



AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



**His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud  
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques  
Office of His Majesty The King  
Royal Court  
Riyadh  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

**17 June 2013**

Ref: TG MDE 23/2013.008

### **Your Majesty**

I write to you today on the anniversary of the arrest of Raif Badawi, the 29-year-old founder of a website for political and social debate, Saudi Arabian Liberals. I urge you to order his immediate and unconditional release as he has been detained and charged solely for the legitimate, peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.

Raif Badawi has been detained since 17 June 2012 in a prison in Briman, Jeddah. He was charged with "setting up a website that undermines public security" and ridiculing Islamic religious figures. His trial began in June 2012 before the District Court in Jeddah and was marred by irregularities. According to his lawyer, the original trial judge was replaced by a judge who had advocated that Raif Badawi be punished for "apostasy". His lawyer contested the judge's impartiality in the case.

The charges against Raif Badawi relate to a number of articles he has written, including one about Valentine's Day for which he is accused of ridiculing Saudi Arabia's Commission on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. The charges against him also mention his failure to remove articles by other people on his website, including one that insinuates that Al-Imam Mohamed ibn Saud University had become "a den for terrorists". On 17 December, the District Court referred the case to the General Court in Jeddah, recommending that Raif Badawi be tried for "apostasy". On 22 December, the General Court made Raif Badawi sign documents to enable his trial for "apostasy" to proceed.

On 21 January 2013, the General Court sent the case back to the District Court, stating that it did not have jurisdiction to review the case. It said that it had found that Raif Badawi had not insulted Islam and therefore an "apostasy" charge did not apply. The General Prosecutor, however, insisted that Raif Badawi be tried for "apostasy". The case was then sent to an appeal court to determine whether it should be heard by the District Court in Jeddah or another tribunal, in particular the General Court in Jeddah. On 7 May, the appeal court sent the case to the District Court in Jeddah. However, on 8 June the judge at the District Court insisted again that Raif Badawi be tried for "apostasy" and sent it back to the appeal court.

Over 1,000 people called for the release of Raif Badawi via Twitter between 3 May (World Press Freedom Day) and 12 May 2013. This card shows an image of Raif Badawi made up of such messages.

I would be grateful if Your Majesty would give this matter your prompt attention and order the dropping of all charges against Raif Badawi and his immediate and unconditional release. We look forward to your response.

**Yours sincerely**



**Salil Shetty  
Secretary General**

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