

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/arabie-saoudite-rwb-appeals-to-king-abdullah-to-09-12-2014,47356.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Saudi Arabia

Appeal

RWB appeals to King Abdullah to pardon jailed citizen-journalist

9 December 2014

Reporters Without Borders launched a petition today calling on Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah to pardon imprisoned citizen-journalist and cyber-activist Raef Badawi, the winner of RWB's 2014 press freedom prize, so that he can be freed at once and spared being lashed 1,000 times in public.

At the end of an unfair trial, a Riyadh court [sentenced Badawi](#) on 1 September to ten years in prison, a fine of 1 million riyals, and a ban on travelling abroad for ten years after his release.

It also sentenced him to the barbaric, medieval punishment of 1,000 lashes, which could be administered in public in 20 weekly sessions of 50 lashes. No date has so far officially been set for the lashes, but RWB's sources say they could be given after Friday prayers outside Jeddah's Al-Jaffali mosque.

"We [appeal](#) to the king to quickly intercede and grant Badawi a pardon so that he can be spared an inhuman punishment that violates international law," Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire said. *"In his blog, this citizen-journalist had the courage to publicly question Saudi society's evolution and its respect for fundamental freedoms, prompting a debate about political, social and religious issues.*

"For starting this public debate, this young man, now aged 30, has been persecuted by the Saudi authorities since 2008. A few weeks ago, the Reporters Without Borders - TV5 Monde press freedom prize jury decided to honour him for his work promoting freedom of information. We are proud to have Badawi as one of our laureates."

Co-founder of the *Liberal Saudi Network*, a discussion website, Badawi has been [held](#) since June 2012 in Jeddah's Briman prison for violating article 6 of a cyber-crime law banning content that "undermines public order, religious values, public decency or privacy." He was accused of [criticizing](#) the religious police in his posts.

Married at the age of 17, Badawi became a businessman after finishing school but started to take an interest in Saudi society and the religious establishment. He gradually evolved into a human rights activist and in 2006 conceived the idea of creating the liberal discussion site that has now been closed by the authorities.

The site's co-founder, **Suad Shammari**, was herself [arrested](#) on 28 October for posting [tweets](#) that were deemed to have insulted Islam and endangered "public order."

After Badawi's arrest, his wife, Ensaf Haidar, fled with his three children to Lebanon and then found refuge in Canada in October 2013.

Ranked 164th out of 180 countries in the [press freedom index](#), Saudi Arabia is on the Reporters Without Borders list of [Enemies of the Internet](#), while King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud is on the Reporters Without Borders list of [Predators](#) of Press Freedom.

Help us to free Raef Badawi by signing the [petition](#).

You can download those documents on our website :

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