

Evaluation of iran's correctional sytem



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Iran, a Look Inside The Correctional System

Abstract

Many countries hold beliefs and practices that seem cruel or seem to take away rights of their citizens. Countries that hold what the United States considers to be extreme religious beliefs also have extreme punishments for crimes not even citation level in America. Many countries see the United States as too lax on punishments and corrections or without values based on freedoms. There are basic human rights that every person deserves and not all governments or countries agree on what treatment is humane for prisoners or persons who broke the law. Iran is a country where the capital and corporal punishment is legal, the Muslim religion takes part in every facet of the citizen's lives and the correctional system is based on the religious principals.

Iran, A Look Inside The Correctional System

In order to understand another country's correctional system, a basic understanding of the culture and people that make up the country is needed. In addition to culture, the economy, religion, topography and history of the country should be considered as well. Understanding what makes the people who they are as a whole will give a better perspective on the rationale of the prison system. An understanding of what the people base their values of what is right and wrong and the punishment.

The United States correctional system is ever evolving to support the views and needs of its citizens. The people of the United States believe that people

should be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. The citizens of the US demand humane treatment for prisoners and when word of any cruel treatment is heard, it is met with public outcry, protests and demands made to public officials for change. The citizens of the United States expect a level of freedom and the ability to mangle said freedoms. The freedoms and rights extend to the inmates incarcerated in the jails and prisons in the united states as well. There is an ever-present humanitarian quest for safe and fair treatment of all people, incarcerated or not. Despite the heinousness of the crimes the offender is still awarded with judicial *due process* and basic human necessities such as shelter, clothing, toilet/sink and food. There are additional comforts US prisoners are bestowed such as heat, electricity, cable, a commissary, educational programs, rehabilitave programs, bedding and pillow and other comfort items. There are restrictions to the amount of solitary confinement one must endure to limit mental stress and negative effects of isolation. There are laws against torture and interrogation, all citizens have rights at all times.

In 2017, the United States executed 23 people, that is a huge contrast to the 567 executions in Iran in 2017. Unlike the United States, Iran utilizes many forms of punishment including flogging, stoning, firing squad, amputations, forced blindings, hanging and falling from heights. In Iran, there are two types of sentences that can result in a death sentence. The first is a violation of highly conservative religious fundamentals, a “ qesas-e-nafs” (retribution) sentence, when a murder victim’s family refuses to forgive a murderer or eating during Ramadan. The other type is a regular death sentence, “ hokm-e-edam”, for crimes such as rape, murder, theft and drug trafficking. Hugely

contrast to the lax punishments drug traffickers receive in the United States which is often downgraded to monetary fines.

Iran is a country of South West Asia, it is mostly desert and borders Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. It's roots as a country date back to 550 BC and was traditionally known as Persia. Iran has been the site of conflict and has been war for a great length of time with its neighboring Iraq, which has resulted in economic stress and social burden. The alleged support for international terrorism has made it an outcast in the global community although the country is still highly valued due to its abundant natural resource: petroleum. Iran is unique in that it is the world's only Shiite state, with 92. 5% of its population reporting as Shiite. Shiite is a form of Muslim which is the country's only religion. Religion is heavily emphasized in the country, mandatory prayer is five times a day, called ' salat' with encouragement to pray more.

The Shiites or " Twelvers" are the largest branch of the nation of Islam, which is Muslim. All Muslims believe the prophet Muhammed was the messenger of Allah, in essence the way Jesus was the messenger of God in Catholic religion. The Shiites beliefs are derived from a ' Doctrine of Believers', they believe in 12 divinely ordained leaders known as the 12 Imams. The Imams are prophets chosen by Muhammad. The basic principles of the doctrine are: Monotheism, the belief that their god is one and unique; Justice, a skewed scale of moral " correctness" based on fairness along with punishment vs the level of violation of said ethics; Prophethood, the belief that their God Mohammed has sent " prophets" to guide man; Leadership, the " leaders" of this religion are divinely appointed by the " Imams" whom

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have succeeded Prophethood; Last Judgement, God's final assessment of humanity. Religion is taken very seriously in Iran and its punishments in the court of law reflect that. There is no separation of church and state like the United States, religion is very much integrated into everyday life, with punishments reflecting Allah's will.

