



P.O. Box 741 • Amherst, New York 14226-0741 • (716) 636-4869 • Fax (716) 636-1733
www.centerforinquiry.net

United Nations Human Rights Council: 26th Session (10th – 27th June 2014)
General Debate on Item 4, Friday 20th June 2014, Speaker: Cfi Representative, Josephine Macintosh

The Human Rights Situation of Raif Badawi in Saudi Arabia

Mr President

Last month, Raif Badawi, who founded a Saudi website dedicated to fostering debate on religion and politics and called on his country to respect freedom of religion, belief, expression, and women's rights, was charged with "insulting Islam"¹. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison, 1,000 lashes and a fine of 1 million Saudi riyals. Badawi was first jailed for seven years in 2012 for violating Saudi Arabia's IT law and insulting religious authorities through his online writings and hosting those of others on his website².

In a separate case, Mr Badawi's lawyer, Walid Abu al-Khair, was jailed for his human rights activism³.

Mr Badawi is a prisoner of conscience who is guilty of nothing more than daring to create a public forum for discussion and peacefully exercising the right to freedom of expression.

Corporal punishment, such as flogging, violates law set by the Convention on Torture, which prohibits torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

We call on Saudi Arabia, as a newly elected member of this council, to release Raif Badawi immediately and unconditionally, and drop any pending charges against him and others for "blasphemy," "insulting Islam," or "apostasy".

As an elected member of this Council, Saudi Arabia is obliged to "uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" and "fully cooperate with the Council"⁴. If it is to retain any credibility as a member, we urge it to reform its laws so as to protect freedom of religion, belief, and expression, cease the use of corporeal punishment, and repeal Article 1 of its interior ministry's decree defining atheism as terrorism.

Thank you.

¹http://www.centerforinquiry.net/blogs/entry/raif_badawi_sentenced_to_10_years_in_prison_1000_lashes_for_insulting_islam/

²<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/thousand-lashes-and-10-years-prison-online-saudi-arabian-activist-2014-05-07>

³http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elham-manea/waleed-abulkhair-imprison_b_5267086.html

⁴ A/RES/60/251, §9