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PUBLIC STATEMENT

LATEST DEVELOPMENT
March 11, 2022

Saudi Arabia should lift restrictions on Raif Badawi and protect peaceful debate

Raif Badawi's release in 2022 ended a decade in prison for his online writing. The punitive travel ban documented after his release has kept the question of family reunification open.

What we know

Saudi authorities prosecuted Raif Badawi over an online forum for public debate. His sentence included ten years in prison and 1,000 lashes, of which 50 were publicly administered on January 9, 2015. The European Parliament awarded him the Sakharov Prize that year. His family reported his release from prison on March 11, 2022, the most recent development recorded here, and rights monitors documented a ten-year travel ban tied to his sentence. [1–6]

Our position

No one should be imprisoned, flogged, or barred from travel for peaceful expression. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects freedom of opinion and expression and the right to leave any country. Release from prison does not end a punishment if a family is still kept apart. [3, 6–7]

Our calls

Amnesty Freedom calls on the authorities to:

1. Lift any remaining restrictions tied to Badawi's peaceful expression and confirm his freedom to travel in writing.
2. Permit him to reunite with his family.
3. End corporal punishment.
4. Review the cases of others subject to prison terms or travel bans for similar speech.

Supporting information

1. Raif Badawi | USCIRF
2. Raif Badawi Released | Amnesty International Canada
3. You can't leave and we won't tell you why: travel bans in Saudi Arabia - Amnesty International
4. 2011 - 2020 | Laureates | Sakharov Prize | European Parliament
5. Raif Badawi - PEN America
6. Release of Raif Badawi an Overdue and a Necessary Step for Saudi Arabia | USCIRF
7. United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Note to editors: *This statement is based on the public sources listed above. The date shown is that of the most recent development recorded in those sources; later developments may not be reflected.*