In Iran, both corporal and capital punishment are legal with a number of crimes being punishable by death including: murder, rape, child molestation, sodomy, drug trafficking, armed robbery, kidnapping, treason and terrorism. The population of Iran is 80, 687, 000 and of that there are 225, 000 convicted offenders in jail or prison and an unknown number of detainees awaiting trial. The conditions of the prisons have been described as deplorable with inhumane treatment of prisoners. There are overcrowding issues, food is scarce, there are little to no hygiene products, the only reading material is the Koran. Torture is used for interrogation, with threats and beatings and no limit on the length of solitary confinement. Again, another thing the United States would see as a civil rights law violation or a court would rule charges dismissed for duress suffered by the offender during interrogation.

Many things that are considered 'rights' in the United States that are considered highly illegal in Iran and therefore seem controversial to people from the United States who are not accustomed to other cultures norms. " In 2008 (Iranian) Judicial Authority said " Imprisonment is useless and public flogging is the best deterrent" and went on to say Judges were to lenient and criticized them for being influenced by Western culture's views on human rights". Iran allows flogging both public and private for both men and

women. Women remain fully clothed, men have bare backs and, on some occasions, less clothing, depending on offence. In 2008 flogging was instituted as a punishment for dangerous driving. More than 100 offences are punishable by flogging ranging from theft, assault, vandalism, defamation, fraud, adultery, intimate relationships with unmarried men/women, offences considered a violation of ' public morals' and same sex relationships. " In 2015 a mass (public) flogging took place where more than 480 people were flogged for eating during Ramadan, the Moslem fasting season." People have been ' mass flogged' for protesting employment conditions or severely punished like the case of " Journalist Reza Fathi was given 459 lashes for creating unease in public mind"

In " November 2016 a man was forcibly blinded in both eyes for blinding a 4-year-old girl with acid". Punishments will vary in severity based on the offence and the sex of the offender. There are more restrictions on women due to the strict religious beliefs. Women are more likely to be subjected to stoning until death, the law mandates participation. " In 2013, 10 people were sentenced to death by stoning". Punishment for adultery is often death by stoning. Men are buried to their waists, women their chests or neck and stones are thrown until the offender is dead. Hanging is also used, although not " preferred". A crane is often used and rather than hang the " offender is often jerked upward and then suffocates which could take 10-20 minutes." Amputations can include " cross amputations" which include several fingers and toes from opposite sides of the body. Firing squad is utilized and falling from heights is often reserved for same sex relationships. In some cases, a combination of corporal and capital punishment can be utilized, for example

“ In March 2005 serial murderer was executed after receiving 100 lashes”. Judicial corporal punishment can be applied at the discretion of the courts and severity also depends on the crime, “ 35 men and women were arrested for dancing/mingling and consuming alcohol and were subject to 99 lashes to be carried out immediately”. There are no programs available in prisons to facilitate rehabilitation for drugs, that must be sought outside the instruction, the same for educational programs.

There are significant differences in the Iranian criminal justice system and the correctional system in the United States just as there are significant differences in the people and the culture of the people. However, humans have similar needs regardless of where they are located in the globe. Most religions have the basic idea of moral righteousness and without that there is a form of penance or suffering period. With information easily accessible via the internet, people are becoming more educated about different cultures, stories are being shared and people are becoming more aware of the suffering of others. Iran has been the subject of heavy debate regarding stoning, prison conditions and women’s rights. Much like the evolvement of the correctional system in the United States and evolution is necessary in Iran as well. It must be considered that if punishments were more severe in the United States for crimes involving rape and murder, perhaps crime rates would drop.

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