

His Majesty King Salman 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

Copenhagen 7th June 2020

Your Majesty,

Eight years have gone by since writer and blogger Raif Badawi last saw his wife and children.

In 2012 Mr. Badawi was condemned among other punishments to a long prison term and public flogging on charges of ‘insulting Islam’ and ‘founding a liberal website’ We do not question any country's right to uphold their laws. But in this case, we must draw your attention to the fact that the verdict is a violation of international law.

Under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ‘everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers’.

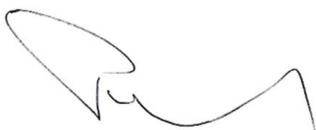
Criminalisation of the peaceful criticism of public officials and institutions violates international human rights law. Corporal punishment such as flogging also violates the absolute prohibition under international law of all forms of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 18 of the UDHR states that, ‘everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief’.

Your Majesty, as a member of the UN Human Rights Council your country has committed to uphold these values in your own country as well as in other member states.

Your Majesty, Mr. Badawi has tried all legal means he had to convince the Saudi Arabian legal system to overturn the verdict, with no success. But, Your Majesty, in all countries in the world the head of state has the power to show clemency and mercy, and clemency and mercy are indeed the most venerable signs and proofs of power. We therefore sincerely hope that you will use your power to secure the release of our honorary member Raif Badawi as well as his lawyer Waleed Abu al-Khair, who is serving a 15 years prison term for defending Raif Badawi. We believe that they are being held solely for their peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression

Sincerely yours,



Per Øhrgaard,
President



Mille Rode,
General Secretary