Saudi Arabia Beheads 79th Convict This Year in Tabuk

Riyadh, May 7 (RHC)-- Saudi Arabia has beheaded a citizen convicted of drug trafficking, bringing to 79 the number of executions in the kingdom so far this year.

The Saudi Interior Ministry said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency that the man known as Hussein al-Omairi was beheaded on Wednesday in the northwestern region of Tabuk. The man was reportedly found guilty of smuggling amphetamines.

Concern is growing about the increasing number of executions in Saudi Arabia as it has seen a surge in executions this year. While in 2014, 87 beheadings were carried out, so far this year 79 people have been beheaded.

Saudi officials execute convicts by sword and then dangle their corpses from a helicopter to make sure the public could see the result of the execution. Saudi authorities say the executions reveal the kingdom's commitment to "maintaining security and realizing justice."

The kingdom has come under particular criticism from human rights groups for the executions carried out for non-fatal crimes. Amnesty International says Saudi Arabia has one of the highest execution rates in the world.

Muslim clerics have also slammed Riyadh for indicting and then executing suspects without giving them a chance to defend themselves, describing the Saudi authorities as uncivilized. Drug trafficking, rape, murder, apostasy and armed robbery are all punishable by death under the Saudi rule.

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