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Iran Reports 21,000 Arrests During June War With Israel

Summary

- Iranian police report detaining about 21,000 people for alleged security violations during the 12-day June war with Israel; number of people still in custody remains unclear.
- Judiciary chief previously said about 2,000 arrests were made, with many released after being cleared of spying or collaboration.
- Parliament passed a bill increasing espionage penalties, but it was rejected by the Guardian Council; it could still become law if amended.

Iranian police say they detained around 21,000 people for alleged security violations during the 12-day war with Israel in June, a figure far higher than earlier official estimates.

Police spokesman Saeed Montazerolmehdi said on August 12 that public tip-offs played a significant role in the arrests. It is unclear how many remain in custody.

Among those detained, 2,774 were foreign nationals accused of spying. Authorities claimed evidence on their phones showed suspicious activity such as images of military positions, key facilities, and transmitted location data. Another 261 people were suspected of espionage, while 172 were arrested for unauthorized filming.

The announcement contrasts sharply with late July comments from judiciary chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni-Ejei, who reported about 2,000 arrests during and after the conflict, saying many had been released after investigations cleared them of spying or collaboration with Israel.

Human rights groups have voiced alarm over the scale of the crackdown.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) documented hundreds of arrests during the conflict, often targeting ethnic minorities and activists. Amnesty International has condemned Iran's post-war surge in executions, warning of torture, unfair trials, and arbitrary killings.

Since late June, Iran has executed at least seven people accused of spying for Israel, including nuclear scientist Rouzbeh Vadi on August 6.

Vadi, arrested over a year earlier, was accused of providing sensitive intelligence that aided Israeli operations.

Iranian authorities are concerned about deep infiltration by Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, which has apparently enabled devastating military and intelligence operations inside the country.

In June, parliament passed a bill to sharply increase penalties for espionage and collaboration with hostile foreign governments, particularly Israel. Although the Guardian Council rejected the bill, a spokesman for the constitutional watchdog said that with amendments, it could still become law.

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