

URGENT ACTION

RAIF BADAWI SENTENCED TO JAIL, FLOGGING

Website founder Raif Badawi has been sentenced to seven years in prison and 600 lashes for online posts critical of the Saudi Arabian authorities, which they considered offensive to Islam. Amnesty International considers Raif Badawi a prisoner of conscience.

A Criminal Court in Jeddah, western Saudi Arabia, sentenced **Raif Badawi** on 29 July to seven years in prison and 600 lashes for offences including violating Saudi Arabia's information technology law and insulting religious authorities by creating and managing an online forum, Saudi Arabian Liberals. Raif Badawi was also convicted of insulting religious symbols in his tweets and Facebook posts, and of criticizing the "Commission for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" (also known as the religious police) and officials who argued against including women in the Shura Council. The judge also ordered that the online forum be shut down.

Raif Badawi has been detained since 17 June 2012 in a prison in Briman, in Jeddah. His trial began that month in 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". During his pre-trial detention, on 28 December, Raif Badawi was taken to hospital for treatment and found to have developed diabetes. Raif Badawi's lawyer asked for him to be released pending trial but this request was denied.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to release Raif Badawi immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to ensure that he is given immediate and regular access to his family and a lawyer of his choice, and any medical attention he may require, and is protected from torture or other ill-treatment
- Calling on them not to carry out any punishment of flogging, which would violate the prohibition on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in international law.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 SEPTEMBER 2013 TO:

King and Prime Minister

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
Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior)
+966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Shaykh Dr Mohammed bin
Abdulkareem Al-Issa
Ministry of Justice, University Street
Riyadh 11137
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 401 1741
+ 966 11 402 0311

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed
bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 403 3125 (keep trying)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 3/13. Further information:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/mde23/001/2013>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Saudi Arabian authorities have recently unleashed a widespread campaign of persecution of human rights defenders, both through the courts and through arbitrary measures such as the imposition of travel bans. Activists who have used the judiciary to seek redress for violations by the Interior Ministry and security forces, or those who have criticized state institutions for shortcomings have been singled out by the authorities.

In June alone, at least 11 activists were sentenced to prison terms amidst an ongoing crackdown on activism, including online activism. Between 17 and 24 June, four prominent activists were sentenced to between 10 months and 10 years in prison for their human rights activism and seven young men were sentenced by a special court in Dammam to between five and 10 years in prison for their Facebook posts in support of a detained Saudi Arabian Shi'a Muslim cleric in the country's Eastern Province, where ongoing demonstrations have been repressed with excessive force.

One of the four activists, Dr Abdulkareem Yousef al-Khoder, a professor of Islamic Jurisprudence and co-founder of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA) was sentenced on 24 June to eight years in prison and a 10-year travel ban on vague charges such as disobeying the ruler, inciting disorder by calling for demonstrations, harming the image of the state by disseminating false information to foreign groups, and taking part in founding an unlicensed organization. Two other ACPRA co-founders and human rights defenders, Dr Abdullah bin Hamid bin Ali al-Hamid and Dr Mohammad bin Fahad bin Muflih al-Qahtani, had been sentenced in March to five and 10 years' imprisonment and travel bans of equal duration on similarly vague charges.

The Specialized Criminal Court in Jeddah sentenced a prominent human rights activist, Mikhlif bin Daham al-Shammari, on 17 June to five years in prison followed by a 10-year travel ban for his peaceful human rights activism. Also in June, the authorities sentenced two outspoken women's rights activists, Wajeha al-Huwaider and Fawzia al-Oyouni, to 10 months in prison for attempting to help a woman whom the authorities considered to be defying her husband.

On the day Raif Badawi was sentenced, his lawyer, prominent human rights defender Waleed abu al-Khair, attended the 13th court session of his trial, which had already lasted 20 months, for ridiculing the Saudi Arabian judicial system.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights upholds the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association. Restrictions on these rights are not permissible unless they are provided by law, for the purpose of protecting certain public interests (national security, public order, public health or morals) or the rights of others, and, in each case, are demonstrably necessary and proportionate for the achievement of that purpose. Criminal charges for peaceful criticism of public officials and institutions and for peaceful defence of human rights violate international human rights law. Corporal punishment such as flogging also violates international law, which prohibits torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Name: Raif Badawi
Gender m/f:m