

United Nations Human Rights Council, 23rd Session (27 May – 14 June 2013)

Item 3 General Debate

Tuesday 4 June 2013

Speaker: IHEU representative, Roy Brown

Mr President,

Public executions were commonplace in England throughout the Middle Ages and were often attended by crowds of onlookers. But the last public execution in England took place in 1868, and in France in 1939. The last witchcraft trial in Europe took place in Switzerland in 1782.

Civilisation moves on, but not apparently in certain member states of the OIC, and in particular in Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Article 7 of the ICCPR states quite categorically that “no-one shall be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” and this injunction clearly applies to all public executions, whether by beheading, by hanging, or by a bullet in the back of the head.

Yet as we heard in the last session of this Council, torture is still commonplace throughout the Islamic Republic of Iran.¹

In Saudi Arabia last month, five Yemeni men were publically beheaded and their bodies then displayed in public, crucifixion-style.²

In April, a Saudi court ordered that a man’s spine be severed because his mother could not afford to pay the blood money demanded.³

Just last month, two maids were reportedly sentenced to 10 years in jail and 1000 lashes for so-called “witchcraft” – a totally imaginary offence.⁴

Mr President, we call upon the OIC to:

- Utterly condemn public executions and physical mutilation of anyone, whatever their alleged crime, in all its member states,
- To demand the abolition of the non-existent crime of witchcraft,
- To insist that the death sentence only be imposed after due process in which the defendant has been properly represented,
- That until such safeguards exist, to put in place a moratorium on the death penalty,
- To demand that all its member states fully respect their obligations under the ICCPR.

Thank you, Sir.

¹ <http://iheu.org/story/iran-admits-torture-following-pressure-from-iheu-at-the-un>

² <http://amnesty.org/en/news/saudi-arabia-five-beheaded-and-crucified-amid-disturbing-rise-executions-2013-05-21>

³ <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/452683/20130402/saudi-arabia-punishments-stab-paralise-spinal-cord.htm>

⁴ <http://www.emirates247.com/crime/region/two-maids-get-10-years-1-000-lashes-for-sorcery-2013-05-20-1.507147>