

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/saudi-arabia-seven-years-in-jail-and-600-lashes-06-08-2013,45021.html>

---

Middle East/North Africa - Saudi Arabia

Draconian sentence

## Seven years in jail and 600 lashes for cyber-activist

6 August 2013

---

Reporters Without Borders condemns the sentence of seven years in prison and 600 lashes that a Jeddah criminal court has passed on the cyber-activist **Raef Badawi** for allegedly offending Islam and violating articles 6 and 7 of the 2007 Anti-Cyber-Crime Law.

Badawi's lawyer, Waleed Abu Al-Khair said his client, held since June 2012, will have [30 days to appeal against sentence](#) from today when his law office is to receive written notification of the verdict, which was handed down on 29 July.

"We are appalled by this extremely harsh and unfair sentence, for which there is absolutely no justification," Reporters Without Borders said. "We urge the Saudi authorities to overturn this conviction and to repeal all the 2007 Anti-Cyber-Crime Law's repressive provisions. Saudi citizens must no longer be threatened for using their right to free speech and freedom of information.

"This verdict is symptomatic of the tension between the Saudi authorities and Internet users. The government is relentless in its censorship of the Internet, the only space where a degree of freedom of expression and information has developed in recent years."

The founder of Saudi Liberals, a website for political and social debate that has been censored ever since its creation in 2008, Badawi was held in Jeddah's Briman prison since his arrest on 17 June 2012.

He was accused of creating and moderating a website that insulted religion and religious officials, including the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, and violated the Sharia's basic rules. Judge Faris Al-Harbi added three months to his sentence for "parental disobedience."

[The verdict](#) issued on 29 July also accused Badawi of posting an article on St. Valentine that denigrated the religious police, and failing to withdraw blasphemous third party comments from the website – charges covered by articles 6 and 7 of the Anti-Cyber-Crime Law

According to [paragraph 1 of article 6](#), "production, preparation, transmission, or storage of material impinging on public order, religious values, public morals, and privacy, through the information network or computers" is punishable by imprisonment, a fine or both.

As the website's founder and moderator, Badawi was required by the law to act as a public decency enforcer and to remove any offensive material posted by visitors to the site.

This is not the first time the Saudi authorities have gone after Badawi. He was previously arrested in May 2008 and charged with creating a website that insults Islam. As a result, he left the country and returned only after the charges were dropped.

The charges brought against him after his second arrest in June 2012 initially including "[apostasy](#)" because of a comment on the site saying "that Muslims, Jews, Christians, and

atheists are all equal." The apostasy charge was dropped after he agreed to recite the Muslim profession of faith.

Saudi Arabia is on the list of countries regarded as "[Enemies of the Internet](#)" that Reporters Without Borders published in March 2012.

---

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 35.3 kb)
-