Taliban publicly flog 63 Afghan men, women for crimes such as 'immoral relations'

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The Taliban's supreme court announced Tuesday that more than 63 people, including 14 women, were publicly flogged in northern Afghanistan after being convicted of crimes such as homosexuality, adultery, and other “immoral relations.”

This is the first time the fundamentalist Taliban rulers flogged such a large group of Afghans in public since returning to power in Kabul nearly three years ago.

The announcement stated that Tuesday’s punishments were executed in the central sports stadium of Sar-e Pul, the capital of the Afghan province of the same name. The provincial governor, judges, security officials, area elders, and members of the public were among the onlookers.

The Taliban have publicly flogged hundreds of men and women in sports stadiums across the country since retaking control of Afghanistan in August 2021. At least five Afghans convicted of murder have also been executed publicly by gunfire.

The United Nations and global human rights groups have decried judicial corporal punishment and executions in public under Taliban rule, saying they are prohibited under international human rights law and demanding they must cease immediately.

The reclusive Taliban leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, has disregarded international criticism and calls to stop the implementation of the Islamic criminal justice system in line with his harsh interpretation of Islam.

Akhundzada has vowed to enforce the public stoning of women for adultery, though no such punishment has been reported so far. The U.N. decried his announcement as disturbing.

International rights groups have consistently criticized worsening human rights conditions, particularly those of Afghan women, after the Taliban takeover, demanding that they reverse their restrictions on women and civil liberty.

De facto Afghan authorities have barred girls from attending schools beyond the sixth grade and many women from public and private workplaces, deterring the world from granting diplomatic recognition to the men-only Taliban government.