

# URGENT ACTION

## SAUDI ARABIAN BLOGGER FACES IMMINENT FLOGGING

**Amnesty International has been informed that Raif Badawi, a Saudi Arabian blogger and prisoner of conscience, will be publicly flogged on 9 January. Flogging violates the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in international law.**

Amnesty International received information that Raif Badawi will be flogged after the Friday prayers on 9 January in front of al-Jafali mosque in Jeddah. The flogging is to be carried out in public.

Raif Badawi was sentenced by the Criminal Court in Jeddah on 7 May 2014 to 10-years in prison and 1,000 lashes, followed by a 10-year travel ban, a ban on using media outlets, and a fine of one million Saudi Arabian riyals (about US\$266,600). The conviction and sentence stemmed from Raif Badawi's creation of the Saudi Arabian Liberals website (which the court ordered to be closed) and the accusation that he had "insulted Islam". The Court of Appeal in Jeddah upheld the sentence on 1 September.

According to the final court decision, Raif Badawi will be receiving no more than 50 lashes per session, with a break of no less than a week between sessions.

Raif Badawi was initially charged with "apostasy", a crime that carries the death penalty in Saudi Arabia. He has been detained since 17 June 2012 in a prison in Briman, in Jeddah. His lawyer, Waleed Abu al-Khair, is himself in prison, serving a 15-year sentence for his peaceful activism.

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

- Calling on the authorities 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.
- Calling on them to release Raif Badawi immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to ensure that his conviction and sentence are quashed.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 FEBRUARY 2015 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 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 (please keep trying)

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### **And copies to:**

President, Human Rights Commission  
Bandar Mohammed 'Abdullah al-Aiban  
Human Rights Commission  
PO Box 58889, Riyadh 11515  
King Fahad Road  
Building No.373, Riyadh  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 11 461 2061  
Email: hrc@haq-ksa.org

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

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the sixth update of UA 3/13. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/023/2014/en>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Raif Badawi's trial began in July 2012 before the General Court in Jeddah. On 21 January 2013, the General Court sent the case to the Criminal Court in Jeddah, saying it did not have jurisdiction to examine the case because it did not find that Raif Badawi had insulted Islam and therefore an "apostasy" charge did not apply. The General Prosecutor, however, insisted that Raif Badawi should be tried for "apostasy". The case was then sent to an appeal court to determine whether it should be heard by the Criminal Court in Jeddah or another tribunal, in particular the General Court in Jeddah, which has jurisdiction over "apostasy" cases. The Court of Appeal in Jeddah referred the case to the Criminal Court and on 29 July 2013 Raif Badawi was sentenced to seven years in prison and 600 lashes. His lawyer appealed the decision arguing that the case had been dealt with by a temporary judge who was not impartial. On 11 December 2013 the Court of Appeal ruled that the case should be reviewed again and sent it back before the Criminal Court in Jeddah. On 25 December 2013, the judge in the Criminal Court ruled that he did not have jurisdiction to review the case, arguing that the charges related to "apostasy". The case was sent back to the Court of Appeal in Jeddah to decide whether to send the case back to the Criminal Court or to examine it itself. The Court of Appeal sent the case back to Jeddah's Criminal Court which sentenced Raif Badawi on 7 May 2014 to 10 years in prison, 1,000 lashes and a fine of 1 million Saudi Arabian riyals (about US\$266,600). Raif Badawi appealed and on 1 September the Court of Appeal upheld the sentence.

The Saudi Arabian authorities have continued their widespread campaign to persecute civil society activists and human rights defenders with complete impunity, using both the courts and extrajudicial means such as the imposition of travel bans. On 6 July 2014, Raif Badawi's lawyer, prominent human rights defender Waleed Abu al-Khair, was sentenced by the Specialized Criminal Court to 15 years in prison to be followed by a 15-year travel ban. He was found guilty of "disobeying the ruler and seeking to remove his legitimacy", "insulting the judiciary and questioning the integrity of judges", "setting up an unlicensed organization", "harming the reputation of the state by communicating with international organizations" and "preparing, storing and sending information that harms public order". He was initially arrested on 15 April after appearing at the fifth hearing of his trial before the Specialized Criminal Court in the capital, Riyadh. Before that Waleed Abu al-Khair was sentenced to three months' imprisonment by the Criminal Court in Jeddah and had his sentence upheld on 6 February 2014 by the Court of Appeal in Mecca on similar charges (see UA 98/14, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/016/2014/en>).

Corporal punishment, such as flogging, violates international law, which prohibits torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Name: Raif Badawi

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 3/13 Index: MDE 23/001/2015 Issue Date: 8 January 2015

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