the northwestern region of Jawf. Khalid al-Rowaili was convicted of smuggling amphetamine pills, said the Interior Ministry.

On 23 April 2015, Sulaiman al-Jahni, a Saudi national convicted of trafficking amphetamines, was executed in the northern region of Jawf.

On 24 April 2015, Saudi Arabia executed a Jordanian man in the northwestern region of Tabuk for drug trafficking. Mohammad Abu Samak was arrested “as he was smuggling a large amount of banned amphetamine pills,” the interior ministry said.

On 30 April 2015, a Saudi national, Abdullah al-Ruwaili, was executed in the city of Tabuk after being found guilty of "smuggling a large amount of banned amphetamine pills," said the Interior Ministry.

On 1 May 2015, Shirin Khan, a Pakistani convicted of drug smuggling, was beheaded in Riyadh province. He was found guilty of smuggling heroin into the kingdom in swallowed balloons, the interior ministry said.

On 12 May 2015, Saudi Arabia carried out its 80th beheading of the year, edging closer to the 87 executions it carried out during all of 2014. Rabie al-Sai'ari, a Saudi citizen who was convicted of trying to smuggle hashish into the kingdom, was executed in Najran, a district on the border with Yemen.

**Malaysia**

The death sentence is mandatory for trafficking narcotics in various amounts according to the drug concerned (section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952).

According to Home Ministry, 441 persons were hanged since 1960. Of the 441 persons executed, 228 were involved in drug trafficking.

At least 38 new death sentences were imposed in 2014, 16 of which were for drug trafficking. Amnesty International received credible information that at least 2 executions were carried out in 2014. While the European Delegation in the country has had echoes of 3 executions in 2014, which would have been "recognized" by the government, which had been asked – through an NGO – to confirm.

In 2013, there were 3 executions, according to information gathered by the *Malaysian Bar*. At least one people was put to death for drug trafficking.

As of 13 November 2014, there were 975 prisoners on death row, according to figures supplied by the Home Ministry. Some two-thirds of those sentenced to death committed drug-related offences.

The Malaysian Government has since 2009 announced its willingness to review the mandatory death penalty, with a view to its possible abolition or the reintroduction of a discretionary death penalty.

In its 2009 Universal Periodic Review report to the United Nations Human Rights Council, Malaysia had declared that it was proposing to amend “existing anti-drug trafficking legislation to reduce the maximum sentence to life imprisonment” from the current mandatory death penalty, that gives no leeway for the justice system to differentiate between a mule and a lord.

In July 2012, the Attorney General announced that the Attorney General’s Chambers was considering proposing an amendment to the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952 to give judges the discretion not to impose the death sentence on drug couriers, commonly known as “drug mules”. The Attorney General’s Chambers was reportedly also considering a proposal that those on death row be resentenced.

At an event entitled “Dialogue with Members of Parliament on the Reintroduction of Discretionary Sentencing for Capital Punishment” held at Parliament on 14 November 2013, the Government and the Attorney General’s Chambers had informed those present that they were in the midst of reviewing the mandatory death penalty.

**Singapore**

Singapore has some of the toughest anti-drugs laws in the world, and its customs forms warn arriving travellers of “death for drug traffickers” in no uncertain terms.

The Misuse of Drugs Act provides for the death penalty if the amount of diamorphine (or pure heroin) trafficked is 15 grams or more.

On 18 July 2014, Singapore hanged two men convicted of drug trafficking, the first executions carried out in the city-state for more than three years while the country reviewed its use of the death penalty. Tang Hai Liang, 36, and Foong Chee Peng, 48, both from Singapore, were executed at Changi Prison Complex. Tang Hai Liang was found to have trafficked 89.55 grams of diamorphine and Foong Chee Peng was found to have trafficked 40.23 grams of diamorphine.

On 14 November 2012, following the periodic general review started in July 2011, Singapore’s Parliament changed the mandatory death penalty for drug-related crimes, allowing judges discretion to impose life imprisonment in certain specific instances of drug trafficking, in which two specific, tightly-defined conditions must both be met. First, the person must have only played the role of a courier, and not have been involved in any other activity related to drug supply or distribution. Second, the trafficker must also have co-operated with anti-narcotics authorities in a substantive way, or has a mental disability that substantially impairs his appreciation of the gravity of the act. However, the mandatory death penalty will continue to apply in most cases, particularly for those who manufacture or traffic in drugs and those who fund, organise or abet drug trafficking.

All existing cases, if eligible, would be considered for re-sentencing under the new law.

As of 20 April 2015, seven people sentenced to death for drug offences were re-sentenced under the new regime: Yong Vui Kong, a Malaysian who was sentenced to hang in 2009; Subashkaran Pragasam, a Singaporean man sentenced to death in October 2012; Dinesh Pillai Raja Retnam, a Malaysian drug trafficker sentenced to death in 2011 (the first to have his death penalty lifted on grounds of mental disability); Yip Mun Hei, a Singaporean convicted in September 2009; Wilkinson Primus, a Malaysian condemned to hang in 2009 (the second to have his death penalty commuted to life imprisonment on grounds of mental disability); Cheong Chun Yin and Pang Siew Fum, both Malaysians, convicted in 2010.

