

In a bid to diversify its economy away from oil, he has opened Saudi Arabia up to the outside world, taken the religious police off the streets, and allowed women to drive.

But the kingdom's human rights record remains "abysmal", according to the US-based campaign group Human Rights Watch, with the high level of executions a major concern. In recent years, only China and Iran have put more people to death, according to human rights activists.

"There's been no cost for Mohammed bin Salman and his authorities for going ahead with these executions," said Joey Shea, who researches Saudi Arabia for Human Rights Watch. "The entertainment events, the sporting events, all of it is continuing to happen with no repercussions, really."

According to Reprieve, the families of those executed are usually not informed in advance, or given the body, or informed where they have been buried.

The Saudi authorities do not reveal the method of execution, although it is believed to be either beheading or firing squad.

In a statement sent to the BBC, the UN's special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Dr Morris Tidball-Binz, called for an immediate moratorium on executions in Saudi Arabia with a view to abolition,.

He also pressed for "full compliance with international safeguards (including effective legal assistance and consular access for foreign nationals), prompt notification of families, the return of remains without delay and the publication of comprehensive execution data to enable independent scrutiny".

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