

Yury Fedotov  
Chief Executive, UNODC  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC  
PO Box 500, A 1400 Vienna, Austria  
By email: [yury.fedotov@unodc.org](mailto:yury.fedotov@unodc.org)

12 December 2014

Dear Mr Fedotov,

I write in reply to your letter dated 22 August 2014 (attached here for reference), in which you explain that the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) will continue supporting counter-narcotics "supply control" operations in the Islamic Republic of Iran despite the country's continued execution of individuals arrested in such operations.

Your letter notes that while the UNODC "advocates for the abolition of the death penalty", you believe this aim is best furthered through "engagement and dialogue", and that you are "gratified" by "recent public statements by high level Iranian officials that are showing potentially favourable developments regarding the application of the death penalty in relation to drug offenders in Iran".

As much as we would like to believe such statements offer hope of real change, it is impossible to ignore the gulf between Iran's rhetoric and the realities of its justice system. We believe that developments this month offer a pertinent example of this divergence between words and deeds.

On 4 December, Mohammad Javad Larijani, the Secretary of Iran's Human Rights Council, a branch of the Judiciary, used an English-language interview with France 24 to suggest he wished to change the law to end executions for drug offences, while just one day earlier authorities executed [18 convicted drug offenders across](#) the country's prisons. This is just the latest instance of many alleged drug traffickers being hanged on the same day, following a [similar occurrence in Orumiyeh prison last month](#).

The number of people executed for drug trafficking in Iran so far this year is at least 318, meaning that before the end of the year the total number of such executions will likely equal or surpass the [331](#) reported for 2013. This increase in the execution rate belies Mr Larijani's reassuring rhetoric and UNODC's lauding of "potentially favourable developments" on this issue.

Your letter notes that Iran's continued execution of drug offenders has been "the subject of many high-level discussions" with Iranian counterparts, but the rising number of such executions suggests the UNODC's approach is ineffective if not counterproductive.

Earlier this year Iran's Judiciary head, Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani – brother to the same Mohammad Javad Larijani who is apparently seeking to end the execution of drug offenders – [rebuked UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon for criticizing Iran's rising number of executions](#). It is hard in light of this to find reassurance in the fact that "the UNODC representative in Iran continues to raise concerns on the use of capital punishment against drug offenders", or that all UNODC workshops for Iranian counter-narcotics officers "included a session on capital and corporal punishments as impediments to international cooperation in legal and law enforcement matters".

The [United Kingdom](#), [Ireland](#) and [Denmark](#) 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 publically acknowledged that "the donations are leading to executions".

The [UNODC Human Rights Guidance Note](#) referenced in your letter notes that "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". Whatever the good intentions of Iran's "human rights representatives," Iran continues to execute drug offenders in large numbers. We ask that the UNODC act in line with this policy and immediately freeze or withdraw its support for counter-narcotics supply control operations in Iran until the death penalty for drug offences is abolished.

Yours sincerely

**REPRIEVE**

**Maya Foa**

Director, Death Penalty Team  
Reprieve



**Rick Lines**

Executive Director  
Harm Reduction International



**Faraz Sanei,**

Researcher, Middle East and  
North Africa Division  
Human Rights Watch



**Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam**

Executive Director  
Iran Human Rights



**Roya Boroumand**

Executive Director  
Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation



**Florence Bellivier**

President  
World Coalition Against the Death Penalty