**Vietnam**

Vietnam has enacted some of the strictest drug laws in Asia. A 1997 law made possession or smuggling 100 grams or more of heroin, or 5 kilograms or more of opium, punishable by death. In July 2001, the People’s Supreme Court issued guidelines envisaging a 20-year jail term for defendants guilty of trafficking from 100 grams to 300 grams of heroin, life in jail for trafficking 300 grams to 600 grams, and capital punishment for 600 grams and upwards. The guidelines are not strictly implemented. In 2009, the Parliament removed the illegal use of drugs from the list of crimes punishable by death, but maintained capital punishment for drug trafficking.

Media reports have indicated that around half of all executions are for drug-related crimes. There are nearly 700 people on the death row in Vietnam, many of them for drugs.

Amnesty International recorded that the courts imposed at least 72 new death sentences in 2014, 80% of which were for drug trafficking.

On 20 January 2014, a Vietnamese court sentenced 30 people to death on Monday for trafficking heroin at the conclusion of a mass trial. State media reported the 21 men and 9 women were convicted of being part of four connected rings that smuggled nearly 2 tons of heroin from Laos into Vietnam and then on to China. The 20-day trial in the Province of Quang Ninh involved the largest number of defendants sentenced to death in a single trial in Vietnamese court history, said provincial court Chief Ngo Duc. On 19 June, the Supreme People’s Court upheld death sentences given to 29 of them, while one of the appellants had his death sentence reduced to a life sentence.

On 14 August 2014, a court in northern Vietnam sentenced six other people to death for trafficking heroin from Laos to be sold to China. Judge Pham Van Nam said six, including two women, were convicted of trafficking 110 kilograms of heroin, from mid- 2012 until the gang was busted in May 2013, at the end of a three-day trial in Dien Bien province. The judge said the case was biggest one ever tried in the province, which borders Laos.

On 11 February 2014, three leading anti-death penalty groups appealed to the United Nations to freeze counter-narcotics aid to Vietnam, after the communist country sentenced 30 people to die for drug-related offences. The call – from *Reprieve*, *Harm Reduction International* (HRI) and the *World Coalition Against the Death Penalty* – cites the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime’s internal human rights guidance note requiring the organization to stop funding for a country if it’s feared that such support may lead to people being executed. The appeal follows the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland’s withdrawal of aid from Iran’s drug control program, fearing that such assistance could contribute to illegal executions for drugs offences in the country. UNODC aid to Vietnam will exceed $5 million for technical assistance, equipment, training and other support for the 2012-2017 period. Drug control is the largest component of the program.

**Pakistan**

Under the Narcotics Substances Act 1997, the minimum penalty for anyone found in possession of more than 10 kilograms of illicit drugs is a life sentence, while a death sentence is the maximum penalty.

Since 1997, when a stringent law prescribing capital punishment for drug pushers was enacted, the High Courts and Supreme Court have overturned the death sentence for as many as 70 people sentenced to death on charges of smuggling narcotics into the country in the same period, statistics laid before the National Assembly revealed. The statistics were provided by Interior Ministry on 26 March 2014 in response to a question by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf lawmaker Shireen Mazari. “The majority of these sentences were quashed by higher courts due to insufficient evidence or flaws in the trial process,” Raja Amir Abbas, a Supreme Court lawyer who has dealt with drug smuggling cases, told *The Express Tribune*. Meanwhile, 444 people across the country were being tried in cases of drug offences punishable with death, the statistics revealed. A total of 522 death sentences were handed down in the country over the past five years, the Interior Ministry informed the house.

On 23 October 2014, *Reprieve*, the charity that campaigns against the death penalty, said Britain risks being “complicit in a gross human rights abuse” in Pakistan if drug mules caught by a force trained and equipped by Britain are executed. While the UK government’s Strategy for the Abolition of the Death Penalty lists Pakistan as a ‘priority country’, the UK has given more than £12 million to support anti-drug operations in Pakistan, where specialist drug courts maintain a conviction rate of more than 92 per cent, and can hand down a death sentence to anyone convicted of possession of more than 1kg of drugs. UK funding has covered training for officers in Pakistan’s Anti-Narcotics Force as well as intelligence and equipment, while ministers have failed to take steps to prevent the aid leading to death sentences. In correspondence with legal charity *Reprieve*, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has confirmed that the UK has ended counter-narcotics funding to Iran due to “the exact same concerns” as Denmark; the latter country redirected funding in 2013 after concluding donations were “leading to executions”. On Pakistan, however, Clegg said the UK would continue its funding, despite being “acutely aware that this assistance must not compromise our clear opposition to the use of capital punishment in all circumstances, including for drug offences”. *Reprieve* has asked the British Government to make its aid conditional on an end to the death penalty for drug offences – consistent with its position on similar aid to Iran – and to accept responsibility for the link between its support for drug operations and the application of the death penalty, including for British nationals. In December 2014, the Pakistani government ended a six-year-moratorium on capital punishment. Among at least 500 prisoners slated for execution in the coming months, there are at least 112 drug traffickers who were apprehended with support and funding from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), according to a joint statement released in March 2015 by a coalition of 11 human-rights groups and drug-policy think-tanks, including Reprieve, Harm Reduction International and the International Drug Policy Consortium.

**India**

On 7 March 2014, India replaced the mandatory death penalty in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act with an optional death sentence, following the 2011 Maharashtra High Court ruling in India Harm Reduction Network vs Union of India, in which the mandatory death penalty for repeat offenders under section 31A of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, was declared unconstitutional.