Iran executes 2 men for blasphemy posted on social media

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Iran executed Yousef Mehrad and Sadrollah Fazeli-Zare Monday for “insulting the Prophet of Islam” and “burning the Quran,” claiming that their social media activity was “dedicated to atheism and desecration of the sanctities,” reported the Mizan news agency.

Accused of running a Telegram channel, titled “Criticism of Superstition and Religion,” the two were arrested in 2020 and held in solitary confinement for the first months, according to Iran's Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), they were also denied access to a lawyer.

Convicted in 2021, they were sentenced to death for blasphemy charges, HRANA said. The court also indicted them for “running groups to act against national security.” Iran’s Supreme Court rejected their appeals, upholding the verdicts, citing that the men “clearly confessed,” said the judiciary’s news agency Mizan.

“Almost everybody who was executed in Iran doesn’t have the right to a fair trial, access to a lawyer, there’s no due process,” Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, director of Norway-based group Iran Human Rights told i24NEWS. “Basically all of these executions are extrajudicial executions.”

“Iranian authorities can arrest anyone they want, they can be charged with any charge, and force them to confess on TV after torturing him, and then sentence him to death,” said Amiry-Moghaddam in the interview, adding that “the aim of the execution is to spread fear.”

“As of today, 205 have been executed since the beginning of the year,” he concluded his interview with a sharp critique on the regime, “all they can do is suppress and instill fear in society.”

"It is also a serious insult to the freedom of expression," Amiry-Moghaddam added on Twitter, “these executions must be a turning point in the relations between the Islamic Republic and countries respecting the freedom of expression."

Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi said Tehran's deadly crackdown will only deepen the anger felt by protestors that swept across the Islamic Republic, triggered by Kurdish-Iranian Mahsa Amin's death last September 16.